Outline of presentation

- Social Sustainability?
- WACOSS Model of Social Sustainability
- The Social Sustainability Assessment Framework
  - Background
  - How was it developed?
  - What does it look like?
  - How could it be used?

Social sustainability

- Only fairly recently receiving research attention...
- Three main centres of research on social sustainability:
  - Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development
  - Sustainable Europe Research Institute
  - Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney

Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development

- Colantonio (2007) “Measuring Social Sustainability: Best Practice from Urban Renewal in the EU”
- “There is limited literature that focuses on social sustainability to the extent that a systematic study of this concept is still missing.”
- “Social sciences and social policy research have developed a plethora of social objectives strategies and measurement instruments, but with little regard for the sustainability perspective.”

Sustainable Europe Research Institute

- “Social sustainability, as an independent dimension of sustainable development, and equally important as the economic or environmental dimension still lacks broad recognition by scientists as well as by decision makers.”
Socially sustainable communities are equitable, diverse, connected and democratic and provide a good quality of life.

Since 2002 WACOSS has been addressing the lack of attention on the ‘social dimension of sustainability’.

**Social Sustainability - Definition**

Social sustainability occurs when the formal and informal:
- processes;
- systems;
- structures; and
- relationships
actively support the capacity of current and future generations to create healthy and livable communities.

**Social Sustainability – Principles**

- Equity
- Diversity
- Democracy & Governance
- Quality of Life
- Inter-connectedness

**Background to the SSAF**

Socially sustainable communities are equitable, diverse, connected and democratic and provide a good quality of life.
Assessing social sustainability

- Social-Economic Assessment is not enough
- Social is more than a trickle-down from economic benefit
- Social Impact Assessment is not enough
- Reactive to projects and driven by proponents
- Mitigating worst social impacts of a project
- Fairly constrained version of the ‘social’ – amenity, visual impact etc
- Social Assessment is not just community engagement

Social Sustainability Assessment Framework (SSAF)

- A simple, self-assessment questionnaire of 30 questions to help understand how organisations, programs or services contributes to social sustainability by:
  - Encouraging reflection
  - Facilitating discussion and dialogue
  - Enhancing awareness and understanding of a project
- The SSAF is not:
  - A formalised, accredited framework
  - A definitive or quantitative tool

Social Sustainability Assessment

- Enhancing awareness and understanding of a project
- Facilitating discussion and dialogue
- Encouraging reflection
- Mitigating worst social impacts of a project
- Reactive to projects and driven by proponents
- Focus on social sustainability

Background to the SSAF

- Initial interest in developing a social sustainability assessment tool to help inform future Sustainability Assessment processes of:
  - State Government
  - Private Sector
  - Local Government

- After discussions with funding body, Lotterywest, the focus became firmly on the assessment of social sustainability WITHIN the community services sector

How was it developed?

- Two project coordinators – Jane Lawton then Nicole Hodgson
- A reference group primarily from community services sector
- Workshops with the sector and many iterations!
- A piloting process, assisted by consultant Anne Goodall, piloting with four organisations in the sector
Part 1 – Quality of Life
To what extent will the project improve:
- affordable and appropriate housing opportunities for the target group?
- physical health outcomes for the target group?
- mental health outcomes for the target group?
- education, training and skill development opportunities for the target group?
- employment opportunities for the target group?
- access to transport for the target group?
- the ability of the target group to meet their basic needs?
- safety and security for the target group?
- access to community amenities and facilities for the target group?

Part 2 – Equity
To what extent will the project:
- reduce disadvantage for the target group?
- assist the target group to have more control over their lives, socially and economically?
- identify the causes of disadvantage and inequality and look for ways to reduce them?
- identify and aim to meet the needs of any particularly disadvantaged and marginalised people within the target group?
- be delivered without bias and promote fairness?

Part 3 – Diversity
To what extent will the project:
- identify diverse groups within the target group and look at ways to meet their particular needs?
- recognise diversity within cultural, ethnic and racial groups?
- allow for diverse viewpoints, beliefs and values to be taken into consideration?
- promote understanding and acceptance within the broader community of diverse backgrounds, cultures and life circumstances?
Part 4 – Social Cohesion
To what extent will the project:
- help the target group to develop a sense of belonging in the broader community?
- increase participation in social activities by individuals in the target group?
- improve the target groups' understanding of and access to public and civic institutions?
- build links between the target group and other groups in the broader community?
- result in the provision of increased support to the target group by the broader community?
- encourage the target group to contribute towards the community or provide support for others?

Part 5 – Democracy & Governance
To what extent will:
- the project allow for a diverse range of people (especially the target group) to participate and be represented in decision-making processes?
- the processes of decision-making for the project will be clear to and easily understood by staff and stakeholders?
- the project have a budget sufficient to ensure adequate delivery by qualified trained staff?
- the project ensure that the use of volunteers is appropriate and properly governed?
- the duration of the project be sufficient to achieve the desired outcomes?
- have you considered what will happen when the project ceases?

How could it be used?
- Continuous improvement of projects and services:
  - E.g. go back in 6 months time and reflect on our project intentions
  - Assisting in the development phase of new projects and services
  - Helping to articulate the broader impacts of projects for:
    - advocacy to funding bodies and decision-makers
    - making presentations about projects/programs
    - writing case studies / reflections of programs

How could it be used?
- As a starting point for a more detailed evaluation of projects
- As a starting point for peer exchange with other organisations and services
- As an educative tool to work through with staff or management groups to increase understanding about social sustainability and the broader impacts of services
- As a ‘checklist’ for program management

Where to from here?
- Introduction of the SSAP to organisations in the community sector
- Look for other partners to create alternate versions, for example:
  - Local Government – planning and development assessment processes, broader sustainability assessment processes, community development and community service provision
  - Private sector – sustainability assessment processes, community engagement for development and project proposals

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