

SEARCH CRITERIA

Model	Model A: Empowerment Model
Industry	Local Government
Focus/Level	Community
Outcomes	Building community, Building individual confidence
Special Interest Groups	Other

1. PROJECT TITLE:

The Casuarina Project – Building Community Spirit

2. FUNDERS:

Department of Industry, Innovation and Regional Development
Surf Coast Shire

3. PROVIDERS:

Viv McWaters, Beyond the Edge Pty Ltd

4. KEY CONTACTS:

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5. INDUSTRY/ISSUE/GEOGRAPHY:

The Casuarina Project is a community capacity-building initiative of the Surf Coast Shire in Victoria. It aims to develop individuals who are already active in the community to continue and enhance their community involvement and to create a strong network across the Surf Coast Shire.

6. PROJECT CONTEXT:

Developed by the Rural Development Committee, the Casuarina Project aims to assist local people develop skills that enable them to commence, or continue to be involved in, community activities.

The outcome is an active network of committed community members who can tackle local issues, find solutions and be creative project co-ordinators. Each participant's capacity to plan, resource and deliver effective community activities has been enhanced by the program of training and skills. The project is strengthening links between individuals, community groups, businesses and local government across the Shire as well as encouraging community creativity and inspiration.

Existing resources and groups are tapped into as well as many individuals and groups are acknowledged who have already achieved fantastic work and who most often, give freely of their time and energy to achieve community development.

The 2002 Project Evaluation outlines the three phases of the Program:

Phase 1 is a series of one and two-day workshops to learn skills, develop confidence and plan a community project to be implemented in Phase 2.

Phase 2 involves the implementation of a community project, with some on-going support and development.

Phase 3 is ongoing and is about using new-found and rediscovered skills in the community to further stimulate projects and encourage others.

The program provides support and encouragement and participants encourage each other as well as involving their community.

Individuals taking part in the program can expect to:

- Develop specific skills useful in all walks of life, but especially with groups and teams
- Gain a new understanding of their own and others' motivations, strengths and challenges, be confident to work with others to initiate and conduct community events.

2002 was the second year that Phase 1 was implemented. Over seven months, nineteen people from the Surf Coast Shire took part in two weekend and seven one-day workshops. One of the weekend days was devoted to a Community Conference where the wider community was invited to take part.

(From the 2002 Project Evaluation)

7. PROJECT NICHE (SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES):

The specific objective of the Casuarina Project is developing the skills of local people in the Surf Coast Shire in beginning, or continuing involvement in community activities.

Due to its capacity building nature, the Casuarina Project targets individuals most likely to increase their involvement in community programs and be able to break into existing networks and create new ones.

This means that the project nurtures people already experienced in, and committed to, furthering their role in community activities rather than supporting people in existing leadership roles.

The project has also strengthened links between individuals, community groups, businesses and local government across the Shire, and encouraged community creativity and inspiration.

8. PHILOSOPHY/APPROACH:

Bennett's Hierarchy was used as the logic behind the design of the Casuarina Project and forms the basis of PILOT program evaluation report.

This means that the cause-effect relationship between outputs, intermediate outcomes and ultimate outcomes are identified. Bennett's hierarchy was used because it allows the integration of program evaluation within the program development process.

However, this approach limits the identification of unexpected outcomes or the program improvements. Subsequent years of the program will also apply the same evaluation process.

The following table summarises characteristics of the Casuarina Project according to Bennett's hierarchy. Drawn from the 2002 Project evaluation, the following table outlines the results for the pilot program for each of the level of the hierarchy.

Table 1: Casuarina Project 'Program Logic of Causality'

