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Jumping through hoops: delivering more effective community consultation during the grant application process

Lynne Hardy De Weaver

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Jumping through Hoops: Delivering More Effective Community Consultation during the Grant Application Process

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*Dip. Ed., Master of Science (Education)*

A thesis presented to The School of Business
Southern Cross University
Lismore, NSW Australia
In fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Declaration of authorship

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not previously been submitted for any degree, nor is currently being submitted for any degree.

I also certify that any help received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged.

Print Name: __________________________

Signature: __________________________

Date: __________________________
Abstract

The State and Federal Governments of Australia provide a range of grant-based programs to promote economic development and build social capital in regional Australia. One of these was the Community Technology Centre at New South Wales Program (CTC@NSW). It was funded by both State and Federal authorities and designed to help communities with populations of less than 3,000 people to gain access to a range of Information and Communications Technologies products and services to build capacity, social capital and facilitate regional economic development. The CTC@NSW Program was built around the creation of technology centres owned and operated by local communities across regional NSW. Grants provided seed funding over a three year period and as a consequence 55 such centres were established in NSW. A community consultation process was integral to this grant application program as it required communities to prepare and submit satisfactory business plans and cash-flow projections with the help of a Regional Program Coordinator (RPC). However, the onus was on the communities to demonstrate, through the application process, that they had the necessary skills and capacity to establish and operate community owned and operated businesses; and that they could become, and remain self-sustaining following the acquittal of the grant monies.

This research examines the CTC@NSW program and the community consultation involved in the application process. It also looks at the role played by the RPCs in assisting communities prepare and submit their grant applications. Action Research was used in this research and its associated reflective process served to inform the case studies of the communities in which the author worked. An online survey of the 55 successful communities
involved in the CTC@NSW program was also undertaken. This survey sought to investigate various aspects of the community consultation process and was both qualitative and quantitative in nature.

The research identified a number of language-related issues that affected the grant application process and subsequent outcomes. The academic literature referenced provided significant material which gave greater clarity concerning the importance of building social capital and capacity during the community consultation process in order to empower communities. The findings of this research also highlighted some of the underlying issues that emerged during the consultation process. One of the major problems identified by the research was the importation of government cultural, educational and corporate sector values and language into rural communities with no pre-program testing to examine potential mismatches between government expectations and community understanding.

As a result of this research, a new community consultation model has been developed, based on pertinent literature. It involves a more inclusive, 'bottom-up' approach to the community consultation process along with suggestions that could be imbedded in government grant programs that have been created to promote regional economic development. This model proposes the deployment of RPCs who can deliver a more effective community consultation process to ensure better program outcomes for both governments and communities through the development and/or enhancement of social capital within applicant communities.

This new model could also serve to ensure that grant programs not only deliver the government’s desired policy outcomes more effectively but also better serve the needs of identified regional communities by building knowledge, capacity and developing social capital.
Refereed Publications, Book Chapters and Conference Papers

De Weaver, L. (May 2004) *Jumping through Hoops: Regional Communities and the Process of Applying for Grant Funding*, Conference Paper, presented at the CISA Conference, Adelaide, S.A.


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CHAPTER 1
Introduction

In addition to setting my research objectives, this chapter will include some of my own narrative as well as provide the background on the Community Technology Center at New South Wales (CTC@NSW) program and the experiences I had as the Northern Rivers Regional Program Coordinator, all of which provided the stimulus for this research. The award-winning CTC@NSW program was the recipient of the 2002 NSW Premier’s Silver Certificate of Achievement in the ‘Provision of Services to Regional/Rural NSW’ and from the perspective of the State and Federal Governments that provided its funding, the CTC@NSW program was successful. However, it was my work experience, with this and other grant programs in the Northern Rivers, which highlighted the need for research that looked at the community consultation aspect of applying for government grants. Throughout this chapter, and in all the others, I will use the term ‘community consultation’ rather than ‘community engagement’ as these two terms are often used interchangeably in the literature and by others engaged in this type of work. The content of the other chapters in this thesis have been summarized at the conclusion of this chapter.
1.1 Personal Background: the catalyst for this research

Figure 1.1 Key dates referenced in this research. (All abbreviations can be found in the Glossary)

After working for fifteen years in Sydney, first in the advertising industry and then as a marketing consultant specializing in corporate communications in the telecommunications sector, I moved to the Northern Rivers of NSW for my ‘Sea Change’ in January 1999. Naively I had thought that I could continue my consulting work using the Internet and email and by taking the occasional plane trip to Sydney to stay in contact with clients and suppliers while living in a small coastal community in regional NSW. The reality proved to be altogether different.

The uptake and wide acceptance of the Internet as a business tool in Sydney throughout the late 1990s had led me to believe that equity of access would be as common and affordable in regional NSW as it had been in Sydney. However, the first reality check came when I discovered that dial-up connection to the Internet at local call rates was not available in Yamba, even though it had approximately 3000 residents and was only a few kilometers from both a major interstate highway and a large regional centre. The next surprise came when I discovered that download speeds reduced to around 28kbps for any document that exceeded one page or contained more than one kB of graphics. This meant that I could no longer send reports or anything that contained images online nor continue to work collaboratively online with graphic designers and clients in Sydney.

When I decided to see what could be done to improve the situation I discovered that there were a whole range of other issues that needed to be addressed in the first instance if I wanted to be able to continue using the Internet as a business tool. Initially I contacted various departments at Telstra and other telecommunications companies only to discover that there was not a lot I could do as an individual, even if I was prepared to pay a premium price for
better Internet access. I also discovered that Telstra had put in a pair-gain system on the telephone network in my local exchange so that they could provide more than one telephone service over a single copper line when they installed new telephone network services in the lower Clarence Valley where Yamba is located. At the time, Telstra regularly installed pair-gain systems in fast growing areas where there was no existing telecommunications infrastructure, in order to provide voice telephone services to new premises. This system was not only cheaper for Telstra to deploy but it was also more cost-effective from their perspective. The first item on my agenda was to raise awareness in the local business community of the benefits of using the Internet as a tool in order to save time, money and increase productivity. I joined the local Chamber of Commerce and began to lobby for better telecommunications services in the town. I soon discovered that there were a number of other ‘local’ issues that had to be dealt with in this particular community in order to get affordable online access and services that were at least on parity with those available at this time in the urban areas of Australia. At the time, it seemed to me that the entire concept of using the Internet and Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) as a business tool was a ‘city’ concept and that the ‘Digital Divide’ had Yamba’s postcode, 2464.

I spent the next 18 months working on committees, surveying local businesses in Yamba to see what type of ICT they might find useful. I conducted Internet and eCommerce workshops, wrote media releases about the many reasons and applications for using the Internet and the World Wide Web (Web). I was also the chief advocate for applying for one of the federal government’s Networking the Nation (NTN) grants. These grants had been made available from the sale of the first tranche of Telstra shares following the government’s first steps to privatize Telstra, the company that had been Australia’s nationally-owned telecommunications carrier. It was under the auspices of the local Chamber of Commerce that I applied for a grant through NTN’s National Office of the Information Economy (NOIE) program, via their Website http://www.noie.gov.au to establish a local Internet Service Provider (ISP) in Yamba and to create a Portal Website for the benefit of local businesses, particularly its tourism industry, and the community in general.

Before my ‘Sea Change’, I had spent the previous fifteen years working in the advertising and communications industry, first as a copywriter, specializing in translating the complex
Chapter 1: Introduction

features of financial products and services into easy-to-understand consumer benefits, then as a Communications Consultant in the telecommunications sector, working on a range of complex marketing and corporate communications projects for companies such as Ozemail, Microsoft, AAPT Telecommunications and Primus Telecommunications. However, after downloading the information about the NOIE grant from their website, I knew that completing the application was going to be a challenge. Although I was the Chair of the Chamber’s Application Committee because of my enthusiasm and previous work experience, warning bells should have gone off for me at this point because it was very difficult to recruit other members from the business community to form an Application Committee. Those I approached would look at the application, see what was required and tell me that they simply didn’t have the time to spend on it as their focus had to be on their own businesses. Only two other people from the Chamber actually helped to prepare the application and their help consisted of getting letters of support from other organizations within the community. Everything else fell on my shoulders and since I had been the driving force in the first instance I was determined to do the best I could to get that grant because of the economic benefit it could deliver to the businesses of Yamba.

Fortunately, I had worked with another group from the Chamber earlier in the year to assist them with an application for a grant from the NSW Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD) Main Street Small Town program. There had been a lot more interest in that particular project because the benefits of this program seemed to be much more tangible to members of the Chamber – better signage for the town on the Pacific Highway, business surveys to determine why local people left the town and did their shopping elsewhere and funding for a Program Coordinator to actually do the work. Although my involvement with the NSW Government’s Main Street Small Town (MSST) program had been fairly minimal, I had met the Regional Business Development Manager for DSRD and had had many ‘chats’ with her in the process of completing the MSST grant application. She explained what funding bodies looked for in applications; informed me as to the type and level of detail and information required, showed me how to reframe the questions in the application during the consultation phase and explained how applications were assessed. In addition to gaining a better understanding of the entire application process, it became
increasingly clear that the language used in these applications was different from the 'Plain English', benefit-oriented advertising copy I was used to writing.

I discovered that the language used in grant applications, and all too frequently employed by the facilitators to deliver the community consultation associated with these programs, had its own special jargon which included the extensive use of three letter acronyms (TLAs). Additionally, as I found out later in the CTC@NSW Grant Application, its 'language' had an additional layer of complexity as it included the terminology relating to Information and Communications Technology (ICT) issues which were explained with their own unique buzzwords and TLAs. I also had to learn what was meant by 'in-kind contribution' and 'competitive neutrality', who 'stakeholders' were, how to conduct 'community surveys', how to get those all-important 'letters of support' written and how to use the correct terminology in response to the ICT questions asked in grant applications. I soon realized that I had to learn to speak the 'language of grants and regional economic development' if Yamba's grant application was to be successful. As I proceeded with the process of completing the paperwork, it also became evident that the bureaucratic processes involved in grant programs were intrinsically linked to political agendas and election cycles of State and Federal governments. This was especially evident if the applicant community was located in a 'marginal' or swinging electorate. Further research in this area is recommended.

Over a four month period, from July through October 2000, I worked six to eight hours a day, six days a week to gather the information required to complete the documentation that NOIE required for that particular grant application. I also had to establish contacts with various people and organizations throughout the district that could actually fulfill the function of Internet Service Provider (ISP) and provide portal services. Such a supplier also had to be 'competitively neutral', i.e. not be competitive with any existing business within the community. Additionally, I wrote media releases, arranged and facilitated numerous community meetings and built support from the ground up. However, it was when I struggled to complete this application that I began to wonder if the language used in the documentation of that NOIE Grant might also have served as a gatekeeper for people living outside the capital cities of Australia as they were often less aware of the social and economic issues
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inherent in the privatization of Telstra. But, in the end, I did meet the funding round deadline and the application was lodged on time.

After an anxious eight-week wait, the Chamber received a letter from NOIE, just before Christmas to say that the application had been successful. It was then that I realized that since I had done all the preliminary work, I would probably be expected to make sure that the funding was acquitted according to the business plan in the application. However, by this time I had already taken on another regional economic development challenge. My interest in the impact of ICT in regional economic development had been ignited, but as a professional writer, I was intrigued by the role that language played in community consultation and grant application process. I also wanted to put some of the things I had learned from applying for a NOIE grant into practice. In January 2001, I accepted an appointment from the NSW Office of Information Technology to become the Northern Rivers Regional Program Coordinator for the CTC@NSW program so other members of the Chamber had to take over and implement the next steps in establishing the community enterprises that the NOIE grant monies would help them to create.

I worked for the CTC@NSW program for the next two years and fulfilled my ‘quota’ to establish six Community Technology Centres (CTCs) in the Northern Rivers. In December 2002, I was appointed Marketing Manager at Southern Cross University a position I held for the next five years. During this time I also commenced my PhD research and served as a Director on the NSW government’s Northern Rivers Regional Development Board. Unfortunately, I had to leave full-time employment in November 2007 when I contracted a severe auto-immune disorder, Chronic Inflammatory Demyelinating Polyneuropathy, which saw me hospitalized and requiring ongoing medical intervention including weekly transfusions. Unfortunately, this condition also caused almost a two-year interruption to my research. Although regaining my strength and balance as well as the use of my arms and hands has been a slow process, I have maintained my interest in and commitment to addressing the issues raised in this research and have maintained contact with my former colleagues in the CTC program. I am currently a member of the Regional Development Australia, Northern Rivers Board following a Ministerial appointment in 2009.
1.2 History of the CTC@NSW program

The CTC@NSW program had evolved from earlier, but similar, Telecentres models that had been funded during the late 1990s by the federal government’s Networking the Nation (NTN) program. (In particular, the West Australian Telecentre Network had been used as a model by the CTC Program Manager.) Prior to the establishment of the CTC@NSW program, there had been 33 Telecentres in regional NSW which had also been funded under NTN, all of which were later incorporated into the CTC@NSW Network. The following timeline shows the Program’s operational stages.

**Figure 1.2** Timeline of the CTC@NSW Program Operational Stages

From its inception the CTC@NSW program had focused on assisting regional NSW communities, with populations of less than 3000 to gain access to the Internet and a range of ICT based products and services through a grant application process. Its goal was to benefit local businesses, students, community organisations, individuals and identified special groups within these communities through the provision of better access to ICT. However, it is important to note that the Telecentres funded by the earlier NTN programs did not have the same commercial imperative that CTCs had, rather these earlier grants had placed greater emphasis on building social capital and providing equity of access to the Internet.

CTCs, on the other hand, were driven by a strong commercial imperative and had to demonstrate, as part of the application process, a business plan that would demonstrate just how they would become self-funding community enterprises at the conclusion of their three years’ of funding and program support. However, each of the applicant communities had the flexibility to determine how they would configure their CTC to maximise its revenue potential. These configuration models affected both the amount of funding that the communities could apply for as well as the composition of the Application Committees.
CTCs could be configured as one of three types:

1. Stand-alone models; i.e. larger, single-site centres or CTCs, located in a single town with a single managing community organization;

2. Out-reach models with the main CTC located in the largest town or community in the region with the ‘outreaches’ located in smaller, neighbouring villages and offering limited facilities, i.e. one or two computers and Internet access and minimally serviced by the main centre;

3. Alliance models were comprised of two smaller Centres, in two separate locations with each providing a subset of the services and equipment offered by a single standalone CTC. These sites could also be co-located in a number of public facilities, e.g. Tourist Information Centre, etc.

The CTC@NSW program was jointly funded by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments and was specifically designed to assist small rural and remote communities in New South Wales in developing an ICT based community enterprise. This definition also provides the context for the CTC@NSW program as the program’s Website, http://ctc@nsw.gov.au defined CTC’s as,

“Community Technology Centres (CTCs) are computer enabled multi-purpose facilities based in the Main Street or main centre of a town. They provide access to Internet connected computers as well as provide printers, video and teleconferencing facilities, business equipment, and e-commerce incubator facilities. CTCs are owned and managed by a not-for-profit group, such as an incorporated association, co-operative or local government committee.”

Building social capital was always a key goal of the CTC@NSW program, but its focus was achieving this through the establishment of social enterprises, and elements of this were clearly demonstrated in all aspects of the CTC application. It is interesting to note the fuller, more inclusive definition of social enterprise which was offered by Talbot, et al (2002, p. 2-8),

“Social enterprise is a means by which people come together and use market-based ventures to achieve agreed social ends. It is characterized by creativity, entrepreneurship, and the focus
on community rather than individual profit. It is a creative
devour that results in social, financial, service, educational,
employment, or other community benefits… and is a bold
tempt at redressing many of the issues that people who are
marginalized in our society have, by rebuilding their confidence
and their capacity to help themselves… There are three broad
1.3 CTC@NSW Implementation Stages
The CTC@NSW program was implemented in stages as shown in Table 1.1. It was originally
anticipated that all CTCs should be fully operational and self-sufficient within a three year

Talbot’s definition seems to reflect the aspirations as well as the framework within which the
CTC@NSW program operated. However, social enterprises can also be looked at in terms of
building social capital as defined in a report published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics
(2004, p. 12),

“Social capital relates to the resources available within
... and opportunity for community benefit can only be done
through sound commercial practices. Social enterprises are
businesses.”

Building social capital through the establishment of social enterprises is a challenging task,
but it was the hallmark of the CTC@NSW program which was deployed in New South Wales
at the beginning of this century.

