



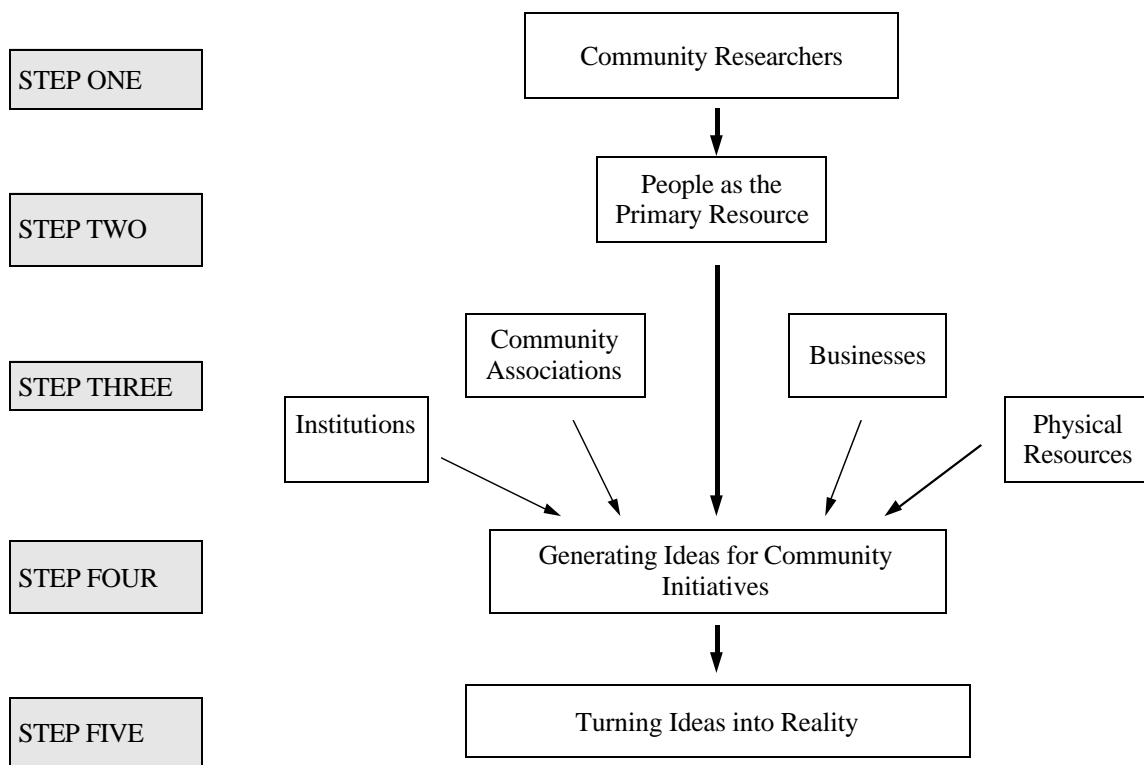
SECTION THREE
PROJECT OVERVIEW



PROJECT OVERVIEW

A Community Partnering project has five main steps:

- Step 1: Recruiting and training community researchers.
- Step 2: Working with people as the primary resource.
- Step 3: Identifying secondary resources.
- Step 4: Generating ideas for community initiatives.
- Step 5: Turning ideas into reality.



Step One: Recruiting and Training Community Researchers

Aim

To recruit and train community researchers with first-hand experiences of marginalisation and disadvantage.

Background

This step assumes that a Community Partnering project has been initiated by an existing agency (like a local council or community-based organisation) that has in place a project team made up of people with professional training such as community or economic development workers, or social planners. In this case the project team needs to be augmented by community researchers. However, a local group that conducts its own training using this resource kit can also initiate and run a Community Partnering project.

Key Tasks

1. Recruit community researchers.
2. Train community researchers.

Key Staff

The project team.

Time

1-2 months (approximately).

Outcomes

Community Researchers who are familiar with the ideas that guide the project and are able to work with people who are marginalised and disadvantaged.

The project team
includes community
researchers



Turning the “needs”
map into an “assets”
map

Step Two: Working with People as the Primary Resource

Aim

To introduce the idea that marginalised, disadvantaged and isolated people are primary community resources with abilities, ideas and dreams that can be the basis for community initiatives.

Background

Draws on the asset-based community development approach of John Kretzmann and John McKnight (see pages 8 to 10).

Key Tasks

1. Working with people to identify skills and abilities, interests and ideas, dreams and aspirations.
2. Working with people to begin formulating ideas for community initiatives.

Key Staff

Community researchers with support from the project team.

Time

6 months (approximately).

Outcomes

Groups who have developed some initial ideas for community initiatives based on their own skills, interests and dreams.



Step Three: Identifying Secondary Resources

Aim

To identify secondary resources and the potential contribution they could make to community initiatives.

Background

Draws on the asset-based community development approach of John Kretzmann and John McKnight (see pages 8 to 10).

Key Tasks

1. Identifying key community associations.
2. Identifying key institutions.
3. Identifying innovative ways that businesses contribute to community initiatives.
4. Identifying examples of physical resources that could potentially be used for community initiatives.

Key Staff

Community researchers in collaboration with the project team.

Time

6 months (approximately) (running parallel with Step 1).

Outcomes

Examples of community resources that could potentially be used for community initiatives.

Making an inventory
of all the assets of
a community



Step Four: Generating Ideas

Brainstorming
ideas for
community
initiatives

Aim

To generate ideas for community projects, with an emphasis on the ideas and interests of people who are marginalised.

Background

Builds on Steps Two and Three by coming up with new ways of harnessing community resources.

Key Tasks

Running community workshops, with an emphasis on involving people who are marginalised and disadvantaged.

Key Staff

Community researchers in conjunction with the project team.

Time

1 month (approximately).

Outcomes

An ideas bank.
Groups formed around common areas of interest.



Step Five: Turning Ideas into Reality

Aim

To support groups primarily comprised of marginalised people to develop new community initiatives.

Background

Builds on Step Four.

Key Tasks

1. Working with groups to refine their ideas.
2. Working with groups to develop their initiatives.

Key Staff

Community researchers in conjunction with the project team.

Time

12+ months.

Outcomes

New community initiatives that are managed and run primarily by groups of people who have been disadvantaged, marginalised or isolated.

Refining ideas
and developing
initiatives





SECTION FOUR

COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS



COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS

Introduction

Community researchers are a central element of the Community Partnering process. They are the key to building successful relationships with people who are marginalised, isolated or disadvantaged.

Community researchers will share the experiences and backgrounds of the people that are the focus of a project. Thus a retrenched worker is the ideal community researcher to initially work with other retrenched workers; an unemployed young person will quickly develop a rapport with other unemployed young people; single parents will be able to identify with a community researcher who is also a single parent.

The longer term objective is that people with diverse experiences and backgrounds come together to build community initiatives, but in the first instance community researchers play an indispensable role in making connections with those who are isolated and marginalised.

Community researchers will have a commitment to contributing to their communities and life skills that include:

- An ability to communicate with people
- An interest in working with different groups of people
- Good listening skills
- An ability to think creatively
- An ability to work as part of a team
- An interest in learning new skills.

Community researchers may not have the professional training or educational background of other members of the project team (like community or economic development workers, or social planners). But without community researchers the project team will face an uphill battle to gain the trust of people in the community.

A sample position description for a community researcher is provided in Appendix 1.

