



Training for capacity building

Training programs or workshops can be valuable inclusions in a capacity building program. Research commissioned by the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building (CVCB) has identified training as one of five different models of extension operating in Australia today.

This research, which also identified the important elements that contribute to successful training programs, was based on a 2-year national review of extension and education across Australia by Jeff Coutts, Kate Roberts, and Fionnuala Frost. They identified characteristics of different extension models (see box) and used these, along with other information, to develop indicators for success for each of the models.

This factsheet looks at the **training model**. It describes the key elements of successful training programs as well as providing a checklist that you can use for developing a training program or evaluating how your training program measures up in relation to capacity building.

Extension models

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

Technological development. This model is about individuals working 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.

Training. This model is about delivering specifically designed training programs and workshops to targeted groups of landholders, community members, government personnel and others to increase understanding or skills in defined areas.

Information. This model is about providing a range of information that individuals and groups can access from a distance and at a time that suits them. It can be based on a website, information centre or other centralised locations.

Consultant. This model recognises the interaction between a mentor or a consultant who works over time with an individual or community to improve their managerial, technological, social or environmental situation - or individuals from different backgrounds working together on a 1:1 basis.

The rationale for choosing the **training model** is a belief that workshops or courses can be developed, packaged and delivered to a large number of diverse participants to build their skills and knowledge base. Examples of training-based extension models include: Grazing Land Management and Northern Nutrition (a national beef industry program); Building Rural Leaders (a Queensland community-based program); Quality Management Training for Vegetable, Melon, Stone Fruit and Mango Industry (a national horticultural training program); Marron Roadshow (a WA aquaculture program); and Research to Practice in the Grape and Wine Industry (national program).

Training and programmed learning can be criticised as being “top-down” extension in that participants usually do not have direct input into determining the need for such learning events, the content or the process. However, the fact that people do participate reflects that they have a need for gaining knowledge in the topic areas. Most successful extension projects based on this model incorporate an adult learning philosophy which acknowledges the knowledge already held by participants and encourages experiential learning as they engage with new information brought to them through the learning event.

WHEN WILL A TRAINING MODEL SUPPORT CAPACITY BUILDING?

Well designed and implemented training and programmed learning programs can provide invaluable support for people to make big jumps in knowledge and understanding in specific areas. These people could already be involved in an extension program and have identified that they need training to improve their knowledge and skills. As an example, groups operating under the facilitation model might identify that they need training in a specific subject and actively seek out education and training opportunities for their members – when it suits their needs. In this way, well developed workshops or courses available, are important in complementing the capacity building ladder (for information about the capacity building ladder, go to CVCB factsheet 1, 2004, *What works and why in extension*).

Other reasons to consider developing projects under this model include:

- a research project has been completed and an outcome is information and knowledge that can be directly applied to a range of practical situations
- information or knowledge has been gathered about a specific area from a range of sources and this lends itself to be packaged for others to benefit from
- there is demand for training in a certain area
- there is a perceived need to improve awareness and knowledge about a particular topic across a wide geographical area.

DESIGNING SUCCESSFUL TRAINING PROGRAMS

Characteristics that contribute to the success of training programs and events are as follows:

Proven market demand. Successful training projects are the result of comprehensive market research. This research should identify the training need as well as provide important information on the content, delivery and style of training required.

Test training packages before delivery. The use of pilots to test packages is a critical step in the development process and is part of the effective framework for undertaking market research, and developing and delivering training products. Pilots can help identify and rectify and issues with process, content and delivery. They can also be used to check the adequacy of training material and trainer explanations.

When assessing your training package, remember that small to medium business, such as farm businesses, may need support to overcome time and resource limitations in implementing learning from training. This constraint will need to be incorporated into any evaluation of a pilot program.

Information is integrated into a cohesive package. Training may not just be about technical issues. A well designed training programme will identify and satisfy any needs for training, e.g. in topics such as leadership, literacy and numeracy, and business skills. A well designed program will provide the participants with the opportunity to improve their skills in all of these areas in an integrated way.

It is also important to incorporate local examples and issues into the training as a way of promoting understanding, maintaining relevance and providing motivation to change.

