

Chapter Four

LASER Project Implementation

The vision, goals, targets, and strategies have been selected, and you're ready to get to work. You're excited about the new strategies you've chosen, and can probably even imagine what it will be like when they're completed. But in order to complete something, you need to start... and beginning is the hard part. You need a plan.

Whether you're pursuing one or two small projects, or a comprehensive strategy involving all the different sectors of the community, you need to identify who is going to do the work, what resources they will need to get it done, and how they will proceed. All of the people and organizations that will be involved need to agree to the plan; ideally they will all commit to provide a share of the resources that will be needed to achieve the goals.

The plan you develop must be prioritized, with steps laid out in a logical order that will allow each actor to build on what went before. You should strive to have the strategies to be employed work well together, anticipating where they might interfere with or complement each other. Feedback systems should be established to continuously monitor how the plan is moving forward. Financial planning, risk management and decision support systems, life cycle design and accounting, and sustainable procurement policies all play important roles in effective project implementation.

The members of your Stakeholder Group have committed themselves to this process, and they should now be in a position to take a lead in implementing the projects, either as individual organizations or working together in partnerships. Even if the municipality will be leading the process, the responsibility for implementing the recommendations that arise should be shared by everyone involved. As the project planning moves forward, you will need to identify which stakeholder organizations will be responsible for which activities, and work with the different implementing organizations to create partnerships for action.

Engaging the Business Community

There is an enormous amount that a truly representative Stakeholder Group can do to revitalize their community. But to achieve economic renewal, it is critically important to engage the local businesses and the other organizations you have identified as being part of the entrepreneurial capital of the community. Business, the creation of new jobs, and new entrepreneurial enterprises are the engine that brings prosperity to a community. The existing business community, the individuals who take the risks to create and run companies, are a vital resource. In the best case, these individuals have been involved with the LASER process from the start. If not, this is the time to involve them. (See Chapter One for more information on business involvement in economic renewal planning.)

To successfully engage the business community, it will be essential to demonstrate the benefits that the individuals you seek to involve will achieve as a result of their participation. If you are to do this effectively, you need to know how to speak to them in the language of business. You will need to explain initiatives in terms of profitability, marketing, new markets, PR opportunities, and competitiveness. In short, you will need to give them a business case for sustainability. The arguments laid out throughout this workbook form the basis of such a business case, but it will be important to present your programs in this light.

It will also be critical that you do not expect business people to sit through endless meetings, or to donate their time without hope of a return on the investment they are thereby making. Business people can be extremely generous if they are presented with a good case, but they will be wary. They are used to being the first group to be approached by anyone seeking donations. They often see themselves as the victims of government programs that unnecessarily constrain their operations. If you can show them how the LASER program can enhance the business climate, promote the creation of new companies, and help them to grow, to add jobs, and to increase the economic vitality of the community, they will be much more inclined to participate.

Business people meet frequently, in such organizations as the Rotary Club, the Chamber of Commerce and other business associations. You should ask whether you might speak to these organizations, to explain what LASER is seeking to do. It's helpful to find a few champions in the business community who are interested in taking the first steps with you, so that their colleagues will feel more comfortable following suit. There might be elements of the strategy you have addressed that are appropriate for particular enterprises in your community to add to their portfolios. In this case, consider whether part of your project should consist of obtaining the training and resources that the business needs to do this.

It is always a good starting point to ask the business community what it perceives the community's needs to be. What would enable each company to expand, to add a job here or two jobs there? Economic development efforts that focus on recruiting companies from another region to relocate to yours ignore a basic truth: businesses that would do that will do so again, when they get a sweeter offer. Meanwhile, there are businesses on Main Street that have sunk

Boulder, Colorado

Preserving Land Preserves Local Business

— *Christopher Juniper*

Started by a retired education professor with six goats and six acres of land, Haystack Mountain Goat Dairy became a successful business of 20 employees that needed to grow beyond its 110 goats and its small dairy facilities. Despite winning product awards and selling some goat cheeses for \$25 per pound, the Dairy could not afford additional pastureland in pricey Boulder County, one of the hottest US cities for both the "creative economy" and real estate prices. So desired expansion would require moving elsewhere in the state — away from Boulder's natural food business expertise, key local markets, and the owner's hometown.

However, following favorable public hearings, in early 2006 the Boulder County Commissioners and Boulder City Council both saw the compatibility of their

open space preservation programs with the needs of the goat dairy, and crafted a cooperative transaction that both locked up 80 acres of important open space on the edge of the city and provided expansion space for the goat herd and dairy operations on an old dairy site. The 32 acres with the dairy facilities will be purchased by government open space acquisition funds and later sold to the Dairy when its expansion financing package closes. Forty-eight acres will remain in County/City hands but will be leased to Haystack for goat pasture, and will be permanent open space whether used by the goats or not.