When planning for the involvement of community researchers it is important to know about gatekeepers. Gatekeepers may be activists or community workers who claim to speak on behalf of marginalised and disadvantaged groups. Gatekeepers have interests and allegiances that are already well defined. They have established networks and modes of operating. They will frequently have preconceived ideas about other people's abilities and capacities. Indeed sometimes they act on behalf of disadvantaged groups because they believe these groups need their help. Gatekeepers have public reputations that may rightly or wrongly prejudice perceptions of a project.

Community researchers, on the other hand, will not be actively or publicly aligned or associated with stakeholder groups or interest groups in a community. They will be able to build relationships without being hampered by the pre-conceived ideas or expectations of others.

Community researchers may need to work through gatekeepers, but they will not be gatekeepers.

This section of the resource kit discusses strategies for recruiting and training community researchers. The training is focused on the guiding ideas (discussed in Section Two on pages 5 to 27). Although the training is presented as a series of one-off activities, it is important for the project team to revisit the training and guiding ideas at different times throughout a Community Partnering process.

Recruiting Community Researchers

Objective

To recruit community researchers with first-hand experiences of marginalisation and disadvantage.

Key Tasks

1. Recruit community researchers.

Tools and Tips

The recruiting process is a search for people who share the experiences and backgrounds of those who are the focus of a Community Partnering project. Potential community researchers may underestimate their skills and abilities. There are at least two strategies that can be used to find community researchers:

1. Placing a carefully worded job advertisement in the local paper. An example of a job ad is on page 42, along with the reflections of some community researchers on the ad.
2. Networking with agencies and groups that are likely to have contact with people from the target groups.

Time

1-2 months (approximately).

Outcome

A project team that includes community researchers.

Community researchers will have first hand experience of disadvantage

Sample Only

Job Advertisement for Community Researchers

COMMUNITY PARTNERING PROJECT

Have you been hard hit by economic change in the Latrobe Valley and found it difficult to get a job?

We are looking for three people who are familiar with this experience and who are willing to talk to others such as retrenched workers, unemployed youth, and single parents.

Applicants will need to have lots of enthusiasm, be motivated and interested in working with people from many different groups in our community.

The successful applicants will be employed by Monash University but will be based at the La Trobe Shire Council. A current Victorian driver's licence is required.

Each position is for 21 hours/week for a period of 35 weeks.

Community Researchers Reflect on the Job Ad

Yvonne: I was getting really frustrated because I couldn't get any work . . . and I said to a friend "Why can't someone just make use of what I know. I've experienced these different things and wouldn't it be great if someone just wanted to know about that stuff.." So then there was this ad in the paper that said "Have you experienced these sorts of areas – single parenting, retrenched workers and unemployed youth". And I'd pretty much done all of that. That was amazing.

Jenny: And you thought this is the job for me!

Yvonne: Well, actually I'd got to the stage where I'd almost given up applying for jobs because I wasn't getting anywhere. But I stuck it on the fridge and looked at it for a nearly week . . . because I didn't want another knock-back.

Steve: I read it out to the wife and she said "You'll never get a job like that, don't bother putting in for it." And I thought "I'm going to put in for it". So I did. Basically it was the challenge of it.

Jenny: So why didn't she think you'd get it?

Steve: It was so different to what I'd done 90 per cent of my working life – a blue collar worker to a white collar worker. But I'd got the experience the advertisement was asking for. I'd experienced despair, anger, all those feelings and frustrations.

Training Community Researchers: Community

Objective

To introduce community researchers to the idea of people's differences and similarities (see pages 15 to 17).

Key Activities

1. Conduct an introductory activity such as the one on page 44 that introduces all the members of the project team and highlights their differences.
2. Conduct an introductory activity such as the one on page 45 that highlights the similarities between people on the project team.

Tools and Tips

See 'Key Discussion Points' on pages 44 and 45.

Time

½ day (approximately).

Outcome

Community researchers with an appreciation of the similarities and differences between people.

Acknowledging
differences and
finding common
ground

Sample Only

People's Differences

Activity

1. All members of the project team put a different coloured sticker on their collars.
2. All write a response to the following questions on three separate sheets of paper:
 - Something interesting I did on the weekend.
 - Something interesting I've done at work.
 - Something I did as a child that relates to this project.
3. Stick the sheets around the wall.
4. Give each person a set of coloured stickers
5. Working individually each person puts on each response sheet the coloured sticker that corresponds to the person they think wrote it.
6. When everyone has finished going through the sheets, find out who wrote each response, and ask each person to expand on their responses.

Key Discussion Points

- We have all learned something new about each other.
- Our project is like this exercise because it is based on learning new things about people – their interests, experiences, skills and so on.
- We can never assume we know what somebody's abilities and interests are, because people will constantly surprise us.

Responses from one project team

Something interesting I did on the weekend

- This weekend I learnt how to change the oil and spark plugs in my car.
- Marched in the Moomba Parade playing a trumpet.
- Went on a fun walk and spent most of the five kilometres chasing a 75 year old grandmother!

Something interesting I've done in my work

- Worked on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait.
- Driven an overhead crane and removed a generator rotor weighing 100+ tonnes, worth approximately \$100 million.
- I once dropped a raw egg in my cash drawer and spent the next 20 minutes frantically trying to clean the goo off the money.

Something I did as a child that relates to this project

- I fell asleep in the pot cupboard and my mother was out with the police searching the streets for me. Perhaps this project is symbolic of me emerging from the pot cupboard!!!
- Worked in a school project building gardens, rockeries etc.. We all had a lot of fun and gained a lot of experience.
- I was a great goal attack in my primary school netball team—"Sneakers". This relates to working as part of a team as I will be doing in this project.

Sample Only

People's Similarities

Activity

Go around the group and ask each person to talk about why they are interested in working on the project.

Key Discussion Points

- Despite the sorts of differences that we have, like differences in age, hobbies, background, work experience and family situation, we all share a common interest in working with people and a concern for the well-being of our community.
- We all bring something unique and different to the project, but we also bring a common interest and concern for people.
- Sometimes in the project it will be important to draw upon different perspectives and experiences (of each other and the people we meet). At other times we will be building on common concerns.

Some of the responses from one project team

“I’d been working in this job for years and I was so miserable because of all the pressures. You used to be able to chat with people when they came in and really look after them, but now there were all these pressures to sell products. You had to fill out forms to say how many customers you had asked about retirement planning or whatever the product was for the month, and it was ridiculous because most people we saw were on pensions and benefits. And you could see the services were changing and the people who were worst affected were people on pensions and benefits. So I left. And I knew I just wanted to work with people. And I thought that this job was an opportunity to work with people and really do something worthwhile.”

“I thought this job would be a bit different. I’ve never done anything like this before in my life, I’ve always had blue collar jobs. And I think that if I can just help one person then I will have achieved something.”

“I can see so much potential in our community, but I look at the sorts of measures that are being introduced and I’m not confident that they will produce worthwhile outcomes in the long term. So rather than focussing on trying to attract big business and industry and investment from outside the region I think that much more emphasis could be placed on trying to work with the things that we already have, starting with people’s interests and skills, and starting with the ideas that people have got for things they want to be doing.”

Introducing
action
research

Training Community Researchers: Research

Objective

To introduce community researchers to action research (see pages 18 to 19).

