Identifying a Planning Team

Purpose of the Planning Team

It is important to get out to community groups, departments, and the public throughout the planning process. At the same time, it is helpful to have a smaller group of dedicated people, who form a 'planning team' or a 'steering committee' that can meet more frequently, generate ideas, take the 'pulse' of the community and help the community planner work through the planning process.

The purpose of this group is:

1. To provide input, feedback and direction for the development of the CCP.
2. To serve as a cross section representation of the community so that many perspectives are included.
3. To help develop the overall plan.
4. _____

    _____

    _____

Roles of the Planning Team

Before you meet with the planning team for the first time, write a draft term of reference that the group can discuss and modify. This way everyone is the planning team will know, and agree to, the expectations, meeting schedule, and roles of the group.

In general the Terms of Reference should include brief information on the:

- Background of the initiative (i.e. CCP)
- Goal and purpose of the planning group
- Role of the planning group
- Membership and membership selection
- Group organization
- Meeting logistics (frequency of meetings, location, timing, presentations/attendance by other community members)
- Information sharing (who will take the minutes, when will they be available to the group and to the public)
- Other items the group feels is important.

The Government of Canada document 'Sharing the Challenge: A Guide for Community-Based Environmental Planning' has good information on setting up committees. Appendix 1.1. on page 38 has a sample terms of reference (you will need to modify it for your local process).

Members of the Planning Group

Finding the members of the planning group is an important task. The planning process requires a time commitment, participation in the discussion, and an understanding of what is happening in the community.

Think of the possible people who you think should participate in this working group. Think about the people in the community with relevant information and knowledge, who are reliable and has the time to participate, and who are passionate about community planning and sustainability or sustainable development.

Here are some ideas to help you determine who these members could be are:
1- 8-10 people is a good size
2- 1-2 members of the administration (some communities include political leaders, other specifically do not and have a reporting mechanism to the leadership)
3- mix of men and women
4- good knowledge of the community
5- representatives of local organization and group
6- mix of family groups [community cross-section]
7- involved in planning/ programs
8- an Elder member
9- a youth member

Narrowing down the list

You will probably come up with an initial list of more than 8 to 10 people. You will need to narrow down the list to a manageable number of people for the planning group. Developing criteria to help decide who the 'best' people would be for the project can help you do this.

Possible Criteria

1- ability to participate
2- knowledge on climate change/ planning
3- length in community
4- job/position, organizations
5- _____
6- _____
7- _____

What are other criteria that should be used to narrow the list of people to a manageable size?

Initial Thoughts on Planning Group Members
Who could be on the planning group? Write these names down here.

Others Considerations

There are a number of considerations that we want to raise when identifying and selecting group members.

1- We want a cross-section from the community. There is a tendency to select people who we know personally. Your goal is to get the best people who will contribute to the plan.

2- Participation is key. Availability is important, since the Planning Group members need to be involved. Their input and suggestions are valuable and should create the best resource that is reflective of your community.

3- Conflict within the group. Open dialogue is essential to promote an effective working sessions which covers all the topics on the agenda. Tension between group members can stifle the exchange and flow of ideas. Respect for others' opinions and recommendations are important in the process.

4- Other agendas. Individuals who use these sessions to push their own agendas distracts from the purpose of the planning group to create a resource representative of the whole community. It is important to hear the views and opinions of the entire group, however everyone must have an opportunity to express their own viewpoints.

5- Naysayers. Don't be afraid to include someone who isn't 100% supportive of the planning initiative but who is otherwise is perfect for the group. Sometimes these people don't have all the information available or make judgements based on misinformation. These people can turn out to be your biggest supporter. You be the judge of this (or get advice) of their openness to change.

6- Fun. The meetings should to be fun and engaging. The best ideas are generated when people are relaxed and sharing their thoughts and viewpoints.