Transparent quality control. Any training program should incorporate a quality control system that is transparent. Quality control systems include ensuring that trainers and facilitators have the appropriate qualifications and experience e.g. Certificate 4 in Training and feedback mechanisms so that participants can assess content and delivery and changes made as a result.

Develop a facilitator guide. A guide for facilitators or trainers is as important as a course guide for participants. This guide should explain fundamentals of the program, and provide lesson or workshop plans, tips for the facilitator and a way of assessing progress. This guide should be tested by presenters who have not been involved with developing the material.

Course material is aligned with training packages. Projects developed under the training model can and should be effectively linked into the National Training Framework.

Clear explanation of the links with accreditation pathways. Course developers, deliverers and participants need guidance in ensuring that accreditation issues are understood and that accreditation pathways are clear. Many participants do not understand accreditation pathways and how a particular training course may contribute to accreditation, hence the need to make this clear.

Booklets to enable participants to follow activities. It is important to have participant booklets that allow participants to easily follow the activities and learnings. They will also serve as refreshers after the course. Make sure the booklets are professionally developed and presented and that there is plenty of space for participants to write responses and their own notes.

Training should be appropriate to the gender and culture of the participants. Being sensitive to needs of male and female and participants as well as different cultures is important. This relates not only to course content but also to issues such as venue, workshop timing, facilities, use of language and availability of childcare.

A range of media inputs are available. When developing training material it is important to keep in mind that conditions may not always be ideal as far as venues are concerned. This means that delivery formats must be flexible e.g. providing posters and other ways of displaying information rather than relying on one method, especially if that involves technology, e.g. Powerpoint presentations.

Designing content with a variety of media inputs will also serve to break up presentations and maintain the interest of participants.

Adult and experiential learning is incorporated into delivery of the course. Adult learning and action learning approaches need to be overtly incorporated and tested into courses and workshops. Alternatives – distance or self-directed training packages – need to be developed and promoted to provide opportunities for people in isolated areas who are unable to attend group training. Also, numeracy and literacy cannot be assumed and lack of these skills needs to be taken into account when designing, delivering and encouraging participation in training.

If it is appropriate, you could consider building in support for participants between and/or after workshops, e.g. following up with individuals after workshops to help them overcome barriers that might stop them from implementing their learning

CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATING TRAINING CAPACITY BUILDING MODELS

You can use this checklist for designing and assessing a training program. Of course, this is a guide only and these elements may well be varied for good reasons. The aim is not to have a mechanistic and mindless checklist, but to provide a series of prompts to help with refining activities and projects.

Element	Comments	Ranking (1-5 where 5 is fully covered and 1 is not covered)
The project is based on extensive market research or demand or both.	Projects should result from identified or expressed need and be supported by representatives of potential participants.	
Up-to-date information is accessed from the full range of potential sources and integrated into a cohesive package.	Some effort needs to be made to ensure that information is balanced and incorporates the most up-to date- information.	
A transparent and defensible quality control mechanism is in place in the development and implementation of the project.	There are some 'off the shelf' QA mechanisms that work for training. Those that are used need to be obvious and defensible.	
A facilitator's guide is developed that can easily be used by qualified presenters who have not developed the course itself.	Having developers separated from deliverers helps in testing this aspect.	
The course material is aligned with competencies under Training Packages in the VET system.	This should be a given for new projects under this model.	
There is a clear explanation of the VET pathways to allow presenters and participants to understand how the package can contribute to formal qualifications.	There is a lot of misunderstanding about VET accreditation. Including an explanation in course materials will assist in dealing with it.	
There are participant booklets that allow participants to easily follow the activities and learnings and will serve as refreshers after the course.	Booklets should be professionally developed with appropriate spaces for writing and illustrations.	
The training is gender sensitive in terms of timing, content and recommended facilities.	Gender also includes cultural sensitivity and should be assessed.	
A range of media inputs are available to break up presentations.	Consideration also needs to be given to remote locations with lack of equipment.	
Pilots are undertaken and rigorously assessed.	Before launching a project training product, pilots can refine their potential usefulness.	
Adult and experiential learning is incorporated into the delivery.	These are about recognising participant experience and engaging people in the process of learning.	

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