Key Activities

1. Using a whiteboard brainstorm images, words and ideas associated with research. Good prompts to use are:
 - What is research?
 - Who does it?
 - What tools do researchers use?
 - Why is research done?
2. Highlight how this is a traditional model of research in which experts are the researchers, and other people are the researched.
3. Introduce the action research model.
4. Construct images of the two different models of research and discuss their differences

Tools and Tips

An example of the two models of research is provided on pages 47 to 48.

Key points to make during this training activity are:

- This project uses an action research model in which we all participate as experts with our own specialist knowledge and insights.
- We will also learn from each other and together build up a shared knowledge.
- But we will go one step further than just learning new things, we will be using our specialist knowledge and our shared knowledge as the basis for building new activities, actions and realities.

Time

½ day (approximately).

Outcome

Community researchers with an appreciation of an action model of research.

Sample Only

Example of one brainstorm about research

What is research?

[gathering information
finding out
answering questions
investigating existing systems
finding answers
“the truth is out there”

Who does it?

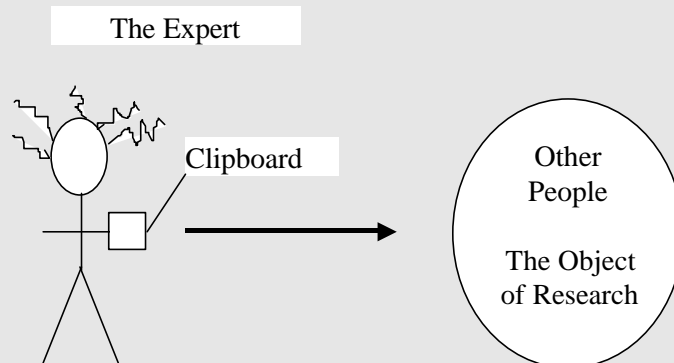
[mad scientists
nutty professors
dusty labs, cloistered away, ivory towers

What are the tools?

[other people
statistics
hypotheses
methodology
data
control groups

Why is it done?

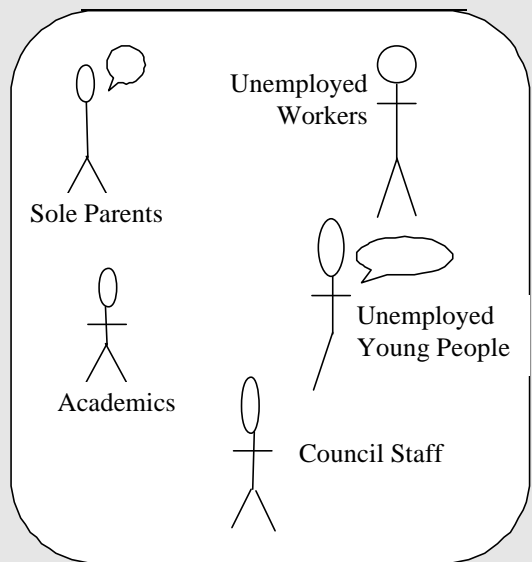
[government
policy-makers
other experts



Sample Only

Example of one diagram about action research

What is action research?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> creating new realities producing actions process of interaction collaborations conversations between people changing the world
Who does it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> unemployed people sole parents academics council staff
What are the tools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> listening talking conversations
Why is it done?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to make things happen to change things



Everyone involved is an “expert”.

Everyone talks, listens and learns from each other.

Training Community Researchers: Portrayals

Objective

To introduce community researchers to needs-based and asset-based portrayals of the community (see pages 8 to 10).

What aspects of the community are thought about in terms of needs or problems?

Key Activities

1. Working as a team, brainstorm the needs and problems in the community. Write all the needs and problems on a blackboard or whiteboard.
2. Brainstorm all the assets or positive things about the community. Write these on the blackboard or whiteboard.
3. Working as a team sort the needs and assets into categories (e.g. people, physical environment, groups, associations).
4. Use the categories to construct a needs map and assets map.
5. Discuss the differences between the two maps.
6. As a team discuss the work of John Kretzmann and John McKnight (see pages 8 to 10). Chapter One of *Building Communities From the Inside Out* can be downloaded from <http://www.nwu.edu/IPR/publications/buildingblurb.html>. Other materials can be purchased (see <http://www.nwu.edu/IPR/abcd.html>)

What aspects are seen as resources or assets?

Tools and Tips

A needs-based and assets-based portrayal are on pages 50 and 51.

Key points to make during this training activity are:

- The needs and assets maps are two different ways of thinking about and portraying our community.
- This project is based on the assets map. It involves finding out more about the assets in our community and using these assets as the basis for new community projects.

Time

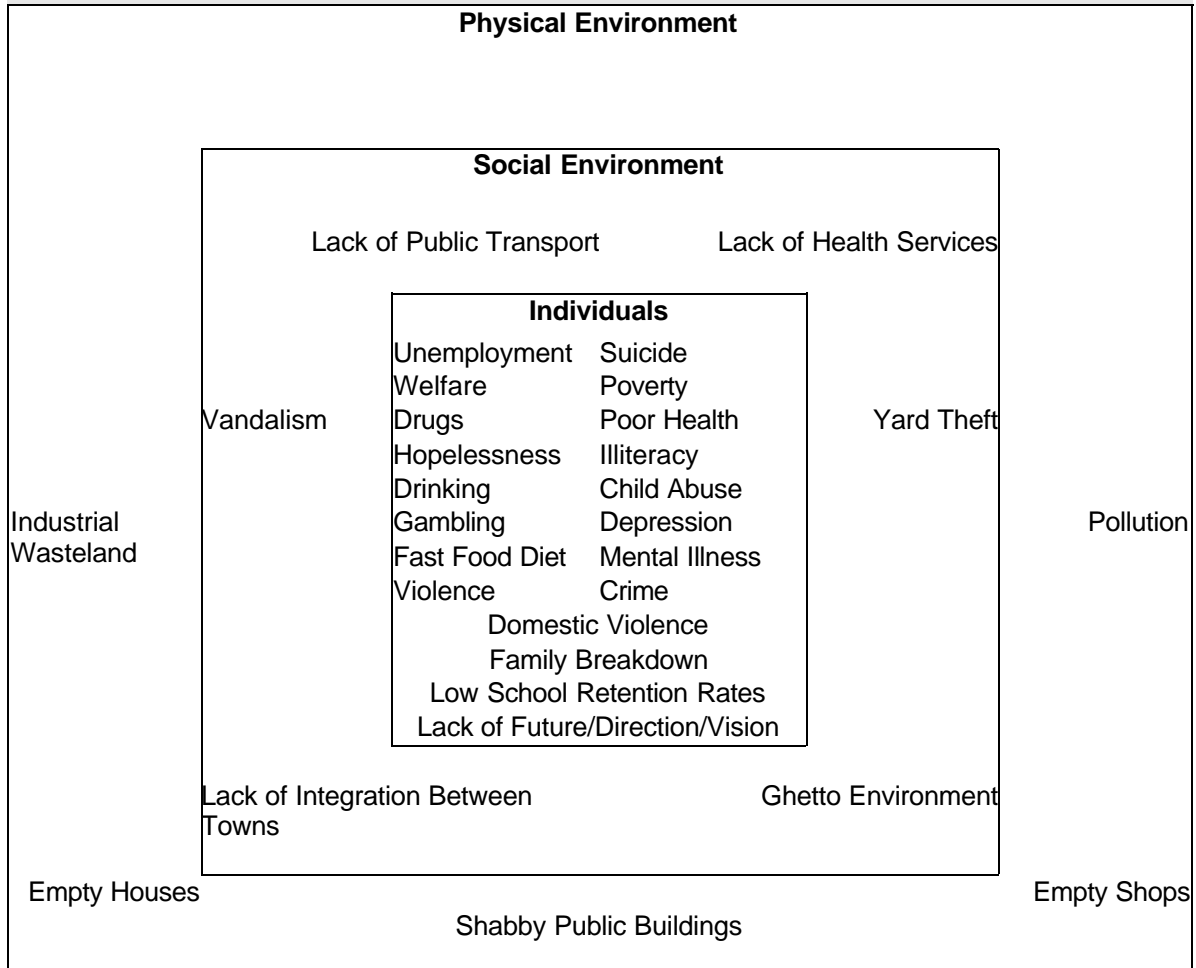
½ day (approximately).

