

Professional Extension Capability Pathways

Relational Practice – Guiding Principles

Version 1

TNQ

Drought Hub



tnqdroughthub.com.au



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Relational Practice – Building and Sustaining Self and Relationships with Others

The TNQ Drought Hub brings together farmers, Indigenous landholders, communities, researchers, and businesses to co-design approaches and solutions for drought resilience in Tropical North Queensland. The Hub explores and shares innovative approaches to solutions towards building drought resilience in the region. Key to our activities is enhancing connectivity and collaboration between various groups and service providers in our region.

Relational Practice

Relationships between extension officers and farmers, while valuable in their own right, are also a means for change, so relational practice is at the core of the change process. The aim of relational practice is to develop rapport and understand the needs, goals and priorities of the farmer. It requires understanding a farmer's world view: demonstrating attentive listening to understand their values, needs and most importantly personal and productivity goals. This provides the foundation for change.¹

Introductory Comments

This document sets out some guiding principles to support decision making related to extension practice. It is essentially a summary document to support the scoping out of a project or program for an early career extension professional or a more seasoned professional that may wish to review an alternate approach. It is intended to support your decisions, there are three complementary resources setting out some guiding principles associated with Change, Technical and Relational Practice. Each of the documents can be considered as required to support effective extension practice decision making.

Context

Establish the foundation for a collaborative relationship. Begin to get to know the producer (or group of producers) and their context to build and sustain a sound working relationship. Be welcoming and inclusive, engage with producers and seek to understand them and their context.²

This guideline supports the identification of key stakeholders, how to engage with them, and effective communication practices to achieve successful program or project delivery. It is important to understand and work with different communities of stakeholders, or audiences relevant to the project or program of work.

¹ https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccch/images/Qld-EMP_Report.pdf

² https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccch/images/Qld-EMP_Report.pdf

Engaging with Key Stakeholders

Table One³ illustrates the process for identifying different communities that need to be considered. A Community of Interest captures the broader community. The Community of Practice are the various stakeholders that need to be engaged with to drive impactful change. The Community of Stakeholders who implement change belong to the Community of Place (producers and identified stakeholders).

Table One: Communities of Interest, Practice and Place.

Community of Interest Broader Community			
Program Coordinator	Funding Partners	Community Groups	
Community of Practice Target audience for impactful change			
Delivery Partners	Contractors	Queensland Government and Government Departments	Research Organisations and Universities
	Delivery Stakeholders	Producer Organisations	NRM Organisations
Community of Place Producers and Stakeholders implementing on-ground change			

³ Adapted from: <https://www.barrierreef.org/uploads/21-22-Lower-Herbert-Comms-Engagement-Plan-FINAL-ENDORSED.pdf>

Communication and Engagement

Effective communication takes into consideration each of the communities of stakeholders. The external communication and engagement approaches are specifically for producers, intermediary groups, and community groups⁴.

Table Two: Internal versus External Stakeholder Engagement

External Communication	Community of Interest	➤ Inform
	Intermediary Groups	➤ Consult > Involve > Collaborate
	Producers	➤ Empower > Consult > Involve > Collaborate
Intra-Program Communication	Delivery Partners	➤ Engage > Inform > Consult > Involve > Collaborate
	Node Partners	➤ Engage > Inform > Consult > Involve > Collaborate

A Communication Plan will inform the utilization of Tables One and Two. In Table Three a sample of key stakeholders and the types of communication to be incorporated in a communication plan is provided. It is expected that by implementing the communication and engagement activities below, the project can effectively communicate and engage with the audiences identified, producers, intermediary groups, community, and internal stakeholders.

Table Three: Communication Planning Framework

Audience	Key Messages	Purpose	Channel	Method and/or activity	Frequency	Indicators for measuring success	Target
Producers	Technology Adoption	Program Promotion	Website	Program Information	Quarterly	Website traffic	30 Site hits

⁴ Adapted from: <https://www.barrierreef.org/uploads/21-22-Lower-Herbert-Comms-Engagement-Plan-FINAL-ENDORSED.pdf>

Delivery of programs and projects encompasses successfully engaging with the target communities to build strong working relationships that promote awareness, engagement, and practice change. Successful delivery outcomes can be reported against the Communication Planning Framework.

Supporting Resources

Various source documents are referenced in the development of this guideline. The reader is encouraged to review the full source documents where further detailed information is required in your decision-making processes.