Sources:

The Denver Post 14 Apr 06

Minutes of the Boulder County Parks and Open Space Advisory Committee 15 Dec 06

their roots into your town, that could use the resources you spent trying to woo some stranger to modernize their equipment, to train their workforce, to expand their operations. Adding two jobs in an existing small business may not seem very glamorous, but it is the sort of economic development that your community can do on a continual basis, year in and year out. If you surveyed the existing business



community and asked who, with a little help, could add a new job, you would find that the total number of jobs will add up to far more than you ever could recruit from outside. Recruitment efforts often spend millions of dollars per job created — dollars that could be far more effectively invested in the existing business community.

There are times when your community will benefit from recruiting a company from the outside. The return on such investments are rarely positive,

however. If you do engage in such activity, ensure that the net economic benefit to your town exceeds what you gave up to achieve it. Free land, tax breaks, infrastructure give-aways, and other subsidies all cost a community.

A far better strategy is to convene the existing businesses that are naturally part of a cluster, in which all are essential to enable each other to thrive, and work with them to enable all of their enterprises to successfully compete. Such businesses may see themselves as competitors, but it is frequently the case that all of you within a community are competing with similar businesses in other regions. In the Internet age, customers can seek out businesses anywhere in the world. What businesses do you have that can be the best in the world at what they do? What is keeping them from doing that? Do they lack marketing? Business expertise? New equipment? Who in the community might help them to become world-class?

For example, in Afghanistan, the consultants OnTheFrontier Group convened a cluster of participants in the carpet industry: weavers, carpet washers, wholesalers, and retailers. It might seem, at first, as if these are people would never want others in the group to know their business secrets. But OTF Group showed the cluster members how they really are competing with Pakistan, and that they need to improve their industry as a whole to be able to see their carpets into the world

market. They did the same with growers of dried fruits and nuts. In Jamaica they worked with makers of sauces and spices and with the tourism cluster. Even though Jamaica has the 13th most recognized brand among all tourist destinations in the world, its tourist industry was suffering because, as a whole industry, it had not realized that it was competing with Bali and Hawaii. As a cluster, members can help each other improve their offering so that tourists who can book a vacation anywhere in the world will think first of Jamaica.

It may be worth bringing in experts from a notable business with a regional or national market that has invested in innovative ideas. They can speak of their experience with the new product or service they introduced, and how it helped them in the market. Business managers who have invested in renewable energy, those who have innovated using a local agricultural product and created a new market, eco-tourism experts, or entrepreneurs who have taken a cultural experience and made a business out of it are all good candidates to bring in to talk to your local business community. Business people like to talk to others like them who have done something different, and who can share the real-life experience of making it work. It is most likely that the business community does not know or fully appreciate the information contained in these pages and in the supplementary LASER resources. Ensuring that this information is discussed by your local businesspeople is a good place to start.



Implementation Partnerships

The old model of community development was to create a dedicated organization or agency with all the relevant people and departments needed to carry out whatever program was being proposed. With the rapid speed of change brought on by the information age, it is much more critical in the 21st Century to work through partnerships and coalitions, rather than trying to create large organizations. The business community is generally resistant to the creation of yet another bureaucracy. Size works against you when you're trying to be flexible and innovative. To initiate sustainable economic renewal strategies it will be essential to work in partnership with existing organizations.

If you have done a good job recruiting stakeholders, you should have many of the organizations that you need for these partnerships sitting at the table already. But it's one thing to think about the long-term needs of the community, and another to commit precious time and resources to a plan, so engaging in implementation partnerships takes some careful thought. It shouldn't be done without clarifying that the projects fit within the organizational mission of each partner, and without firm commitment from the leadership of each organization.

Once you have this clarity and commitment, it helps to sit down and draft a Partnership Charter. The Charter should address the following issues:

- 1) The vision for the project
- 2) The goals and objectives of the project
- 3) The benefits each partner expects from the project
- 4) The roles and responsibilities of the partners, including information about flows of information, authority, and accountability
- 5) A method to resolve conflict within the partnership

No partnership should be entered into without explicit discussion about all of these issues, or you are setting yourself up for destructive conflict, dysfunction, and — ultimately — failure to achieve your goals. Power struggles are common among organizations that have a degree of autonomy from each other, and if the roles and responsibilities aren't clear, there can be a lot of duplicative and unproductive work done from different quarters.



*Tool for
Partnership Charters*

Identifying Implementation Requirements

Project Scope and Scale

In the early stages of implementation planning, you need to clarify the appropriate scope and scale for the projects you are proposing. Taking on a task for which you don't have the implementation capacity will cause frustration and disempowerment; aiming too small will make your efforts seem ineffective. How do you decide how big and broad the projects can be?

Rome wasn't built in a day, and changing the world happens in baby steps. There are several principles that can help you determine the appropriate scope and scale for your projects:

Subsidiarity: The Principle of Subsidiarity suggests that projects should be managed by the smallest or lowest possible level of competent authority. For LASER implementation projects, this means that you need to decide whether it would be better for projects to take place on the municipal, neighborhood, or regional level, and who at any of these levels would be the best project manager. It may be that the best partner is a company within your community, or an entrepreneur who is looking to create one.