“Social capital relates to the resources available within
communities in networks of mutual support, reciprocity, and
trust. It is a contributor to community strength. Social capital
can be accumulated when people interact with each other
in families, workplaces, neighbourhoods, local associations,
interest groups, government, and a range of informal and formal
meeting places.”
funded in later rounds would receive the same level of support as those created during earlier rounds.

**Table 1.1** Operational Stages and staffing levels of the CTC@NSW Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Activity at Stage</th>
<th>Program Staffing Levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>1 June 2000 – 31 January 2001</td>
<td>Planning &amp; Development</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>1 February 2001 – 30 June 2004</td>
<td>Implementation, deployment of Regional Coordinators &amp; commencement of Funding Rounds</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>1 July 2004 – 30 June 2005</td>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>1 July 2005 - 2009</td>
<td>CTC Association</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stage 1 required extensive research into models of other Australian telecentre programs. This was undertaken and conducted by the CTC@NSW State Manager, the Community Development Manager and a Business Planning Officer.

The implementation and rollout of the program occurred at Stage 2 when the program had a fully staffed Support Unit, with offices in Sydney and Bathurst, and had recruited all its Regional Program Coordinators (RPCs). As the RPC for the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales, I facilitated the program's rollout in the Northern Rivers and worked in this capacity from February 2001 until December 2002. The NSW regions involved in this program are shown in Figure 1.3; the Northern Rivers is shown as 1.
During Stage 2, the staff of the Support Unit included a Business Strategy Manager, an ICT Officer, a Help Desk Officer and Web Manager, Marketing and Promotion Manager and two Office Administrators. This unit provided ongoing assistance for applicant, as well as funded communities, and identified and helped CTCs to deliver a range of potential revenue streams that might assist them in building their businesses and generating revenue. The twelve regional coordinators worked in close collaboration with the Support Unit. Following each funding round all parties involved in the program attended regular debriefing meetings to discuss any and all of the issues that they had had to deal with during that particular funding round.
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During Stage 3, the program’s transition period, the central Support Unit was reduced to four members with just four regional coordinators retained to provide support and assistance to the newly funded CTCs. Stage 3 was established to ensure that communities that had received funding during one of the later funding rounds were not disadvantaged. It also foreshadowed a strategy for a staged disengagement.

The NSW State Government provided additional funding to establish the program’s next iteration as the CTC Association. Stage 4 staffing consists of just one paid Business Development Manager. As of May 2009, 55 CTCs still remained in this network and it spanned regional NSW from the Northern Rivers to the Far West and to the Riverina in the south of the State. They are all ‘not-for-profit’ community enterprises with strong local management committees and a commitment to community engagement as they continue to support the economic, educational, cultural and social life of the small rural NSW towns in which they are located. According to the CTC Association’s Website, http://ctca.net.au,

“CTCs are much more than just internet enabled centres. They are quite simply the hub of their communities. Each individual CTC knows their area, the community, local media and local socio and economic environment. They deliver a wide range of services.”

There are still seven CTCs in Northern Rivers, but only five are currently active in the CTC Association. Kyogle and Nimbin’s CTCs are still providing service to the community and the CTC@Mullumbimby has become the CTC@Byron Shire and has been subsumed by its original auspicing body, the North Coast Adult and Community Education (ACE) while the CTC@Richmond River is primarily focused on its Virtual Museum in Evans Head.

When the community engagement and consultation processes inherent in the CTC@NSW program commenced in March of 2001, its overarching objective was to use the money allocated to it by the NSW and Federal Governments to establish a network of 55 new CTCs across rural and remote NSW. When funding for the CTC@NSW program was finally expended in June 2004, it had achieved this goal. However, other objectives of the program as listed on the CTC@NSW Website, http://www.ctc@nsw.com.au (as at 2001) were to:
• Assist local communities to establish a network of sustainable CTCs across rural and remote NSW;

• Promote community development and networks of interests in rural and remote NSW;

• Encourage community demand for Information Technology (IT) services in rural and remote communities;

• Encourage existing telecentres to join the CTC support network.

The program’s objectives for its RPCs were to:

• Generate regional awareness and interest in the CTC@NSW program;

• Assist communities in preparing their Expression of Interest (EOI);

• Organize community meetings to discuss the benefits of the CTC program;

• Facilitate the establishment of local steering committees or groups to promote the CTC program within communities and complete the application;

• Establish sub-committees to prepare marketing plans, assess technology requirements;

• Help the communities conduct surveys to determine the need for services that could be delivered through ICTs;

• Facilitate the completion of the application by assisting with the preparation of comprehensive business plans complete with marketing plans and three-year cash-flow projections;

• Support and assist the community throughout the lengthy application process;

• Help to build ‘capacity’ in small regional/rural communities.

A guiding principle of the CTC@NSW program was the belief that CTCs could achieve sustainable outcomes where community members were the key agents in the implementation of the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the Centre’s progress. Although the momentum for establishing a CTC came from the communities, it quickly became evident as local people engaged in the process of applying for the ‘seed funding’ grants that they had to fully
understand what was expected of them. To do this, they first had to deal with the bureaucratic language barrier used in the CTC Application for Seed Funding (As shown in Appendix A), as well as the voluminous documentation that accompanied it. This also meant that in order to be effective, RPCs also had to be able to interpret the business and technology requirements of the CTC@NSW program and then translate them into ‘plain English’ for the communities.

Although I worked with over 26 Northern Rivers communities, only seven of them actually went on to apply for a CTC Grant following the submission of an Expression of Interest. The communities that decided not to proceed gave a variety of reasons for not proceeding but the most common were that the people who made the initial request for information on the program had neither the time nor inclination to deal with all the paperwork and ‘jump through all the requisite hoops!’ However, it was through the process of working with applicant communities that I was able to identify some of the major issues that served to marginalize many of the communities that wanted to establish a CTC in their community but lacked the skill, business acumen and time required to do so.

1.4 The issues to be explored in this research

In each of the communities in which I undertook the community consultation process, as it related to applying for a government grant, there were many similarities in the issues that emerged. I soon discovered how difficult it could be to really engage communities in a meaningful consultation process if I didn’t really understand their issues and world-view or if I simply followed the procedures recommended by the various government funding bodies. The more cynical members of the various Application Committees with whom I worked also suggested that the various funding bodies were only seeking to deliver some of their election promises, disguised as policy decisions, without truly engaging those who were supposed to be the beneficiaries of those policies! This led me to ponder how communities could become genuinely engaged in the consultation process, and how they could be better articulate their needs. To this end I endeavored to develop a consultation model which could be used to truly engage a community and to look at their issues from the bottom up rather than the top down.
There is a genuine need to better understand some of the more dominant issues that repeatedly arise in small communities when they apply for government grants. The objectives of this research grew out of the many issues that I encountered as a Regional Program Coordinator during the community consultation process as it pertained to the grant application process and has been contextualized by the work I undertook as the Northern Rivers Regional Coordinator for the CTC@NSW program. However, it is important to remember that while RPCs usually work with communities to help them secure government grants, they are nevertheless agents employed by various government agencies to act on their behalf.

This research will seek to provide answers to the following primary questions:

1. What role does the RPC have to play in building social capital in small rural communities when they apply for a government grant?

2. Could a new approach to the community consultation process associated with grant applications help to build social capital and empower communities?

This research will also explore some of the other associated issues that can arise during the application process. It will also look at some of the more notable operational issues that can emerge post funding, especially as they relate to community owned and operated enterprises.

1.5 Overview of remaining Chapters

Chapter 2 presents a summary of the relevant literature which helped to inform this research. In particular, research and articles pertaining to all aspects of social capital, communications issues arising from language usage and the impact of government policies, as they pertain to regional economic development initiatives in regional Australia.

Chapter 3 includes an a review of the unpublished reports and documents I prepared as well as collected during the time I worked as an RPC in the Northern Rivers. Although many of these reports were demographic in nature and relate to regional economic development issues as they pertained to the Northern Rivers, they provided the background and context to understand the issues that arise when helping small communities apply for government grants. However, it is important to note that all of these reports were prepared prior to
commencing this research and have been therefore reviewed through the prism of a reflective analysis process.

Chapter 4 covers the methodologies used in this research, e.g. Action Research, Case Studies and an Online Survey.

Chapter 5 presents the Case Studies from the seven communities in which I conducted the bulk of my CTC@NSW work. They contain material drawn from monthly progress reports, field notes and other similar reports. Each of the Case Studies will look at specific issues which had occurred in each of these communities but viewed through the reflective prism of hindsight which has been informed by the literature associated with this research.

Chapter 6 provides the analysis of issues explored via the Online Survey I conducted in May 2004 with the 55 CTCs across NSW that had received funding from the CTC@NSW program. This survey was undertaken in the CTC@NSW’s last year of program funding and was divided into sections focusing on my research objectives.

Chapter 7 provides the analysis associated with this research as well as the answers to the questions posited in section 1.4. It will also propose a more community focused model which will serve to enhance the delivery of a more effective approach to community consultation inherent in the delivery of government grant programs.

The Appendices include a bibliography, a Glossary of Technical and CTC@NSW Program terminology, copies of both the CTC@NSW Expression of Interest and copies of both versions of the two CTC@NSW Applications for Seed Funding and a copy of the questions in the Online Survey which formed an integral component of this research.

1.6 Summary of this Chapter

This chapter provides information on the professional as well as the personal factors which served as a stimulus for this research. It also provides the necessary background on the CTC@NSW program which contextualizes this research and includes a summary of the other chapters that make up this thesis.


CHAPTER 2

Academic Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The issues discussed in this Chapter are grouped according to the themes this research seeks to address. It summarizes the key findings from a variety of sources relating to language and communications issues, government policy, and Social Capital and community consultation strategies that pertain to economic development programs in regional Australia. Some of the literature is based on empirical evidence as demonstrated by Bullen, Onyx, Putnam, Woolcock, Narayan, et al, while other sources reflect the theoretical underpinnings of the ‘wide church’ that is Social Capital including Adams, Bourdieu, Coleman, Cox, Putnam, Woodhouse, et al. Language usage issues are discussed with reference to the work of Boroditsky, Fairclough, Gee, Greville, Lakoff, Thibodeau, Trudgill, et al and community consultation theories and practices are explored in the work of Arnstein, Ganz, Kenny and Lloyd. All of these explore issues and concerns that arise in the delivery of regional economic development programs by governments via grant applications. This literature, along with that of other seminal researchers, serves to provide the theoretical framework that underpins this research.

This chapter also seeks to clarify the potential of the role played by Regional Program Coordinators (RPCs) in assisting communities during the consultation phase of the grant application process. RPCs act not only as change agents for the granting body but they also serve as facilitators and interpreters in the regional communities in which they work as
illustrated in the Case Studies discussed in Chapter 5. Although there is a substantial amount of literature regarding agriculture extension and natural resource management, there has been little specifically written addressing how government agencies inform targeted communities about their grant programs, nor any literature that specifically addresses the role and/or impact of RPCs in building Social Capital during the community consultation aspect of applying for a government grant.

The use of RPCs was a key feature of the CTC@NSW program that has been used to provide the context for this research. Existing literature, as it pertains to the more generic issues identified in this research, i.e. language usage, the implications of government economic policies on regional economic development programs, Social Capital and the community consultation process have been reviewed; the local and regional economic development sections have focused primarily on Australian case studies, such as those of Beer, Cox, Onyx, Bullen and others as they are the most relevant to this research. It should be noted that, while Australia is the focus, there are many similarities between the US and Australia because both have federal systems of government and both tend to focus on market-based solutions to deliver regional economic development programs (Putnam, 2002, Beer, et al 2003).

2.2 Language as a gatekeeper

While language and literacy skills confer the ability to read and gain understanding as well as enable people to function more effectively, they are also considered to be neutral skills and something we all possess to a greater or lesser degree. But this is not always the case, as all too often literacy skills are unevenly distributed across regions and social systems according to Greville (2000).

Complicating this is the fact that there are many other variables in language usage reflecting differing worldviews or schema (De Weaver & Lloyd, 2005). Thibodeau and Boroditsky (2012), looking at the complex problem of crime when they investigated the role of metaphor in guiding how people reason about complex problems, found that metaphors exert an influence over people’s reasoning by, “... instantiating frame-consistent knowledge structures, and inviting structurally-consistent inferences.” They also found that metaphors were most effective when they were presented early in the narrative helping people to better organize
and understand information. This understanding of metaphor and frames is also discussed by George Lakoff (2009, p. 14), who defined ‘frames’ as, “…a conceptual structure used in thinking... or interpreting the words used in a document so that the information it contains is more accessible to the people reading that document.”

To paraphrase Lakoff (1993), people use metaphors to frame both their thoughts and their speech. This is often evident at the initial stage of community consultations in small rural communities (Kenny 1999, Onyx and Bullen 1997); especially when a ‘pecking order’ is established within the various stakeholder groups and their skills and differing world-views begin to emerge as they come to grips with the language, metaphors and power relations embedded in the formal and/or corporatised language used by government departments and their agencies in their grant applications (Beer, Maude & Pritchard 2003, Romaine 1994, Shepherd, 1998, et al). The demographic and psychographic profiles of residents of rural and regional NSW, linked to the fact that many of the people who applied for a CTC@NSW Grant, had grown up in small rural communities and had known each other all their lives, also tended to create an ‘us and them’ mentality (Graham and Jennings 1996, MacLachlan & Reid 1994). This meant that the newly arrived ‘sea and tree changers’ in these small communities were often seen by ‘old-timers’ as ‘outsiders’ (McGregor, 2002, Salt, 2003, Shepherd, 1998).

However, these same ‘outsiders’ were often more familiar with the formal and business-oriented style of the language found in grant applications and their associated documentation, including the use of metaphors and technical terms. This phenomenon was highlighted by Luke and Gilbert (1993). Fairclough (1989, p. 19–21) considered that,

“...social conditions determine properties of discourse... we ought to be concerned with the processes of producing and interpreting texts, with how these cognitive processes are socially shaped and relative to social conventions, not just texts themselves. ...Firstly, language is a part of society and not somehow external to it. Secondly, that language is a social process. And thirdly, that language is a socially conditioned process, conditioned that is by other (non-linguistic) parts of society.”

Kenny (1994, p. 247) also identified language and communications issues as an integral part of the consultation process when she wrote, “…it is important to acknowledge how
communications can influence power relations within community settings.” She referred to Fairclough (1989) when she discussed the relationship of language and politics, i.e. “Language has always been important in politics and in government…” She went on to say, “While it is clear that any utterance can have a multiplicity of meanings and interpretations, and both the communicator and the listener may never know all of them, the very fact of human society rests on the assumption of (a degree of) mutual understanding... Words are always circumscribed by situation and intentions that may not, may never be, wholly transparent.”

Language is an integral component of the consultation process and takes on its own characteristics and conventions as it is shaped and adapted by the nature of the societies in which it is used. This is a critical consideration when dealing with people who have lived their entire lives in small rural communities where conversations are externally shaped by such things as the weather, stock and commodity prices and local issues. This narrower frame of reference also serves to shape and frame their world-views because, from their perspective, they all speak the same language to a greater or lesser degree and while they do not always agree with each other, they do not necessarily share the same conventions for interpreting the language and speech as those used by newcomers to their community (Kenny, 1999, Luke and Gilbert, 1993, Lakoff, 1993, MacLacklan and Read 1994, Romaine, 1994,).

Therefore, an important factor in establishing more successful grant programs may be in developing a better understanding of the skills and language capabilities, as well as the worldviews of the people who live and work in small rural communities (De Weaver and Lloyd 2005). According to Salt (2003, p. 2), “…non-metropolitan Australia contained 3.6 million people out of a total of 19.4 million at June 2001, up from less than 300,000 one century before.” This disparity may also serve to create a language dilemma for both the minority of the population who live in the ‘bush’ as well as those in government agencies who live and work in urban areas but frame the policies that are supposed to shape and administer grant programs that are to be delivered in rural and regional areas. It is also worth noting that the levels of tertiary education in the bush also lag behind those of their urban counterparts. According to a 2001 ABS Australian Social Trends report which was prepared over the same time the CTC program was being rolled out,
“18% of Australians aged 25-64 years had a bachelor degree or higher as their highest non-school qualification. Among people in this age group, 21% of those counted in major cities held a degree or a post-graduate qualification. Across the Remoteness Areas, the proportion was about half this, ranging from 13% in Inner Regional areas to 10% in Very Remote areas. This difference between Major Cities and the other Remote Areas is probably augmented by the movement of young people to cities to undertake higher education or to obtain employment. In addition, the majority of jobs requiring higher education qualifications are likely to be found in Major Cities.”

