

CREATING ACTION PLANS

by *Evan Sinclair*
Indigenous Planning Studio
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Summary

This fact sheet discusses how an action plan can help your community achieve its goals. It also explains who is involved in the action planning process, how the action plan is used, what resources are required, and what some of the common challenges are. Finally, this resource offers some helpful tips for guiding a successful action planning process. Importantly, it describes how to keep community members interested and involved while making the plan!

Keywords: communication tools, managing the process, direction setting, planning team

When is an Action Plan Created?

The process of creating a Community Plan is commonly broken into four phases, as shown below in Figure 1:

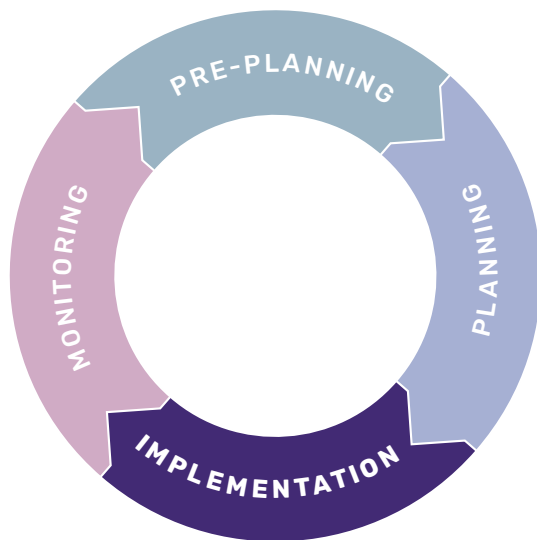


Figure 1 | The Four Phases of Creating a Community Plan.
Adapted from (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada / Indigenous Services Canada. CCP Handbook – Comprehensive Community Planning for First Nations in British Columbia. 2016. <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100021966/1100100021970>. p. 14.) Used with permission.

Action plans are generally created when your community is in the implementation phase of the process.¹ This means you will have already completed your Community Plan! While implementation is generally defined as the third phase, the beginning and end of each phase is not always strict.

It is important that you adapt the process to suit your community's needs. In some cases, projects that do not require a great deal of resources can be implemented sooner than others.² Still, before you start the action planning process, you will need to set your community's goals and objectives.

For more information, see *Setting Goals and Objectives*.

What is an Action Plan?

Even though your Community Plan may be completed, implementation often requires more planning.³ As such, after prioritizing your goals from the Community Plan, the action plan should describe what you want to achieve and offer a framework for how it will be done.⁴

Implementation often requires more planning.

Action plans can take many different forms and, in doing so, can serve a variety of purposes.⁵ For example, an action plan can be created to implement a specific part of the Community Plan, such as constructing new housing or introducing new types of economic development. On the other hand, action plans can also respond to particular concerns in your community, like protecting culturally significant areas or improving emergency preparedness.⁶

However, no matter where the action plan comes from or what topic it addresses, its pieces should generally remain the same. The primary action plan pieces are illustrated in Figure 2 below.

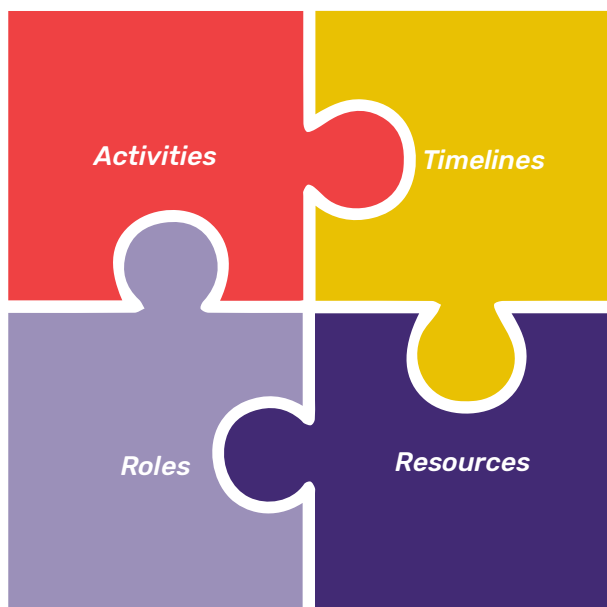


Figure 2 | The Four Key Pieces of an Action Plan

Adapted from (National Aboriginal Lands Managers Association. Community Land Use Planning Toolkit, Version 1.0. Ottawa: Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. 2016.)

First, the plan should include a list of activities to start, support, and achieve your community's goal. Second, the plan should offer a timeline for when the activities will happen. This will make sure the process stays on schedule. Third, the plan should explain who is involved in each activity, as well as who is responsible for doing what. Fourth, in order to determine if the goal is doable, the plan should describe the resources needed for each of the activities.⁷

Why Create an Action Plan?

With everything that is included in a Community Plan, deciding how to get started can be difficult. Creating an action plan can help to simplify this step. Based on your community's top goals and objectives, the action plan can identify and communicate what needs to be done to achieve them.

Prioritizing actions is the first step to translate your community's plan into results on the ground. This can be done by considering things such as:⁸

Impact: the action positively affects the greatest number of community members, opposed to actions helping very few.

Urgency: the action addresses the most pressing issues or goals of your community.

Cost: the action does not require more resources than are available in the community to implement it.

Support: the action is believed to be important by the community members, Chief and Council members.

What are Some Common Challenges?

