

Step 5

Putting the Plan Together

By this point, the field workers and community members have gathered together the information they need to put together the community environmental plan. They have defined their community's vision for the future, the community's environmental problems and needs, and feasible solutions. Now it's time to set priorities for action and produce a coherent plan—the road map and the schedule for reaching the goals.

To create the community environmental plan, three steps remain:

- Target the most important problems for the community to solve.
- Set priorities for action and choose the solutions to implement.
- Put the plan together, making sure that all the solutions fit together

Targeting the Problems

At this step, the planning team needs to decide which problems to target. They have already laid much of the groundwork for this in Chapter 4, when they determined the greatest hazards to people and the environment and evaluated how effective the environmental facilities are. Now the team should target the problems it considers to pose the highest risk, since protecting the health and environment of the community's residents is the first priority.

If the communities have facilities and practices that are not performing well, the team might want to target those problems too, even if they don't yet pose a high risk. Poor practices waste money and other resources and are likely to cause bigger problems in the future. Finally, the community probably has other important considerations besides risks and performance of environmental facilities. These might be social or economic goals, such as:

- Attracting businesses to the community or setting up an enterprise.
- Making the community a nicer place to live.

- Promoting tourism like SESWA in Swabi.

Each community has its own set of considerations and priorities. For some communities, these other considerations might even be more important than reducing risk. This would be a good time to revisit the client community vision to see what goals residents value the most.

At this stage in the planning process, the field workers and community members should rearrange the list of the community's needs and problems according to the considerations that are most important to the community. Since some will probably be equally pressing, they can arrange them in categories, such as "action is urgent," "action is necessary," and "action is desirable."

Setting Priorities for Action

Which solutions shall be implemented to address the identified problems and needs? Which shall be implement now, and which will be implemented farther down the road?

The field workers should already have a handle on which solutions are feasible for the community, how quickly or easily they can be implemented, approximately how much they cost, and what they can achieve. List these solutions, along with key information about them, next to the problems.

Setting priorities for action requires a balancing act. The community members need to solve as many of the most urgent problems as they can with the resources they have. They might also want to address problems that don't necessarily pose a high risk but that have easy and inexpensive solutions. For example, littering generally does not pose a great hazard to public health or to ecosystems. The littering problem, however, might be easily solved by providing trash cans in public places, having school children make posters that can be displayed throughout town asking people not to litter, or even getting local law enforcement involved, if necessary. Activities that involve a broad spectrum of the community help generate public support for the overall environmental program.

The resources are usually not as limited as we think. We need to give special attention to solutions that can address more than one problem. For example, they might decide that leaf burning is a low-priority problem in the community, while managing solid waste is a high priority. Yard waste composting is a solution for reducing solid waste that also helps discourage leaf burning and its associated air pollution problems. The matrix below can help us set short-term priorities for action. We need to Keep in mind that other community is likely to have longer term needs that might require substantial resources to solve.

Remember, this is the environmental plan for *the* community. Only the people in a community know what the priorities for action should be. So they need to take charge,

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be creative, and do their best to juggle different options to solve as many of the community's environmental problems as possible while maintaining public support and using resources wisely.

	Problem Is Very Important for the Community to Solve	Problem Is Less Important for the Community to Solve
Solutions Require Few Resources	Include solutions in the plan	Probably include solutions in the plan
Solutions Require Many Resources	Include as many solutions as possible in the plan	Don't include solutions in the plan

Looking at the Big Picture

At this stage in the planning process, the community environmental plan will be pretty well hammered out. The only thing left to do is to look at the big picture. For each of the problems that are priorities for action in the environmental plan, the community shall try to predict the full outcome of using the solution (or solutions) and see if any of the solutions they have chosen might cause new problems or interfere with one another. Say, for example, that the community decides to expand its ground-water supply system. This could mean that the "zone of contribution" for the well—the area of an aquifer that recharges the well—could expand to encompass more septic tank leachfields or other potential sources of contamination. Talk to the local experts. Ask them if they foresee any problems with how the solutions fit together.