Experience: If your municipality has never managed a project with multiple partners before, then choosing something simple that involves only two or three reliable partners would be a good way to begin. Once you have experience with small projects, it is easier to expand and do larger ones.

Stakeholder Involvement: Who benefits from the project? Will the project have impacts that would affect people in the community? One criterion for choosing the size and scope of a project can be the degree to which you feel it is possible to involve the relevant stakeholders in project design and implementation.

Practical Considerations: The size and scope of your project will inevitably be limited by pesky details like the budget you can muster for the purpose, the time that the partners have available, the other resources that might be sought, and the overall timeframe required for implementation. Planning for early success at the outset by choosing some projects that are achievable in the near term is a good way to keep momentum going without overwhelming all of the participants.

Once you have identified a good implementation partnership, and chosen the scale and scope of the projects you will pursue to initiate the strategic action plan, the next step is to identify the implementation requirements in more detail. This involves looking very closely at all the activities and resources you need to achieve your objectives, and making sure that you have what you need.

Preparing a Project Budget

To help you outline the way all the elements of your action plan will work together to achieve the results you want, we will be constructing a Project Logic Model. It is intended to be a rigorous process that looks at every step of implementation, and continually checks it against the results and impact you want. Part of the information we will need in order to create this Model are the project *inputs* — the resources that will be used to make it happen. In most cases, identifying inputs will require that you determine a Project Budget.

Your Project Budget, like any budget, has two main parts: the revenue side, where the money is coming in, and the expense side, where the money is going out. The revenue might be from grants, contracts, income from sales, fees paid for services, in-kind contributions, donations, and special events. The expenses for community improvement strategies typically fall into several basic categories:

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Personnel costs: | including fringe benefits (health insurance, vacation and sick pay, retirement), taxes, and liability insurance. |
| Office services: | rent, communication, utilities, insurance, trash removal, maintenance, etc. |
| Equipment: | permanent items (can be depreciated) — computers, machinery, vehicles. |
| Supplies: | expendable items — paper, pencils, flip charts, printer cartridges, light bulbs, etc. |
| Travel: | airfare, mileage, accommodations, per diem rates, and other incidental costs. |
| Publications: | printing, postage, copying, periodicals, books, etc. |
| Professional services: | legal, accounting, engineering, other services of people who are not on staff. |

To prepare a Project Budget, first break the strategy down into the individual tasks (these in turn will be the “activities” in your Project Logic Model), and estimate how much time, materials, and other resources will be required for each.

Let’s suppose you were pursuing a strategy of introducing a system of neighborhood exchange for local goods and services. Your breakdown of the required tasks might begin like this:

| Activity / Task | Time and Effort | Materials | Other Resources |
|--|--|--|--|
| Identify neighborhoods and participants | Five weeks – 10 hours per week | 1,000 flyers | Public Service Announcements Phone calls Internet ads |
| Convene introductory meetings | 15 introductory meetings with Workshop Leader – 3 hours/meeting | Exchange Program materials with enrollment forms and local directories | Space rental fees Travel for Workshop Leader Refreshments for participants |
| Establish Support Networks and hold regular follow-up visits | 2-10 hours/week of leader’s time after introductory meeting | Additional printed materials | Travel costs |

Projected Expenses

| Budget Line Item | Assumptions | Cost |
|--|------------------------------|------------------|
| Personnel | | |
| salaries | Workshop Leader, part-time | \$ 10,000 |
| fringe benefits | pro-rated health insurance | 2,000 |
| taxes and insurance | payroll taxes @ 15% | 1,500 |
| Office Services | | |
| rent | office space for one year | \$ 7,200 |
| communications | phone, internet, ads | 980 |
| utilities | electricity, heat, water | 400 |
| maintenance | trash removal, cleaning | 400 |
| insurance | liability | 250 |
| Equipment | | |
| computer | used or low cost | \$ 750 |
| Supplies | | |
| flip charts | 2 per workshop @ \$12.50 | \$ 375 |
| workshop refreshments | \$15 per workshop | 225 |
| Travel | | |
| mileage | \$.34 per mile for 350 miles | \$ 119 |
| incidentals | \$10 per diem | 150 |
| Publications | | |
| publicity flyers | 1000 @ \$ 2 | \$ 2,000 |
| Exchange directories | 150 @ \$20 | 3,000 |
| Professional Services — <i>none anticipated</i> | | |
| Other Costs | | |
| space rental for meetings | \$25 per meeting | \$ 375 |
| contingency | unanticipated expenses | 276 |
| TOTAL | | \$ 30,000 |

Projected Income

| Budget Line Item | Assumptions | Cost |
|---------------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Grants | Community Foundation | \$ 20,000 |
| Contributions | 100 memberships @ \$25 | \$ 2,500 |
| Participation Fees | 150 attendees @ \$25 | \$ 3,750 |
| Special Events | Exchange Fundraiser | \$ 4,000 |
| TOTAL | | \$ 30,250 |

SAMPLE BUDGET OUTLINE

Now you're ready to build a project budget. Each item that is needed for the different tasks and activities has a cost, which you can organize by budget category. When you have calculated your expenses, you can do the same thing for the income you expect from the project.

