

Fostering Community Engagement and Participation Through Local Skills Audits

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Abstract

Community strengthening approaches which emphasise local solutions to local economic, social and environmental challenges now receive significant support through Federal and State Government policies and programmes. This paper examines the theoretical basis which underpins community building and place based development. The focus then shifts to examining how information and communications technology (ICT) can be used creatively in a community strengthening context. The potential role of regional universities supporting adoption, diffusion and effective use of ICT is then considered. The case of the Wendouree West Community Skills Survey then draws all the elements of the paper together. During 2002 the Centre for Electronic Commerce and Communications (CECC) was engaged by the Department of Human Services (DHS) to support the Wendouree West Community in conducting local skills surveys as part of its Neighbourhood Renewal project. The aim was not just to actively involve residents in the collection of information on the skills and learning aspirations of residents but also to make sure the results would be both useful and used. This paper explores the process involved and outcomes generated through the implementation and ongoing development of the Wendouree West Skills Survey. It is found that the creative use of ICT can generate broad community benefits which extend specific initiative outcomes.

Community strengthening

State and Federal Governments believe the goal of strengthening economic and social opportunities; sustaining productive natural resources and the environment; delivering better regional services and adjusting to economic, technological and government-induced change; can be achieved through a partnership approach which will foster the development of self-reliant communities and regions. The current approach by Governments is to view the development of communities – and to an emerging extent service delivery – largely from a bottom-up, self-reliance perspective rather than from a top-down compensatory perspective.

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This places communities in a new position of responsibility to take the initiative for their sustainable futures (Garlick 2000, p. 10). Community strengthening programs put the onus on communities themselves to come up with solutions to their economic viability and services needs; to manage change; realise their potential; and lead their own development. The role for Government in this context is one of supporting communities in their adaptation to new challenges. Examples of key programs which make up the Victorian Community Building Initiative include:

- Community Building Demonstration Projects in 11 communities selected by government based on statistical indicators of social, economic or geographic disadvantage¹.
- The Community Capacity Building Initiative where 11 pilots involved 55 communities in projects designed to strengthen the ability of people in rural towns and settlements to take charge of their future².
- Neighbourhood Renewal Projects in 15 of Victoria's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods³.
- A variety of community strengthening projects have also been initiated with funding support from the Community Support Fund⁴.

While this change in policy approach recognises the enabling capacity for collective action, (Gray and Lawrence 2001), there is, however, a lack of research which identifies those factors which influence the likelihood that local initiatives can arrest or reverse the processes of decline or effectively achieve community plans and aspirations in terms of local development (Black, Duff, Sagers, Baines, Jennings and Bowen 2000).

¹ For further information visit

www.communitybuilding.vic.gov.au/programs/major_programs/demonstration_projects.asp.

² See www.communitybuilding.vic.gov.au/programs/major_programs/capacity.asp for further information.

³ Visit the Victorian Office of Housing website at www.neighbourhoodrenewal.vic.gov.au for information on how government, businesses and services providers are working in partnership with local communities to bridge economic and social gaps.

⁴ Project information is accessible from www.communitybuilding.vic.gov.au/programs/major_programs/csf.asp.

Theoretical basis of community strengthening

Emerging literature with a focus on community building and placed based development emphasises attitudinal change, empowerment, self-reliance and cooperation – rather than competition – as particularly important in achieving change and community sustainability. Significant consideration has also been given to the concept of social capital for community building and economic development. Allen (1995), for example, has explored how communities can, through better organisation and more effective mobilisation of local resources, increase their sustainability prospects by enhancing social capital. Social capital relates to the resources available within communities as a consequence of networks of mutual support, reciprocity, trust and obligation (Coleman 1988; Putman 1993). In the Australian context, Cox (1995) raised awareness and interest in the concept of social capital through the 1995 Boyer Lecture Series, promoting socially valuable processes to encourage stronger community connections and build reservoirs of trust and mutuality.