Outcome

Community Researchers with an appreciation of the distinction between needs-based and assets-based portrayals.

Sample Only

Example of a needs based portrayal

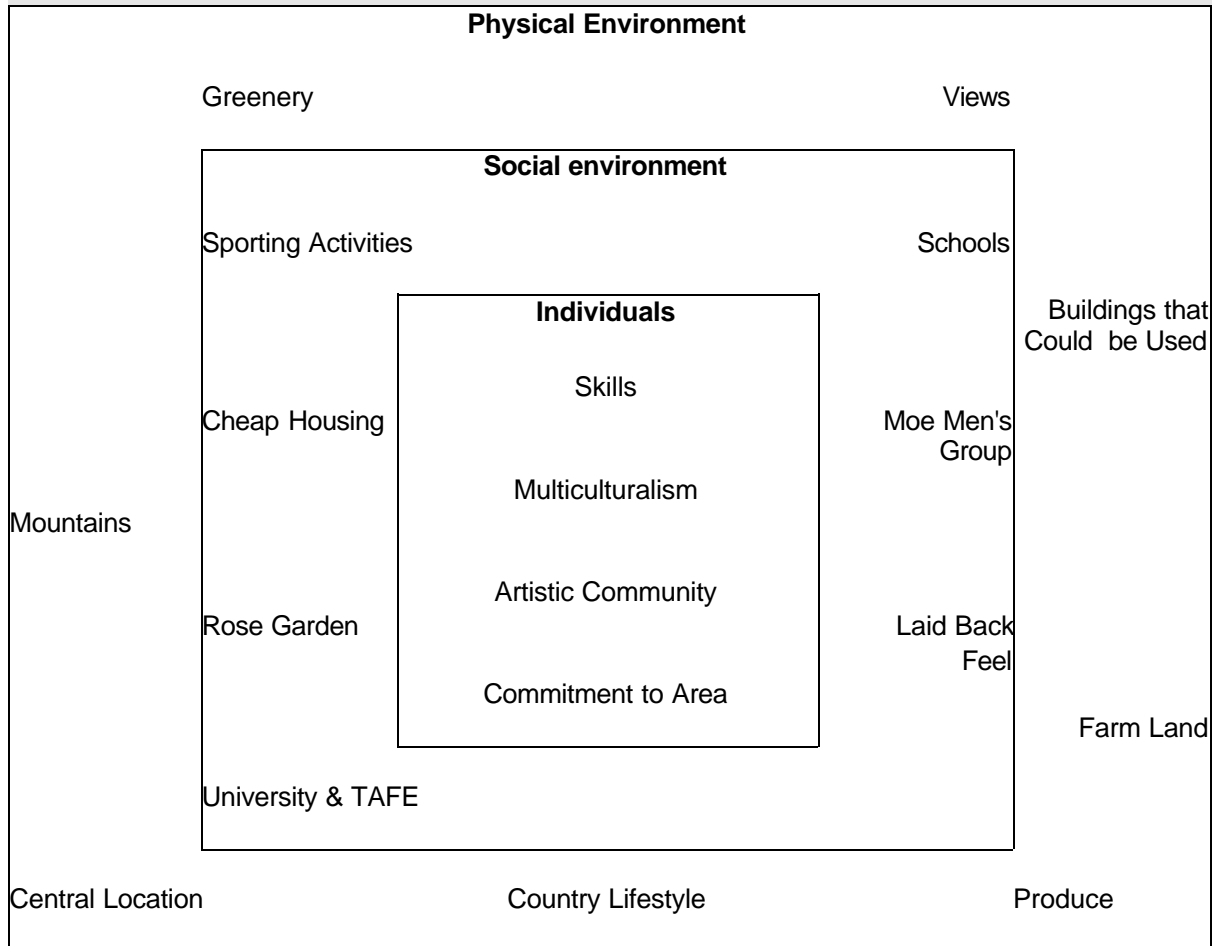


Key discussion points about this needs-based portrayal were:

- The needs and problems of individuals seem to far outnumber other needs and problems.

Sample Only

Example of an assets based portrayal



Key discussion points about this assets based portrayal were:

- The towns and physical environment are seen as the assets.
- Individuals are far more readily thought about in terms of needs and problems than assets or resources.

The project will find out more about the assets and resources of the community, starting with individuals.

Training Community Researchers: Economy

Objective

To introduce community researchers to an understanding of the economy as including unpaid work and non-market transactions (see pages 11 to 14).

Key Activities

1. Introduce and discuss the diagram of the visible and hidden economy (page 53).
2. Each person writes down a list of all the activities they do in a typical day, include all paid and unpaid activities.
3. Working as a team, sort the activities into those that belong in the visible part of the economy and those that belong in the hidden part of the economy.

Tools and Tips

Follow this activity up with visits to alternative economic enterprises in your local area, or have a look at some alternative economic projects on the internet (see pages 20 to 27)

Time

½ day (approximately).

Outcome

Community researchers with an appreciation of the range of economic activities and practices.

Introducing
the hidden
economy.

Forms of Economic Activity

Type of Business	Type of Labour	Type of Market	
<p style="text-align: center;">Capitalist Enterprises</p> <p>(e.g. small, medium and large businesses)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Paid Labour</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Market Transactions</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Visible Economy</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Alternative Capitalist Enterprises</p> <p>(e.g. alternative businesses motivated by an environmental ethic)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Alternative Paid Labour</p> <p>(e.g. Work for the Dole, training schemes)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Alternative Market Transaction</p> <p>(e.g. thrift shops, Local Exchange and Trading Systems)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Non-Capitalist Enterprises</p> <p>(e.g. self-employed people, not for profit organisations, cooperatives)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Unpaid Labour</p> <p>(e.g. housework, gardening, helping out friends or family)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Non-Market Transaction</p> <p>(e.g. exchanges with neighbours, friends or family)</p>	

Source: Cameron, Jenny & Gibson, Katherine, 2001, Regional communities reinvent economy, in Dibden, J; Fletcher, M.; and Cocklin C. (eds) *All Change!: Gippsland Perspectives on Regional Australia in Transition*, Monash Publications in Geography and Environmental Science, Melbourne (forthcoming).



SECTION FIVE

WORKING WITH PEOPLE AS THE PRIMARY RESOURCE



WORKING WITH PEOPLE AS THE PRIMARY RESOURCE

Introduction

Once community researchers have been trained the next step is to begin working with marginalised, disadvantaged and isolated people to identify their skills, interests and dreams. This step is the foundation for generating ideas for community initiatives and then supporting groups of people to turn the ideas into realities.

