

Community road safety strategies: a review

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ABSTRACT

Between March 2008 and August 2011, the TAC, through the TAC Community Road Safety Grants program, funded twenty five projects in local councils or community groups to develop municipal or community based road safety strategies.

The TAC established the Community Road Safety Grants (CRSG) program to provide community groups with opportunities to address local road safety issues within the context of the Victorian road safety strategy. Since March 2008, the TAC has conducted 10 rounds of funding, resulting in more than 200 approved projects totalling around \$3.7 million in grants.

In 2012, the TAC commissioned a study to develop an understanding of the development and implementation of community/municipal road safety strategies. Particularly, the TAC aims to understand processes, support, consultation, barriers to implementation and evaluation of strategies and associated action plans.

The results of the study will assist the TAC and its road safety partners to review guidelines and policy on the implementation of community based and/or municipal road safety strategies.

This paper will report on the process undertaken in this review, with outcomes to be presented at the conference.

BACKGROUND

The TAC through the TAC Community Road Safety Grants program has funded numerous local councils or community groups to develop municipal or community based road safety strategies.

The TAC established the Community Road Safety Grants (CRSG) program to provide community groups with opportunities to address local road safety issues within the context of the Victorian road safety strategy. Since March 2008, the TAC has conducted 10 rounds of funding, resulting in more than 200 approved projects totalling around \$3.7 million in grants.

Twenty-five projects address the review and/or development of municipal or community road safety strategies.

Applications for these projects usually include the engagement of a contractor to undertake the following activities:

- Review of current strategy;
- Review of local crash and infringement data;

- Stakeholder consultation;
- Community consultation;
- Development of draft strategy and actions; and
- Finalisation of strategy and recommended actions.

The TAC undertook this review to gain a greater understanding of the development and implementation of municipal and community road safety strategies funded through the TAC Community Road Safety Grants Program. The results of the study will assist the TAC and its road safety partners to review guidelines and policy on the implementation of community based and/or municipal road safety strategies.

METHOD

The TAC engaged Nucleus Consulting Group (Nucleus) in December 2011 to undertake the review to consider the following issues:

- process undertaken to develop the strategies, including data collection, consultation, partnerships etc;
- understanding of available support through organisations such as VicRoads regions, Police, Victorian Registered Community Road Safety Groups etc;
- barriers to receiving support including access to/provision of data;
- the level of support or endorsement by Councils;
- development of action plans for the strategy;
- level of implementation of the strategy and actions;
- evaluation of the strategy or specific actions; and
- value for money in terms of the level of funding provided through the grants program for individual strategy development.

To conduct the review, a methodology of three steps was developed by Nucleus Consulting group as outlined in Table 1.

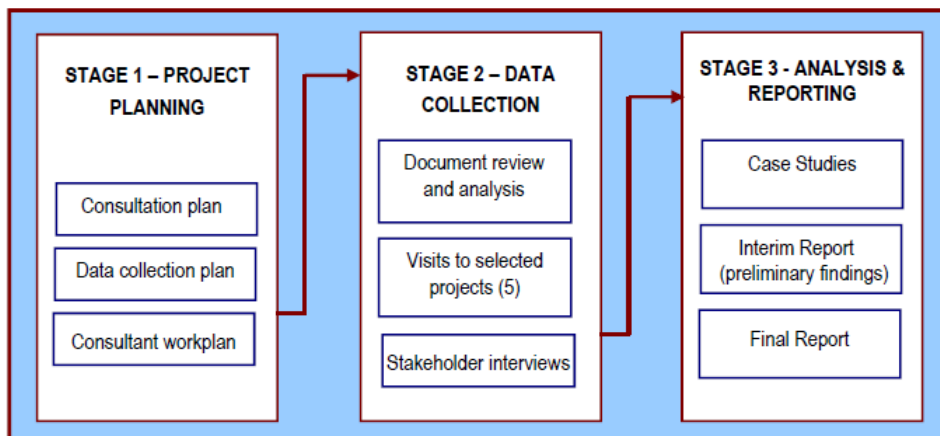


Table 1. Project methodology

The TAC contacted each municipality or community group to advise them of the review. An email was sent to the key contact for each project to provide an outline of the review and its purpose (see figure 1).

Dear Grant Recipient

In nine rounds of the TAC Community Road Safety Grants program, 25 projects have been approved to develop municipal or community based road safety strategies.

In the June 2010 issue of the 'Update' newsletter, the TAC advised that it would be undertaking a review of projects funded to develop municipal road safety strategies. The TAC is also interested in gaining an insight to community based road safety strategies, which have been funded by the TAC.

This review will assist the TAC and its road safety partners to review guidelines and policy on the implementation of municipal and community based road safety strategies. The project has been awarded to Nucleus Consulting Group and will commence in January 2012, with a view to finalisation by the end of March 2012.

The outcomes of the review will be to broaden the understanding of how local road safety strategies have been developed, including:

- Processes undertaken (eg data collection, consultation, partnerships etc)
- Levels of support, endorsement and ownership
- Extent of implementation of the strategy and actions
- Monitoring, review and evaluation.

The TAC understands that road safety strategy projects will be in various stages of development, implementation or evaluation.

The first stage of the project will be a desk top review of applications, supporting documentation and data, and progress and final reports. Nucleus Group will identify a sample of projects for telephone interviews (second stage) and the third stage will involve an in-depth review of a small number of projects to develop case studies. The TAC will contact Councils and community groups identified for Stages 2 and 3 to ensure willingness to participate in the review. It is likely this stage will commence from early February 2012.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this important review.