In a resource kit produced by the NSW Premier's Department Strengthening Communities Unit a package of tools was produced which 'allow communities to be examined through the lens of social capital' based on principles of action research and participatory community research (Stephens 2001p. 21). While recognising that every community is complex and unique, ten key characteristics of a sustainable community were identified. A sustainable community is one that (Stephens 2001, p. 31):

1. Takes an integrated approach to creating a sustainable future.
2. Maximises the use of its limited time and resources in areas that will yield the greatest strategic benefits.
3. Develops plans that merge social and economic goals and build local capacity
4. Mobilises the community around priorities.
5. Harnesses local support and attracts the outside resources needed to achieve its goals.
6. Uses its critical mass of cooperating organisations to implement and evaluate locally based initiatives.
7. Has strong inclusive and visionary leadership.
8. Encourages active participation, consultation and involvement for community well-being.
9. Supports local investment in education, training and lifelong learning.
10. Has access to positive and accurate information with which to evaluate its progress in achieving its goals.

In introducing a discussion paper on the measurement of social capital the ABS (2000, p. 3) observes the concept rapidly gained wide interest and use 'among policy makers, politicians and researchers alike' with a strong push for the general community to 'use social capital as a way to not only describe but also to understand community well-being'.

Bullen et al. (1998) have identified social capital as a 'bottom up' phenomenon which originates with people forming social connections and networks. Through their work with five New South Wales communities, they developed and piloted a survey instrument for measuring social capital. Tasmanian researchers developed a complementary survey instrument for determining a community's receptivity to capacity building (Guenther and Falk 1999; Guenther, Falk and Kilpatrick 2000). Kilpatrick and Bell (1998, p. 1) have identified that social capital facilitates learning and change in communities by 'oiling' the processes of assessing and acquiring new knowledge, skills and values.

Onyx and Leonard (2000) have used community case studies to explore the relationship between social capital and other capital forms (financial, natural and human). They illustrated how particular communities have organised themselves in new and innovative

ways and were able to demonstrate how the origins of positive examples of local development could be traced to the efforts of a small number of local individuals and/or active networks. In a more recent study Cocklin and Alston (2003) used a case study approach to examine the 'capitals' that underpin the sustainability of rural communities (natural, human, social, institutional and produced capital). They found that while the concept of capitals provided a systematic framework it presented a somewhat ambiguous answer to the question of what sustainability does in fact mean in the context of rural communities.

Despite its 'hot topic' status social capital is not a precise concept. It has been the subject of much discussion and debate in government and academic circles, and in the broader popular debate. Stewart-Weeks (1998) has, for example, raised strong concerns about what he terms the 'current fascination with social capital'.

Social capital has appeared over the horizon, like the cavalry, to rescue the policy process and give people some hope (p. 8). The scepticism, though, is driven by a sense, that for all its superficial attraction, the social capital debate is not suited to the scale and scope of the urgent, complex and often vast problems to which government generally is expected to offer solutions... People will assume that all we have to do is sprinkle some social capital glitter around and things will improve (p. 9).

Governments and policy makers have often been unwilling to examine the longer term and structural causes of community decline, including government policies themselves (Institute for Social Research 2001). As the rapidity of change is generally caused by factors outside the control of individual people or communities, there have been calls for a great deal of caution in applying community-based and participatory approaches to managing change. Balatti and Falk (2000, p. 5), for example, identify that while government recognition may have increased for bottom-up community owned planning processes, the call for self-reliance, for some, is tantamount to saying 'Survive on you own or die'. While local people may have the advantage of understanding the social and environmental status of their area and of appreciating the impact of decisions made in distant locations, they often have few mechanisms to access skills, knowledge or structures that support participation in planning for the future well-being of their community (Sheil 1999).