The opposite page shows how a budget might be prepared for this example. This is a very simple illustration, for a project that would not last more than one year. Obviously, this basic worksheet would need to be expanded for a real-world project that might go on for several years.



*Budget Development
Tools*

Funding Strategies

It is always easier to develop a budget for new activities than it is to actually raise the money. Yet for economic renewal activities there are often more diverse sources of funding than for other community development objectives, so take heart. For one thing, many of the strategic ideas that come forward can be the basis for new kinds of business activity. When you have a viable business idea, it is often possible to secure financing with loans or investments. If you are starting businesses in impoverished areas, it can help at the outset to secure grants or loans with favorable terms to minimize the risks associated with new businesses. Some of the support services that are envisioned as part of the strategies identified in Chapter Three would also need ongoing program support from government or philanthropic agencies.

When you have identified all of your funding needs, you can begin the process of matching potential income sources with the different activities. For example, if printed materials are needed, it might be that a local printer would consider donating this as a public service. If there are personnel costs, ask some of the stakeholders and partners involved if they have staff already in place whose time could be dedicated to the project. If there are other material costs, try to find creative ways to minimize them, so that the total amount of additional funding you need does not pose an insurmountable obstacle to the initiative.

For business financing, it is possible to obtain loans and investment once you have put together a business plan. The business plan for any new enterprise

would include information about the market potential, the start-up costs, and the projected income from the product or service you are proposing to offer. As detailed in the previous Chapter, there are services that a community can offer to new businesses to help them do the feasibility studies, cash flow projections, and profit and loss calculations. These in turn will allow banks, loan funds, and potential investors to determine whether it's worth their financial risk.

Risk Management

You should identify a risk management strategy for the project as well, and make sure that it is adequately funded. For some business activities, this might mean obtaining insurance or a bond, or a loan guarantee. For non-profit and government activities, you also might need insurance and plans to make sure that you aren't exposed to an unreasonable level of risk. For construction projects, this might mean identifying all the technical and safety requirements, and confirming that you have budgeted adequately to cover all the bases. For non-profit activities, you should anticipate any of the parts of the project where things could go wrong — injuries to staff and participants, inadequate service delivery that creates shortages, vehicle transportation risks — and make sure that you have the proper insurance coverage, if that's what's needed.

Your project may require material accounting beyond the budgeting of operational expenses described above. If long term purchases and investment are involved, you will want to calculate the life cycle cost of that equipment or infrastructure. You also must plan in advance to minimize the impacts of your activities on the environment, and the risks that you will be responsible for these impacts. This all means looking at equipment or other supplies and investments in terms of their production, use, maintenance, and recycling cost — not simply their purchase price.

Most of us are numb to the real effect our consumption has on the Earth. We tend to view separately each object being manufactured, and calculate its cost in terms of the individual product's useful life. "Whole systems" calculations, however, include the environment in which a project or product is manufactured, and the interactions that are likely to occur in the process. Design and accounting are just beginning to catch up to the idea of giving more careful consideration to how the objects are being designed and how their use fits with the environment.

Life cycle design is a way of taking whole systems into account. This mental model begins by noticing how things, people, ideas, and organizations fit into the ecology. It looks at the whole system involved in the design and construction of infrastructure, buildings, and products, including all aspects of manufacture, construction, disposal or demolition, and reconstruction or remanufacture.

Along similar lines, new accounting practices are being introduced which consider the true cost of products and services. This includes the hidden costs of resource use associated with production, use of the product, reprocessing, the waste generated during the product's life cycle, and any impact it has on the environment.

These accounting tools can make a significant contribution to the cause of sustainability. Among them are: Total Cost Accounting (TCA), which looks at liability, risks, hidden costs, and intangible costs like customer acceptance; Full Cost Accounting (FCA), which looks at the social costs like harm to the ozone layer and other effects that would not be automatically monetized in the course of a company's analysis; and Environmental Life Cycle Accounting (ELCA), which looks at the costs of the environmental impacts of a particular product. Ideally you want to include all of these considerations in your analysis.

Of course, costs do not equal value. It is not possible to put a financial value on all of the natural and social benefits, and such accounting systems are not a complete solution to the sustainable management of natural and social resources. However, the introduction of whole systems approaches to design and accounting, like those described here, will mitigate the dramatic and harmful effects of the distorted practices currently in place.