Carrying out an action planning process that is open to community members can help to prevent three major problems from arising.⁹

First, managing your community's expectations is key, as failing to do so can result in disappointment with results or frustration with the process. Second, poor communication with community members can result in them becoming disinterested. As the action plan's greatest asset, it is important to keep them informed and involved throughout the planning process. Third, lack of clarity can cause confusion and, in turn, disagreement among community members.

This can pose major problems when your community is trying to come to an agreement on priorities.¹⁰ These factors are important, as successful implementation of the action plan depends on community members taking ownership over it.

ownership

community members are involved in creating the plan and, as a result, remain committed to helping it take shape

Careful budgeting and project management can also prevent a number of other issues from emerging. For instance, resources are often limited and, in cases where there are unexpected costs, it is important to have a backup plan. The same can be said for delays. Although it is important to have a schedule of activities in place, issues like bad weather and supply shortages can extend project timelines. Detailed reporting is also important for maintaining the support of partners and funders. Deciding who will be responsible for this task and when it needs to happen is a great way to improve chances of success.¹¹

Who is Involved in the Process?

There can be many different people involved in creating an action plan. The process may be directed by a community's Planning Team, Land Advisor, or professional consultant.¹² The involvement of Chief and Council is also important for accessing resources. Regular communication with them can help to maintain their support, even in cases where administration changes.¹³ However, when it comes to the action plan taking shape on the ground, it is the community members who will bring it to life through their shared efforts and everyday actions. For this reason, it is important all community members take part in the process. In doing so, their participation will help to support ongoing efforts and increase the chances of long-term success.¹⁴

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What Resources are Needed?

Creating an action plan will require financial support. This is important to consider before getting started, as the aim of the plan will largely determine how much is needed. If the costs are more than what is in your community's budget, additional resources may be required. To assist in this, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada offers a section on funding resources in the CCP Handbook.¹⁵ In other cases, the action plan may need to be adjusted to reflect the resources available, which should be decided with the community.¹⁶

Beyond money, creating an action plan also requires time. The community planning team, Land Advisor, Chief, Council, and members of the community will be expected to invest time into meeting, communicating, and reporting.¹⁷ These activities will also require a certain level of skill. In some cases, professionals from outside the community can be hired to provide specific services. In order for the plan to succeed, these groups must work closely to avoid conflicts.¹⁸

How is a Successful Action Plan Created?

Though the planning process in First Nations' communities is very different from municipalities, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) offers some helpful tips for moving beyond plans. As shown in Figure 3, there are 5 key things you can consider during the action planning process.¹⁹



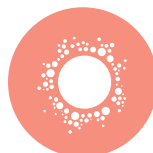
Management

A group or managing body can be created to oversee the action planning process and review the progress of activities.



Partnerships

To gain support, non-government and government organizations at different levels can be engaged with.



Participation

Organizations and people from across the community should be included so everyone takes ownership over the plan.



Measurement

Since changes to the plan may occur along the way, measuring results can help you stay on track and meet your goals.



Communication

Designing a strategy for communicating with all members of your team will help to direct resources and stay on schedule.

Figure 3 | Five Factors for a Successful Action Planning Process.

Adapted from (Clark, A. Passing Go: Moving Beyond the Plan. Ottawa: Federation of Canadian Municipalities. 2012. https://fcm.ca/Documents/tools/GMF/SS_PassingGo_EN.pdf. p. 3.) Used with permission.

Final Thoughts

In summary, action plans can help turn your community's ideas into results on the ground. Once you have completed your Community Plan, as well as established its goals and objectives, an action plan can be created. To increase the chances of seeing positive results, make sure members of your community are actively involved throughout the process!

Further Reading

Comprehensive Community Planning Training Materials (2007-09) by Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources

Available at: <http://www.yourcier.org/comprehensive-community-planning-training-program-materials.html>

Moving Toward a Stronger Future: An Aboriginal Resource Guide for Community Development (2015) by Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness

Available at: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/mvng-twrd-strngr-ftr/index-en.aspx>

Endnotes

- 1 Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. "CCP Handbook: Comprehensive Community Planning for First Nations in British Columbia, Third Edition," *Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada*, 2016, Accessed October 24, 2017, http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-BC/STAGING/texte-text/ccphb2013_1378922610124_eng.pdf, p. 15.
- 2 INAC, 2016, p. 46.
- 3 INAC, 2016, p. 48.
- 4 United Nations Habitat, "People's Process in Post-disaster and Post-conflict Recovery and Reconstruction, Chapter IV: Community Action Planning," *United Nations Human Settlements Programme*, 2008, http://www.fukuoka.unhabitat.org/docs/publications/pdf/peoples_process/ChapterIV-Community_Action_Planning.pdf, p. 13.
- 5 National Aboriginal Lands Managers Association, "Community Land Use Planning Toolkit, Version 1.0," *Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada*, 2016, p. 53.
- 6 INAC, 2016, p. 48.
- 7 NALMA, 2016, p. 53.
- 8 INAC, 2016, p. 46.
- 9 NALMA, 2016, p. 55.
- 10 INAC, 2016, p. 48.
- 11 INAC, 2016, p. 45-48.
- 12 NALMA, 2016, p. 53.
- 13 INAC, 2016, p. 49.
- 14 NALMA, 2016, p. 57.
- 15 INAC, 2016, p. 104.
- 16 UN Habitat, 2008, p. 14.
- 17 INAC, 2016, p. 45.
- 18 NALMA, 2016, p. 56.
- 19 Amelia Clark, "Passing Go: Moving Beyond the Plan," *Federation of Canadian Municipalities*, 2012, https://fcm.ca/Documents/tools/GMF/SS_PassingGo_EN.pdf, p. 3.