Creative use of ICT for building strong communities and social cohesion

The harnessing of new information and communication technologies (ICT) has been linked to the generation of benefits for all citizens, regardless of their geographic location. By providing support for Australians to go online, governments have hoped to 'level the playing field' with benefits espoused in terms of 'location independence' and for defeating the 'tyranny of distance' (Information Policy Advisory Council 1997; Department for Information Technology and the Arts 1998; Brumby 1999). In its *Connecting Victoria* policy, the Victorian Government summed up their position as follows:

In moving to a knowledge-based society, we – the Government, the Parliament, and the Victorian community – have a choice. We can let new technologies further divide our society into winners and losers – the information rich and the information poor. Or we can harness the potential of technology to develop the whole State and maximise opportunities for all our citizens (Brumby 1999).

In a more recent policy statement the Federal Government outlines its key strategies for community connectivity in *Australia's Strategic Framework for the Information Economy 2004-2006*. In the context of strengthening collaboration and capabilities there is a need to facilitate the creative use of ICT for building communities and social cohesion, and to

facilitate the development of networks, capabilities and tools to enable participation by people who are facing economic, geographic or social barriers (Department of Communications Information Technology and the Arts 2004).

The role of a regional university in adoption, diffusion and effective use of ICT

Since 1999 the University of Ballarat (UoB) has through its Centre for Electronic Commerce and Communications (CECC) partnered with diverse communities, to establish effective and sustainable online service initiatives which have actively engaged various regional development stakeholders in the design and promotion of initiatives which have (Simpson 1999, p. 4):

1. Dramatically improved information dissemination and community awareness of what technology can do, which in turn leads to greater take-up.
2. Applied information technology to industry sectors which traditionally have not been areas of IT application and which are key employers and economic drivers within the regional economy.
3. Promoted greater co-operation and communication between regional communities.

The University's approach to delivering online services is characterised by long-term partnerships with geographical communities, regional groups, organisations, businesses and with local, state and federal governments. Despite diversity in locales, client organisations and target communities there is considerable synergy in terms of the overall initiative objectives. These are generally associated with building community capacity and enhancing local economic and social prospects. In supporting communities the University fulfils a range of roles. These include (Thompson 2004, p. 25):

1. Opportunity identification – High levels of ICT expertise have been combined with a sound understanding of regional economic and social development priority. Active engagement with community members and a willingness to invest in preliminary consultation and research has been demonstrated as critical components of opportunity identification.
2. Resource attraction – Practical support has been provided through the identification and attraction of internal and external human, financial and infrastructure resources necessary to initially implement and then sustain initiatives.
3. Infrastructure development – In a variety of contexts (community, government, business) infrastructure has been developed to effectively and actively support end users in doing locally significant and empowering things with ICT.
4. Training and facilitation – Commitment to participatory design, action research, face-to-face training, facilitation and ongoing support.
5. Evaluation and ongoing enhancement – Support provided to communities for evaluating initiative outcomes as a pathway to identifying opportunities for services to evolve and respond to new circumstance or opportunities.

Through the piloting and demonstration of services demand for similar ICT services has substantially increased. There is growing awareness of the opportunity to access tools and services which can effectively address limitations in regional Australia (such as low speed of internet access and the generally low IT skills levels). This has better ensured that organisations in the Central Highlands Region of Victoria (and beyond) can capture a share of the benefits afforded by new ICTs.

Considerable technical innovation has been achieved through CECC's distinctive approach to technology selection, design, and implementation with products and systems designed as component-based solutions for ease of integration and re-use. An iterative approach to

implementation has refined many of the processes involved in establishing online services. This means that subsequent projects are delivered faster. This approach also delivers greater flexibility which is critical because it allows client organisations to adapt services to meet future needs. It also supports CECC in remaining responsive to changes in technology and in rapidly accommodating advances and innovations.

Across the client group CECC works to disseminate information on project outcomes and opportunities. CECC also brings clients together so they can share their experiences, discuss challenges and identify and prioritise future research and development needs. Broader dissemination of outcomes is achieved by presenting at conferences, publishing in journals and contributing to books which focus on the adoption of online services in a regional and rural context.