Unfortunately, it appears not much has changed over the past few years; because according to an Australian Social Trends report prepared by the ABS in 2008 states,

“...Despite the overall increase in the proportion of the Australian population with a non-school qualification, improvements in educational attainment have not been evenly distributed across different geographic regions. While there was an increase between 1996 and 2006 in the proportion of people with a non-school qualification across all geographic regions, the gains were greatest in Major Cities (from 44% in 1996 to 57% in 2006) and smallest in Very Remote areas (from 30% in 1996 to 36% in 2006). In 2006, the proportion of people with a non-school qualification declined with increasing levels of remoteness.”

This does not mean that people who live and work in regional communities are not articulate, but rather that they are often unfamiliar with the technical terms and buzzwords that are a feature of much of the documentation used by various government funding and regional economic development programs. Andrew Shepherd (1998, p. 19) noted,

“Rural development, like other creatures of the ‘development industry’... is prone to jargon and the extensive use of buzzwords. Sustainable development, sustainable agriculture, participation, women’s involvement, indigenous knowledge, integration, are all examples of phrases which are uttered ritualistically when the need arises.”

In discussing the impact of language on community empowerment, Don Watson (2003), speech-writer for the former Prime Minister, Paul Keating, offered a more cogent and
compelling argument when he wrote, “Democracy depends upon plain language...We need to feel safe in the assumption that words mean what they are commonly understood to mean.” Watson reflects the earlier work of Bollinger (1980, p. 125) who asked, “Why can’t officials use plain language?” Although not specifically referring to the CTC@NSW grant application, similar language concerns had also been identified by Luke and Gilbert (1993, p. 5) when they stated

“To refer to ‘technology’ in association with ‘literacy’ can signal a number of discourses concerning literacy, technology, and various combinations thereof... technology for literacy, literacy for technology, literacy as technology and technology as literacy.”

While not specifically linked to CTC grant applications, similar issues of understanding were raised by MacLachlan and Read (1994, p. 58) when they stated,

“Contextual cues may also provide support for a particular reading of what it is that’s going on... In the case of written texts, generic markers or cues perform a similar ‘how-to-read’ or meta-communicative function, since they help to establish a frame for our understanding of what is going on.”

It is also worth noting that ‘literacy for technology’ was not a new issue but one that had been identified earlier by the RPCs working for the CTC@NSW program and this will be discussed in Chapter 3. MacLachlan and Read (1994) provided further context and a clearer indication of the role that this type of literacy had to play in specifying Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) requirements for programs such as the CTC@NSW program. Grant applications for ICT based projects are often peppered with buzzwords required by grantors which help them to account for their spending on these programs in the most up-to-date or fashionable terms. It appears that these buzzwords are often used by those writing grant documentation with little or no understanding as to who the grants are targeting (Shepherd, 1998).

Discourse analysis during the consultation process can also provide us with a better understanding of the obtuse descriptors and ‘code words’ that are frequently used in the delivery of ICT products and services in small rural communities. McGregor (2003, p. 2) suggests,
“Discourse analysis challenges us to move from seeing language as abstract to seeing words as having meaning in a particular historical, social and political condition...words are politicized, even if we are not aware of it, because they carry the power that reflects the interests of those who speak.”

This view had also emerged earlier and was enunciated by Fairclough (1992) when he indicated, “Discourse is shaped and constrained by (a) social structure (class, status, age, ethnic identity and gender) and by (b) culture.” Jennings and Graham also noted (in Zuber-Skerritt 1996, p. 172), “Not only is discourse determined by community, it is also embedded in the larger framework of social relationships and social institutions.”

When reviewing the meeting notes and reports from earlier CTC@NSW work, it became evident that discourse could also be shaped and influenced by the knowledge and understanding of how ICT products and services might be used to build capacity in rural communities. Gee (1996, p. 144) provoked further thought in this regard by suggesting discourses had five key features,

1. “... ideological... resistant to self-analysis;
2. defined positions in relation to other, ultimately opposing discourses;
3. value concepts and viewpoints at the expense of others;
4. discourses are related to power relations and;
5. hierarchical structure in society.”

Thus a more pragmatic view of power and social and cultural change agents linked to the language issues of marketisation and globalization arise out of these changing discourses, and is perhaps, more relevant when engaging in community consultation in the 21st century. Although Fairclough (in Cope & Kalantzis 2000, p. 163–164) was not specifically referring to communities in the Northern Rivers, his views are highly relevant as he stated,

“We are living through a period of intense social and cultural change which is pervasive and universal in its global, national and local effects...these fundamental changes are changes in languages, different dialects, different genres, and different discourses...The processes of marketisation are in part linguistic in nature: they involve a marketisation of language, in the sense that the language of areas like public services are being colonised by the language of the market...Much of the debate on globalisation has focused upon economic changes, but cultural
globalisation is also an important aspect…cultural globalisation can be seen to include a globalisation of language practices of ways of using language which to a degree cuts across boundaries between language.”

This type of ‘marketised’ language has become the lingua franca of governments and their agencies and it proliferates in the documentation used to frame and deliver their policies and programs (Greville, 2000, MacGregor, 2003). It may also be the type of language used in programs that target small rural communities which tends to reinforce ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’ stereotypes (Lloyd, 2005). There is nothing neutral about the literacy skills in small regional communities when it comes to applying for government grants but rather ‘communities don’t know, what they don’t know’. Although he was referring to Indigenous communities in Western Australia, Greville (2000, p. 34) came to similar conclusions,

“In cross-cultural settings, a functional account of literacy is inadequate to describe or explain the ways that individuals and groups are differently positioned according to social and cultural relationships.”

Language and communications issues are closely linked to the increasing impact of marketisation and corporatisation which have been driven in large part by the economic rationalist policies of the Federal Government over the past 30 years. This type of reality is revealed by Quiggin (1997, p. 21),

“The term economic rationalism first entered the Australian lexicon in the early 1970s … The critical and skeptical thinking that characterized the first phase of economic rationalism was gradually replaced by dogmatic … faith in market forces and in the supreme importance of ‘efficiency’ and ‘competition … the micro-economic reforms at the centre of economic rationalist thought have some successes to their credit, but at least as many failures … The social consequences of economic rationalism include a steady erosion of social cohesion as competition and the naked pursuit of self-interest invade more and more of our social life, with obvious winners and losers.”

All too often those who are identified as the ‘losers’ or ‘disadvantaged’ live and work in regional communities across Australia. The 2001 ABS Australian Social Trends Report
defined ‘relatively disadvantaged areas’ as those Census Collection Districts (CCDs) that are in the bottom 5% of index scores. This means that if disadvantage was equally distributed across Australia, each geographical region should have similar proportions of people living in disadvantaged CCDs; however this is not the case. While the majority of the people who live in disadvantaged CCDs are located in urban areas there is a proportional over-representation of disadvantaged CCDs in remote areas. According to another ABS Australian Social Trends Report (June 2006), only 2.7% of Australians live in remote or very remote areas but 13.7% of them reside in disadvantaged CCDs compared with just 5.1% of people who live in Australia’s major cities. People living in regional and remote areas also have to deal with a range of other issues such as limited access to health services and educational opportunities that disadvantage them still further.

How grant programs are presented by governments to potential recipients in disadvantaged areas and communities requires further investigation (Garlick, 2000, Onyx & Bullen 1997). Other social commentators have also commented on how language can be manipulated to justify the actions of governments but it may also reflect their differing worldviews (Greville, 2000, Lakoff, 1993, MacGregor, 2003, Quiggen, 1997). ‘Spin’ can be all the more pernicious if it fails to reflect these worldviews and involves the opportunistic use of community development programs without any commitment to the empowering processes of authentic community consultation practices in the delivery of such programs (Lakoff 1993, Kenny 1994). Although Lakoff was addressing the use of metaphors in the communication process, Kenny was speaking about more generalized types of community development programs, not the CTC@NSW program on which this research has focused. Her conclusions about the nature of language used in the community consultation process resonates with many of the key findings of this research. Others (Beer, Maude & Pritchard, 2003, Greville, 2000, Kenny 1994, Layder, 1998 Prasetyo, 2002) have also found that the corporatised language associated with the financial aspects of grant applications can cause considerable angst and confusion during the application and acquittal process. Another criticism of grant programs which addresses another equally pernicious aspect of grant programs appeared in Our Community Matters Newsletter (2nd Ed. 2010, p. 12),

“One of the main grumbles community groups make about putting in submissions for funding is that every single funder
wants different financial information in different formats with different definitions. You can’t just put in the accounts you use yourself, you have to get out all the documents and get them to fit under different headings, wasting large amounts of the time your staff is always so short of. It would be very helpful if all Grant-makers used the same system, and now there’s a movement (pioneered by Professor McGregor-Lowndes from the Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies at QUT) to get that to happen.”

Watson (2003, p. 1), also addressed the issue of language as a gatekeeper in terms of how government officials speak to the ‘average person’ when he noted,

“Public language is the language of public life: the language of political and business leaders and civil servants – official, formal, sometime elevated language. It is also the language of leaders more than the led, the managers rather than the managed. It takes very different forms; from shapely rhetoric to shapeless, enervating sludge; but in every case it is the language of power and influence.”

However, it is not uncommon for Regional Program Coordinators to serve as the ‘official translators’ when undertaking the community consultation process which is often an integral component of applying for a government grant. Kenny (1994, p. 292), suggests the use of a “Checklist for communications between people who speak different languages”. Although she was referring to non-English speakers, the same ideas she presented in her checklist are also relevant to people living in small rural communities who may be unaware of the benefits of better Internet access and ICT products and services might be able to deliver to their communities. The use of checklists will be addressed more fully in Chapter 7.

2.3 Government policy as a gatekeeper

Almost since Federation, Australia’s federal government has been interventionist in setting policy to deal with the various contingencies and cycles of the Australian economy (Macadam, Drinan, Inall & McKenzie, Pusey and others) While ‘space and place’ have historically been included in physical terms, distribution of resources have also been included in setting public policy (Fincher, 2005). During the period following World War 2, it was
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Keynesian economic theory, with its marketplace intervention and monetary policy that was considered to be the best method of ensuring economic growth and stability. Then, during the 1980’s, the negative impacts of globalization on Australia’s economy loomed large and a fundamental shift took place. Economic rationalist theories took hold with their belief that Keynesian-type intervention distorted the flow of goods and services into the marketplace. According to Pusey (1991), subsequent government policy was shaped by economic rationalist policies that stated ‘markets were the most efficient distributors of goods and services. Not only did those espousing economic rationalist policies believe government involvement in the social aspects of community life would serve to destroy individual freedoms but that it would also stifle community volunteerism. The doctrine of ‘mutual obligation’ was espoused and a diminution of government services occurred during this time period (Botsman, 2001). This was particularly onerous to many small regional communities as it meant that the previous ‘safety net’ of readily accessible government services and support all but disappeared (Alessandrini, 2006, Blakely, 1994, Lewis, 2009, Dore & Woodhill, 1999).

More recently, the term ‘Social Capital’ has become ‘code’ for the rebalancing of the economy so that Australia can again become a more civil society (Edwards, et al). However, ‘hard-core’ economic rationalism is still reflected in government policy, particularly when applied to grant programs. This has meant that in addition to communication problems regarding the delivery of grant programs, these same programs have been affected by economic rationalist policies which have impacted on building Social Capital. Edwards, et al (2003, p. 74–75) stated, “…discussion about Social Capital crystallizes and articulates a deeper debate about the economy, polity and civil society in contemporary Australia.” They go on to say that,

“Commentators such as Putnam and Cox decry a decline in Social Capital, though they attribute this decline to different causes. Putnam attributes the decline to less civil engagement by baby boomers while Cox considers economic rationalism has eroded connections between people.”

While there will be further discussion of Putnam’s and Cox’s theories on Social Capital in this thesis, it is important to further consider the impact of economic rationalism on the shaping of government policy.
Gilding in Woodward, Parkin & Summers, (2010) referred to Michael Pusey’s (1991) Economic Rationalism in Canberra as giving an influential account of economic rationalist reforms which are used to justify the cutting of tariffs, the floating of currency, and the privatization of government enterprises. Pusey argued that those most responsible for the reforms were ‘a new elite’ of senior public servants trained in neo-classical economics, who took their ‘intellectual bearings’ from the United States and Britain. At the same time, Pusey followed Marxist conventions insofar as he emphasized the relatively privileged backgrounds of the ‘new elite’ (Skocpal, Perez-Diaz, Wuthnow in Putnam, 2002). Pusey’s views appear to be reflected in the framing of the wording of the CTC@NSW Grant Application, (Appendix 2), as indicated in the very first explanatory note which usually required a detailed explanation by the RPC to the Application Committee as to what it actually meant. It read,

“Grant monies can only be paid to an incorporated body or not for profit organization such as a local government body. If the CTC is not incorporated, or is not a not-for-profit organisation at the time this Proposal for Seed Funding is submitted, it can be lodged by another community based Incorporated Body that is prepared to act as host applicant. If this happens, a clear audit trail for grant monies needs to be established by the host organisation.”

Although the meaning of this might section of the grant application might have made perfect sense to bureaucrats in Canberra, it was very confusing to grant applicants living in small regional communities.

The policy framework, which established the need for this type of information was further illustrated by Stillwell (1993, p. 157) and although he was writing about urban policy in Australia, his views are also relevant to this research as he noted,

“Regional economic policy operates in a world of constant change … The policy changes in federal/State financial relations have taken place in the context of a wholesale restructuring of the Australian regional economy, initiated not by the State but by capital … Perhaps the most general casualty of the last decade has been the commitment to resolving the imbalances in the process of structural change through economic policy. The liberal-Keynesian view of the appropriate role of the state has been radically challenged by the ascendancy of ‘economic
rationalism’ emphasizing the superiority of market forces over government intervention.”

Since the 1980s, according to Pusey (1991) and Stillwell (1993), economic rationalism or neo-liberalist policies have been embraced by federal, state and local governments to a greater or lesser degree, depending on which of the major political parties is in power. This is evidenced by the re-emergence of the idea that the best way to increase national prosperity is to de-regulate the capital and labour markets so that Australia can become more competitive in a global marketplace. Unfortunately, the process of globalization, with its free-trade imperatives, has caused a great deal of pain in regional areas as illustrated by the significant cut-backs in service provision when Australia’s national telecommunications service provider was privatized (Brooks, 2005, Keast & Mandell, 2004, Woodhouse, 2006). Over a decade ago a Federal Taskforce Report (1993) addressed some key regional economic development policy issues. The findings of this report are as relevant today as they were then, as it outlined a national strategy which was to be based on three principles,

1. “All regions should have equal access - as far as possible – to basic infrastructure.
2. The regions should have the opportunity to develop their own economies.
3. Those regions suffering some specific disadvantage, for example their remoteness should have special access to assistance.”

Although telecommunications, ICT and Internet access were not specifically identified in this report as ‘basic infrastructure’, they have since become so in terms of regional economic development. What was interesting to note in this report was the nature of the ‘mutual obligation’ that the taskforce implemented in order to achieve these principles; they sought to ‘empower’ regions rather than just give them monies. The taskforce believed that regional communities could take greater control over the future of their own economies by structuring programs in this way. However, it is worth considering what Beer, Maude and Pritchard (2003, p. 143) had to say some 10 years later,

“Economic development on the ground is affected by the resources available, the political pressures on the organisation, the way it is funded, the other activities and initiatives being pursued, competition from other organisations and the level of
support received from the community. The skills and abilities of practitioners working on the ground are pivotal as is the nature of the local industry.”

Although economic rationalist policies were imbedded in the CTC@NSW program along with the many other such grant programs created by Australian governments to foster grassroots regional economic development, this research has revealed that it was the Regional Program Coordinators who were the ‘practitioners working on the ground’ that most influenced the success of the CTC@NSW program over the duration of its funding. Walmsley (in Sorensen & Epps, 1993, p. 46–47) also noted,

“The arguments of the economic rationalists found expression in many ways. One was the move towards privatisation that gained strength in the 1980s. This extended from selling off government assets … to the introduction of market principles in welfare services… Some writers have interpreted these moves in terms of capital seeking new markets and growth areas …

The economic rationalist agenda adopted by the Hawke and Keating administrations is impacting, and has the potential to impact even more, on rural areas. In many instances, the impacts are far from positive.”

These views were also supported in the CTC@NSW Program’s Final Report, regarding many of the communities that had received grant funding to establish CTCs with branches or outreach sites in even smaller rural communities. However, from the data derived from this research, many of the CTCs ceased to function in their original capacity and most of the outreach sites disappeared altogether when the funding ran out or when their business plans did not deliver the anticipated profit results.