Community support will be crucial to the success of the plan. As the team look at each solution, it shall ask itself questions about how much support it will have in the community:

- How concerned is the community about the problem that the solution addresses?
- Is local leadership available and capable to undertake and complete the needed changes?
- Can they draw on local capabilities, equipment, and ingenuity to implement the solution?

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Consider that the provincial and federal governments have to protect the broader public interest and might find the community plan too narrow. Keeping an eye on environmental problems that the community might be exporting to other communities will help them anticipate and avoid conflicts with higher levels of government.

Finally, the community and field workers shall never lose sight of the community vision. Looking at each problem independently can make it difficult to see how it all fits together. Throughout the process, stop and consider what they are really trying to accomplish.

Step 6

Implementation: Putting the Plan Into Action

Now the field workers and activists have their community environmental plan—their road map to the destination the community wants to reach. But even the best map will be worthless if they never buy their vehicle, put in the fuel, and start the journey. They'll need a maintenance schedule to keep things running smoothly. No matter how good a road map is, detours, flat tires, and accidents might force one off course. The community organisation needs to check its progress regularly and see whether it needs to change its route.

This chapter is about **implementation**: putting the plan into action, evaluating how well the plan works, and revising the plan as needed. In the environmental plan, a community has outlined the solutions it wants to use to manage environmental issues. Now it is time to iron out the approach for implementing the plan, which includes:

- Developing a schedule for putting the plan into action.
- Financing the plan.
- Determining the role the local government and other governments and organizations will play.
- Determining the role individuals in the community will play.
- Evaluating and revising the plan as necessary.

Developing a Schedule for Putting the Plan Into Action

To begin implementing the plan, the community organisation and the field worker need to develop a step-by-step approach for each solution the community has chosen. They shall start by making a list of concrete actions that must be taken, in the order in which they should be taken, for each solution. Once these step-by-step approaches have been ironed out, shall draw up a schedule for taking the steps. The schedule should include a start date and a completion date for each step, when possible. Sometimes, however, the actual dates will have to be established after other actions are completed. An approximate target date should be included in these situations. In some cases, the solutions will take only days or weeks to complete. In other cases, however, completion

will take years.

After the schedule has been drawn up, the community organisation need to determine who is responsible for “making things happen.” List those responsible for completing each step. This way, it can easily check with the right people to see if the plan remains on schedule and to determine what should be done if the schedule slips. The schedule needs to be regularly checked to make sure things are happening as planned. If not, take steps immediately to keep up the momentum.

The community should also set up a way to measure the plan’s successes and failures. For each solution, specific goals should be given. For example, a specific goal might be to cut the amount of garbage each family produces from three to two bags a week.

The community might consider focussing on one major project in its plan that addresses a key concern—such as beginning a water conservation program—and mobilizing the community to get results. This can help build momentum and community support for other actions specified in the plan, and can help the community organisations identify and correct weaknesses in one project before they’ve gone far on other projects.

Action Planning Checklist

An Action Planning Checklist can assist in getting the action planning process off the ground. The Action Planning Checklist identifies specific actions that should be considered for each action plan.

Responsibility/Leadership - At the beginning of the action planning process identify potential candidates and determine if they will accept the responsibility.

Stakeholders - the field workers shall determine who will be impacted by the action item and get them involved in the process including any committee process established for action plan development. An early buy-in and participation by stakeholders may ease implementation later on. Identification of stakeholders and their participation will increase the sensitivity of action planning recommendations.

- Residents
- Landowners
- Builders
- Developers
- Professionals (Planners, Engineers, Architects, etc.)
- Businesses
- Industry
- Others

Resources - What type of resources will be required, are they readily available, are they costly and can they be managed by the individuals involved in the process? Resources

may include data, mapping, personnel, budgets, software and facilities.

- Data
- Personnel
- Mapping
- Computer Hardware/Software
- Others

Obstacles - Identify the most obvious obstacles even before you set out to develop the action plans. The identification of obstacles may assist in selection and development of action planning items.