In terms of University/Region engagement CECC has contributed positively to the UoB goal of providing leadership for the uptake of ICT in industries, local government and within and among regional groups (Thompson 2004). The type of regional/university engagement which has emerged is very consistent with the strategic priority and mission of the UoB with CECC actively engaging with regional communities to address community-identified needs, problems and issues and through this engagement generating and applying knowledge that promotes economic, environmental and social prosperity (Institute for Regional and Rural Research 2004).

The specialised knowledge base and infrastructure which has developed acts as an attractor for new investment in the ICT cluster. New activities promote innovation and expand the underlying infrastructure and knowledge base. This strengthens the ICT cluster; enhances relational capital; communication; and regional development prospects. Feedback effects then act to further enhance the ICT cluster creating a virtuous circle of increasing returns.

Collaboration with a regional university has been identified as an important factor in the initiation, renewal and growth of online service initiatives in a regional and rural development context. Potential challenges have been reduced by the availability of a comprehensive portal platform and toolset which have been specifically designed to meet regional and rural needs, particularly the infrastructure gaps which often exist. Initiatives have been sustained by empowering community members to take ownership of their online services. Through this model sustainability has been achieved by effectively aggregating demand of ICT services.

Capacities and assets verses deficiencies and problems

An important philosophy underpinning capacity-oriented approaches to development is a clear commitment to discovering a community's capacities and assets as a prerequisite to planning and advancing local improvement efforts (Beaulieu 2002). This alternative path leads towards the development of policies and activities based on the capacities, skills and assets of people and their neighbourhoods rather than focusing on a community's deficiencies and problems. As Beaulieu suggests,

The best way to effectively address the challenges that face communities is to have a good knowledge of the resources available to work on local issues. So an important beginning point involves mapping the assets of the community – the skills and talents of local residents, as well as the capabilities available or possible through local organizations and institutions. Collectively, these resources offer the wherewithal to address the host of important issues impacting the community (Beaulieu 2002, p. 2)

This view recognises historic evidence that local people must commit to and invest effort for development interventions to succeed. It also recognises that for many communities, it is increasingly futile to wait for significant resources to arrive from outside the community. There is no choice but to lead development from within drawing on the unique combination of assets which each community boasts to build its future (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993).

The key to neighbourhood regeneration, then, is to locate all of the available local assets, to begin connecting them with one another in ways that multiply their power and effectiveness, and to begin harnessing those local institutions that are not yet available for local development purposes (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993, p. 8).

Building a strong community requires the effective mobilisation and marshalling of local capacities to address issues of community importance. Allen (1998) identifies four organising questions for mobilising local community assets which have been uncovered and mapped. What do we want to do (our goals)? What do we have to do it with (our map of assets)? Who or what can do it? How do we get them to do it?

Drawing on the working of Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), Beaulieu (2002) has summarised the key steps of an asset-based approach to capacity-focused development:

1. Map the assets through an ongoing process of locating and making inventories of the gifts, talents and abilities of individuals, associations and institutions.
2. Build relationships among these assets and broaden local leadership.
3. Explore how assets can be mobilised to improve local conditions/needs (such as expanding job opportunities, improving education or achieving better healthcare services).
4. Engage the community in visioning and planning to achieve a shared vision and to plan the direction the community takes.
5. Leverage outside resources that help advance local improvement efforts and support priority activities.

In research conducted for Local Government Victoria, community strengthening has been identified as an exciting process 'that offers a break through in harnessing the potential already available in many localities' (Considine 2004, p. 4). The Department of Victorian Communities (2003) clearly emphasise the philosophy of fostering local capacities and assets in its Corporate Plan 2003-2006 with guiding principles including:

- The focus of DVC's effort is 'people and place' (p. 2).
- Importance of giving communities opportunities to set directions for their future (p. 4) and of fostering and encouraging partnerships and collaboration (p. 8).
- DVC along with all Victorian Government departments will develop new frameworks to support community strengthening and link services (p. 11).
- Objectives focused on communities that shape their future, encourage participation and embrace diversity supported by Government that is easier to work with (p. 12).
- The measuring, monitoring and evaluating of programs identified as important in DVC's approach to supporting and strengthening Victorian communities (p. 20).