Figure 1. TAC email to grant recipients

Following agreement by the TAC on the methodology, the key tasks for Stage 1 (Review Planning & Project Profiles) included:

- *Collation of relevant documentation*

To enable the review process to be thorough, all documentation relating to the approved projects was provided to Nucleus, including project application forms and reports as well as any other program documentation for consideration.

- *Development of templates*

Project profiles were developed, for the more detailed case studies, to guide the structure and nature of information required to be collected (see Appendix A).

- *Review and analyse*

Project application forms, progress and final project reports (for all 25 funded projects) were reviewed and analysed. Information from documentation was used to develop a profile for each project.

- *Telephone interviews*

Key contacts, provided by the TAC, from each project were telephoned as part of the development of each profile. This enabled the TAC to gain insights into the development and success of local road safety strategies or ways that the program might work more effectively.

- *Case study projects*

Structured interview outlines (consultation questions) were developed in readiness for Stage 2 to guide discussion with the nominated case study projects.

The key tasks for stage 2 (Development of Case Studies) included:

- Telephone discussion with key contacts of projects to discuss project profiles and explore key issues further.
- Review of key characteristics of finalised project profiles to select five projects for more detailed case study.
- Visit five projects to undertake project profile review and conduct interviews. Visits included interviews and discussion with project sponsors, project workers and external partners, providing opportunities for review of project processes and outcomes.
- Preliminary analysis of projects in order to explore strengths/weaknesses of models and particular practices.

The key tasks for stage 3 (Analysis and Reporting) included:

- Preparation of a report identifying and exploring issues relating to review objectives, including:
 - Analysis of project profiles to compare and contrast the breadth of structure and practice across the reviewed 25 projects funded (drawing out aspects of 'better practice' as well as barriers)
 - Finalisation and presentation of five detailed case studies describing the manner in which local road safety strategies were assembled and implemented
 - Summary analysis to enhance understanding of how community and municipal road safety strategies are developed and implemented
 - Implications for guidelines and policy on the implementation of community based and/or municipal road safety strategies.

DISCUSSION

Of the 25 community road safety strategy projects identified for this project, 23 projects participated in this review. Twenty one projects have reviewed and confirmed their project profiles. Five projects were identified as case studies, finalised and agreed to by the councils or groups.

In order to derive implications for guidelines and policy on the implementation of community based or municipal road safety strategies, key elements drawn out about projects from profiles and case studies included:

- Processes undertaken to develop the Road Safety Strategy, including data collection, consultation, partnerships etc
- The level and nature of support provided through partnerships and/or links with other organisations or agencies, as well as any barriers that prevented effective support being provided
- Structure and content of action plans (to implement the strategy)
- Council support or endorsement and level of implementation of the strategy and actions
- Governance and quality control arrangements, and any evaluation undertaken.

Analysis included comparison of the breadth of structure and practice across the 25 projects, drawing out aspects of 'better practice' as well as barriers to development and implementation. Analysis also included input and comment from a range of project stakeholders with specific reference to how projects worked and key factors in effectiveness.

The Community Road Safety Grants Program (CRSGP) has enabled grant recipients and project partners to identify and document critical road safety issues and build the profile of road safety in local communities. Key aspects of successful projects included:

- Reference to relevant research, crash statistics and other local data to substantiate and demonstrate need for a specified project and as the basis for road safety strategy design and identification of current issues and priorities.
- Community engagement and consultation, both during design phase (to identify local issues or concerns) and strategy execution (to facilitate implementation of road safety actions). Engagement was more effective when projects tapped into existing community networks, worked with knowledgeable community development facilitators, included community leaders at governance levels and provided a number of different methods and points at which people could get involved.
- Good working relationships and clear communications with a range of project partners, each having a defined role and level of involvement. As well as the 'indispensable' partners (eg Victoria Police, Local Government, RoadSafe Committees and VicRoads), more diverse representation across community and local networks added vibrancy to projects.
- Council support and commitment or endorsement, most effective when there was active Councillor involvement in chairing or participating in road safety committees and community consultations, and when the road safety strategy and action plans were included in 'whole of Council' policy frameworks (also a critical element in promoting sustainability).
- Translation of the road safety strategy into practical, measurable actions designed to progress achievement of identified goals, along with regular monitoring of implementation of action plans and clear, effective governance arrangements.

Possible future changes that may be considered include requiring more emphasis on the following in funding application forms:

- Demonstration of need and proposed solution using statistics, a sound evidence base and research
- Community engagement to be broadly based, inclusive and participatory
- Defined partnerships and working relationships with regional and community Groups
- Council and local government involvement in developing the grant application and contributing to strategy development
- Demonstration that strategy has influenced local action and informed program funding applications of Council and partners.

Other considerations for the TAC relate to funding supplementation where projects:

- Propose to involve larger numbers of partners, across a broader geographical area (eg across several local government areas)
- Evaluate the road safety strategy and action plans and provide findings in interim and final reports.

CONCLUSION

While the key road safety partners such as TAC and VicRoads work closely together to coordinate programs and initiatives, Councils and community groups need further encouragement to examine complementary programs for strategic opportunities, information and resources that might make their projects more effective. For example, VicRoads has invested considerable money in development of Municipal Fact Sheets and Municipal Performance Indicator data that might be used alongside other data to identify local road safety issues; CRSGP strategies and priority actions could be used more strategically in informing and developing applications for funding under other programs.

The TAC will consult with its road safety partners, particularly VicRoads, in considering the recommendations from this review and their application to enhancing policy and guidelines to ensure local road safety initiatives at the municipal and community level have the greatest chance of being effective.