Procurement

Just as you should take into account the real costs of any products and services your plan will employ, meeting the objective of sustainability will require that you take a hard look at the procurement policies you use to obtain them. Municipalities are mega-consumers, and their consumption patterns inevitably impact the social, financial, and natural fabric of the community. It is estimated that in developed countries governments themselves consume 15% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Communities that make a conscious choice to base their purchase decisions on an analysis of their wider impact can have a dramatic effect on the actions of their suppliers, as product and service providers work to remain competitive in the municipal market. Over the long term, changing procurement practices can go a long way toward helping a community meet its objectives for sustainable economic renewal. Organizations that are working toward compliance with the International Standards Organization guidelines for environmental management (ISO 14001) are already taking steps in this direction.

Sustainable procurement makes for sound fiscal practice. Products that use natural resources efficiently can reduce the total costs to a municipality by using less energy, by lasting longer, by being easily recycled, by producing less waste, and even by being healthier for employees. Hazardous and toxic waste, in particular, can be very expensive to dispose of or recycle. In Canada, the province of Manitoba has passed a Sustainable Development Act that requires organizations that receive funding from the government to institute green procurement regulations.

The Experience of Santa Monica, California

The City of Santa Monica has taken several steps to implement a sustainable procurement program. The City passed several laws and ordinances related to their purchasing policy, including:



Sample
Procurement Policies
and Training Programs

- A Recycled Products Procurement Policy
- Administrative instructions pertaining to office paper
- The U.S. Conference of Mayors / CALPIRG Buy Recycled Campaign
- Janitorial products purchasing criteria
- A ban on purchasing wood from tropical rainforests
- Ozone-depleting chemical purchasing regulations
- A Reduced-Emission Fuel Policy for City vehicle purchases
- A Print Shop Purchasing Policy

The measurable benefits to the City since these policies have gone into effect have been many. The janitorial purchasing criteria, for example, have produced the following results:

- 1) Replacement of toxic products throughout the city with less toxic or nontoxic alternatives in 15 of 17 cleaning product categories.
- 2) The elimination of approximately 3200 pounds of hazardous materials per year in products purchased.
- 3) A cost savings of approximately 5% resulting from: the purchase of more concentrated products having lower packaging and shipping costs; lower cost per application of the alternative products; and better, less wasteful use of products due to improved custodial training.
- 4) A proven and effective set of procurement specifications that can be adapted for use in future efforts to reduce the use of toxic agents.
- 5) Increased morale of the custodians, who recognize the city's concern for their health and working conditions and who appreciate the opportunity to participate in making decisions about their work.

Santa Monica saved money, improved morale, developed good governance strategies, saved resources, and reduced environmental impact. That's a win-win-win-win-win strategy — all five areas of sustainability in the community have been improved.

The Project Logic Model

Once you have identified the activities to be pursued and the resources to be utilized, and have completed a Project Budget, you can develop the Project Logic Model. The idea behind this model is to help you outline the way all the elements of your action plan will work together to achieve the results you want.

So often, the activities we propose for community improvement are driven by existing constraints — current staff, activities that are already underway — and we can get sidetracked from the most important consideration of all: whether what we're proposing will have the desired impact. Going through a step by step process to line up the goals, targets, budget items, activities, and results can be enormously helpful.

Project Logic Models ask for the following information:

Inputs— The inputs to be identified are the resources that will be used on the project. In most cases, this information will come from your Project Budget.

Activities— The activities are the workplan items and tasks that will help achieve the strategy. The tasks and activity breakdown is critical to developing a budget that works, and making sure that the resources, timeline, and other factors are reasonable.

Results— Often, the results of your activities are not immediate. Breaking down your expected results into short, medium, and long term time frames will help you better prepare the materials you will need to track your success.



*For more information on how to
construct Project Logic Models,
the Kellogg Foundation has drafted
an excellent workbook:*

<http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf>

This is how a logic model might look for our sample project:

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Need: | Income and economic security |
| Assets: | Strong neighborhood associations, many small cottage industries producing goods and services for the local market |
| Goal: | To create a vibrant local economy where local products and services meet the needs in the local markets, and the new ideas and prosperity makes the community able to export more goods to outside markets |
| Target: | 2,000 local producers who have direct access to a growing local market for their products and services |
| Strategy: | To introduce a neighborhood exchange system, where local producers would register their products for local markets and would be able to trade for other local products using a complementary exchange process instead of national money. |

| INPUTS (partners, resources, funding, time, people) | ACTIVITIES (what will you do with all the inputs?) | RESULTS (Changes in knowledge, skills, behavior; social, economic and environmental conditions) | | |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| | | Short term | Medium term | Long term |
| Workshop Leader Printed information materials Intake forms for exchange network \$20,000 | Identify neighborhoods and at least 30 participants per neighborhood Convene fifteen introductory meetings Establish five Exchange networks Hold monthly network mtgs | Increased knowledge about about the benefits of community exchange systems | Participants taking advantage of the exchange system More goods and services exchanged on a neighborhood level | Improved social networks in neighborhoods More economic opportunities for neighborhood residents Improved community resilience More income for impoverished areas |

The process we've outlined here, like project logic models generally, is designed to help you see the direct linkage between the ideas you have for strategies, the steps you need to take to implement the ideas, and the results and impacts of your initiatives. The process of consolidating and cross-referencing will also help you better integrate the various strategies you are developing.