Involving residents in a community survey process

Local area data can enhance local decision making and planning (Cavaye 2004); provide indicators about progress and participation into action at a local or regional level (Salvaris 2000); and assist in addressing one of the central challenges for asset-based community development by generating information which can assist in the constant building and rebuilding of relationships between and among local residents, local associations and local institutions (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993).

Community asset mapping can play an important role in promoting the type of community strengthening that is concerned with engaging local people in community enhancement efforts (Beaulieu 2002). ‘The idea of people taking charge of their own measurements of progress is a powerful and far reaching innovation that can bring about a new sense of civic engagement’ (Sustainable Seattle 2000 cited in Salvaris 2000p, 2). Actively involving residents in the process of identifying their community assets can generate a sense of ownership and empowerment (The Children's Partnership and Camfield Estates 2002).

In the specific context of Neighbourhood Renewal (NR) in Victoria, Salvaris (2003, p. 4) has identified that community survey processes are likely to be successful as a means for:

- Involving local residents in a legitimate, respectful and open way in talking about and helping to improve problems and issues in their neighbourhood.
- Increasing community awareness of the NR Strategy.
- Developing the skills and self-esteem of a number of local residents in survey work.
- Generating a large amount of information important for the success of the NR project.
- Evaluating changes and improvements in the community generally, and as a result of the NR program.
- Benchmarking conditions in specific NR communities against those in the surrounding region and in other NR communities.

Community survey processes can also ‘yield research and statistical information which is just as reliable [a]s that which might come from a more independent or “scientific” process’ (Salvaris 2003, p. 4). In the NR context, where there has been active involvement of residents as interviewers as well as respondents to surveys, the availability of resident interviewers ‘clearly created a climate in which interviewees were prepared to talk more openly and candidly’. This is clearly one means for addressing the problem of trust between interviewer and respondent. Indeed, Salvaris (2003, p. 5) argues that the use of residents meant that the quality of information was probably better than it might otherwise have been possible to achieve using external (and therefore unfamiliar) interviewers.

In the following section the case of the Wendouree West Community Skills Survey is presented to demonstrate how ICT is being used as an enabling tool to enhance local knowledge of the skills and aspirations of residents and to support the broader community building activities which are associated with the Wendouree West Renewal project (see www.wendoureewest.com for further information).

Wendouree West community skills survey

Infrastructure for collaboration consists of the pathways by which people and organisations come together to exchange ideas, solve problems or form partnerships – to recognise, value, and leverage their area's assets for mutual gain (Garlick 2000, p. 11).

The Victorian Government's Neighbourhood Renewal program has been established in a number of Victoria's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, with the purpose of developing joint government and community-based approaches to address multiple causes of disadvantage. One of the key concerns has been to lift employment, training and education and expand local economies, through the development of community-based employment and education programs.

The progressive rollout of the Neighbourhood Renewal Program commenced during 2001. Since that time, the University of Ballarat, through CECC and Centre for Regional Innovation and Competitiveness (CRIC), has had a significant role in the development, administration and analysis of the Community Survey and the Community Skills Survey.

During 2002 CECC was engaged by the Department of Human Services (DHS) to support the Wendouree West Community in conducting a local skills survey. The aim was not just to actively involve residents in the collection of information on the skills and learning aspirations of residents but also to make sure the results would be both useful and used. The specific objectives of the Wendouree West Community Skills Survey were to:

1. Enhance the effectiveness of the Wendouree West Community Renewal Project.
2. Assist residents in accessing employment and learning opportunities.
3. Increase local economic and social activity.