<p>1. SEEC Social, economic and environmental change as a result</p>	<p>Contribute to vibrant rural communities that are self-reliant and self-sustaining, drawing on existing resources in their own communities.</p>
<p>2. Behaviour Change Participant adoption of improved practices and technologies</p>	<p>Recognise capacity within own community. Take responsibility for services and activities and seek support from a range of sources (both within and outside own community).</p>
<p>3. KASA Change in participant knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations associated with participation in the Casuarina Project</p>	<p>Knowledge: Understanding of own and others' behaviours in groups; strategic planning; impact of change; awareness of various group processes and the difference between process and content; understanding of motivation, networking and mentoring. Attitudes: Individuals can make a difference; confidence and self esteem; local communities are worth it Skills: Leading group discussions; designing and staging events; design of a community project; leading workshops; effective communication; how to attract resources; building project alliances; dealing with conflict; public speaking; using the media effectively. Aspirations: To make a difference in own community; to be a part of a wider network of people working towards vibrant communities</p>
<p>4. Reactions Participant ratings of their involvement in the Project and the potential benefits</p>	<p>Participants enjoy the contact/training days - find them stimulating, challenging and fun. Form new friendships. Ongoing involvement in their own communities. Recognition.</p>
<p>4. Participants Scope, duration and intensity of participant involvement in the Casuarina Project.</p>	<p>20 individuals from the Surf Coast Shire who are currently involved in community activities. Phase 1: 11 contact days Phase 2: Implementation of a project designed during phase one Phase 3: Ongoing support to others/sharing knowledge etc.</p>
<p>5. Activities</p>	<p>Phase One: Two weekend workshops, one to be a community conference, and seven one-day workshops</p>
<p>6. Inputs Time, money and staff used to plan, promote, implement and evaluate the Casuarina Project</p>	<p>Department of State and Regional Development: \$50,000 grant Surf Coast Shire: organisational support, program development and monitoring through the Rural Development Committee; access to photocopying etc; publicity via Communications Unit, funding \$12,500 Viv McWaters, Beyond the Edge Pty Ltd: design and delivery of Casuarina Project, including preparation of notes and evaluation Volunteers: Guest speakers, Rural Development Committee working group</p>

9. RESOURCES, MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING STRUCTURES:

Funding was provided through the Department of State and Regional Development provided funding via its Rural Leadership and Community Events Program.

Surf Coast Shire has contributed through the organisational support provided by Council officers the Chief Executive Officer and members of the Rural Development Committee, and funding valued at approximately \$12,500).

The shire provided various support materials and facilities throughout the course of the program, including photocopying and promotional materials, media assistance, and general project management.

The program of learning was developed and facilitated by Viv McWaters, Beyond the Edge Pty Ltd.

Volunteers also participated by contributing time as guest speakers in the program.

10. PROCESS/METHODS USED:

A series of one- and two-day workshops were held over seven months to learn skills, develop confidence and plan a community project to be implemented.

Day one and two (23 & 24 February) focused on 'Understanding self and others in groups'. The following sessions were included in these days:

- Welcome & Introductions
- Overview of the Course
- Participant needs analysis
- Social Styles
- Group Roles & Effectiveness
- Discussion Method
- Introduction to Community Project

Day three (22 March) looked at 'Unearthing ideas from individuals in groups'. The following topics were covered:

- Workshop Method
- Communication Skills
- Project Planning

Day four (19 April) focused on 'Being Effective'. Topics included:

- Planning processes
- Designing & Staging Community Events
- Attracting resources
- Implementation alliances

On May 10, day five was themed 'The dynamics of change'. Topics included:

- Models of change
- Conflict, controversy and negotiation

Day six (May 31) and days seven and eight (22 & 23 June) were themed 'Effective Teams' and 'Community Conference' respectively. Topics covered included:

- Outdoor team building activity
- Teams and creativity
- Debrief and project planning

Day seven was dedicated to a community conference which was attended by more than 50 additional people. An important link between the Casuarina Project participants and the wider community was provided, particularly in relation to their developing community projects.

Many linkages were formed between participants and community members with similar interests and aspirations. Valuable support for projects was also found. Conducted using open space technology, the conference was well received by the community members who took part.

Day nine (26 July) themed 'Being Heard', covered the following topics.

- Public speaking skills
- Using the media effectively

Day ten (23 August) and eleven (13 September) looked at 'The Ripple Effect' and 'Celebration'. Topics included:

- Motivation
- Networking
- Mentoring
- Succession planning
- Historical scan of training
- Project presentations
- Celebration and personal affirmations

11. IMPACTS TO DATE (AND EVALUATION APPROACHES USED):

The logic behind the evaluation process is described using Bennett's Hierarchy. See Table 1 for Casuarina Project 'Program Logic of Causality'.

Participants took part in a program of learning and self development to enhance their skills in the community. The 2002 Project Evaluation outlined how the training consisted of a mixture of skills, personal development, community awareness and understanding, and practical project planning. Participants generally enjoyed the program, particularly meeting and interacting with their fellow participants, as well as the program's informal, easy-going approach.

