



COMMUNITY ACTION PLANS

INTRODUCTION

The Small Town and Rural Development Group (STAR) work with communities to help them plan their own future, organise to take action, and develop successful projects and partnerships. Over the last 20 years we have assisted over 100 communities to prepare Community Action Plans, and over 60 communities to establish Community Development Trusts and other forms of community and social enterprises.

COMMUNITY ACTION PLANS

Community Action Plans are now increasingly recognised as an important resource for communities to have if they want to be successful in securing and directing funding for their priorities, and in making effective representation on their own behalf.

A community action plan clearly sets out:

- A vision for the future of the community
- What the community is like now (taking account of its assets and needs)
- The main themes and priorities for action
- Who should be involved and how priorities should be taken forward.

It is recommended that communities prepare plans on a 5 year cycle – many of the communities we have worked with are now on their 3rd or 4th Action Plan. They have found them essential in making things happen, important as a way of re-engaging with the wider community and as a way of refreshing their community organisations!

The Action Plan should be jointly prepared by the key organisations in a community and then jointly owned and delivered by them. In some cases there is a need and opportunity for communities to establish new organisations to take their plans forward and we have often assisted communities to establish Community Development Trusts following on from the preparation of Community Action Plans.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PREPARING A COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

A Community Action Plan cannot be prepared without extensive community engagement to ensure that it represents the views of a good cross section of the whole community and takes account of wider stakeholder views and plans. A successful engagement process will also create the opportunity for more people to become interested and involved in not just contributing to the plan but in helping to deliver it.

STAR has designed an effective community engagement process and assist communities to carry it out to develop robust Community Action Plans. This process includes:

- The establishment of a **Community Action Plan Steering Group** which brings together the community's key organisations to jointly plan the future of the community together.
- A **Community Views Survey** – of all households/or a quota sample of households
- A series of **Stakeholder Interviews** (Community Conversations) with different organisations and interests in the community
- The preparation of a **Community Profile** that collects together the facts and figures about the community
- A **Community Futures Open Day Event** to show the results of the process and to prioritise projects and actions
- The drafting and finalising of a 5 year **Community Action Plan** – as a well-designed community owned document, which can be shared with all residents and other stakeholders, supporters and funders.
- A **Launch Event** for the Action Plan.

TIMESCALE: Experience suggests that 4 – 6 months is required for communities to work through this process.

BENEFITS

The Community Action Plan and the process that informs it are designed to strengthen communities' ability to become more proactive in shaping their own future and to become effective partners in their own development.

If done well the planning process helps to encourage more people to become active in their community, strengthens local organisations and gives them a stronger mandate to act on behalf of the community in pursuit of clearly defined community priorities. This in turn should assist communities and their organisations to attract funding for priority projects, make more effective representation on their own behalf, and work better in partnership with each other and with others.

Our view is that Community Action Planning is an important part in successful community development and should be at the heart of enterprising and sustainable communities.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Colin Roxburgh email: colin@stardevelopmentgroup.org
STAR Development Group www.stardevelopmentgroup.org