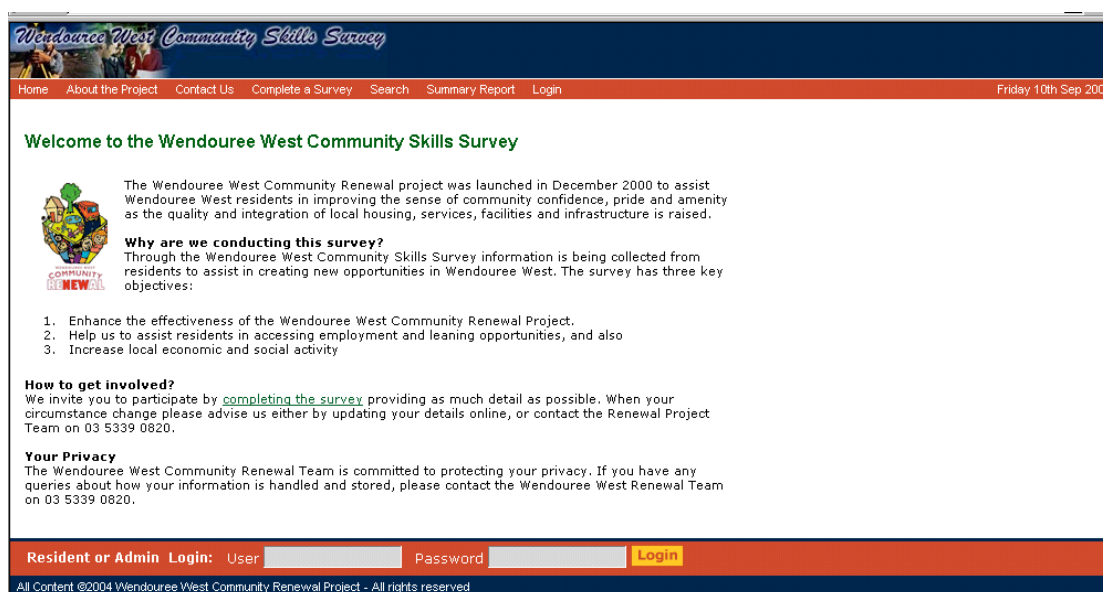
In implementing the project the University of Ballarat undertook significant awareness raising and consultation activities to actively engage residents and members of the Renewal Team during the planning phase of the project. Once agreement had been reached on the overall project goals and approach CECC was able to commence development of the 'Community Skills Survey Package'. This included: designing and piloting the survey instrument (for distribution via paper-based and web formats); establishing web-based administration facilities for managing resident responses; hosting the survey infrastructure; and providing ongoing advice and support.

Resident volunteers assisting in rollout of the project were provided with training in survey techniques prior to the commencement of the Community Skills Survey during November 2003. Further training was provided to members of the Renewal Team who would be responsible for the initial entry of survey responses and for the ongoing utilisation and management of the web-based facilities.

At the end of the initial survey period a total of 175 completed surveys were returned to the Wendouree West Community Renewal Office. A member of the Renewal Team entered the details of each survey into the web-based system which can be accessed at www.cecc.com.au/communities/wendouree (see Figure 1).

The dynamic reporting capabilities of the system supported the Renewal Team and other key stakeholders in reviewing the characteristics of respondents, for example age, gender dispersion, time lived in Wendouree West and the level of telephone access. The full report can be accessed at www.cecc.com.au/communities/wendouree by clicking on the Summary Report link.

Figure 1. Wendouree West Community Skills Survey Website



In the initial evaluation undertaken by CECC during January 2004, the Skills Survey Data was combined with Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data to evaluate factors such as participation rate (10.26 percent); age profile (most significant response received from residents aged between 45-64 years); and gender (a higher participation rate among female residents was confirmed).

The skills survey information provides opportunities for making better use of existing resources and also identifies new resources that can be used to build on the strengths that already exist in Wendouree West. Comprehensive information is, for example, now available on the skills, employment and learning aspirations of individual residents with information including those skills they have, could teach or want to learn (see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary information skills: Trades and occupations

Trades and occupations	I have	I can teach to others	I want to learn	Formal qualification
Carpentry	17	3	11	0
Welding	22	3	10	1
Painting	52	3	9	2
Electrical	15	1	9	2
Appliance repair	16	1	11	1
Other	23	2	1	4
Plumbing	12	0	11	0
Gardening	67	6	7	0
Truck or bus driving	20	0	10	1
Office work	27	2	14	4
Retail	42	4	4	4
Mechanic	20	5	9	3
Professional	9	0	8	4
Cleaning/maintenance	70	10	3	4

Residents also described the types of connections they have within the community and indicated areas where they wanted further information or to become involved (see Table 2).