Reviewing the model, you can ascertain whether you have adequately planned the level of effort necessary to achieve the results you want. This can provide a solid basis for moving forward; projects are much easier to get started when you have thought through all the different steps toward implementation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Another critical component of project implementation is the selection of indicators and performance measures. These are your tools for evaluating the effects of your efforts. Indicators are directly related to your goals and targets, and give you regular feedback on whether you are achieving the goals that you set for the project. Performance measures are related to the project implementation plans you have developed — they give you feedback on whether the activities you have designed for the project are taking place as planned. Indicators give you a sense of the outcomes of your work, performance measures tell you how many outputs are underway. The outputs are the means, the outcomes are the ends.

Performance Measures

The performance measures will help you evaluate how the projects and activities you have designed are being carried out. Like indicators, these give you feedback on the objectives you set, but instead of monitoring the actual conditions in the community, performance measures monitor the activities you are carrying out to change those conditions. The basis for the performance measures is the information you have included in the Project Logic Models.

For example, in the model we used above, one of the activities was to convene fifteen introductory meetings for five different neighborhoods. This means that

you will monitor the number of introductory meetings that are actually held, the number of participants who attend each meeting, and the number of neighborhoods that are involved in the project. Since you have done the hard work of determining the level of effort that is needed to achieve your objectives, it is important that you regularly assess the level of effort that is being made, to see if your initial projections about its effectiveness were correct.

Indicators

Indicators are used at all levels of formal and informal decision-making. The gas gauge in your car, for example, indicates when it is time to fill up, and the gross domestic product (GDP) tells policy-makers whether policies to stimulate the economy are working. The right indicators are necessary to your economic renewal planning; they will tell you whether your efforts to move your community in the right direction are successful.

By monitoring indicators for each specific target you have chosen, you will allow the government, civil society, and the public at large to assess whether your community is making sufficient progress toward sustainability. Developing indicators is simply a logical process of determining what information tells you most accurately whether your community is meeting the targets you have set.

Indicators can be conceptually simple, like total population, or very complex, like GDP. They can be based on quantitative data like concentration of sulfur dioxide in the air, or qualitative information like the results of a survey of people's attitudes toward their community. One thing is true of all good indicators, however: they are clear and easily understood by experts and non-experts alike.

The bases for the indicators are the targets you have established. If you set a target, for example, that 85% of all families will earn adequate income to meet all of their basic needs by 2015, then the indicator you might select to monitor the achievement of this target would be the annual reported family income figures for your area as compared to the cost of living. Some communities have developed a 'livable wage' index, a regular barometer on what income is necessary to live in decent housing, have access to health care and transportation, educate children, and live a healthy life.



*Indicator Development
Tools*

Gathering relevant data for your indicators can be as challenging as identifying them in the first place. Over the long term, evaluating the results of your project will be much more time and resource-intensive if the underlying data is not readily available. Sometimes you decide upon an indicator, only to discover that data for it cannot be found after all. This underlines the importance of determining how, or whether, you will find the data needed for an indicator you are planning to rely on.

Local or regional governments are often an outstanding source of administrative facts and figures about school enrollment, crime, incomes, taxes, percentages of households with plumbing and electricity, health, etc. But it can still be a difficult process to determine which department and which individuals within that department are able to provide you with the data you need. Furthermore, you may encounter resistance in getting them to share what they have. There are, unfortunately, many prevalent attitudes that can make it difficult to obtain information, even when you know the data exist. When choosing between two strong indicator possibilities for the same target, you should take into account the probability of being able to get the data for each of them, before assuming it will be available to you.

Communities Seek Better Sustainability Indicators

— Christopher Juniper

Since the early 1990s, communities have been exploring how progress is measured with what they are trying to manage, and finding that new indicators are called for to better help community leaders understand the challenges and craft effective solutions. This gap is even wider for communities pursuing sustainability strategies, though most measures of “quality of life” fit well with sustainability goals.

The pathways to better sustainability indicators are varied. Citizens of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania USA formed Sustainable Pittsburgh in 1999 to promote sustainabil-

ity principles, civic engagement in the Southwestern Pennsylvania’s future planning, reduce urban sprawl and “close the disparities gap.” It published its first semi-annual sustainability indicators report in 2002 and convenes annual conferences on SMART growth.

Community stakeholders in Jacksonville, Florida USA started the Jacksonville Community Council in 1975 to foster public and private collaboration on key quality-of-life challenges. Ten years later, the Council created the Jacksonville indicators project to assist with problem-solving efforts since the right data wasn’t easily available.

It is all too easy to confuse performance measures with indicators as an evaluation tool for the success of the project. People often feel they have succeeded if they deliver the activities they have proposed — they don't always follow up to see if those activities have achieved the desired results. Include both of these measures, however, and you'll have the information you need to improve projects in the future to make them all more effective.