Marginalised people have skills, interests and dreams that are the basis for new community initiatives

Disadvantaged and marginalised people are usually portrayed as “needy” and “deficient”. Social services are orientated towards identifying and addressing their needs and problems. The strategies outlined in this section work in a very different way. They focus on the skills and abilities, interests and ideas, dreams and aspirations of marginalised people. The strategies position all people as contributors to their communities and capable builders of community initiatives.

Community researchers play a vital role in building relationships with people who are disadvantaged and isolated. With the support of community development workers, social planners, social service providers and so on, community researchers will be able to undertake each of the strategies:

- finding people to work with
- introducing the project
- defining marginalised people as the primary resource
- introducing ideas for community initiatives
- overcoming obstacles
- running mini-workshops.

Finding People to Work With

Objective

To find marginalised and disadvantaged people who might be interested in being involved in the project.

Key Tasks

1. Identify community-based organisations and social service agencies who are likely to have contact with the kinds of people that are the focus of your projects.
2. Approach the coordinators of the organisations and agencies to see if they are willing for community researchers to talk with groups.
3. Organise a time to meet with the groups.

Tools and Tips

Community organisations and agencies to approach include:

- Neighbourhood houses
- Resource and community centres
- Adult education classes
- Literacy and numeracy classes
- Work for the Dole projects
- Support groups and lifeskills groups
- Health services

Ask the coordinators of organisations and agencies for their ideas about the best way to approach the groups they deal with.

Time

1-2 months (approximately)

Outcome

- Appointments to meet with groups and discuss the project.

Build connections with community organisations and agencies

Introducing the Project

Objective

To meet with people who have been marginalised and disadvantaged to introduce the project and discuss their potential involvement.

Key Tasks

1. Meet with groups.
2. Introduce the project.
3. Discuss their potential involvement.

Tools and Tips

An example of the material used by community researchers to introduce one Community Partnering project can be found on pages 60 to 61.

An excellent way to first get a group's attention is to use photo-essays that depict everyday life in your community from the perspective of disadvantaged groups (see pages 62 to 65).

At first, making presentations can be difficult. Have a look at the reflections from community researchers on what it was like for them and how they dealt with some of the barriers they encountered (page 66).

After community researchers have met with a few groups have a discussion with the support staff about the strategies that are working well and problems that are encountered.

Time

1-2 months (approximately)

Outcome

- Agreement from groups that they are interested in meeting again with the community researchers.

Initially some people may not be interested. Don't worry. Use the project team to discuss what to do

Sample Only

MATERIAL AND IDEAS TO DRAW ON WHEN INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

1. Perceptions of our Community

- Media reporting represents our community in a very negative light.
- Lots of people (especially those from outside) have very negative perceptions of our community.

2. The ½ Empty Glass

- This negative approach is to see our community as being like a half-empty glass.
- It is to focus on all the things that are wrong, all the problems, needs and deficiencies that people have (see also the photo-essays on pages 62 to 64).
- This suggests that you have to fill the glass up, that you need to get things from outside and pour them into the glass to make it full. These things might be businesses, or investment or experts.

3. The ½ Full Glass

- In this project, we see our community as being like a half-full glass.
- We acknowledge that there are problems, but there are also lots of very positive things and we want to focus on these.
- We believe that the most important resource in our community is the people who live here and their skills, talents and ideas.
- In this project, we are particularly interested in the skills and ideas of people who are often seen as having lots of problems, needs, and deficiencies—people like sole parents, unemployed young people and retrenched workers.

Q. What is the primary resource of our community?

or What makes the glass half full?

A. People - their skills, talents, gifts, ideas and interests.

Other elements of our community are also important.

- Q. What are the secondary resources of our community?
- or What are some of the other things in the half-full glass?
- A. Community groups and associations
Small, medium and large businesses
Institutions (like the local councils, schools)
Physical infrastructure (like unused buildings, vacant land)

4. The aims of the project

- In this project, we want to build on the resources in the half-full glass.
- We want to build on the skills, talents, gifts, ideas and interests of people in our community, and in particular the skills, talents, gifts, ideas and interests of those who are disadvantaged like unemployed young people, sole parents and retrenched workers.

5. How do we build on the resources in our community?

- By bringing people together to learn about their skills, talents, gifts, ideas and interests. We use a Portrait of Gifts as one way of doing this (see pages 68 to 69).
- By linking people who have common interests and shared goals.
- By drawing on existing community groups, institutions and businesses to support new projects .
- By supporting groups to turn their ideas into realities.

6. What are some examples of outcomes?

- Young people at risk of homelessness are being trained in woodworking skills by retired workers.
- Unemployed and retired workers establish a community garden on unused land and donate produce to local community groups.
- A group of single parents start a baby-sitting club that develops into a cooperative providing child care services and home-cooked meals to busy employed people.
- Retrenched workers run a community tool library that lends tools and provides advice on home and furniture repairs to people on low-incomes.

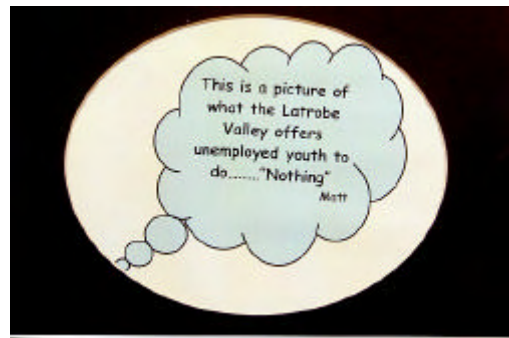
USING PHOTO-ESSAYS

Photo-essays are a terrific way to get people's attention and to depict what life is like for those who are marginalised, disadvantaged and isolated. They can include:

- Headlines from newspapers



- Statements from people



- Photos

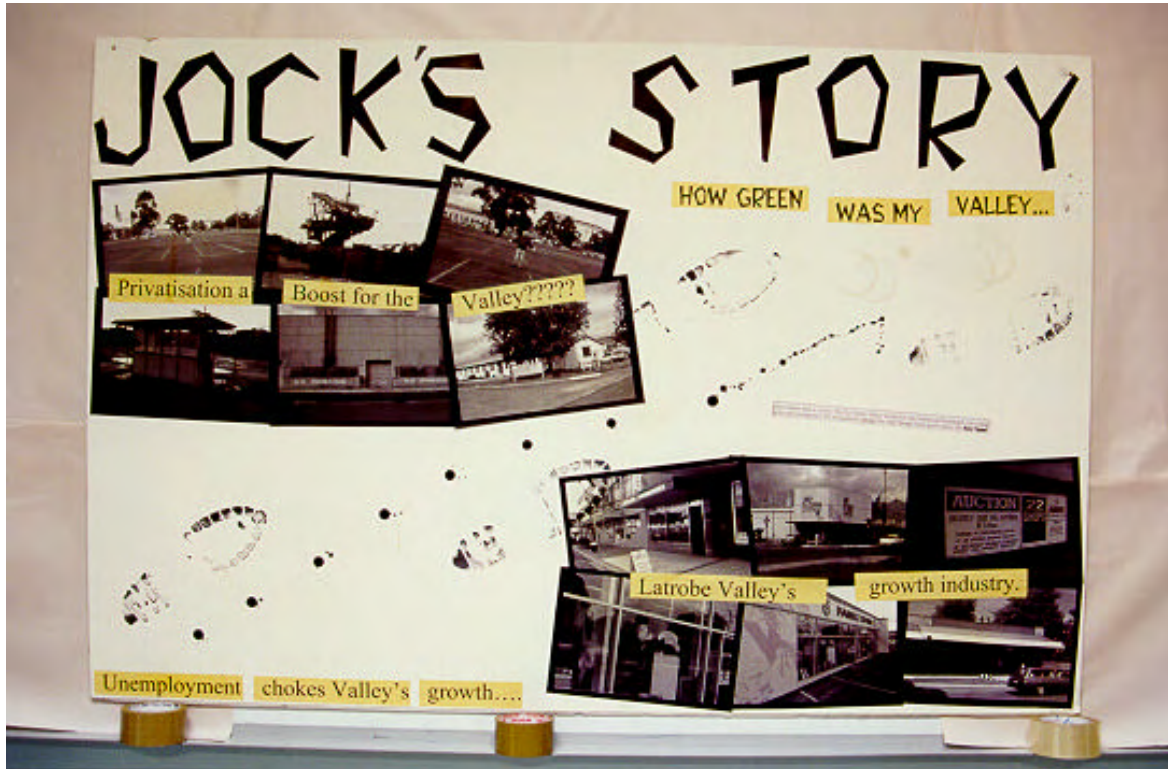


Making photo-essays is a fun way for community researchers to get to know each other and work cooperatively. Community researchers can also invite their friends and family to help make the photo-essays.

Make sure you ask for permission when you take people's photos. Let people know why you are taking their photo, and how and where it will be used.

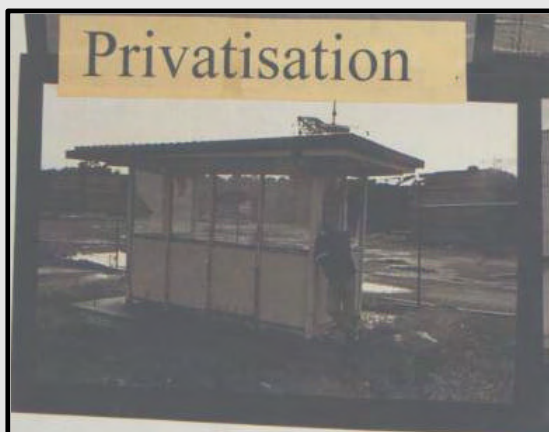
If you take close-ups of businesses or institutions you will also need to get permission.

Keep a record of all permissions.



“Jock’s Story” was put together by unemployed workers from the State Electricity Commission in the Latrobe Valley. It shows derelict industrial buildings, abandoned mining equipment, empty carparks and vandalised bus shelters.

From the point of view of Jock and his mates, downsizing and privatisation of the power industry has produced a boom in thrift shops, pawn brokers and vacant stores, while the workers have been thrown onto the “scrap heap”. The photo-essay taps into the feelings of abandonment, loss and nostalgia for the past felt by many across the Latrobe Valley.



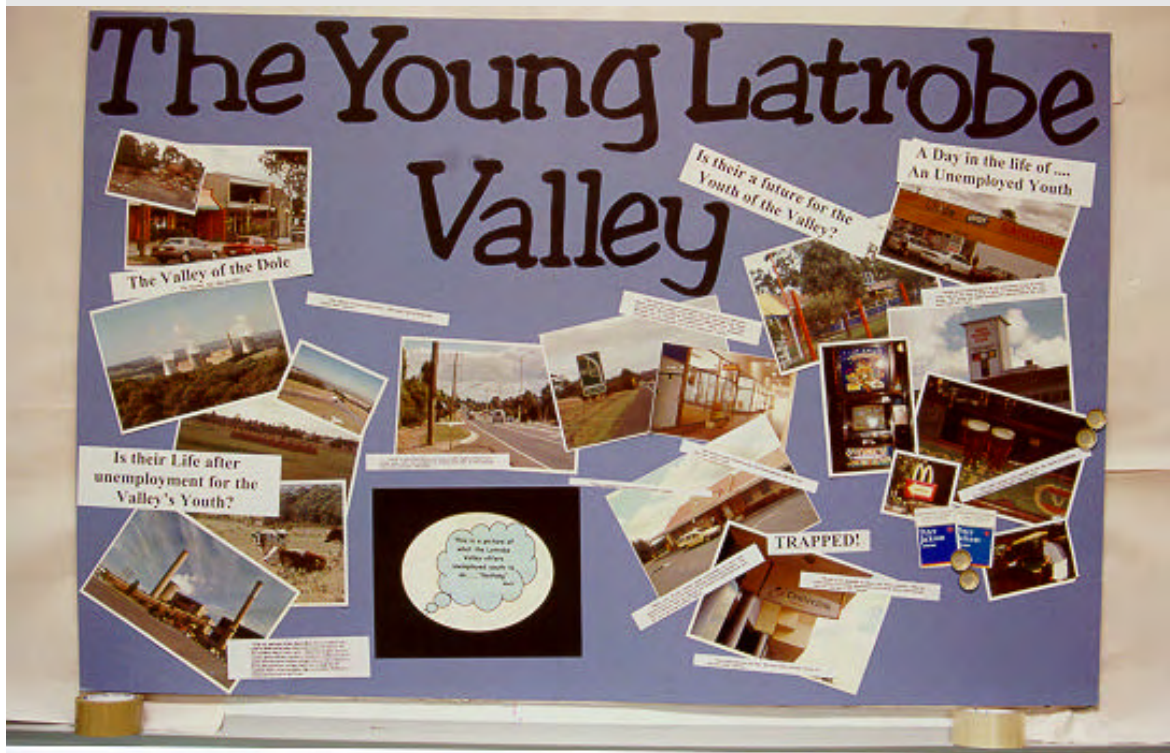
“Jock’s Story” immediately created a connection between the community researchers and the groups they were talking with.

It is an excellent illustration of a “needs map” giving the community researchers a starting point for talking about the difference between focusing on needs rather than assets.

“The Young Latrobe Valley” illustrates life in the Latrobe Valley from the perspective of young unemployed people. It highlights everyday events such as drinking, smoking, playing pool, going to the pub, visiting Centrelink and going to court.

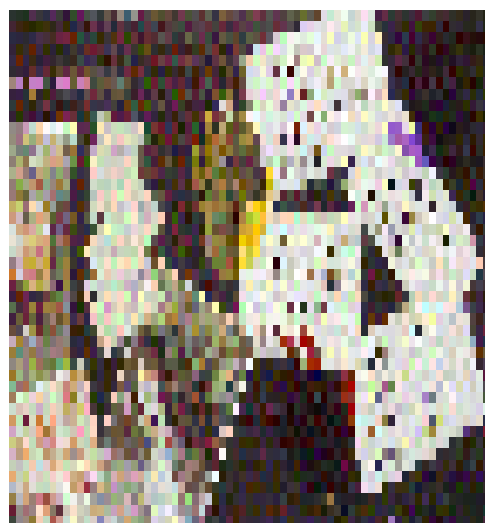
Like “Jock’s Story” there is a powerful sense of abandonment, with the young people depicting their lives in terms of no jobs, no opportunities and no future.

This photo-essay is also an excellent example of a “needs map”.



As well as producing some of the highest levels of unemployment in Australia, the restructuring of the power industry has produced a large number of sole parent households, for the pressures of unemployment have split many families and households apart.

Sole parents have to juggle a multitude of tasks from balancing the family budget through to caring for children. So rather than a lack of activities to fill up the day, sole parents have to deal with the lack of time for all their activities.



COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS REFLECT . . .

. . . on making those first presentations to groups.

Yvonne: I have this vision of me being pushed out on a stage and Jenny's foot is sort of pushing me out there. And I'm saying "I can't do this". And then having to just do it . . . I felt I could pick it up ok; it was the articulating it to other people that I wasn't sure about, and what their response was going to be. I was worried if they thought I was an idiot, you know "What are you raving on about?". So I'd be a little bit hesitant about talking. And that was an issue standing up in a class and talking about something that I wasn't sure how it would go across and what if it was rejected and what if people sat there thinking "What is this woman on about?". That was hellish that that might occur.

Kathie: And there were some difficult moments in those early talks and presentations, thinking that people weren't interested or . . .

Yvonne: Yeah. Waiting for the response. Although once I got going it was ok. Even getting a negative response gives you something to work with .

. . . on the barriers they encountered.

Leanne: I think there are a lot of people that are angry. I can remember when Yvonne first took me out to some of the groups and we would get the politics thrown at us. I think a lot of the anger that people have is political, politically directed, especially "There's no work in the Valley. Everything goes to the City". And there were constantly these comments that everything goes to Traralgon. There was all that. So there is definitely anger there.

Kathie: And you actually felt it directed to you.

Leanne: Yeah, it was. It was towards us . . . and even towards their local council, their local government . . . and towards the university: "Here's someone who's got maybe the power or the intellect to do something but they're not doing anything about it. All you want to do is research us. We know these are what the problems are. We're sick and tired of people telling us we're like this". Things like that.

Kathie: So how have you overcome that issue?

Leanne: In the end, Yvonne would say "Don't present yourself that you come from Monash". She would present herself as a single parent, and I would present myself as an unemployed person, and automatically you would have that rapport with someone, because you're on the level that they're on. It would be until you'd say that the project is sponsored by Monash University and the Latrobe Shire, that's when you'd get the political stuff. But the political stuff tended to be male driven. The women really took to the project and the understanding of it really well, they could see that it was really tangible. Whereas the men tended to put up the obstacles.

Turning the
“needs” map into
an “assets” map
by using a
Portrait of Gifts

Defining People who are Marginalised as a Resource

Objective

To build up a knowledge of the marginalised and disadvantaged as skilful and capable, with ideas, dreams and aspirations that might be the basis for new community initiatives.

Key Tasks

1. Meet with people and groups to complete a Portrait of Gifts (see pages 68 to 69 and Appendix 2).
2. Collate the “results” of the Portrait of Gifts from the different groups (see pages 68 to 69 and Appendix 2).
3. Meet with people and groups and discuss the “findings”.

Tips

An excellent way of building relationships and giving people the opportunity to find out more about each other is for people to work together to complete a collective Portrait of Gifts.

The Portrait of Gifts does not have to be a comprehensive “survey” of a large number of people. Its primary use is as a tool to show people how skilled and capable they are. Its secondary use is to demonstrate to others the range of skills, interests and ideas in the community.

Once you have recorded the results give people or groups their Portrait of Gifts to keep.

Time

2-3 months (approximately)

Outcome

- A portrayal of people as the primary community asset and resource.



PORTRAIT OF GIFTS

What is a Portrait of Gifts?

- A Portrait of Gifts is a tool for valuing the everyday skills that people use at work, home and in other situations, such as volunteer and community groups. It can be completed by people working alone or it can be the basis for a conversation and discussion with a community researcher.
- The Portrait of Gifts might seem like a survey, but is it best thought of as a strategy for initiating contact with people and inviting them to participate in a Community Partnering project.
- The Asset-Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University has produced a resource book with different examples of Portrait of Gifts (or Capacity Inventories). See:
Kretzmann, John, McKnight, John & Sheehan, GERALYN (with Mike Green & Deborah Puntenney) (1997) *A Guide to Capacity Inventories: Mobilizing the Community Skills of Local Residents*, The Asset-Based Community Development Institute, Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois (Available from ACTA Publications, 4848 N. Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois, 60640, 773-271-1030, acta@one.org, see also <http://www.nwu.edu/IPR/abcd.html>).
- In the Latrobe Valley Community Partnering project, the community researchers followed the example of the Greyrock Commons Co-Housing Community (discussed on pages 83 and 91 in the resource book, above) and reported on the results of the Portrait of Gifts in terms of people's gifts—gifts of the head (what people know), gifts of the hand (what people can do), and gifts of the heart (things people care about) (see page 70).

What Issues Should be Considered?

- Will you be using the information in aggregate form or do you want to be able to identify individuals? Will people be asked for their names?
- Some communities use the Portrait of Gifts as the basis for establishing learning exchanges. Do you want to use Portraits for this purpose? (If so, you will need people to fill in individual forms and you will need to know their names).
- Can groups fill in one form together or do you want each individual to fill in their own?
- How will you be reporting the findings from your Portrait of Gifts?
- How many Portraits will be completed? Do you need to ask all residents in a neighbourhood to complete a Portrait of Gifts, or do you only need to approach the people you want to start building relationships with. In the Latrobe Valley Community

Partnering project, just over 50 Portraits were completed by people involved in Numeracy and Literary classes, Neighbourhood House courses, and Work for the Dole programs.

- How will you be reporting the findings from your Portrait of Gifts?

*It is very easy to ask many more questions than you actually need to.
Try to gather only information that you are fairly certain you will use.*

*Testing a draft Portrait of Gifts on a small number of people
is an excellent way of refining questions.*

*A complete portrait of gifts and brochure reporting on the
results is included in Appendix 2*

Sample Portrait of Gifts

The following two extracts are taken from a Portrait of Gifts.

Education and School Activities		Tick
1.	Organising activities for children or teenagers	
2.	Reading or story telling to children; Listening to a child read aloud.	
3.	Helping in a class room.	
4.	Providing some kind of other support for the school, eg: fund raising, school canteen or tuck shop (please specify):	
5.	Sharing computer skills with others.	
6.	Sharing other skills with or tutoring an individual or group (please specify):	

Do you have any skills you would like to learn?

Are there any skills you would like to share?

The following extract is from a brochure that reports on the results of the questions above. The complete portrait and brochure are included in Appendix 2.

Gifts of the Head

- nearly ¾ of the people who filled in a Portrait of Gifts listen to children reading aloud.
- nearly ½ have shared computer skills with someone else.
- some skills people would like to learn are:

furniture restoration	internet skills
sewing	tv and computer repair
first aid	organisational skills
creative writing	leadership skills
- some skills people would like to share with others are:

woodworking	sewing and dressmaking
photography	arc welding
basketball	tai chi



The Latrobe Valley - A Learning Community

Introducing Ideas for Community Initiatives

Objective

To introduce people to different types of community initiatives that could build on the skills, interests and ideas identified in the Portrait of Gifts.

Inspiration can be gained by looking at other community initiatives

Key Tasks

1. Gather examples of community initiatives, such as cooperatives, not-for-profit incorporated associations and volunteer projects.
2. Meet with people and groups to discuss the examples of community initiatives. This discussion could happen when you talk about the results of the Portrait of Gifts.

Tools and Tips

An extract from a brochure about different community initiatives is included on page 72. The full brochure is in Appendix 3.

The internet has lots of examples about community projects (see pages 14, 20 to 27).

Find out about initiatives in the local area so you can talk to groups about them and even take groups to visit them.