Regional Economic Development programs have played a prominent role in many parts of Australia since Federation so it is important to consider the various approaches as to how these regional economic development programs have been delivered. According to Beer, Maude and Pritchard (2003, p. 16)

“There are only three basic approaches and from those a number of strategies arise … The first approach is to make your region a better place to do business … In effect it is a supply side
measure…The second approach is to generate new markets for the commodities and services produced within the region… Actions that fall within this approach are demand side measures, boosting the demand for the region’s product. Third is the creation of institutions that work to see further economic growth introduced into a region. The institutional approach recognizes that professional associations, business networking groups and tourism boards have a positive impact on regional performance."

This research has focused on a regional economic development program which was jointly funded by the NSW and Federal governments; the CTC@NSW program illustrates two of these economic rationalist approaches, i.e. building the ‘supply side’ and ‘increasing demand’ for ICT products and services. Importantly, Beer, Maude and Pritchard (2003, p. 101) also noted,

“…the Federal government is probably the only tier of government in Australia with the necessary resources to sustain a coherent and viable program of local or regional economic development. As the collector of 75% of public sector revenues it has greater financial capacity than either State or local government… To a certain degree Federal Government attitudes to formal engagement with local economic development are less important than what has happened in practice. On the ground, Federal programs have supported many economic development agencies and initiatives, and have done so over a considerable period of time.”

Government programs have supported many such economic rationalist or neo-liberal development initiatives and programs over the recent years, Kenny (1994, p. 56–57) also foreshadowed another aspect of these programs,

“…there is an ironic convergence between community development and neo-liberal agendas. Both argue for empowering people to take control of their own destinies. However, the neo-liberalist approach emphasizes responsibilities over rights and sets the terms of reference for gaining the so-called control, which is individualistic in orientation and based on a commitment to individual entrepreneurship… While community development programs have not been uniformly affected by the push to neo-liberalism, they have been affected
nevertheless. There has been increasing pressure, especially from governments, for community programs to operate as though they were small entrepreneurial businesses. In particular, the context in which community organizations must think about funding has changed profoundly. For example, tenders and other submissions for funds must be presented in the same style as business plans, emphasizing inputs, outputs and unit costs.”

Onyx and Bullen also explored the impact of these supposed ’empowerment’ initiatives as they related to building Social Capital when they wrote (Onyx & Bullen, 1997, p. 217),

“… A fundamental dichotomy is drawn between ‘power-over’ and ‘power-to’… Power to focuses on the productive aspects of power, and suggests that this productive aspect can be mobilized at all levels … The empowerment of one party does not necessarily equate with the disempowerment of another party… Power is both enabling and (simultaneously) constraining.”

In understanding this dichotomy it is also important to consider the three forms of Social Capital, i.e. bonding, bridging and linking, which will be expanded upon later in this chapter, as they serve to provide the necessary sources of community empowerment. While most government regional economic development programs have their own underlying criteria, requirements and designated outcomes, including community empowerment, they often have a decidedly economic rationalist bias. Beer, Maude and Pritchard have a different interpretation of economic rationalism as it relates to economic development. They have argued (2003, p. 144) that there are only four basic economic development roles available to governments, i.e.

“1. Entrepreneur/developer;
2. Coordinator;
3. Facilitator; and
4. Stimulator”

The Entrepreneur intervenes directly in the local economy and operates businesses as was the case with the CTC@NSW program, while programs that take on the coordinator role strive to work closely with existing local development efforts by providing expertise in strategic and operational planning. They strive to operate as facilitators of economic development strive and to improve the attitudinal environment of an area. They also adopt the role of a stimulator and actively try to recruit firms to enter or remain in a particular community (Beer,
Chapter 2: Academic Literature Review

Maude and Prichard, 2003). Earlier, Stilwell (1993, p. 144), took a harder and perhaps more pragmatic approach to regional economic development programs in Australia. His views are as relevant today as they were 20 years ago,

“Government policies to influence the pattern of regional economic development are more than common. They are effectively inescapable ... In a federal system the regional allocation is particularly visible and usually highly political...

Four principal sets of policy instruments are available as components in a conventional program of regional economic development policy:

1. Regional expenditure policy;
2. Regional differentiated price policies
3. Controls of regional development;
4. Mobility policies”

Of these, it is this ‘regional expenditure policy’ that has had the greatest impact on the rollout of the various grants programs in the Northern Rivers region of NSW discussed in this research. Government expenditure can be particularly potent when used as justification for infrastructure improvements as an instrument of regional policy because it also impacts on the relative attractiveness of regions to new capital investments and even changes the spatial distribution of industry in the long run (Stilwell, 1993). Various state and federal government policies and programs have focused on the economic consequences of the inequitable distribution of services, particularly telecommunications in regional communities according to the 2003 National Office for the Information Economy Report. Although the focus of this research has been on community consultation and the grant application process involved in telecommunications grant programs, one has only to consider the current political implications of the roll-out of high-speed broadband in regional Australia, under the auspices of the National Broadband Network Company (NBN Co.), to understand that the inequitable distribution of these services is still influenced by economic rationalist policies and remains a significant issue in regional Australia. But, for most Australians, changes within the economy and changes within political processes have meant that the region in which they live has become a more important determinant of ‘quality of life’ than it was thirty, twenty or even ten years ago (Fukuyama 2002, Beer, Maude and Pritchard 2003).
Chapter 2: Academic Literature Review

The forces of globalization have reduced government involvement in the provision of a whole range of services and government priorities in regional Australia; they are now shaped by the ‘market’ and consequently social policy initiatives often have a more punitive approach in regions experiencing disadvantage and decline, all of which contribute to the growing inequity in Australian society, particularly in remote, rural and regional areas. This cycle of poverty and disadvantage is evidenced by the lack of access not only to resources but also to services that allow greater participation in society, such as health, education, welfare and employment and telecommunications; social exclusion in rural Australia continues despite the number of government funding programs that have been created to overcome disadvantage. This inequality can also be linked to postcodes (Vinson 2007, Alston in Cocklin and Dibden, 2005). Although successive governments have sought to address some of these inequalities, it was the privatization of the nation’s telecommunications company, Telstra, under the Howard government and the establishment of the Networking the Nation (NTN) program in July 1997 that provided the catalyst as well as the funding to do so. NTN supported activities and projects such as the CTC@NSW, along with a number of other programs, which were created to meet a range of telecommunications needs in regional, rural and remote Australia. Funding for the CTC@NSW program was jointly provided by the NSW State Government and the Regional Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (RTIF) whose funding decisions were made by an independent board that had been appointed by the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. This Department also provided administrative support to the program and provided advisory and support services to the Board.

While grant funding programs such as RTIF had a strong economic bias, they were also created to help overcome regional disparity. Although not specifically referencing NTN and the RTIF, Alston (in Cocklin and Dibden, 2005 p. 162–3) asserted,

“For rural people and communities, the self-help philosophy fostered by governments is evident in government funding and programs…The expectation of governments that disadvantaged individuals and communities can be self-reliant supports a position of limited government involvement and reduced funding…Australia’s rural communities have been particularly
vulnerable to globalising forces and rural people feature prominently in the ranks of the socially excluded.”

Better access to Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and transport infrastructure has become critical to economic success in a global environment especially for those living in rural areas. In the Northern Rivers region of NSW this was confirmed by the Final Report for the Regional Industry and Economic Plan, prepared by the Northern Rivers Regional Development Board in 2005 and updated in 2009. In many rural areas not only is public transport inadequate and/or expensive, so too is communications infrastructure, such as Internet and broadband access, and mobile telephone coverage (Alston, in Cocklin and Dibden, 2005). The following data in Table 2.1, from a 2006 ABS Research Paper further supports this.

**Table 2.1** Table reproduced from ABS Data Research Report, Patterns of Internet Access in Australia. 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nil, negative or between $1 and $399</th>
<th>Between $400 and $1,299</th>
<th>$1,300 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any Internet</td>
<td>BB connection</td>
<td>Any Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Cities</td>
<td>42% 26%</td>
<td>72% 48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner Regional</td>
<td>39% 19%</td>
<td>67% 37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer Regional</td>
<td>37% 15%</td>
<td>64% 32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote</td>
<td>35% 14%</td>
<td>63% 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Remote</td>
<td>19% 10%</td>
<td>59% 33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seventy-two percent of those living in urban areas on median incomes in 2006 had internet access but only 67% of those in inner regional areas did, this number falls to 64% for those living in outer regional areas such as the Northern Rivers region of NSW. It was also challenging in the early stages of the roll-out of the CTC@NSW program to explain to people living in small communities that economic rationalism meant that governments were no longer going to deliver funding based simply on a community’s need unless those needs were backed up by a solid business plan and, as Stilwell (1994 p. 252) had asserted,

“….economic rationalism…rests on the twin beliefs; (i) that economic issues have priority over other social goals,
whose achievement in the long run depends on improved economic performance; and (ii) that the market economy generally produces more efficient outcomes that government ‘intervention’ and planning. These views, with varying degrees of sophistication, have come to be very influential among politicians, media commentators and among senior public servants in Canberra.”

However, even small communities in regional Australia are subject to global financial and information flows and a diminution of state power. In this context economic rationalism translates as political and policy objectives which follow the dictates of capital competition in a ‘market state’. The effects of globalization on countries like Australia are even more complex given its distance from global markets. This complexity is further compounded by the distances between Australia’s larger internal markets. It appears that globalization not only ‘pulls away’ power from ‘local communities’ but it can also inhibit the building of Social Capital as well as create new economic and cultural zones across and within a country (Onyx, et al, 2007, Gildings in Woodward 2010). Unfortunately, many of these new cultural and economic zones also represent the ‘pockets of concentrated and severe social disadvantage’ that have become entrenched across rural and remote Australia (Vinson, 1997 & 2007).

Many of these same factors apply to the Northern Rivers regional communities which will be discussed in Chapter 5; particularly those located west of the Great Dividing Range. In a report prepared for Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia in 2007, Vinson (2007, p. 6) indicated that,

“… just 1.7 percent of postcodes and communities across Australia account for more than seven times their share of top rank positions of the major factors that cause intergenerational poverty, including: low income, limited computer and internet access, early school leaving, physical and mental disabilities, long term unemployment, prison admissions and confirmed child maltreatment.”

Disadvantage was also highlighted in an earlier, more optimistic report prepared by the Bureau of Industry Economics (1994, p. xiii–xiv) as it advised that,

“While assessments of where governments fit into the process of regional development differ, there is broad agreement that at
the minimum it is vital for governments to get the fundamentals right. This includes management of the public sector, efficient systems of business taxation, the provision of efficient physical infrastructure, the provision of good education and training systems, the operation of effective finance and labour markets, the development of an effective regulatory and competition framework, and stability and predictability in policy setting ...

Against the backdrop of the increasing integration of the world economy and greater competition in global markets there are four key issues in developing effective regional development policies for the future, namely:

1. Getting the fundamentals for growth right;
2. Helping the regions to realize their potential;
3. The role of selective incentives in attracting particular activities; and
4. Dealing with inequalities in outcomes.

These four points can also be applied to other government programs such as the CTC@NSW and Rural Transaction Centre Programs, the West Australian Telecentre Network and others which will be discussed in Chapter 3 as they were also rolled-out across the nation under the Networking the Nation program to address ICT shortfalls in rural and regional areas. ‘Social Capital’ and ‘social entrepreneurship’ were seen as the obvious paradigms for telecentre type programs, as their major focus was on helping people in small regional communities develop and implement market based, community enterprises based on ICT products and services in order to achieve the social and economic agendas as shown in their CTC@NSW Grant Applications (Appendix 2). The long term viability of such programs, and the operational issues that emerged from programs such as the CTC@NSW, were seemingly foreshadowed by Pusey (1991, p. 2) when he wrote about the prevailing economic rationalist policies deployed by state and federal governments in the 1990s,

“In the wake of the ten years of economic boom, Australians seem to know intuitively, at least, that this has been the only boom in living memory where the broad mass of population gets nothing or as little as possible.

Economic engineering has mostly produced, or otherwise abetted, a seismic shift in the distribution of income, power and resources. There are seven notable dimensions of this redistribution...”
According to Pusey (1991, p. 6) these dimensions reveal the following shift in emphasis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Public sector</td>
<td>The private sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bottom 70% of wage and salary earners</td>
<td>The top 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage and salary earners</td>
<td>Corporations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small business</td>
<td>Big business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ‘bush’</td>
<td>The city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers</td>
<td>Producers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households</td>
<td>Markets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.1** Table from p. 6 of Pusey (1991) Economic Rationalism in Canberra: A Nation Building State Changes Its Mind

Economic rationalist policies also brought with them the corporatisation of the language used in funding programs as evident in the CTC program’s application (Appendix 2) as well as that of other similar grant programs. It has also added an additional layer of complexity to the community consultation process as it pertains to applying for government grants. This is perhaps best exemplified under the heading in Part 4 of the CTC@NSW Grant Application, ‘Managing Your CTC’, communities were required to,

“...provide details of the structure of your organization and its relationship with any other relevant committees and bodies in your community.”

This section also went on to request details of the management team, their qualifications and experience as it related to the proposed project and their involvement in the community. It asks about their skills in undertaking such tasks as budgeting, acquitting grant funds, preparing cash-flows, managing a community-based enterprise, developing and supporting the implementation of a Business Plan, selecting and managing paid staff and volunteers, publishing and marketing services. It also asks that they identify the strategies they proposed to use in identifying other funding and grant opportunities. Providing this type of information was very challenging for applicant communities and often required extensive guidance from the RPC. The concept of self-sufficiency fostered by governments was evident in the documentation associated with the various government funding and programs and required greater explanation from the RPC as shown in the data gathered for this research. There
was also the expectation of governments that disadvantaged individuals and communities could be self-reliant and this rationalized their policy decisions which led in turn to limited government involvement and reduced funding. Australia’s rural communities, including those in the Northern Rivers region have been particularly vulnerable to globalization, thus making them well-represented in the ranks of Australia’s socially disadvantaged (Alston, in Cocklin and Dibden, 2005).

However, a report prepared by the National Office of the Information Economy (NOIE) in 2003 which focused on ICT, indicated that there was no discernible difference between businesses in non-metropolitan and those in metropolitan areas. This report (NOIE, 2003, p. 15–16) stated,

“Australian businesses are playing a critical role in the development of the information economy through the strategic application of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to core business activities such as supply-chain management and customer service delivery. While both areas have significant potential for sustained productivity growth and ultimately, return on investment, it is in the area of electronic service delivery that the greatest potential exists for facilitating widespread and intensive use of the internet amongst Australians in general…There is little or marginal difference between businesses located in metropolitan or non-metropolitan areas in terms of the usage of mainstream ICTs such as computers or the Internet.”

This optimistic view tends to reflect a worldview that has been framed by ‘top down’ thinking in regard to the transformative role that telecommunications might play in regional economic development. Nor can it be assumed that rural areas that are already showing greater vitality will be the best positioned to benefit from this transformation and the more remote and regional centres already in decline, the least (Keller 2001). But, the raison d’être for the CTC@NSW program was closely aligned to this transformational view of telecommunications and its associated infrastructure as it assumed that people living in small rural communities would have the necessary skills to manage and support a community enterprise based on ICT products and services. Unfortunately this was not the case as shown
by this research. However, Plowman, et al (2003, p. 135) were more optimistic when they addressed the ways in which governments responded to the needs of rural communities,

“Governments have started to respond to the strong expressions of dissatisfaction of rural people concerning the decline of social and economic fabric in rural communities attempting to develop programs for the reversal, or at least the amelioration, of the observed trends…. governments are increasingly calling on the presumed self-help capacities of rural communities for them to become ‘partners’ with government in developing and delivering programs for rural communities… however the depth and breadth of resources, particularly the human and Social Capital, may not be sufficient to allow communities to respond to, and participate effectively in, such programs.”

But this type of ‘partnership’ often appeared to be one-sided to the people living in small communities because governments exerted much more control than partnership as Beer, Maude and Pritchard (2003, p. 143) pointed out,

“Economic development ‘on the ground’ is affected by the resources available, the political pressures on the organization, the competition from other organizations and the level of support received from the community. The skill and abilities of practitioners working on the ground are pivotal, as is the nature of local industry.”