Public Reporting

Developing an outstanding set of indicators for your goals, targets, and strategies means little if they are not tracked and reported to policy makers and the public. Data for the indicators you have selected must be gathered, and the results incorporated into reports that communicate the progress (or lack of progress) the community is making toward its objectives. The reports should be distributed to the public, civil society organizations, and individuals in the local government.

There are two distinct but interdependent phases of public reporting: collecting data to track indicators, and preparing a report using those results. Tracking

In the Pikes Peak region of Colorado, USA, the Fort Carson installation of the US Army initiated a four county sustainability indicators project in 2003 to better align community goals with each other and with the installation's 2027 sustainability goals (which were developed by community stakeholders in 2002). Like other indicators projects, the Pikes Peak region's stakeholders identified more than 100 indicators the community would like to manage. The project also helped people from the different counties build better working relationships for collaborative solutions to key challenges.

The United Nations continues to develop resources that support the recommendations of Agenda 21 for sustainable development indicators. Norway has recently proposed 16 indicators of progress towards

sustainable development, ranging from very general indicators of health such as life expectancy at birth, to very specific indicators of Norway's contribution to global poverty reduction through measurement of its trade with African and LDC countries, to ecological measures such as nesting trends of wild birds.

Sources:

Sustainable Pittsburgh: www.sustainablepittsburgh.org

Pikes Peak region:

<http://sems.carson.army.mil/sustainability/PPSIPReport.pdf>

Jacksonville: www.jcci.org

Norway: Knut H. Alfsen and Thorvald Moe, "An International Framework for Constructing National Indicators for Policies to Enhance Sustainable Development," presented to United Nations Division for Sustainable Development, Expert Group meeting on Indicators of Sustainable Development, Dec. 2005. <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/natlinfo/indicators/egmIndicators/crp3.pdf>



Reporting Tools

indicators consists primarily of data gathering. Preparing a sustainability report consists of analyzing and interpreting the data and writing coherent descriptions and recommendations that are easily understood by the target audiences. Policy makers are busy, and will usually not be able to take the time required to read long columns of data. Furthermore, many people find it difficult to understand raw data. The purpose of gathering indicator data is to enable you to inform the community of progress, and this purpose will not be met unless you draw up and present the messages in an easily accessible format.

Backa Topola

Community Revitalization through Democratic Action

— Michael Miller

As its CRDA program steamrolled into the halfway point of Year Three, the community of Backa Topola seemed to have all matters sorted out. From the very inception of the program in this municipality, CRDA principles and objectives immediately seized upon the pre-existing tradition of civic activism. It helped citizens understand the necessity of working together to recognize basic community needs, as well as to present them to both donors and local authorities in order to obtain adequate assistance for resolving community problems.

During the first two years of the CRDA program, citizens of Backa Topola worked together to implement many projects that benefit communities included in the program, as well as those whose realization has a direct positive impact to the whole municipality and even the entire region. Implementation of such projects as Reconstruction and Equipping of Maternity Ward and Reconstruction and Equipping of “Bethesda” Home for the Handicapped not only initiated a process of extended civic participation in the municipality,

but also inspired several communities originally not included in the program to try to replicate the CRDA program module in their communities. Other program activities included developing project proposals, devising business plans, organizing press conferences and trainings, initiating campaigns, obtaining information on employment opportunities, and more.

However, as the CRDA program in Backa Topola developed, it became increasingly apparent to numerous citizens groups that their initiatives lacked a hub for their activities. Consequently, they decided to develop a project proposal for establishing a Community Development Center (CDC). The cultural center space was recognized as an ideal location for being transformed into a CDC. ADF/CRDA approved the project for reconstructing the facility and partnered with the local community, municipal authorities and an Association of Theater Revitalization to equip the building with adequate modern equipment and furniture. In June 2004, the facility was officially opened as a fully functional Community Development Center.

Before beginning to gather data, the Stakeholder Group should determine a schedule for gathering baseline data and releasing progress reports. The schedule you set will depend on your community's specific needs, resources, and other factors. For example, when Santa Monica's Sustainable City partnership began their effort in 1994, they set a target for gathering baseline data and releasing a report within one year. Thereafter, they would release progress reports every two years. Santa Monica found that this schedule struck a useful balance — long enough for strategies to have an observable impact, frequent enough to revise

As a vital first step towards realizing their vision of this CDC, citizens groups involved in its design and establishment reached consensus on some basic rules for effective work of the Center: it is to be open for all positive initiatives; all activities have to be sustainable; whoever proposes or initiates an activity or a program is responsible for its realization; commercial activities (presentations and similar) have to pay rental of the space; activities organized by volunteers do not pay rental of the space; working hours of the center manager are 10 am to 2 pm (if there is a need the Center will be open longer); and the Center's space/equipment may be rented exclusively in the presence of the Center staff or volunteers.