Make sure you include initiatives that are relevant to the skills, ideas and interests identified in the Portraits of Gifts.

Time

1-2 months (approximately)

Outcome

- People begin to think about and talk about community initiatives that could be developed by building on their abilities, interests and ideas.

The following extract comes from a brochure about different types of initiatives that local communities have developed in response to issues like unemployment, loss of social services and so on. The initiatives build on the skills, interests, and aspirations of local communities. The full brochure is included in Appendix 3.

Co-operative Responses . . .



Families are assisted by a local community group and businesses to build large backyard fishtanks. Sun-fish are bred for home consumption or market sale. A group of families form their own co-operative as a way of increasing market production and generating employment.

A local community has high levels of poverty and few employment opportunities.

The Mirboo North Newspaper Co-operative is formed. Over 50 people contribute each week to the publication of the paper. With the closure of the last bank branch a co-operative has formed to provide financial services in conjunction with Bendigo Bank.



A local newspaper in Gippsland is threatened with closure.

Overcoming Obstacles

Objective

To prepare strategies for overcoming the obstacles that people might put in the way of becoming involved in building community initiatives.

Key Tasks

1. Based on the discussions to date, talk about the obstacles that people might put forward. Don't forget to include the obstacles that are important to you.
2. Prepare strategies and techniques for overcoming obstacles.

Tools and Tips

There are at least three way of addressing obstacles:

1. Prepare specific responses or answers, such as those on page 74. When you are gathering examples of community initiatives see if there is any specific information about how groups have overcome obstacles.
2. Think of obstacles and problems as offering an opportunity for a conversation in which you can explore different points of view. Often people will think of obstacles when they are focusing on problems, needs and deficiencies. What assets and capabilities can you introduce into the conversation? An example of this strategy is on page 75.
3. Use the technique of strategic questioning to assist people in finding their own solutions to problems and obstacles. For more on strategic questioning see page 76.

Develop your strategies before you introduce people and groups to the examples of community initiatives, so you can tackle any obstacles straight away.

Time

1-2 days (approximately)

Outcome

- A "tool-box" of techniques and strategies for dealing with obstacles.

Obstacles are to be expected

Think through ways of helping people overcome their own and others' obstacles

Sample Only

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES THROUGH SPECIFIC RESPONSES

OBSTACLE 1: What's in it for me? What will I get out of it? Why should I bother to be involved?

This project provides opportunities for you:

- to contribute your skills and ideas to the community.
- to become involved with other people in projects that interest you.
- to learn new skills and share your skills with other people.

For example:

- unemployed workers with painting and building skills have helped the Moe Neighbourhood House with building and repair work.
- a young unemployed man has found that he shares an interest with an older retired woman, and that it might be possible for them to work on a project together.

OBSTACLE 2: Where's the money going to come from? Who's going to give support?

There are many different ways for ideas to be turned into real projects:

- often projects don't need money at all to get started, but just need people who are prepared to contribute their time.
- there are many different groups and organisations (like churches and businesses) who are interested in contributing in a variety of ways. For example, a local church has land, housing units and a large kitchen that it wants groups to use.
- sometimes it is best if projects start small and then when they are better established look at getting funding from outside sources.
- this project will help groups find innovative ways of getting the resources they need.

OBSTACLE 3: What do you want me to do? What to I have to do?

You can be involved by:

- coming along to a small event like a pizza making and meeting other people who might share similar interests.
- coming along to a workshop to find out about projects that other people have worked on, share your ideas with other people, and meet with people who have resources they want to contribute.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES THROUGH CONVERSATIONS

The following conversation took place when a community researcher was talking with a group about the possibilities of people working together on community initiatives. The conversation starts with an unemployed worker putting forward obstacles:

One particular gentleman was quite obviously very frustrated and pessimistic. He was quite vocal and kept presenting me with stumbling blocks. “Look what they have done?” “What are they going to do about it?” “What’s the use?” “No-one is going to be bothered.” “People will want to be paid”.

I tried to address his issues without being confrontational. I tried to be sympathetic and understanding. We talked a bit about the problems in our community. I agreed with what he had to say It was evident that we had to almost exhaust that line of thinking before moving on.

At this point in the conversation the focus is on the problems in the community. So the community researcher uses the strategy of introducing the unemployed worker’s skills and interests into the conversation (which she knows about because the group worked on a Portrait of Gifts). This produces a very different tone and the unemployed worker can begin to see the possibilities rather than obstacles:

He is very good with his hands and knows a bit about cars. I asked, hypothetically, if there were a group of single parents interested in learning about car maintenance, and if I could arrange a venue and possible tools, would he be interested in sharing his skills and knowledge? “Yeah. I’d do that no worries” he said. I asked him would he expect to be paid for his time. “No. I wouldn’t do it for money” he replied. I asked “So do you think you’d get anything out of it yourself?” “Yeah. I suppose I’d get some satisfaction out of it cause I like to help people like yourself”. So I really tried to turn it around and have him answer or resolve his own questions and issues.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES THROUGH STRATEGIC QUESTIONS

Strategic questioning is a technique that is extremely useful to overcome obstacles. It helps shift the focus onto possibilities and openings rather than blockages and barriers. It is a way of letting people find their own answers to the issues that are important to them.

Fran Peavey has written about strategic questioning. She points out that strategic questions avoid asking “Why”; and avoid questions that only have a “Yes” or “No” answer. Drawing on her work we can develop some strategic questions that could be used to respond to the earlier obstacles:

**OBSTACLE 1: What’s in it for me? / What will I get out of it? /
Why should I bother to be involved?**

- What would you like to get out of the project?
- What issues would you like to address through a community project?
- What keeps you from getting involved?
- How do you feel about getting involved?

**OBSTACLE 2: Where’s the money going to come from? /
Who’s going to give support?**

- What sort of support do you think community initiatives might need?
- How could we get some support?
- What can you do?
- What would it take to get you involved?
- Who else could we get involved?

OBSTACLE 3: What do you want me to do? / What do I have to do?

- What would you like to do?
- What can you offer?
- What would you be interested in doing?
- How would you like to be involved?

Fran Peavey also gives wonderful examples of strategic questions that might be helpful to use in a community project, for example:

- What would it take for you to change on this issue?
- How would you like it to be?

Peavey, Fran, 1997, ‘Strategic questioning: an approach to creating personal and social change: a web resource’, edited by Vivian Hutchinson, available online at: <http://www.jobsletter.org.nz/vivian/stratq97.htm>

Running Mini-Workshops

Objective

To bring people who are marginalised, disadvantaged and isolated together to meet with others and begin exploring ideas for community initiatives.

Key Tasks

1. Based on what you know about the people and groups you've been working with, identify some that might have overlapping interests.
2. Invite the people and groups to lunch or afternoon (or morning) tea where they will have to work together preparing the food (pizza-making or scone-baking are good interactive activities).
3. Plan a small workshop to follow the food preparation and eating. The workshop should give people a chance to talk about their ideas and to find out about other people's interests.
4. Run your food-based event and mini-workshop.

Tools and Tips

A sample program for a mini-workshop is provided in Appendix 4.

Time

1-2 months (approximately)

Outcome

- Some initial ideas about community initiatives that people might be interested in working on.

Getting people to prepare food together is an excellent way of breaking down barriers and building connections. Consider incorporating food-based activities with any other strategy discussed in this resource kit. See also page 100 for a discussion of the importance of informal events.

Bringing people together to explore ideas for community initiatives