This research also investigated the role played by Regional Program Coordinators (RPCs) in the delivery of government policy and the capacity of RPCs to build and strengthen Social Capital in small regional communities although Lewis (2009, p. 191) suggested,

“Policy over the last decade has claimed much about the benefits of Social Capital. Most of the focus has been on the potential for improving citizen engagement, building community, and increasing social inclusion … But the means by which government might facilitate the positive aspects of Social Capital and these valued outcomes are by no means clear.”

It is worth noting that over the past decade government policy has been closely linked to building both community capacity and Social Capital; both appear to have become key concepts in the roll-out of regional economic development programs in marginalized regional
and rural communities (Onyx, Cox, Edwards, and Giorgas). More recently, Adams (2009 p. 95–96) warned that, “…there is little analysis of the public policy of Social Capital - the ‘how’ such policy is organized.” He also suggested that there are a much broader set of drivers reshaping the nature of public policy and that “…Social Capital theory is located in a much wider church of ideas and practices.” Adams expounded on five drivers in this regard (2009, p. 96 – 97):

“Firstly, Governments during the 1990s were increasingly seen by the public as distant, opaque and untrustworthy… Secondly, there was a perception, especially among state labor governments, that social policy needed to change…there was a shift away from the use of market mechanisms towards more collaborative approaches to public policy and programs for local communities…Thirdly, within the public sector there were growing concerns about the new managerialism, and increasing efforts to ‘soften’ the excesses of managerialism and economic rationalism…Fourthly, there was increasing interest in the revitalization of the ‘place management’ debate…enhanced by regeneration strategies in the U.K. which seemed to demonstrate that place-based sub-regional strategies combining infrastructure investment with community development could improve social and economic outcomes in disadvantaged areas…Finally, associated with the rapid growth of cities and urbanization, there was increasing interest in how to…increase the livability of cities and suburbs.”

The first four of these factors are relevant to the CTC@NSW program, but the importance of these drivers are perhaps best summed up by Adams (2009, p. 97),

“These drivers are important to understand as many Social Capital advocates wrongly believe that the Social Capital literature was a key driver. It never was. Rather the combination of all drivers led governments to consider the efficacy of Social Capital ideas…Whilst these drivers eased the entry of Social Capital ideas into public policy, a related set of theories were being contested in the academic literature…”

Adams also states that Social Capital is not an end in itself but rather a set of ideas that can be used to shape policy and restore confidence in the public sector. On the other hand, Healy et al, (2004, p. 331) have indicated,
“Social Capital is a contested concept. Amongst those who see Social Capital as a useful policy construct, there is much debate about what role, if any, government and business institutions can play in building Social Capital.”

Their research focused on four geographically diverse Australian communities in urban as well as regional communities. Their findings revealed that while government and private enterprises have a role to play in strengthening community capacity and building Social Capital, the latter remains a contested construct. They concluded (Healy et al, 2004, p. 340) by stating:

“The disconnection of non-local institutions from local communities is consistent with the localized versions of Social Capital that have dominated Australian social policy. By extending the Social Capital discourse beyond a focus on local network creation, we aim to promote social policy practices that build linkages between local communities and the non-local institutions that represent and serve them…In practical terms, this would involve initiatives that improve connections between community members and representatives of non-local institutions and that provide opportunities…”

Social Capital is not generated in a vacuum according to Cox (2002 in Putnam), Lewis (2009), Keast, et al (2004), this has important implications to this research because of its influence on delivering successful outcomes to communities when applying for government grants (Edwards, Onyx and Bullen and others). So what is Social Capital and where did the term come from?

While the term Social Capital is often thought of as a relatively new concept, its conceptual antecedents date back to the early works of sociologists such as Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and others. But according to some American academics, the origin of the term Social Capital dates back to 1916, when Lyda J. Hanifan, the State Supervisor of Rural Schools in West Virginia, first introduced the term 'Social Capital'. Although linked to schools, Hanifan's use of this terminology was one of the first to associate Social Capital with community development. According to Farr (2004, p. 11), Hanifan explained the concept quite imaginatively in a journal article he wrote:
“In the use of the phrase Social Capital I make no reference to the usual acceptation of the term capital, except in a figurative sense. I do not refer to real estate, or to personal property or to cold cash, but rather to that in life which tends to make these tangible substances count for most in the daily lives of a people, namely, goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse among a group of individuals and families who make up a social unit, the rural community, whose logical center is the school. In community building as in business organization and expansion there must be an accumulation of capital before constructive work can be done.”

Hanifan also observed that individuals desire group life beyond that of just the family when he concluded,

“That there is today almost a total lack of such Social Capital in rural districts throughout the country need not be retold in this article. ... The important question now is, 'How may these be made better?’

This takes us to the more recent discussions on Social Capital as a construct.

### 2.4 Social Capital as a Construct

Adams indicated (2009, p. 95), that Social Capital is a very ‘large church’. There are also significant and varied opinions as to its value and whether or not in can be measured according to Bourdieu (2003), Brooks, (2005) et al. Therefore understanding the various aspects of Social Capital and its role in the community consultation process is integral to this research. A starting point in developing a better understanding of Social Capital and its various implications is to determine the psychographic and demographic trends in specific population groups as they can and do, impact on building Social Capital (Onyx & Bullen 1997, Putnam, 2002). In order to better understand these trends the starting point has been to look at some of the research undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as this data needs to be considered in any literature review as it is used by governments to help determine policy directions thus making it highly relevant to the scoping, preparation and delivery of government grant programs, Vinson (2007), Woodhouse (2006). In 2002, the ABS held a number of workshops and meetings across Australia to gauge the level of
interest in measuring Social Capital so as to gain a better understanding of its implications in determining policy. The response to these workshops was very strong with significant representation from Australian and state/territory government agencies, local governments, non-profit organisations and university researchers. The ABS defined ‘Social Capital’ in their follow-up ABS Information Paper: Measuring Social Capital (2004); and indicated that there was no internationally agreed framework for defining in terms of:

- “what constitutes Social Capital,
- how Social Capital accumulates in society,
- the impacts it may have on communities and individuals, or
- how to measure the various elements and dimensions of Social Capital.”

Subsequently the ABS (2004, p. vii - 1) developed a broad conceptual framework for defining Social Capital as,

“Social Capital is a multi-dimensional concept, and different elements of the framework may be appropriate for different purposes... Social Capital combines a broader range of elements that hold a society together, and is associated with potential positive outcomes for both individuals and societies. At a time when the interdependence of many social problems has been recognised, Social Capital appears to offer different insights to assist with solutions.”

The Australia's Productivity Commission also produced a similar paper, Social Capital: Reviewing the Concept and its Policy Implications (Edwards, 2004) under the auspices of the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS). This paper, along with another research report prepared by the AIFS, Social Capital: Empirical meaning and measurement validity, (Research Paper 27, 2004) made a significant contribution to the development and measurement of Social Capital indicators which are theoretically based and empirically valid. During the time this research was being undertaken, every state and territory government and many local governments in Australia also had units devoted to encouraging community participation in planning and managing economic, social and environmental sustainability initiatives. It is worth noting that community sustainability was identified as a concern in both AIFS papers due to reduced employment opportunities linked to the withdrawal of services such as banks and post offices from rural and regional centres as they also have implications on the
building of Social Capital. Additionally, the active engagement of local people in envisioning, planning and implementing possible futures was seen as essential to the process of building Social Capital. As a result of this research, determining an appropriate balance between governmental, business, communal and personal responsibility has become a major factor in determining policy direction in Australia. The 2004 ABS Report, *Measuring Social Capital – An Australian Framework and Indicators*, conceptualizes Social Capital as a resource, drawing on and feeding back into other types of resources; additionally, the common term used in their discussion of Social Capital is ‘community’ which may refer to the social networks themselves, or to the place in which these networks or relationships occurred.

Any current discussion regarding the impact of public policy on Social Capital should also consider the impact of both Keynesian and economic rationalist theory. The former infers ‘too much government control’ while the latter ‘too much market influence’ according to Winter (2000, p. 4–5),

“...The emergence of Social Capital as an issue of public policy can be traced back to the Social Security Review of the 1980’s... The review raised, within the context of welfare policy, the notion of participation by all people in an ‘active society’ and would lead to greater inclusion in the life and activities of the wider community... It is these activities of the wider community, or in Social Capital terms, civil society, that make up the arena focused upon by many in the current debate... The review was the catalyst for the Department of Social Security (DSS) adopting a broader understanding of social provision, which went on beyond direct income support.”

There are others who look at the ‘broader Church’ of Social Capital by focusing on individual communities or specific groups (Garlick, 1991, Davison, 2005, Dibden & Cheshire, 2005, Onyx & Bullen 1997); while other policy makers seek to intervene by building strong local networks of people and organisations in specific places (Adams (2009), Adler & Kuan (2002) and according to Cox (2007, p. 508),

“...Social Capital can be claimed to have serious flaws, many of which others have pointed out, but it appears to offer some useful explanatory tools for looking at the connective fabric of groups... Social Capital can be seen as a ‘portmanteau concept’, ...
a collection of overlapping and maybe contradictory measures of social connectivity that work as analytic tools offering interesting measures of social connectivity that work as analytic tools offering interesting insights into the complexities of social systems.”

Cox is also quite pragmatic about how the term ‘Social Capital’ should be used to describe and analyze a wide range of social outcomes. She has noted that there are two other relevant considerations in any discussion of Social Capital as she believes that Social Capital does not reside in either an epistemological framework nor is it completely ‘value neutral’. Cox posits (2007, p. 504),

“Social Capital ought to be regarded as value neutral but seen as a diagnostic tool which can be used to identify ways to navigate public good or identify public problems. Social Capital would then have policy uses and could be applied to identify how the differing types of social networks can promote desirable or negative outcomes.”

Cox also goes on to say (2007, p. 509),

"Social Capital needs to be differentiated from other forms of capital as being collectively defined. It can then be used for measuring group inter-relationships and cultures, but therefore not existing as a separately owned 'thing'. It then cannot be stored, owned or traded in any way as it appears and operates only when people are in groups and in the expectations people have of the ways that particular groups will operate. This definition allows it to fill a space for analytical tools which is not crowded with other measures.”

However, some of the international ‘thought leaders’ of Social Capital theory such as Hall, Wuthrow, Skocpal, Worms, Offe & Fuchs and others in Putnam (2002) have differing perspectives and have influenced the evolution of Social Capital as a construct in the setting of policy and establishment of networks. Over the past 50 years many other theoretical aspects of Social Capital have been used in framing the language used in community economic development programs in Australia, Kelty (1993), Kenny (1994), and Layder (1993). Social Capital has also been used to imply key social indicators such as levels of education and economic growth in a community and as well as a vehicle for economic development, Leven
Great debate has also ensued as to whether Social Capital should be seen as a normative concept or used as an analytical tool (Boggs (2001), Edwards, et al (2003). Winter’s interpretation of its definition is derived from Robert Putnam’s influential book, *Democracies in Flux* (2000, p. 2) as he suggests,

“Social Capital is commonly regarded as comprising all those features of social organization, such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit…”

While many of the Australian proponents of Social Capital theory cited in this research have a local construct, they have also drawn heavily on the theories developed overseas by people such as Pierre Bourdieu, James Colman, and Robert Putnam and others whose constructs of Social Capital were summed up in a paper by Smith (2009, P. 4) as follows:

**Bourdieu:** ‘Social Capital is ‘the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition’ (Bourdieu 1983: 249).

**Coleman:** ‘Social Capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities, having two characteristics in common: they all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure’ (Coleman 1994: 302).

**Putnam:** ‘Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, Social Capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense Social Capital is closely related to what some have called “civic virtue.” The difference is that “Social Capital” calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a sense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in Social Capital’ (Putnam 2000: 19).”

The term Social Capital came into prominence in the late 1970s when French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu wrote more widely about it, much of his work focused on looking at the
implications of language usage in building Social Capital. His commentary on Social Capital in relation to communication was especially relevant to this research as he said (2003, p. 37),

“...one must not forget that the relations of communication par excellence – linguistic exchanges – are also relations of symbolic power in which the power relations between speakers or their respective groups are actualised.”

This construct of Social Capital also serves to highlight the nature of the relationships that can also exist between the corporatised language found in government grant documentation and the more informal, colloquial language used by community groups when they apply for these grants (De Weaver & Lloyd, 2005). On the other hand, Giorgas (2007) has indicated that the underlying theoretical constructs of Social Capital draw heavily on the work of sociologists like Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx and that their ideas have been ‘hijacked by the right’ to support economic rationalist government reforms that erode the concept of delivering policy for the public or ‘common good. Giorgas (2007, p. 207) defines Social Capital as something,

“...embedded in the structure of social relations, and encompasses norms and social networks which facilitate social action, thus enabling individuals to act collectively.”

She also felt that both Bourdieu and Coleman’s ideas on Social Capital had helped to bring together a better understanding of the material conditions that are the drivers of the social processes that are integral to the creation of Social Capital. She also indicated that Coleman’s work is similar to that of Bourdieu’s because it too delivers insights derived from both sociological as well as economic theories. However, she felt that Putnam’s views on Social Capital, although influenced by Colman and other earlier theorists, were grounded in functionalism; and that Putnam’s work stresses networks, norms and trust that are a feature of a social life that enables people to come together to act more effectively when pursuing a shared objective. She went on to say that Putnam also emphasized bonding and bridging social networks, with the former both deriving from and promoting homogeneity while the latter on building connections between heterogeneous groups that could be extended to external sources of information and assets or, as Putnam has said, building the right mix of people for ‘benefits to accrue’.
So while bonding Social Capital is horizontal and bridging is vertical, linking Social Capital also has a key role to play in the Social Capital mix; as all three forms of Social Capital have the potential to empower communities. Onyx explored the power dimension of Social Capital (2007, p. 217) when she stated

“Power is also a multi-faced concept. In relation to Social Capital, it can be enabling or coercive, liberating or repressive and viewed as both a positive and negative force…All three forms of Social Capital provide necessary sources of power, but with different risks. Bonding Social Capital is usually characterized as having dense, multi-functional ties and strong localized trust…Bridging can be used in at least three different ways; to cross demographic divides, to bridge structural holes between networks and to access information and resources outside the community in question…Linking Social Capital is a third type of Social Capital referring to networks that usually entail vertical connections to government funding sources. Such links invariably entail relations of unequal power; it is this form of Social Capital that is most clearly connected with a structuralist approach to power.”

While most writers on Social Capital have indicated that ‘social networks matter’ and that networks in and of themselves have value, to the people who are in them and for the benefits they derive from belonging to them. But, Putnam added the caveat that these same networks can also be detrimental to those who do not belong. This is one of the reasons as to why, the types of social networks available and accessible to communities must be carefully considered. According to Warr (2005, p. 286–287), and derived in part from Putnam,

“…Social networks can be conceptualized as ‘horizontal’, where members are connected in families and even neighbourhoods, are ‘vertical’. The latter provides critical forms of Social Capital because they act as ‘bridging’ networks that connect people across diverse social networks…”Horizontal’ or ‘bonding’ ties with family and friends are sustained over time…Social networks that are characterized as ‘vertical’…connect people more loosely but they have the valuable capacity to link individuals to a wider range of social contacts and opportunities…In contrast to the intensity of bonding networks…bridging networks can be brief or extended over time.”
So while bonding and bridging social networks have different orientations, they can also work in tandem to form ‘linking’ social networks that can act as change agents. This is idea is also supported by Woolcock and Narayan (2000) who made the following distinctions: *bonding Social Capital* denotes ties between people with similar backgrounds, i.e. immediate family, close friends, neighbours even members of the same local organisation. While *bridging Social Capital*, encompasses the other ties people have, such as loose friendships, workmates and residents of the same district or community; and Woolcock and Narayan (2000, p. 13–4) describe the term *linking Social Capital* as a means of reaching out to ‘unlike’ people in dissimilar situations, perhaps to those who are entirely outside a community, thus enabling members of that community or group to leverage a far wider range of resources than would normally be available in the community, i.e. government grants, other funding and support groups, etc. Woodhouse (2006, p. 84) also indicated that a key differentiation should be made between ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ Social Capital,

“Bonding Social Capital refers to the Social Capital generated and shared by members of a relatively homogenous group. Bridging Social Capital refers to the Social Capital generated and shared through interconnections between heterogeneous groups.”