According to the 2002 project Evaluation, the Casuarina Project reached a high level of satisfaction and met people's expectations. Participants were also happy with the program's facilitation and organisation.

Participant learnings within the project:

- Most often related to specific, useful skills and the actual experience of being part of a diverse group of people over a long period of time.
- Resulted in some unexpected outcomes such as forming friendships and enjoyment.
- Resulted in the development of a strong network with participants leaving the program with new-found confidence to 'get out there and have a go'.

In terms of what they have used and to what extent participants vary. Some say it is too early to say how they have used (or plan to use) what they have learnt, however others, describe an improvement in the way they interact with individuals and groups on a daily basis. Specific mention is made of an increased tolerance of others and valuing their ideas, plus listening and letting others have a say.

The skills learnt and knowledge gained has been useful for some in both in their employment and their community work. A proportion has used the discussion method and other participants refer to a greater confidence.

There has also been mention by Participants with regards to the notes and their potential to be a valuable resource.

Overall, participants assessed the Casuarina Project as a great success – for them individually, and also for the Shire as it continues to support and encourage a diverse group of people across the Shire to develop their skills and confidence. They also congratulated the Surf Coast Shire on the initiative and look forward to working with ‘graduates’ from 2001 to continue to contribute to vibrant, healthy and innovative communities (from 2002 Evaluation Report)

12. EFFECTIVENESS:

Participants reported being able to use their learnt skills immediately within the existing groups in which they are already involved. Plans for 16 community projects were developed, some of which are already underway. Other projects are also on the radar screen as a result of the large amount of enthusiasm generated by the participants.

Some of the community projects developed by participants taking part in Phase 1 (2002) of the Casuarina Project have already been implemented. Others are on the calendar for 2003. These projects include:

- Life Activities Club
- Landscaping an area and putting in stairs to Lorne Community House
- Second Stage of community playground at Winchelsea
- Needs survey for the Anglesea Community House
- Boxing gym
- Childproof fencing around old Bellbrae Tennis Club outdoor area
- Community directory on the Internet
- Professional design/artistic services to community groups
- Umbrella group to coordinate environmental activities in Lorne
- Deans Marsh Skate Park

13. PROJECT DOCUMENTATION AVAILABLE:

- Preliminary Evaluation Report

PHASE 1 – 2002

- The Casuarina Project- 2003 Program Brochure

14. ISSUES:

One of the issues that became clear was the advantages of having a diversity of people within the Casuarina Project and the need to continue to encourage community-minded people to take part. In particular, it is important to encourage people to participate who would not normally have an opportunity to take part in such a program

15. COMMENTS/CONCLUSIONS:

The most common unexpected outcome from the project was the depth of friendships made amongst the participants and the strong bond and network that has resulted, that will, no doubt continue into the future.

Others were surprised at how everyone got so involved in each other's project; how valuable it was; how much fun and laughter there was; a sense of family; and the

diversity of ages and experiences. There was also a comment about the group dynamics being a bit confronting at times.

The following improvements were suggested by participants:

- More physical activities, especially early in the program
- Follow-up after the course finishes, say each 3 – 4 months to encourage each other to stick with projects, support and network
- I feel a little more emphasis on the practical aspects of individual projects would have forced people to confront their personal barriers. It would have been good to use the group energy to encourage (or push) people into action.

This year project organisers reacted to feedback and issues raised from the 2001 project which resulted in the following elements being retained in the program.

- Basic structure of topics
- Begin with weekend workshop
- Include at least one weekend workshop during program (around the Community Conference weekend)
- Incorporate more guest speakers
- Support for childcare and travel assistance to enable attendance
- Friday's worked well, works especially for working participants

In response to the same feedback the organisers made the following changes to the 2002 program

- Two day community conference too long. Needs to include one day of conference, overnight time to share together, debrief the next morning and time for developing community project
- Add session on funding and submission writing
- Outdoor challenge - incorporating teambuilding, decision making and physical challenge (additional day)
- No sessions on last day of school terms
- Selection process to highlight the need for commitment to attend every session.

In response to the 2002 program, the following suggestions have been made.

- Start the program in Term 2
- 'Usefulness' ratings for each topic should be collected at the end of each training day

16. REVIEW METHODS:

- Desktop review of 2002 evaluation report and 2003 program brochure
- Interview with project staff.