Table 2. Summary information connections: Community Groups

Community Groups	Count
I am already involved	31
I would like to be involved	10
I would like more information	27
I do not wish to be involved	26

Residents also indicated whether they were willing to become more actively involved in the community (see Table 3) or share their skills with others with more than 15 percent of respondents indicating they would with comments such as: yes if I am asked; anytime, anywhere; as often as I can; willing to do paid/voluntary work; to be paid would be nice but I am prepared to volunteer some time.

Table 3. Summary information commitments: Own community

Commitment	No of people
Meet with and get to know my neighbours and/or others in my street or community	35
Help with community clean-ups	34
Look out for/care for others in my community	32
Help with Neighbourhood Watch	32
Become a leader	18
Be happily 'led' by others	26

Through its partnership with the University of Ballarat the Wendouree West community has secured appropriate infrastructure to support the community in recognising, valuing and leveraging its area's assets to address issues of local priority. This has more effectively supported the development and implementation of community driven strategies to boost employment, education, training, and enterprise development. Early benefits have included:

- The identification of new skills and resources which can be mobilised in areas such as volunteering and community participation.
- The creation of opportunities to actively engage key stakeholder organisations such as job network providers, services groups and learning providers.
- The development and implementation of strategies to extend community involvement in the Skills Survey beyond the initial levels achieved.

Skills survey information has been utilised to assist residents in accessing employment and learning opportunities and to increase participation and pride in the community. Specific examples include:

- Matching residents with employment and training opportunities through the Community Jobs Program for Carers.
- Identifying residents with skills appropriate to the establishment of a Community Enterprise for the fencing and painting services.
- Identifying residents interested in volunteering to assist with the establishment of a local AusKick program.
- Personally inviting residents to participate in Community Working Bees, for example, during the redevelopment of Apex Park.
- Identifying and engaging residents through undertaking skills training to support the establishment of a local Gym.

CECC is now supporting the Wendouree West community with preparations for the second round of community skills surveys. Current participants will be invited to update their details online or via a paper-based survey (with current details included). Volunteer residents will also distribute surveys to those residents who have not yet participated and encourage and support their participation. While revenues generated through the Wendouree West Community Skills Survey have been relatively low, the community engagement, research and development benefits for the University have been significant. As other communities seek support in initiating similar services financial benefits may ultimately flow from an initiative which was originally supported to ensure that appropriate ICT infrastructure and support services would enhance the success of a significant local initiative.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated how community engagement and participation can be fostered through local skills audits. The mapping of the skills and aspirations of residents represents an important beginning point for effectively mobilising and marshalling local capacities to address issues of community importance. Actively involving residents in the process fosters community engagement and participation and can generate a stronger sense of ownership and empowerment.

Underpinning community asset mapping with ICT provides more effective access to and utilisation of the comprehensive information generated through local skills surveys. In the case of the Wendouree West Skills Survey, ICT has been used as a key tool in identifying and leveraging local area assets. Effective and efficient access to information on resident skills and aspirations has been essential in initiating, monitoring and evaluating renewal activities.

Community members have gained new capabilities and confidence through their active participation in the skills survey. Stronger partnerships have also developed, particularly with the local university. This is providing the community with access to expertise, tailored ICT tools and continuing support which is enabling the Renewal Team to continue to work with residents to expand participation in the Community Skills Survey and in the broader renewal activities.

ICT can support communities in more effectively achieving community plans and aspirations in terms of local development. In Wendouree West the community has established an evidence base for planning the future well-being of their community. There appears to be significant potential for the application of similar approaches to small renewal efforts by involving residents in community survey processes to generate information which can assist in the constant building and rebuilding of relationships between local residents, local associations and local institutions.

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