According to Australian Peter Kenyon as presented on his website (www.bankofideas.com.au), “Social Capital is the glue that holds communities together.” But while the ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ aspects of Social Capital are important, it appears that the role played by RPCs is in facilitating ‘linking’ Social Capital is particularly relevant to the community consultation process and in delivering successful grant applications. In the keynote address at the annual CTC Conference, Onyx (Dec.2001, p. 2) highlighted the inter-relationship that exists in all forms of Social Capital in regional economic development programs when she said, “Social Capital can be developed and used wherever humans gather together for a common purpose”. However, it was her expanded interpretation of Social Capital that has great relevance to this research as she (2001 p. 7) said,

“The central concepts of development revolve around the four capitals: financial capital, natural capital, human capital and Social Capital… The argument is that action taken with respect to any of the four capitals will have direct consequences for the
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others... we need to pay much more attention to Social Capital, because Social Capital enhances returns to investment in other forms of capital.”

In the earlier work of Onyx and Bullen (1997), they studied Social Capital in five NSW communities; while it preceded some of the economic development programs in the Northern Rivers referenced in this research, it was nevertheless relevant because of the size and regional locations of the focus communities as they noted (1997, p. 41)

“Social Capital is a ‘bottom-up’ phenomenon. It originates with people forming social connections and networks based on principles of trust, mutual reciprocity and norms of action.”

While their work had many similarities to that carried out by the CTC@NSW program in building Social Capital through more effective community consultation it also provided a tighter definition of Social Capital because of its empirical analysis of data. It also highlighted the multi-dimensional aspect of Social Capital and that Social Capital is not, on its own, a unifying concept but something that must be continually nurtured. The interconnections between Social Capital and regional economic development were further articulated by Onyx (2001, p. 12) when she said,

“There are other steps required in the process of community renewal, processes that go beyond the expression of voice. These include the processes of education and training, and mechanisms of continued sustainable development. Access to external resources is always important. No community is an island unto itself.”

Although, linkages inevitably emerge in the process of genuine community consultation, if that process is to be fruitful, it must also be incorporated in the process that builds lasting Social Capital.

The concept of Social Capital is part of ‘larger church’ as Adams has stated, but it has also become part of an ongoing academic and public policy debate. Cox and Caldwell (in Winter, 2000, p. 59) remind us that,

“...Social Capital functioning is most easily identified when it enables people, organizations, communities and nations to:
• Work together collaboratively;
• Respect each other’s values and differences and recognise common causes;
• Resolve disputes civilly by recognizing the validity of different positions and the need to operate within a framework that takes account of the common good rather than just competing sectional interests;
• Recognise that building trust requires a perception of fairness and equity to all involved and therefore that prejudice or exploitation must be opposed;
• Ensure that the building of internal cohesion is not affected by exclusion and demonization of ‘others.’”

All of which provide both a starting point as well as a roadmap for delivering more effective community consultation during the grant applications process.

2.5 The Practice of Community Consultation

This research has also focused on the facilitating role played by Regional Program Coordinators (RPCs) as practitioners of community consultation. RPCs are frequently deployed to act as agents for government departments and/or their agencies, to facilitate the uptake of larger or strategically important policy initiatives and grant programs. Not only are RPCs employed to facilitate the delivery of these programs, they also provide the strategic interface to the community consultation process that is reflective of the policy aims of the commissioning government department or agency. Although Kenny uses the term ‘community development practitioner’ instead of RPC, these titles are basically interchangeable because both fulfill the same function as she (1994, p. 51) indicated,

“One of the first things that community development practitioners notice when they enter the community development field is how they are hindered and how they might be facilitated in the goal of establishing practices, systems and structures based on principles of participatory democracy, self-determination, social justice and trust.”

Kenny also stressed that good community practitioners are driven by their commitment to community development principles and not by the idea of having ongoing employment. She believes that their key objectives should be to resource and empower the communities with
whom they are working as well as understanding the objectives, attitudes and approaches that are required of them to carry out a variety of specified activities (Kenny, 1994). These objectives also resonant with the work that was carried out by the RPCs in the CTC@NSW program, as community consultation had to be both realistic in terms of achieving program outcomes as well as in delivering community outcomes that met the identified needs of the people in applicant communities along with the bonus of building greater Social Capital.

According to Kenny (1994), community consultation practitioners need to actively seek to engage with identified communities and genuinely encourage their active participation if the process is to be successful. Practitioners such as the RPCs in the CTC@NSW program, needed to provide guidance and support by dealing with issues and solutions that reflected a ‘bottom up’ rather than a ‘top down’ approach as noted in the data associated with this research. Peter Kenyon’s community consultation philosophy as shown on The Bank of Ideas Website (http://www.bankofideas.com.au), also operates on the assumption that communities need to build from ‘the inside out’, and for communities to invest in themselves, their ideas, assets, capabilities and resources. The Bank of Ideas website also provides a whole range of tools that can be used to assist RPCs with such things as: healthy community development, community asset mapping, visioning and planning, rural community revitalization, community and economic development, and others. Kenyon’s ideas are action oriented and reflective of the many community consultation models that are utilised in regional Australia. On the other hand, Eva Cox in Putnam (2002, p. 338) is more circumspect when she addresses community participation in the consultation process,

> “Participation in… political and communal activities brings citizens into close contact with one another, and are clearly essential in the accumulation of Social Capital… Capacity building can be defined as learning that generates enough trust to make participants optimistic about their continuing involvement.”

Since it first appeared in 1969, Arnstein’s community consultation model, i.e. The Ladder of Participation has also made a lasting contribution to community consultation practice. Although, the work she undertook was in the context of the management of public resources in the USA, during the period of the Civil Rights movement, i.e. the 1960s and 1970s, her
ideas are still worth consideration as she also focused on a 'bottom-up' approach. Arnstein (1969, p. 3) had this to say about her model of participation,

“A typology of eight levels of participation may help in analysis of this confused issue. For illustrative purposes the eight types are arranged in a ladder pattern with each rung corresponding to the extent of citizens’ power in determining the end product... the eight-rung ladder is a simplification, but it helps to illustrate the point that so many have missed - that there are significant gradations of citizen participation. Knowing these gradations makes it possible to cut through the hyperbole to understand the increasingly strident demands for participation from the have-nots as well as the gamut of confusing responses from the power holders.”

Although he was addressing the issue of land and resource management in his doctoral thesis, Lloyd (2005) felt that Arnstein's views were too simplistic as they reduced the argument to good and evil struggling for control of resources while ignoring the complexities of the power relationships that are involved in the final decision-making process. Lloyd did credit her with a 'valiant first attempt' to convey the complexities as well as the duplicity that is often involved in empowering communities. Lloyd's interpretation of Arnstein's Ladder of Participation is shown in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 Model of Arnstein's Ladder of Participation as shown in Lloyd (2005)
Over 40 years later, Arnstein’s work is still cited, particularly in the areas of environmental and resource management, mining and the health care sector. Many of her concerns were about tokenism, placation and shared decision making which are also relevant to some of the specific community consultation practices employed in Australia today. It is certainly worth considering Arnstein’s (1969, 217) plea,

“...citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes to be deliberately included in the future.”

So despite the fact that there are many tools and methods used in the community consultation process in Australia today, it is perhaps not surprising to find Arnstein’s more simplistic model for citizen engagement remains, implicitly and explicitly, at the core of many of the current approaches to participation and consultation. It appears that for many practitioners, Arnstein’s ladder remains the ‘benchmark’ metaphor for describing and evaluating participatory activities such as community consultation. Its enduring appeal remains its sequential, pictorial representation which serves to demonstrate the ‘hidden’ power agendas of many government policies, while at the same time revealing the differences in the forms and strategies of participation that are the desired outcomes (Collins and Ison, 2006).

Arnstein’s hierarchical ‘ladder model’ is relevant to this research because it has long endured as an effective approach to community consultation practice even though it does not always address the issues implicitly or explicitly from the community’s perspective. Collin and Ison (2006, p. 4) also noted,

“A linear, hierarchical model of involvement – Arnstein’s ladder – fails to capture the dynamic and evolutionary nature of user involvement. Nor does it recognize the agency of users who may seek different methods of involvement in relation to different issues and at different times ... the underlying epistemology of participation, as understood in many policy-making arenas is limited by its implicit and explicit association of participation with power; with consequences for the kinds of tools and techniques designed to enable participation.”
Although much has been written about community consultation per se, when the consultation incorporates explaining the benefits of ICT, identification of needs and dealing with technical usage issues, a whole new dimension of complexity is added to the consultation process. Aslin and Brown (2004) provide useful insights into this particular aspect of the consultation process as they suggest that good community engagement outcomes cannot be achieved by applying a simple ‘recipe or prescription’ that is applicable to all situations, but rather achieved by using a wide range of tools and techniques. They also felt that consultation needs to be viewed as part of the process that facilitates decision-making for a specific purpose. This proved to be the case in the application process associated with the CTC@NSW program and is supported by the data shown in subsequent chapters of this research.

While Arnstein focused on her own particular hierarchical model for empowering communities, Abraham Maslow (1970) also created a hierarchical model which also leads to empowerment and, it is his theory that has been re-framed in Chapter 7 to demonstrate another model for the delivery of more effective community consultation. Referring to corporate organizational models, Chapman (2002, p. 4) explained Maslow’s five-stage Hierarchy of Needs which was developed in the USA in the 1940–50s as,

> “Biological and Physiological needs including basic life needs. Safety needs including protection, order, etc. Belongingness and love needs including work groups. Esteem needs including status, responsibility, reputation and self-actualization including personal growth and fulfillment.”

While Maslow’s theory is usually linked to pedagogy or psychology, its underlying concepts can also be brought to play in the delivery of a deeper level of understanding as to what motivates community participation when linked to capacity building programs such as the CTC@NSW program. Maslow’s concepts are still valid in understanding human motivation because in community development programs, we must also satisfy each step in turn, starting with the first, in order to deal with the most obvious need, i.e. ‘survival’ itself. It is only when the lowest order needs are satisfied that we can concentrate on attaining or achieving higher order needs (Chapman, 2002).

Maslow’s (2000) article on Utopia discussed how small communities can be overwhelmed if they focus on ‘world-views’ that are at odds with their own and if development programs
appear to be more 'top-down' than 'bottom-up' in their approach to service or program delivery. Maslow (2000, p. 153) also indicated, “There is a necessity for integrating the advantages of bigness and those of smallness.” His concepts were also evident in the small rural communities which were the focus of this research as they struggled for ‘survival’ with economic and social changes within their communities that had been accentuated by the governments’ economic rationalist policies.

Other community consultation models used in Australia appear to support ‘values driven’ participation. This approach is often espoused by large non-profit organizations such as the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). They have established their own practice of public participation based on ‘Core Values for Public Participation.’ These Core Values were developed over a two year period with broad international input to identify those aspects of public participation which crossed national, cultural, and religious boundaries. The purpose of these core values was to help IAP2 practitioners make better decisions which better reflected the interests and concerns of the affected people and entities. IAP2’s Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation (http://www.iap2.org) are,

1. “Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public’s contribution will influence the decision.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.”

These values are universal in scope, and were further validated by the approach taken by the RPCs in the CTC@NSW program. However, an even more ‘bottom up’ approach to community consultation was developed by the American scholar and practitioner, Marshall Ganz. His approach was famously used by Barack Obama when he worked as a Community
Chapter 2: Academic Literature Review

Organizer in Chicago during the 1990s and then in his 2008 Presidential campaign. Although Ganz uses the term ‘Organizer’ where Australians would most likely use the terms of either ‘Community Coordinator’ or ‘Facilitator,’ these roles are essentially the same. Ganz’s (2009) definition of the community consultation process also describes his views on its functional outcomes,

“Organizers identify, recruit and develop leadership; build community around leadership; and build power out of community. Organizers bring people together, challenging them to act on behalf of their shared values and interests. They develop the relationships, motivate the participation, strategize the pathways, and take the action that enable people to gain new appreciation of their values, the resources to which they have access, their interests, and a new capacity to use their resources on behalf of their interests. Organizers work through “dialogues” in relationships, motivation, strategy and action carried out as campaigns... Organizers develop new relationships out of old ones – sometimes by linking one person to another and sometimes by linking whole networks of people together. Relationships grow out of exchanges of interests and resources, the commitment to sustain them, and the creation of a shared story... Organizers engage people in discerning why they should act to change their world – their values – and how they can act to change it – their strategy. Organizers motivate action by deepening people’s understanding of who they are, what they want, and why they want it: their values. Mobilizing feelings of urgency, hope, anger, self-worth, and solidarity that facilitate action, they challenge feelings of inertia, fear, apathy, self-doubt, and isolation that inhibit action.”

So while much of the literature on community consultation in Australia has, for the past two decades, been couched in terms of Economic Rationalist policies, the Ganz model, as previously noted, represents a more bottom up approach to empowering communities, and as such, represents a dramatic paradigm shift in community consultation practice.

Not only have the issues of globalisation, marketisation and privatisation become significant drivers of change for regional and rural Australians, they have also impacted on the building of Social Capital, community consultation practices, especially as they pertain to the process of applying for government grants.
Although, mitigation strategies for better community consultation have been implemented by various government agencies over the past decade, they have often overlooked basic language and literacy issues that serve to inhibit effective community consultation. While not specifically referring to Australia, the entire process of building Social Capital and delivering more effective community consultation was put into perspective by Wolstenholme (1995, p. 1 & 7),

“The continued application of inappropriate models may arise out of difficulties in communication between government representatives and members of community groups during the consultation and planning process… Action and interaction by members of a community in the pursuit of shared interests is probably the strongest force within a community. It is a way of achieving things for the community. Through this achievement a sense of bonding is created. Community action is the important source of power for any change which is likely to promote the well-being of the community.”

The aims of the CTC@NSW program during its life, were very much in keeping with the policy of the NSW Government at the time, e.g. ‘listening’ to what communities wanted to achieve as they had increasingly begun to turn their attention to the economic plight of small communities. They had begun to implement programs that were specifically designed to encourage economic development and to preserve more of their services in these communities. It appeared that they had begun to recognize that the survival of small towns was dependant on employing both economic development as well as community building strategies (Collits, 1995). Better community consultation practice needs to be facilitated at all levels of planning to make these new systems more dynamic and proactive thus ensuring all members of these small communities feel that they have been empowered (Carson and Gelber, 2001).

According to Macadam, et al, 2004) Community consultation and the building of Social Capital need to be approached across many fronts in order to be inclusive as well as effective, as the aspirations of those living in small regional communities will vary from one community to the next. Entering into the community consultation stage is often like entering unknown territory as actions are more likely to be stimulated by expectations within an individual’s
community of practice than by an external one; and to be successful, participation is more likely to be stimulated by incentives tailored to meet the initial goals and individual needs of different stakeholder groups. However, it was sobering to read a report from a Regional Research Forum (2004, p. 8) which concluded,

“…regional development policy in Australia is 80 years old, but despite this, and the research issues in the last 40 years in particular, what we know is substantially less than what we don’t know.”

While it was the Application Committees applying for CTC@NSW grants that usually represented the views of other stakeholder groups or ‘communities of interest’ it was the successful ones that included members who could speak for both their stakeholders as well as the wider community. However, Luke and Gilbert, (1993) indicated that in a globalised era, societies and groups that have the most to gain from grant programs are often the most inarticulate because they lack access to the requisite literacy skills and are thus rendered relatively powerless, unless a trusted broker such as a RPC is available to act on their behalf. This is also supported in the earlier work of Shepherd (1998) as he indicated that it will usually be the rich and non-marginalized who will be more articulate and dominant in communities. It appears that outsiders, such as RPCs, can play a critical role in terms of rights framing language appropriately as well as in establishing linkages and in creating space for the disadvantaged. The requisites for achieving effective regional economic development outcomes were also noted by Hearn et al (2004, p. 14),

“…local needs and interests must be addressed… It can be extrapolated that success in attaining these goals necessitates the community having effective opportunities to be involved in deciding on the project(s) to be pursued… it is essential the community ‘owns’ the initiative…. the strengths and resources of the community should be identified and be used effectively to advance the community.”

Although identifying the strengths of applicant communities, as well as key stakeholder groups can pose a significant challenge during the consultation process, it is often finding the linkages from these various stakeholder groups so they can work together on an Application Committee that provides the greater challenge. Ultimately, effective community consultation
can feel real, committed, integrated and influential (Aslin and Brown, 2004). The literature reviewed in this research confirms that delivering effective regional economic development programs and building Social Capital in small regional communities via the grant application process is also a journey of community discovery and growth.

### 2.6 Chapter Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter provides a more formal context for the questions this research explores, i.e.:

1. What role does the RPC have to play in building Social Capital in small rural communities when they apply for a government grant?
2. Could a new approach to the community consultation process associated with grant applications help to build Social Capital and empower communities?

