



Landcare Notes

What skills and knowledge does the group have?

In a Landcare group there will be members with a wide range of personal and technical skills which are very valuable for developing and implementing projects as well as the leadership and maintenance of the group as a whole.

This Landcare Note outlines a simple way for groups to carry out an audit of the skills of its members and includes a sample survey to help collect that information.

What is a skills audit?

A skills audit is about assessing and documenting the type and level of skills that an individual or group has. It's often done in large organisations as the first step in developing a training program.

A Landcare group can carry out the same type of assessment but not necessarily make it as complex. One example of an audit that a group could do is a short survey of each of its members, identifying their particular skills, interests, training needs and any other pertinent information that the group may discover.

Members could have skills such as:

- Technical skills and knowledge (fencing, weed management, plant identification)
- Financial (bookkeeping, accountancy, financial planning)
- Writing (secretarial, newsletter, public relations, grant applications)
- Public speaking/presenting (for conferences and meetings)
- Organising works/events (such as field days, planting days, pest control works)
- Liaison (with government departments/experts, business, funding sources)

- Researching (seeking information, planning research projects)
- Planning (for developing your group's annual and strategic plans).

The audit should list members' skills in a way that will be easily accessible when you are planning future activities and events. It's also important to make sure your members agree to use those skills if they are asked to do so.

You should keep in mind the vision and goals of your group when you do the audit, because it will help focus the audit process. You can then ensure that you identify skills which support your group and its members.

How to do it

There are several ways of doing a skills audit that range from a simple list of member skills through to the type of detailed assessment often conducted by large groups with complex programs.

This two-step approach provides a framework for skills audits although the level of detail within each step would vary between groups.

Step 1 – Define your group's goals and the roles needed to achieve them

- Consider your goals or long-term plans at a group meeting.
- Discuss and record what action is needed to achieve your goals. These actions will help identify possible roles for group members.
- To make it easier for members to understand the commitment required, develop clear descriptions of what each role involves. (See Landcare Notes: 2.1 Planning; 2.2 Strategic Planning for further ideas.)



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Step 2 – Developing your skills audit

- The first step is for your group or group committee to list, as a guide, the skills you believe are important for group activities. Make sure you allow for members to identify other skills which may not be on that initial list but are skills some of your members may have and that they believe could be useful at some point.
- Develop and carry out the survey which will collect information about the skills, interests or training needs of your members. Those surveys could be done at meetings, as one-on-one interviews, by phone or by mail but they should be short and to the point, taking no longer than 20 minutes to complete.
- Any survey should also include a chance for your members to give an indication of their availability and preferred level of involvement. This gives your committee an indication of how that member will feel about doing a particular job if they are asked repeatedly.
- The survey also gives you a chance to identify any skills your members might like to improve – although this is often better done as a separate exercise at a later date.

Key tools

Below is an example of a skills audit form which shows the type of information you might want to find out from your members. It

includes skills and other information, the aim being to get a clear picture of what each member can contribute to your activities. It includes personal (e.g. fitness) and physical resources (e.g. equipment) that are valuable requirements for various group jobs. It also asks members to identify any skills they wish to improve on, and to give an indication of their availability for group activities.

Further references

Victorian Landcare Gateway:
<http://www.landcarevic.org.au/>

Cognology (2010) Skills Audit:
www.cognology.com.au/sawhatis.htm

Related Landcare Notes

This Landcare Note is one of a series. These notes provide an excellent guide for the ongoing operation of your group.

Landcare Note 2.1: Planning

Landcare Note 2.2: Strategic Planning

Acknowledgements

Nicole Blackett and Jude Niemiec: Landcare Note: *Skills Audit – Finding Hidden Talents* (2002)

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