- Funding
- Community
- Regulatory
- Leadership
- Resources
- Schedule
- Others

Support - Where can you count on support in the community? Will it be the community-at-large, elected officials, appointed officials, or public agencies? Much like obstacles, you need to determine who you can count on for support as a way of shaping action planning items.

- Community
- Planning Commission
- Elected Officials
- Others

Cost and Funding Sources - These are items that are mainly the concern of the "Let's Go" section on implementation. However it is useful in the action planning step to give some consideration to funding sources since funding availability may influence how an action plan is constructed.

- Estimated Cost of Action
- Local Funding
- State/Federal Funding
- Private Funds

The community is ready to go! The Action Plans that the community has developed in "**How Would the Community Get There?**" highlight those actions necessary to put you on the path to realizing the community's vision for its future -- a healthy environment, a strong economy, and a high quality of life. It is now, during implementation, when long-term commitment and resources will be most needed.

Financing the Plan

The approach a community uses to implement its environmental plan must include a strategy for how to pay for solutions. The community must cover both the **operating costs** and the **capital costs** of any equipment and facilities included in the plan. Generally, different types of financing are used for operating costs than for capital costs. The field workers and the community members will need to choose which combination of financing options they will use to cover both of these costs.

Common operational costs include supplies; fuel, utility, and rent; maintaining equipment; monitoring; and interest payments on loans. Another type of operational cost that all communities face, but many do not think about, is depreciation, the reduction in value of a facility or piece of equipment. All of the equipment and facilities that the community uses are getting older. The older they get, the less valuable they are because they are more likely to break down. Each piece of equipment has a useful life, which is the duration of time that the equipment is expected to last before it must be replaced. Financially preparing to replace equipment when its useful life is over is important. Although depreciation is an operational cost, replacement is a capital cost.

Operational costs tend to stay about the same from year to year, although they can rise because of the age of equipment and because of inflation. A steady flow of funds should therefore be used to finance operational costs.

Capital costs are different from operating costs because they involve a one-time investment that is usually relatively large. Common capital financing options are micro-credit grants and loans, bonds, and notes. For many of these options, the useful life of the equipment or facility must be considered when choosing a financing option and the level of debt. If the equipment or facility must be replaced before the debt is repaid, the community will be carrying more than one debt for the same service.

The following table presents information about common financing options for both operational and capital costs. Another important alternative is saving money. Saving money allows the community to become more efficient and provide services at a lower cost. A community can save money in many ways, such as by using local people, equipment, and financial resources (including business donations and volunteer help); properly maintaining equipment; running equipment at times when electrical costs are lower; and buying supplies in bulk with other organisations at a discount. Although financing minor capital costs with money saved is possible, this rarely happens. Instead, savings are usually used to fund operational costs and to avoid the need to raise taxes or fees.

The affordability of a community's environmental solutions depends on community involvement as well as the funding available. If community residents have not participated in shaping the environmental plan, its affordability may well be reduced, because residents will be less willing to pay for changes in which they have had no role.

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Financing Plan Options

Financing Method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Fees	Service fees can be charged for using an existing service (such as billing customers for the drinking water they use) or demanding a service (such as charging homeowners to be hooked up to the wastewater treatment system). Fees can be flat fees (everyone who uses the service pays the same price) or graduated fees (based on the amount each person uses).	Generate a steady flow of funds, therefore better for financing operational costs. Graduated fees could provide customers with incentives to use less if fee rates are increased as more water is used.	Flat fees discourage conservation and promote wasteful use. Service fees might be unpopular. Fees based on how much water is used could discourage industries and other businesses from locating in an area.
	Punitive or corrective fees can be charged to people or businesses that pollute (e.g., releasing chemicals into wastewater treatment systems). The community can also give special fee reductions for industries that start out with water conservation and pollution prevention measures.	Generate revenue while discouraging pollution. In some cases, avoid noncompliance with permit requirements caused by industrial pollutants.	Cannot be relied upon as a source of income. If too stringent, could lose industry to another location or encourage illegal avoidance fees.
	Recreational fees can be charged for hunting and fishing licenses or privileges.	Only paid by those who participate in certain activities. The money raised can be earmarked to protect the environment and maintain recreational areas.	Generate a relatively small amount of money. If recreational fees are too high, they might encourage illegal activities.
	Impact fees can be charged to developers, who will create demand for local infrastructure.	Only paid by those who profit. Money can be used to offset costs.	Might reduce potential for development.
Grants	Grants are funds that are provided by the RSPs, government, or other organizations to pay for special projects	Small communities may be eligible for many different grants to build or upgrade their environmental facilities. Grants do not have to be paid back. Most grants have specific eligibility requirements that a community must meet.	Grants tend to be very competitive. Your community must invest time and money to apply for a grant that you might not get. Grant use requirements may be expensive.