Finally, the literature reviewed in the next Chapter, is derived from the many unpublished reports, field notes, documents, conversations, and reflections from earlier fieldwork and other community consultations programs that occurred in the Northern Rivers. These unpublished documents serve to provide greater context to the factors and processes involved in making grant funding more accessible to those who live and work in regional Australia.
CHAPTER 3
CTC Notes, Unpublished Reports and other Relevant Data

3.1 Introduction

The information in this chapter has been included to provide greater context for this research as it reveals the variety of grants based regional development programs which have been delivered in the Northern Rivers over the past decade, particularly programs with an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) focus. Although this research did not commence until two years after leaving the CTC@NSW program, the information and reports, community consultations and grant applications experiences from an even earlier period of fieldwork that are discussed in this Chapter serve to better contextualize this thesis. Chapter 3 provides some of the detailed information and background reports that I either sourced or prepared for the many ICT projects in the Northern Rivers region in which I was involved. It also includes the highlights from one of the reports I prepared regarding some of the other government funded regional telecentre programs that were operational during this time period.
3.2 Background on the Northern Rivers Region of New South Wales

Since all my field work was undertaken in the Northern Rivers (NR) region of New South Wales, it was important to contextualize its unique geographic and demographic features. This type of background information was an integral part of most Expressions of Interest (EOI) as well as actual grant application. It was also necessary to include this type of information in the many reports I prepared for the various organizations for whom I worked.

The NR is in the top eastern corner of NSW immediately adjacent to South East Queensland is shown in Figure 3.1.
Figure 3.1 Map of the Northern Rivers region of NSW showing all the LGAs
The Northern Rivers region is located in the top northeast corner of New South Wales and covers 20,896 square kilometers. It includes the Tweed, Richmond and Clarence river valleys and during the period of my fieldwork had 10 Local Government Areas (LGAs). Since that time, three of the LGAs, Maclean Shire (in which Yamba was located), Pristine Waters and Grafton have amalgamated to become the Clarence Valley Council LGA.

The Northern Rivers is a unique part of Australia with World Heritage rainforests and environmentally sensitive coastal escarpments, it is also one of the Australia’s major ‘lifestyle and learning’ regions. This region is bisected by the Great Dividing Range which separates the more heavily populated coastal regions from the drier, more sparsely populated rural areas west of the Ranges. It is currently undergoing substantial social and economic change because of a number of factors including ongoing industry restructuring, the compounding affects of demographic shifts as ‘sea and tree changers’ move to the region linked to the ongoing impact of globalisation of the marketplace. However, it is interesting to note that the median household income is significantly lower than the NSW average. The Northern Rivers is the second most popular international tourism destination in NSW after Sydney and, in 2000, there were over 5.5 million tourists visiting the Northern Rivers. Additionally, a survey of 528 of the 19,148 businesses in the Northern Rivers, during 2000 enabled me to better understand the level of knowledge and expectations these businesses had regarding their uptake of the Internet. These businesses included; manufacturing, wholesale and retail, tourism and hospitality, business and community services. Over 85% of respondents employed less than 20 people which is the norm for businesses in this region.

According to the 2001 Census over 20% of the people in these NR communities were over 60 years of age, compared to 17% for the rest of NSW, while almost the same percentage were less than 15 years of age. Although nearly every town listed in this survey had a Police Station, many of them were manned only part-time, Sporting Associations and Social Clubs were widely represented in the surveyed communities.

A report prepared by Northern Rivers Area Consultative Committee in 2001 showed that the region’s population base was projected to grow to 290,500 by the year 2005. It also estimated that there would be 116,000 in the labour force with a projected unemployment rate exceeding 10%. Additionally, the NR is home to more documentary film-makers that
anywhere else in Australia outside of Sydney and Melbourne. It is home to Southern Cross University with campuses in Lismore, Coffs Harbour and Tweed Heads, six TAFE campuses and nearly thirty other educational facilities that provide specialist training in arts, crafts, theatre, film and multimedia. Many of the larger educational institutions are located in the coastal strip, i.e. east of the Great Dividing Range. Other key industries in the Northern Rivers at the time included horticulture, herbs, residential development, meat, dairy, while aquaculture and aged care services are emerging as growth sectors.

More specific information on other Northern Rivers regional and State based telecommunications programs follow.

3.3 Background information on projects in Yamba, NSW

In 1999, after moving from Sydney to Yamba, which is located in the southern area of the Northern Rivers, I joined the Yamba Chamber of Commerce in order to lobby Telstra to deliver faster, more affordable Internet access to the community of Yamba in order to remain in daily contact with my clients in Sydney. However, in the interim, I was asked to help the Chamber prepare an application for a grant from the New South Wales Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD) to provide funding to hold a Seafood Festival at Yamba, in the hope it could become an annual tourist draw for the community. This was also my first experience in dealing with the seemingly ‘coded’ language used in government grant applications.

Following the successful outcome of this grant application I was then asked to prepare another DSRD grant application to secure funding to employ a Marketing Coordinator for a Main Street Small Town Program to be created in the now defunct MacLean Shire in which Yamba was located. It was during this period that I came to realize that the steps and processes required in preparing a successful grant application were relatively complex. However, the DSRD Business Development Manager kindly showed me some of the ‘tricks of the trade’; the first of which was to reframe the questions in the application so that they were more readily understood by the ‘locals’ while at the same time answering all of them so as to reflect all DSRD’s criteria for that particular grant. Successful grants also had to include hard data, in the form of information gathered from a number of community surveys. This meant I had
to organize and conduct numerous surveys of businesses in the community and of course
analysis and prepare the subsequent reports.

Following the success of these two grant applications I was again asked to help the
Yamba Chamber of Commerce apply for grant funding, only this time from the Federal
Government’s National Office for the Information Economy’s, Information Technology
Online (ITOL) program.

The objectives of the Yamba Online project were:

- To establish a locally owned, community based ISP to provide local call access to the
  Internet.
- To provide local businesses with a value adding ISP service and support.
- To create a portal website for Yamba, which would provide greater marketing
  opportunities for local tourism operators, businesses and exporters in order to help
  them “grow their businesses” both nationally and internationally more cost-effectively
  and efficiently.
- To provide local businesses with eCommerce training and support.

It soon became apparent, that additional surveys, publicity and supporting documentation
would be required because of the more stringent assessment criteria of this much larger grant.
However, I had a very good starting base this time as much of the information required to
complete this grant had been gained in the preparation of the two previous grant applications.

At the time of this grant application, Yamba had 448 businesses as determined by the surveys
conducted for the Chamber. These businesses included wholesale and retail, tourism and
hospitality, business and community services. Over 85% of the respondents employed less
than 20 employees which I later discovered was similar to that of other businesses in the
Northern Rivers. The highlights from this survey formed an integral part of the information
that was used to support the Yamba Online Grant Application as a number of the surveys’
questions related to computer and Internet usage. They indicated that,

- business development in the region was constrained by poor IT & Computing skills;
• one in four firms indicated that they needed computer training to keep up with technology and business changes;

• although they wanted to get more involved in Internet, e-commerce and management skills training, few had strategies in place to address these needs;

• many businesses reported that local job applicants did NOT possess adequate computer skills;

• 40% of the surveyed firms did not provide any on-the-job training and 33% trained ONLY when the immediate need arose;

• local firms would support expanded effort in ‘school to work’ transition and many would consider placing Higher School Certificate (HSC) and North Coast Institute of TAFE students in structured learning programs for the first time.

The Yamba Online Project received $75,000 in funding from the ITOL Grant program with local businesses contributing $75,000 ‘in kind’. Much of the information gained in applying for the ITOL Grant gave me the experience necessary to take on a similar but larger project management role for Norlink, a nascent telecommunications service provider for the Northern Rivers. This project, Networking the Northern Rivers, was funded by the Federal Government’s Networking the Nation program.

3.4 Background on the Networking the Northern Rivers Project

Norlink’s Networking the Northern Rivers Project was also a telecommunications project but its vision was to promote economic development in the Northern Rivers through better and more affordable Internet access. Norlink was established in 1997 as a peak body to deal with telecommunications issues in the Northern Rivers of NSW. Over the next three years, I was part of a small team that worked to develop and implement a number of strategies to create a significant differentiation for the Northern Rivers Region in relation to price and availability of a full range of telecommunications services including more affordable Internet access. After undertaking significant analysis of the possible options, a new range of wireless technologies
was selected to provide access to cost effective, high speed telecommunications services for the Northern Rivers.

In July 2001, as part of round 9 of the Federal Government’s Networking the Nation program, Norlink was granted $1.5M to undertake trials in three Northern Rivers towns (of less than 3000 people), using the latest generation of Wireless Local Loop (WLL) technology to deliver both voice and high speed data services. This ‘eTown’ project aimed to rejuvenate regional townships through the use of advanced telecommunications infrastructure in order to deliver cost effective high bandwidth services. The eTown project was to be the model for cost effective telecommunication distribution throughout the Northern Rivers.

The small towns selected for the eTown project had a good mix of residential, business, government and cultural participants and many residents and businesses were actively engaged in the project. These towns were Mullumbimby, Kyogle and Maclean which also went on to participant in the CTC@NSW program.

The eTown project was the first part of Norlink’s overall strategy to create a regional telecommunications service provider which used Wireless Local Loop (WLL) technology. The term Wireless Local Loop covers a wide range of products, as the term describes a function rather than a service. WLLs can provide a cost-effective local distribution systems at an exchange or switch in which the call routing, call management and charging is based. It was hoped that this new service would provide the Northern Rivers region with,

- reduced cost of broadband services;
- higher speed internet availability;
- improved telephony services/quality;
- best practice model for cost effective telecommunications distribution to be used in other regional areas;
- improved regional pricing structure;
- universal local call Internet access with improved reliability and speed;
- timely, cost-effective customer service; and
• resolution of “last mile” issues.

As a Project Manager with the Networking the Northern Rivers and eTown projects I was responsible for the delivery of a wide range of community consultation projects which included,

• conducting numerous regional workshops to raise awareness of the issues surrounding Internet access and affordability;
• explaining the consumer benefits of the services which were to be delivered;
• writing and distributing regular media releases;
• identifying ‘Communities of Interest’ in the Northern Rivers
• building social capital
• coordinating Norlink’s Regional Telecommunications Demand Aggregation study to identify regional businesses and organisations that needed more affordable Internet access;
• conducting telephone surveys to determine:
  ▪ communications costs by Local Government Areas (LGAs);
  ▪ communications usage by LGAs;
  ▪ telecommunications needs of individuals and families in postcodes 2460 – 2486;
• reporting on the telecommunications needs of the region’s tourism businesses as well as the emerging multi-media, television and film industries to access affordable Broadband services in order to deliver their products and services to national and international markets more cost-effectively.

I also prepared and submitted Norlink’s ongoing progress reports to the NTN Project Officer in Canberra as well as completing subsequent, successful applications for additional NTN funding. During this time I prepared and delivered a series of ‘Internet for Everyone” workshops and presented them throughout the Northern Rivers. These workshops not only helped me to establish a number of communities of interest that could build social
capital, but they also served to identify the telecommunications needs of people living and working in the Northern Rivers region. This project gave me an even greater understanding of the telecommunications issues relevant to people and businesses in small communities. It helped me to identify a range of stakeholder groups in the region thus gaining an even better understanding of the implications of how improved telecommunications services could be used to promote both social inclusion as well as foster regional economic development. It also provided me with a basic understanding of the role bonding and bridging social capital play in delivering more effective community consultation during the grant application process. It also served as an ‘apprenticeship’ of sorts for my next regional role as Regional Coordinator for the CTC@NSW program.

3.5 The CTC@NSW and other Telecentres programs

The CTC@NSW program was funded by both the Networking the Nation (NTN) program and the NSW State Government. NTN was established in June 1997 following the sale of the first tranche of Telstra stock. It was created to facilitate economic growth in rural and isolated communities throughout Australia through the establishment of a range of ICT programs. The role of ICTs in regional economic development gained momentum when the federal government launched the NTN program and established a $250 million Regional Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (RTIF). In 1999, a further $174 million was allocated following the sale of the second tranche of Telstra shares.

The NTN program provided funding for not-for-profit organisations to support activities and projects that would address a range of ICT needs in regional, rural and remote Australia. It was driven by a ‘bottom up’ approach with funds being allocated by a formula that looked at each State’s population in regional, rural and remote locations. There was also a separate allocation of funds for other States and Territories.

Although State and Local governments could apply for funding, NTN placed the greatest responsibility for applying for RTIF grants squarely in the hands of regional communities and their local representative groups. The CTC@NSW program had been developed following the Program Manager’s consultations with, and visits to Western Australia where a similar ‘telecentre’ type program had been deployed.
3.5.1 The West Australian Telecentre Network: the model for the CTC@NSW Program

Although the primary focus of this research has been on the CTC@NSW program, it also explored the business planning process and entrepreneurial nature of other Australian government funded telecentre programs that were being ‘rolled out’ from 1997 to 2005. Other programs, such as the Western Australian Telecentre Network (WATN) also revealed the linking aspect of social capital as demonstrated by the work carried out by this program’s Regional Program Coordinators who had been hired to assist communities in understanding the ‘coded’ language used in their grant applications. These RPCs helped small regional communities in W.A. to not only determine their grant eligibility but also their ability to establish and operate Telecentres that would serve to promote economic development if their regions.

The WATN model was of particular interest in this research as many of its objectives and methodologies were later incorporated into the CTC@NSW program. The WATN is perhaps the oldest of the telecentre programs in Australia as it commenced operation in 1991 and has subsequently expanded to over 100 centres located throughout regional W.A. It is still operational and managed through a Telecentre Support Branch (TSB) which operates as part of the Regional Development Division of the W.A. Department of Local Government and Regional Development. It provides a wide range of services to help ensure equity of ICT access to rural and remote areas of the state. These Telecentres serve to build business capacity as well as strengthen the linking dimension of social capital through the use of ICT and Internet access as well providing better Internet access to education and training opportunities.

The Telecentres in the WATN also serve as business incubators, email post offices, community publishers as well as providing a facility for the delivery of a wide range of other community-based facilities and services. These community enterprises are owned and run through local management committees and are open for business with the help of volunteers and part-time, but paid managers. They are supported by four RPCs covering W.A.’s North West and Goldfields region, Midwest and Northern Wheat belt, Southern Wheat belt and
Peel, and Southwest and Great Southern – all very large areas. A W.A. Government Network Report published in November (2004, p. 1) indicated,

“When the program commenced it was about providing people in remote locations with access to learning opportunities primarily in Information Technology…. Telecentres key focus is no longer singularly on Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). In a majority of cases, Telecentres say they are in the business of providing access to training in ICT. However, when their actual activities are described, the majority are more focused on community development activities than online for e-enabled outcomes.”

According to the email received from the W.A. Telecentre Support Branch Manager (July, 2005), “We still employ Telecentre Regional Coordinators to provide support and development services to Telecentres across the State … The State Government still provides a $20,000 salary grant to each facility to support the provision of services for a minimum of 20 hours each week.” According to their website, http://www.dlgrd.wa.gov.au/RegionDev/Telecentres.asp (accessed 3 February 2009) W.A.’s Regional Development Minister announced major new initiatives relating to the future development of the W.A. Telecentre Network as part of the W.A. State Government’s Royalties for Regions program.

Highlights from the WATN Final Report, (Government of Western Australia, 2004) showed,

- It was originally established to provide people living in remote locations with access to IT learning opportunities.

- Centres have evolved into providing a broad range of ICT and business services to the communities they serve.

- Telecentres have been early demonstrators as to the benefits of ICT for their town or region.

- They were originally one of the few places in their communities where the Internet could be accessed and now become the place where broadband services can be offered and accessed.
• In order to achieve long-term viability, Telecentres have had to develop stronger relationships with their local governments.

• There is a lack of quality control and consistency in the delivery of services across the Network.

• The continuing role of Telecentre Coordinators is crucial to the future development and, ultimately, the survival of the Network.

• Telecentre Coordinators also require ongoing training and higher levels of skill in the training and delivery of ICT products and services as well as greater capacity in the areas of financial and project management.

• Unless state funding is maintained the W.A. Telecentre Network will collapse.

The WATN Final Report (2004, p. 1) also indicated that,

“When the program commenced it was about providing people in remote locations with access to learning opportunities primarily in Information Technology…. Telecentres key focus is no longer singularly on ICT. In a majority of cases, Telecentres say they are in the business of providing access to training in ICT. However, when their actual activities are described, the majority are more focused on community development activities than online for e-enabled outcomes.”