Since it opened, many donors and representatives of local and foreign diplomacy have visited the Center and have found it to be a model for replication throughout the region. The CDC activities have been developed in several areas, including: collecting and disseminating information on donor programs for different institutions, NGOs and citizens initiatives; developing project proposals and fundraising; providing

services to citizens (photocopying, internet and e-mail use, administrative services); providing volunteer services (e.g. assistance in registering agricultural goods); cultural events (concerts, exhibitions, trainings on cultural management); website and internet services; public dialogue (round-table discussions, professional debates, networking); and education, such as trainings for unemployed and future entrepreneurs and seminars on NGO management.

Currently the Center hosts 15 volunteers, and any interested citizen has an open invitation to contribute to the CDC's work. The Center provides the trainings necessary for all volunteers and organizes task-forces for different areas of work.

"This center brings an opportunity to both collect and disseminate useful information, to organize different trainings that are very much needed in our community and to get in touch with others. I personally like to work here because this center has a major role in improving the quality of life in our community," says Ms. Rakk Magdolna, a volunteer in the Backa Topola Community Development Center.

strategies if the community was in danger of missing targets. Hamilton, Ontario releases an annual sustainability report. Other communities will want to allow for more time between the periodic updates. Generally, though, you don't want to wait more than three years before making a progress report.

There is, of course, no easy step-by-step process to writing a progress report of your community's economic renewal program. The task requires careful analysis of the data you have gathered, and clear explication of the conclusions to be drawn. The interpretation of your data will obviously depend on the targets and indicators you are tracking. The conclusions will depend on the nature of your program — whether it is a partnership involving local government, civil society, academia, and businesses, or a more limited partnership involving a subset of these players (and possibly others).

Despite the individual nature of each community, meaningful reports have a number of things in common. In general, the report should assess the success of the current program — both in terms of meeting established targets, and regarding its longer term prospects to realize the community vision. All reports should:

- Analyze the performance measures to convey the pace and extent of efforts being made to reach the project objectives
- Track the data related to the community indicators, to see how quickly the projects are meeting their targets
- Assess reasons for successes, or the lack thereof
- Recommend changes to the strategies and project activities to keep them on track in meeting community targets
- Assess whether the body of targets and goals are sufficient to meet the community vision, or whether they need to be revised

The report should represent the unified voice of the Stakeholder Group. While you will probably choose a smaller committee to draft the report, all of the recommendations should be agreed to by the entire group, and it should be issued with the signatures of each stakeholder who participated in the process.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed what is required to implement projects to achieve the goals of the LASER plan the community has developed. Like the LASER plan itself, successful projects depend on Stakeholder support and engagement, the creation of implementation partnerships, and the involvement of the business community.

Once the implementation team is assembled, put together a plan of action that identifies all the requirements of the project — the budget, activities, and personnel that will be needed to get the results you want. This chapter reviewed the process for:

- Identifying Implementation Requirements
- Choosing Funding Strategies
- Risk Management
- Preparing a Project Budget
- Developing a Project Logic Model
- Sustainable Procurement
- Developing Indicators and Performance Measures

Another critical part of project implementation is the monitoring and evaluation systems you establish to ensure that you are meeting your goals and that the activities that you are pursuing are having the desired impact. This involves monitoring the project indicators and performance measures, gathering relevant data, and reporting the results to the public.

When the project activities are complete and the reports are done, it's time to assess the LASER plan itself. Are you making real progress toward creating real

wealth and economic security in your community? Are people from all walks of life better off than they were when you started?

LASER is designed to give you a wide variety of tools to use to improve the quality of life for everyone in your community. It's important to remember that the economy must serve the needs of the people and contribute to a better future for generations to come. We hope that you'll use these resources to build health and happiness for the whole community of life.



Endnotes

Chapter Two

- 1 – Information in this paragraph from:
<http://www.financialcounsel.com/News/Economics/IH/2005/IH-GlobalDemographics-071105.pdf>
July 5 2005
- 2 – Bernard Lietaer. *Complementary Currency Innovations to Address Megatrends*. 2006.
- 3 – The Management Helix system was primarily developed by L. Hunter Lovins and Christopher Juniper of Natural Capitalism Solutions and Charles Hargrove of Australia, 2004-6. Resources for applying the Helix to small businesses have been developed in collaboration with the Chicago Manufacturing Center’s Green Plants Program led by Karen Wan, USA.
- 4 – Personal communication Professor Peter Newman, Murdoch University, sustainability advisor to the Premier of Western Australia, Sept 2003

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- 5 – Richard Florida. “The New American Dream,” Washington Monthly, March 2003.
- 6 – Source: University of Illinois at Urbana: Academy for Entrepreneurial Leadership (UIUC AEL)
- 7 – *ibid.*
- 8 – Sourced from:
<http://www.unctad.org/Templates/Webflyer.asp?docID=6574&intItemID=3369&lang=1>
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http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=30625&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

