



What works and why in extension

Based on a review of over 50 recent and current extension projects from around Australia across agriculture and other fields, five extension models have been identified and best practice guidelines developed based on these models. The five extension models are as follows:

- facilitation
- technological development
- training
- information
- consultant.

ABOUT THE MODELS

Five models were identified based on their underlying philosophies and the way they operated. They are:

The facilitation model, where participants increase their own capacity in planning and decision-making and in seeking their own education and training needs based on their situation. Groups may undertake their own research. The project will often provide or fund a facilitator to help groups define their own goals and learning needs and to help them realise these.

The technological development model, where individuals work together to develop specific technologies, management practices or decision support systems which will then be available to the rest of the industry or community. It often involves local trials, demonstrations, field days and on-site visits.

The training model, where specifically designed training programs and workshops are delivered to targeted groups of landholders, community members, government personnel and others to increase understanding or skills in defined areas. These can be delivered in a variety of modes and learning approaches.

The information model, where individuals and groups can access a broad range of information from a distance at a time that suits them. It can be based on a website, information centre or other centralised locations.

The consultant model, where a mentor or consultant works over time with an individual or community to improve their managerial, technological, social or environmental situation.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR CAPACITY BUILDING?

Analysing information gathered as part of the project has shown that these different extension and education models work in well together as a suite of complementary capacity building avenues. For example, members of groups in projects conforming to the facilitation model provide a key source of participants in training offered through the training model as they are motivated to seek identified training. People who participate in training model initiatives often learn about, and are motivated to seek, information available in initiatives under the information model.

Another way of visualising this complementary relationship is the capacity building ladder.

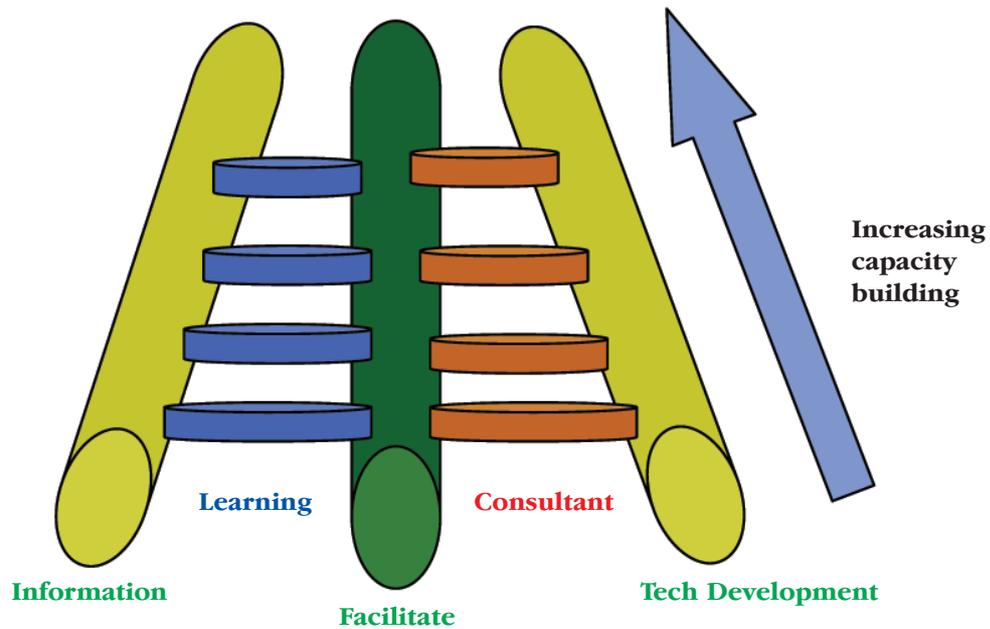


Figure. The capacity building ladder

A central leg of the ladder is the **facilitation** model. Another way of looking at this central leg is to see it as an ongoing process to maintain motivation and a framework for development and change management. The second leg, the **information** model, is critical to this process so that individuals and groups can access information in the **form** that they want, **when** they need it.

Mirroring the ongoing facilitation and information access is the third leg, projects that deal with specific technological development and which incorporate learning and information into changes in new technology and practice.

The left rungs show the need for ongoing, specific training/education products to allow individuals and groups to move to the next level. The right rungs indicate the value of individual enterprises having iterative consultant/mentoring support for incorporating changes at an enterprise level.

THE CHALLENGE FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

The challenge for those involved in capacity building is to stand back and take a bird's-eye view of extension and education training needs to support capacity building in industries and communities and not focus on one model or mode of delivery.

About the project

"What Works and Why" was funded by the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building and Innovation in Rural Industries. The aims of the project were to evaluate extension and education programs being implemented around Australia, looking at best practice as a means of sharing and learning, and to identify how new guidelines, principles and tools will generate effective information and learning.

Researchers were Jeff Coutts, Kate Roberts and Finnoula Frost.

If you want to know more about the project contact Jeff or Kate:

Jeff Coutts, email jeff@couttsjr.com.au

Kate Roberts, email kroberts@robertsevaluation.com.au

ISSN