

As communities develop and implement their community wildfire protection plans (CWPP), they have successes that other communities may find useful as they begin their CWPP efforts. At a recent meeting of people involved in the development of CWPPs at the local, state, and national level, individuals shared what have been the keys to their success in developing and implementing CWPPs. These keys are offered as touchstones for helping to direct your CWPP development.

1. Start with communities that have some existing capacity

When we talk about the capacity of a community we are referring to all the pieces that must be in place for a community to be successful in taking on a project such as a community wildfire protection plan—a citizenry with the interest, time, and skills that can help move the project forward; businesses and organizations who understand the importance of the endeavor and are ready to assist; networks that bring individuals and organizations together to address community needs; experience gained through other successful community projects. In order to demonstrate effectiveness and achieve objectives it may make sense to start developing CWPPs in communities with some existing capacity. However, you will eventually need to work with underserved communities who may lack capacity, but have significant interest and need to develop CWPPs. In these cases, agencies should be prepared to provide those communities with increased assistance.

2. Focus on process

For the process to be seen as legitimate it must be transparent—people have to be able to see and understand what is going on. Communicate often, and through a variety of channels. Be honest. Don't rush—it is worth it to take your time and do a good job.

3. Take advantage of local leadership

As mentioned above, the capacity of a community includes the skills of its citizens. Local leaders exist in every community—identify them and bring

them into the process. A local spark plug who is well-connected, charismatic, energetic, passionate, and enthusiastic can be critical to a project's success. Agency leadership can provide the initial spark necessary to initiate a project, and provide stability when the project reaches some rough spots.

4. Focus on relationships

Building successful, credible relationships takes a significant amount of time but



the pay off can be tremendous. Building relationships through the CWPP process will not only result in a better plan, but will help build community capacity—carrying over to other projects in other areas.

5. Take advantage of windows of opportunity

The Golden Rule of Communication is to take advantage of windows of opportunity. This is also true for building CWPPs. Something needs to happen in each community to start things rolling—something that brings home the urgency of fuels reduction. When that something happens, you need to be prepared to immediately step in and bring that urgency to bear on your planning activity.

6. Work at a scale that makes sense

Don't spend a lot of time worrying about whether you are working at an appropriate scale—work at the scale that makes sense for getting something done. Plans done at a county scale may have access to resources that local units lack, but local plans may have more relevance for the citizens you are trying to involve. Local jurisdictions may be able to build on or adapt broader scale county or regional plans. Work at the level where you can make something happen.

7. Get help

Reach out for help. If you don't know where to begin ask the local agency for help, or go to a neighboring community who has been successful. Go to the local watershed council or volunteer fire department and ask for their involvement. Agencies may have access to technical information and other resources that communities alone cannot access. You will never know what is available unless you ask.



8. Develop measures of success

Agencies and units of government need to have quantifiable measures of success. However, you need to develop measures that make sense for the community. It is often more important to focus on outcomes—actual changes in the community and on the land—than outputs. Identify and define what is important to the community—build your measures of success around that.

NOTE: On this project the researchers receive guidance from the Stakeholder Advisory Team, a group of 16 people involved in the development of community wildfire protection plans at the local, state, and national level, and who represent the clients of any knowledge transfer products coming from this research. Advisory Team members have worked on dozens of CWPPs. The “Keys to Success” presented here were developed during an Advisory Team meeting held in October, 2005. Advisory Team members and principle investigators are listed on the project website: <http://jfsp.fortlewis.edu/>.



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