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Loans/Micro-credit	A loan is money lent with interest. Low-interest loans might be available through the RSPs or banks for rural development.	<p>A long-term, low-interest loan will allow your community to pay for capital expenses that require a large one-time investment.</p> <p>Loan payments can be spread out over time so that repayment is manageable.</p> <p>Loans can be used for shorter term financing while waiting for grants or bonds.</p>	<p>Unlike a grant, a loan must be repaid. Over time, both interest and principal must be repaid with money collected through taxes, fees, or money previously saved.</p> <p>Commercial bank loans may be difficult to obtain without adequate collateral.</p>
Revolving Funds	Revolving funds are self-sustaining funds set up to provide loans to communities for construction and modification of facilities. As the loans are repaid, the money is returned to the fund so that it can be borrowed by other communities.	<p>Offer below-market interest rate loans.</p> <p>Can be Targeted toward the improvement of environmental facilities in communities.</p>	Little amount can limit the use of funds.

Roles of Community Members

Once a community has a picture of which organizations will play a role in implementing the plan, the field worker and the community activists need time to figure out how individuals will be involved. The community should decide who is responsible for making the solutions work and what their specific responsibilities are. Some people on the planning committee might continue to be involved as the plan is implemented. Stay on the lookout for new people who might step forward to help carry out new programs and activities. When the approach to implementing the environmental plan calls for community residents to play a role, they should be knowledgeable about their new responsibilities. The field worker need to actively seek volunteers to donate both time and materiel. The more people are involved in implementing the plan, the greater the support from the community and the fewer the problems.

Evaluating and Revising the Plan

No matter how much thought a community has put into the environmental plan, it might find that some of the solutions it has chosen just don't work out. Other solutions might work, but not as well as the community had hoped.

When solutions do not meet expectations, it's time to reevaluate a community environmental plan. In some cases, the community will decide not to do anything because the flaws in the plan are not big enough to justify the money and time it would take to fix them. For example, if trucking solid waste to the landfill costs more than they expected, building a more central landfill would probably not be a better solution.

Sometimes a community will have to modify solutions only slightly. If a plan includes wellhead protection and people are still accidentally polluting the wellhead area, the only

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change that might be necessary is to increase public education and post signs that tell people what they can't do in the wellhead area. Unfortunately, in some cases major changes to the plan might be necessary. If problems with nitrate pollution of surface water continue, the town might have to take stronger action to reduce fertilizer use.

Even if a community finds that all of the solutions in its environmental plan are effective, the plan might still have to be revised in the future. Changes outside the community might affect the plan. For example, new technologies might be developed that can better solve environmental problems, and new regulations might be made on how communities should handle environmental issues. The community should be aware of these changes so that its environmental plan can be updated when revisions make sense.

Changes within the community might also affect the environmental plan. As the community grows, for example, solutions might have to be revised to handle unforeseen problems. Also, growth might allow the community members to implement solutions that previously were too expensive for a smaller community. Finally, the people in the community might develop new priorities, and the plan will need to change to reflect those priorities. Just as water, soil, and air are connected, so are creating the plan and implementing it. What a community does with one will continue to affect what happens to the other.