Good Practice Guidelines | 5: Environment

Introduction

These good practice guidelines support the learning and development of community and non-profit organisations that help to protect, conserve and care for the natural environment. Drawing on sector resources and research, they have been developed by the Centre for Social Impact for Rātā Foundation and Foundation North.

Indicators of Good Practice

Indicator #1:
A partnership approach

Good-practice environmental and community conservation projects demonstrate partnership. Partnerships uphold the Treaty of Waitangi principles and place high value on co-operation, trust and respect among all those involved.

Appropriate partners for an environmental or conservation project include local champions, local and environmental groups, agencies and iwi. The partners each have a 'stake' in the project.

In an effective partnership, the partners:

- build and maintain strong and supportive relationships
- discuss and agree on how the partnership should operate, and what success will look like
- establish ways to communicate regularly with each other
- deal with conflicts between partners as they arise
- involve each other in making planning decisions and implementing group activities.

Indicator #2:
Kaitiakitanga

Good-practice environmental and conservation projects encourage and enable kaitiakitanga, or guardianship and protection of the land.

Kaitiakitanga recognises people's close connections to the land and to the mauri (life force) of forests, rivers, lakes and seas. It helps to ensure that the whenua (environment) is managed, preserved, protected and enhanced for the long term, for the benefit of all people.

It is good practice to:

- acknowledge the unique status of tangata whenua (the people of the land), who have a customary role as kaitiaki (guardians) of the whenua
- enable tangata whenua to participate as partners in initiatives that involve co-managing natural resources. This involves identifying local iwi/hapū, understanding their kawa (protocols) and taonga (cultural or natural treasures), and respecting and supporting their aspirations for the protection and enhancement of their whenua.

Indicator #3: Community engagement

Involving local communities in environmental and conservation projects increases the likelihood of the projects' goals being achieved and the results being sustainable for the long term. Community engagement is best achieved through:

- tapping in to the community's knowledge, skills and experience
- developing a shared sense of ownership and responsibility for the project – which also helps to build community pride
- supporting people to work together to get things done
- building trust between groups that have different environmental and/or recreational interests
- helping those involved to increase their skills, capacity and technical knowledge. This may mean bringing in external advisers or trainers.

It is important to define the project's 'local community' and get the right people involved. This means asking: Who has an interest in the land or project? Why is the project important? Who might be affected by it? What landowners, agencies, iwi/hapū, businesses and recreational users might have an interest? Who is enthusiastic and has the energy the project needs?

Indicator #4: Participation and learning

Successful environmental and conservation projects offer opportunities for communities to learn and participate, which in turn helps to ensure the projects' sustainability.

The opportunity to learn is a strong motivator for conservation volunteers. Good practice includes:

- identifying the issues that interest volunteers and the skills they seek to gain
- providing them with training opportunities to meet their needs (such as talks and demonstrations).

Indicator #5: Project planning and management

Environmental and conservation projects must be well planned and managed. It is good practice to :

- ensure that the need for and purpose of the project is well established and understood
- identify and comply with any requirements for landowner support/approval, technical endorsement, consents, licences and permits.

Indicator #6: Monitoring progress and making improvements

It is vital that groups leading environmental and conservation projects take time out to reflect on progress and what is working well or could be improved.

When done well, this can identify opportunities to improve the experience for volunteers and local participants – and to share successes and lessons learned with the wider community, stakeholders and funders.

It is also important to monitor progress, to ensure that the project stays on track to achieving its environmental goals. It is a good idea to provide progress updates to stakeholders, particularly landowners who may be sceptical about the project's cost-benefit opportunities.

Demonstrating Good Practice

When seeking funding for environmental and conservation projects, community organisations should describe how their proposed activities align with the six indicators of good practice. Many funders expect to see evidence of:

- how the organisation identified the need for the project

- what partners will be involved and what their roles will be

- whether iwi/hapū have been involved, and how much and how well the project reflects their role as kaitiaki

- how the wider community has been engaged with the project, and the plans for ongoing community participation or volunteering

- whether the organisation has good procedures, practices and policies that indicate strong project planning and management

- how the organisation intends to collect data, monitor and report on changes over time, improve the project and communicate its impacts.

Key Questions:
Can We Strengthen our Environmental/Conservation Project?

> Is our organisation familiar with the Department of Conservation's community conservation project guidelines (available at www.doc.govt.nz)?

> Are we clear about the required licences, consents, permits or technical support?

> Have we considered how our organisation responds to the needs of, and engages with, the wider community and stakeholders?

> Have we developed a relationship with our local iwi/hapū? If so, how can this be strengthened?

> Are we providing enough opportunities for our project participants to learn?

> Do we have feedback and data-collection mechanisms to understand the impacts of our project?

Key Resources for More Information

1 **How to Start, Improve or Evaluate a Conservation Project** (Department of Conservation)

   www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/run-a-project

2 **Information and Resources for Restoration Groups** (Nature Space – Ecological Restoration in Aotearoa)

   www.naturespace.org.nz/resource-centre

3 **Gathering Environment Information and Monitoring Your Project** (Environment and Conservation Organisations of Aotearoa New Zealand)

   www.eco.org.nz/top-menu-2/what-we-do-2/digital-tools---training.html

4 **In Safe Hands Toolkit - A Safety Management Toolkit for Community Groups Involved in Environmental Activities** (Conservation Volunteers New Zealand)

   www.conservationvolunteers.co.nz/what-we-do/in-safe-hands-toolkit

Pare Kore provides education and training on marae, with the aim of encouraging people to prevent waste going to landfill by recycling, redesigning and reusing. The project includes whānau education on sorting waste so that as little as possible goes to landfill.

Pare Kore was established in 2008 by a group of organisations seeking to minimise waste and increase resource recovery on marae in Waikato. It has a vision for all marae in Aotearoa to be working towards zero waste by 2025, and currently 309 marae have signed up to the programme. Pare Kore demonstrates good practice through:

- taking a 'by Māori, for Māori' approach that encourages tangata whenua to exercise their kaitiakitanga, and using kaupapa Māori (Māori approaches) to support whānau learning and participation

- ensuring strong community engagement through partnerships with local marae

- tracking the environmental and social impacts of its work, including gathering data on the number of marae involved, the number of participants in wananga (learning events), and the tonnes of waste diverted from landfill

- offering participants opportunities to learn and develop skills and support the project's sustainability.

For more information on Pare Kore, visit parakore.maori.nz

This good practice resource was developed in 2019 by:

References and Resources

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