

“Leading the Way” Presentation: What have we learnt for council’s integrated planning?

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Background

The Victoria Health Promotion Foundation (Vic Health), together with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), developed a “Leading the Way” (LTW) resource kit. The aims of the resource kit are to provide Councillors and senior council staff of councils in Victoria with an improved understanding of the social and economic factors that may impinge upon community health, and to enhance the whole of government approach to public health planning (LTW, resource guide). In order to promote the resource kit, Vic Health also provides face-to-face seminar to all councils, and encourages the attendance of both the Councillors and senior staff of the council.

In the course of implementing the Public Health Plan, the City of Greater Shepparton adopted “Leading the Way” seminar as a strategy to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) To enhance cross-directorate integration in planning,
- 2) To promote the newly adopted Greater Shepparton Public Health Plan as an integral part of council planning processes, and
- 3) To increase awareness amongst the Councillors and senior staff of social, economic and environmental factors in the determination of community health.

The Greater Shepparton Public Health Plan (GSPHP) working group, in collaboration with Directors of the council, nominated 23 senior council staff to attend the LTW seminar. All seven Councillors of the City of Greater Shepparton were also invited.

On 9th of September 2002, all Councillors and 18 senior council staff from 12 different departments attended the seminar.

Pre and Post seminar questionnaires were developed as an evaluation tool. The aim of the evaluation is to assess the level of awareness and understanding on the GSPHP, integrated planning and ‘Social Determinants of Health’ by attendants, and their attitude towards the application of these concepts.

This report summarises the evaluation results of the LTW. It seeks to provide the evidence basis for the subsequent strategic development and planning of the Council, in order to strengthen cultural change towards integrated planning across all directorates.

Staff evaluation results

‘Integrated planning’

- ↳ Before the presentation, more than half of the senior staff had ‘low to moderate’ understanding of the term ‘integrated planning’. The majority of attendants, claimed to have changed understanding after the presentation.
- ↳ After the presentation, there was a 22% increase in attendants, who ‘agreed’ that ‘integrated planning is essential to their work performance’.
- ↳ Before the presentation, a majority believed that ‘knowing other council plans, and consultation with other council members are important process to perform their tasks’.
- ↳ However, barriers to information access and the lack of mechanism for joint project participation between council departments are important issues to recognise.

Municipal Public Health Plan

- ↳ Almost all attendants were aware of the GSPH, but not all remembered the four health priorities in the health plan.
- ↳ After the presentation, there was a 33% increase in attendants, who ‘agreed’ that GSPHP is integral to the development of all council plans.

Social Determinants of Health

- ↳ More than two thirds of attendants believed that the presentation changed their understanding of term ‘Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)’.
- ↳ After the presentation, a majority think that they can make use of ‘SDOH’ model to improve community health.

Summary & Issues

It is acknowledged that ‘integrated planning’ is essential. But,

- How will the concept be established in such a way that integrated planning can be put into practice across all departments within the council?
- How will the council address the issue of appropriate information access and sharing between departments for the purpose of planning?
- How will a mechanism for joint project participation be established to facilitate the implementation of integrated planning?

There is an increased awareness of the GSPHP and its potential role as a mechanism for integration in the development of council plans. But,

- How can GSPHP be promoted to achieve integrated planning?
- On the other hand, how can the integrated planning approach contribute to an improved implementation of the GSPHP?

Councillor evaluation results

Integrated planning

- ↪ Before the presentation, a majority of attendants had fairly good understanding of ‘integrated planning’.
- ↪ No significant change was perceived after the presentation.

Municipal Public Health Plan

- ↪ All were aware of the GSPHP 2002-04, but not all remembered the four health priorities of the health plan.
- ↪ Three-quarters of attendants believed that GSPHP is integral to the development of all council plans before the presentation. But, no improvement after the presentation.

Social Determinants of Health

- ↪ Three-quarters of attendants had good understanding of the concept of ‘Social Determinants of Health’ before the presentation. But, no difference was observed after the presentation.

Summary & Issues

A majority of councillors believed that they had good understanding of integrated planning, and believed that it is essential to council planning. But,

- How can the knowledge be transferred into practice?
- How can councillors help to develop cultural changes towards integrated planning?

There were no substantial changes after the presentation. The majority of the changes came from those who already had ‘good’ understanding of all three concepts, ie SDOH, integrated planning, and integral role of GSPHP in council planning. So,

- Do we need to do more to address this?

More than a half of the attendants found the presentation valuable in terms of helping them to make decisions about council planning.

- Do we need a follow-up session to further improve this result?

Recommendations by the Attendants

Recommendations by Councillors to promote integrated planning within the council:

- 1) Develop a checklist
- 2) Develop a council policy to put the concept into practice
- 3) Insist that inputs are provided from at least two directorates in the briefing and decision-making process.

Recommendations by GSPHP Work Group to promote integrated planning within the council:

- 1) Provide an audit of the major strategic projects and incorporate them into an information exchange network to enhance information access across all directorates of the council.
- 2) Formalize a mechanism that can receive and act upon requests for joint project participation between different departments of the council.
- 3) Adopt a pilot for integrated planning to be put into practice by all council departments.
- 4) Using GSPHP as a link to major projects to identify areas or plans that need integrated inputs from different directorates.