In pursuing further research on the long-term viability of government funded telecentre programs I subsequently received the following information from the W.A. Telecentre Support Branch Manager (per email, July 2005) when he advised,

“We do still employ Telecentre Regional Co-coordinators to provide support and development services to Telecentres across the State. These people work as part of the Telecentre Support Branch team in this department with the charter to provide Telecentres with,

• Training in areas that ensure compliance with governance obligations under the Incorporations Act.
• Assistance to plan, develop and budget yearly activities.
• Assistance to establish local and region wide service delivery projects.
• Assistance to attract grants from other sources.
• Access to brokered network-wide income generating business.
• Access to forums that establish communication between Telecentres and stakeholders across the State.
• A coordinated distribution of information about government services and programs.” He also indicated in his email (July 2005) that, “The State Government still provides a $20,000 salary grant to each facility to support the provision of services for a minimum of 20 hours each week.” This program is also still operational.

In addition to the W.A. Telecentre Network and the CTC@NSW program, similar Networks were established in other States to address specific regional economic development issues, although cynics in all States profess that their most important function was to get the political party in power re-elected. This cynical view tends to be supported by the fact that many government grant programs have deadlines intrinsically linked to election cycles.

3.5.2 Overview of the CTC@NSW program

In 2001, I commenced work for the CTC@NSW program as their Northern Rivers Regional Coordinator. Table 3.1 provides a summary of my involvement in the CTC@NSW program.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Key CTC@NSW dates</th>
<th>Key Program Activities</th>
<th>Key dates for Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>March 2000, NSW Office of Information Technology made a submission to NTN to establish CTC@NSW Program</td>
<td>CTC@NSW: Discussions between NSW OIT &amp; NTN. A funding pool was created to establish a minimum of 55 CTCs in rural NSW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>1 June 2000–31 January 2001</td>
<td>Planning &amp; Program Development and call for Applications for Regional* Coordinators</td>
<td>Jan. 2001, Applied for, interviewed &amp; accepted position as Northern Rivers Region with CTC@NSW program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2A</td>
<td>February 2001–30 June 2004</td>
<td>Training &amp; Deployment of 12 Regional Coordinators</td>
<td>Feb. 2001 – Commenced work for CTC@NSW program. Attended 1st week long orientation &amp; training in Bathurst, NSW. Commenced community consultation process and engaged with all regional local governments, key regional organizations and 26 communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>1 July 2004–30 June 2005</td>
<td>Transition to partial support with only 4 in CTC Support Unit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The CTC@NSW team consisted of 12 Regional Program Coordinators (RPCs) and a Support Unit with up to 26 staff and offices in Bathurst and Sydney. As the Northern Rivers RPC, I had to prepare a strategic action plan for the Northern Rivers which addressed the seven Key Reporting Actions (KRAs) that reflected the CTC@NSW’s overall program objectives, i.e. to,

1. provide opportunities to deliver information about better Online access;
2. promote regional development through access to government and non-government services;
3. develop opportunities for business and partnerships to understand and benefit from ICT;
4. access to educational programs via the Internet and ICT products and services;
5. access for the whole community via the Internet and ICT products and services;
6. help communities gain access to additional grants and income sources; and
7. promote professional administration of CTCs and its Support Program.

I also had to prepare monthly reports for Management that reflected these KRAs in communities in the Northern Rivers. In the first instance, I helped these communities to prepare an eight page Expression of Interest (EOI) as shown in Appendix 1. Then, if that was successful, I would assist communities with their funding application which required a more comprehensive community consultation process that included developing comprehensive business and marketing plans which formed the basis of their applications. After every meeting with communities I prepared reports, identified issues and listed items which required follow-up.

Although 26 communities requested EOIs, only seven applications were eventually submitted. The communities that went forward included: Uki, Pottsville, and Mullumbimby, which included Brunswick Heads and Bangalow, Nimbin, Bonalbo, Kyogle, Evans Head, Woodburn. Other interested communities whose applications did not go forward included, Coraki, Iluka, MacLean, Yamba, several of the villages in the now defunct Pristine Waters Council area and the Durahrwa Training and Development Aboriginal Corporation in South
Chapter 3: CTC Notes, Unpublished Reports and other Relevant Data

Grafton. However working with these communities gave me an even greater understanding of the issues that they faced and how they dealt with the community consultation process. It also served to further expand my knowledge of regional issues and better understand the nature of the extant social capital that existed to a greater or less degree in all the communities engaged in the process of applying for a CTC grant. During this process I was also able to establish a network of business and professional contacts as well as other government agencies within the region in order to provide access to relevant ‘social capital enhancing’ linkages.

The community consultation process with each of the applicant communities involved ongoing weekly meetings over a three to six month period of time, and in the case of Kyogle and Nimbin it took nearly 12 months, to complete their applications. I also prepared meeting reports following each meeting with actions and timelines and names against who was responsible for doing what and by when. This report was then circulated to everyone on the applications committees with the request for revisions or amendments to be made within 24 hours and again stating the agreed time and venue for the next meeting. Additionally, when the CTC@NSW Program Manager held post Funding Round conferences and workshops in Bathurst with all the program's RPC in attendance. We discussed the recent consultations in each of communities we represented. Each of the CTC Coordinators was also asked to make presentations to the entire CTC Team on assigned topics. Two of the more comprehensive reports I prepared provided included the profiles of other government funded Telecentre programs while another report highlighted excerpts from a book I had written in 2001, Marketing for eBusiness in Australia. As I later reflected on the various community based projects and experiences in which I had been involved, I was well prepared to frame the research questions that this thesis has addressed.

3.6 Background on other government funded Telecentre Programs

In addition to the Western Australian Telecentre Network, I also investigated other Telecentre programs to determine if they had had any recurring issues around the community consultation process associated with their programs. While there were many similarities between the programs, including the use of RPCs to assist communities in understanding
the ‘coded’ language used in the grant applications there were also significant operational differences.

These telecentre reports covered the Tasmanian Communities Online (TCO), more on the Western Australian Telecentre Network (WATN) and the national Rural Transaction Centre (RTC) programs. A brief overview of other similar government funded programs, in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory follows as they were operational at the same time as the CTC@NSW program.

3.6.1 The Tasmanian Communities Online Program

The Tasmanian Communities Online (TCO) program consisted of a Network of 64 community-based Online Access Centres (OACs) located in rural and regional Tasmania. Each of these telecentres had at least two multimedia computers, accompanying peripheral equipment, Internet access and offers a supportive environment in which to access the services on offer.

All TCO telecentres were co-located, with 50 being hosted by a Department of Education School or a Library. Although the initial goal of this program was for the telecentres to become financially self-sufficient after their first year of operation, this objective had not been achieved at the time this report was prepared.

However, highlights from the Tasmanian Final Report (May 2003) revealed that,

- 89 applications were received over four funding rounds and 64 telecentres had been established.

- The Commonwealth and State Governments invested $13 million that returned over $26.2 million to the Tasmanian economy in terms of locally sourced goods and service.

- The telecentres have succeeded in providing: equitable Online access and basic IT training; access to opportunities to pursue lifelong learning; access to a range of Online services and have helped to build community capacity.

- In the 2003-04 State Budget, the Tasmanian Government announced its ongoing financial commitment to these telecentres so as to assist them in meeting their operational costs and to providing central support to the Network.
Chapter 3: CTC Notes, Unpublished Reports and other Relevant Data

• The TCO program is managed by the Department of Education through the State Library of Tasmania and includes a dedicated Centre Support Unit (CSU).
• The CSU assists communities and Centre volunteers as well as managing a range of statewide service delivery initiatives.
• Most telecentres have Community Management Groups that serve on a volunteer basis in an advisory capacity.
• The large telecentres employ a full-time Coordinator, while the smaller telecentres have part-time paid coordinators.
• Without substantial, ongoing support from the State, most of the telecentres in the TCO Network could not have remained viable.

It is worth noting that the final report stated that communities that participated in this program felt that they had gained a significant number of economic and social benefits through participation and that the TCO Final Report (2003, p. 47) also stated,

“...Economic and social contribution flow as a result of effective adult learning through more learned employees and citizens (re) developing trust in society and engaging in family and social life, paid labour, volunteer work and civic participation.”

3.6.2 The Rural Transaction Centres Program

Over a five-year period, from 1999 – 2004, the Australian Government’s Department of Transport and Regional Services committed $70 million to develop and roll-out its Rural Transaction Centres (RTC) Program but only two Coordinators per state were funded. RTCs also targeted rural communities with populations of less than 3,000 and were supposed to provide small communities with Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) at 130 eligible Licensed Post Offices (LPOs) which provided access to the Australia Post giroPost network. By 2004, 168 RTCs had been approved with 86 being operational. Although one RTC was established in the Northern Rivers at Coraki, it published its last Newsletter in June 2006.

Rural Transaction Centres (RTC) were also supposed to assist rural and remote communities to access basic transaction services such as banking, post, phone, fax,
photocopying, the Internet and a range of Australian Government services such as Centrelink, Medicare Easyclaim and Job Network. Many RTCs were co-located with state and/or local government centres which provided communities with access to a broad range of services e.g. licenses, permits and bill paying. RTCs could also help provide access to a range of services which were unlikely to be commercially available in these communities, such as videoconferencing, rooms for visiting professionals e.g. health, accounting and secretarial services, as well as other private sector and community services. Although the Australian Government provided funding for establishment costs and some ongoing operational funding they did not continue to fund the salaries of RPCs once the RTC had been established. The majority of RTCs are no longer operational.

3.6.3 Other Government Funded Telecentre or Online Access Centres programs

A variety of other Telecentre or Online Access Centre programs were created in other Australian states and Territories, often with financial assistance from the Federal government. It was planned that they would provide users with access to the Internet, online services and information provided by governments and commercial providers. The nature of services provided, and the form and size of the centre were determined by a wide range of factors, including, location, regional and local demographics, the form of centre ownership, centre governance and the management structure adopted and the level of any start-up funding provided. Telecentres were also rolled out during this time period in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and the Northern and Capital Territories.

3.6.3.1 Victoria

The State Government of Victoria did not have as direct a role in the management of public Internet access as had the State governments in Western Australia, NSW and Tasmania. However, it coordinated much of its ICT activities through Multi-Media Victoria and its Connecting Victoria - Connecting Communities Program which established public Internet access terminals across the state. This program created,

- 5,400 public access terminals located in Skills.net sites;
3,000 terminals were made available through its access@schools program initially covering 145 schools and expanded to 279 schools with Federal Government assistance; and

- 940 terminals located in public libraries throughout the State with nearly 80% of all terminals located in regional Victoria and these provided the public with free or affordable online access.

Victoria directly funded six community enterprise telecentres through its Regional Connectivity Project, as well as 30 local councils through its e-gaps Program to establish 75 additional public access sites, with 94% of them located in regional areas. It also supported rural ICT sites through Adult and Community Further Education (ACFE). The Networking the Nation (NTN) program also contributed significant funding to ACFE, access@ schools and Skills.net projects.

3.6.3.2 Queensland

Commencing in 1997, the Queensland State Government provided about $4m to Online Public Access in Libraries (OPAL) since 1997. Its Rural Connect project, was jointly funded by NTN, and as it evolved from OPAL to increase and improve Internet access in public libraries in rural and remote communities. Ninety-five libraries are involved in this project, providing access to PCs, scanners, photocopiers and fax, as well as access to a 1800 telephone help desk for technical and Internet support. The Queensland Government Agent Program (QGAP) provides a network of 68 offices throughout rural and remote areas of Queensland with populations of less than 3000. All QGAP offices were connected to the Internet and were capable of securely receipting transactions and accessing Government information using Internet technology. The QGAP offices had a range of organizational structures with about two-thirds being managed by the State Government, some managed by local government and the balance supported by both community not-for-profit organisations and commercial providers. Some of these Centres are still operational.

3.6.3.3 South Australia

The Government of South Australia contributed jointly with NTN to the NetWorks for You online public access project which established 131 telecentres in five regions. These
telecentres provided Internet access, helped raise community awareness and offered business development assistance. These telecentres were strategically based in local community facilities, including schools, libraries, telecentres and neighbourhood centres.

3.6.3.4 The Northern Territory

The Northern Territory’s Electronic Outback Project (EOP) was managed by the Northern Territory Government and provided public Internet access, video conferencing, pay phones, fax, and associated training and project support in 14 of the largest, remote Indigenous communities. The NT Government contributed in-kind support, in the form of project management, while NTN provided funding of over $4 million.

The Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT) has established public Internet access sites, typically providing one or two computers and associated training, in 42 Community Councils and Incorporated Associations across the Territory. Their ongoing operation has been supported by recipient Councils and Associations.

3.6.3.5 The Australian Capital Territory

The ACT Government established a Digital Divide Strategy and Program which focused on assisting disadvantaged groups by increasing access to ICT products and services as well as training for the community. There was no NTN funding for telecentres within the ACT, although there were a number of projects delivering ICT training at centres established in the southern NSW and ACT region.

While in-depth comparisons and contrasts between these various state programs, or whether or not there had been any operational issues or if they had achieved all their objectives would be worthwhile pursuing in further research. However, it was important to understand that the CTC@NSW was not unique and other States had also focused on using ICT and improved Internet access to build social capital and foster regional economic development.

It appears from the evidence presented in the 2003 Networking the Nation Summary Report that these telecentres also played a significant role in meeting the social and economic needs of regional communities, and contributed to the development of community capacity building as well as social capital. Their value extended well beyond providing access to the
Internet, online services and affordable ICT training and they served to provide an important social focus for young people, people on low incomes, Indigenous communities and the aged.

3.7 Chapter Summary

The reports and information presented in this chapter provides both the starting point as well as much of the context for this doctoral thesis. Not only does this Chapter provide specific data regarding demographic and psychographic profiles of the various communities on which this research focused, but it also provides linkages to the narrative of this research. The information gleaned from these largely unpublished reports, provides the linkages to the more formal aspects of this research, particularly the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 as well the choice of action research as one of the methodologies used in this research, all of which will be discussed in the next Chapter.

Because of the time that has elapsed since this research commenced, re-reading these early reports also constituted action research as the information required in these reports also required extensive reflection and analysis; and, as Lloyd has stated (2005, p. 63–64),

“...action research still exists as a systematic and rigorous form of methodology, and provided it is used in the appropriate situations, can expel claims of uselessness and can be differentiated from common everyday thought processes.”
Chapter 4
Research Approach and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

At the first CTC@NSW planning meeting I attended in March 2001, all the Regional Coordinators were given a copy of Yoland Wadsworth’s 1997 book, *Do It Yourself Social Research* to help guide us through the process of gathering the information we needed to assist communities with their applications for a CTC@NSW Grant. This book served as my introduction and guide to Action Research (AR) and the role it could play in conducting effective community consultation as well as in undertaking the social research which is an implicit outcome of genuine community engagement.

The research undertaken for this degree has been in large part, an outgrowth of the reflective processes that is integral to AR as I read the academic literature and re-read all the other reports and grant applications that I had either written or with which I had been involved in the years preceding this doctoral research. The Case Studies that I have included in Chapter 5 are also drawn from this same period; and have also been through this same reflective sieve. However, all my reflections have been tempered and informed by both the published, and unpublished, literature which I reviewed as part of this research. In particular, it was when I re-visited the CTC@NSW Program Manager’s Final Report that the idea of conducting an online survey which included the questions that I felt still needed to be answered, or at least, better understood, took shape.
In particular, it was my readings prior to preparing and conducting the Online Survey that provided me with a greater understanding of the central role that language had to play in the community consultation process that occurs when communities apply for government grants. This survey provided the quantitative evidence I needed to investigate the effectiveness of the work done by the Regional Program Coordinator (RPC) in building social capital and serving as translator and interpreter; it also provided greater insight into the range of skills required by members of the Application Committee and how this could impact on the grant application process as well as the longer term outcomes of establishing and operating a social enterprise. However, as Wadsworth (1997, p. 80) had said,

“...interpretation and analysis don’t come at the end of the research process – they happen along the way.”

As I conducted this research, Wadsworth’s injunction served to sharpen my focus and led me to the conclusion that doctoral research is a journey not a destination and that the journey has many stops and starts along the way.

However, it was my initial observations and experiences in applicant communities, along with re-reading my reports, linked to the ‘informal’ and formal conversations I had with the other RPCs at our post funding round meetings, that served as the genesis for this research. One of the things that emerged on re-reading the reports was that only two communities throughout the entire state had lodged successful applications in the first funding round in December 2000 and I began to wonder if there had been a causative factor in this low application rate. It was when I reviewed my meeting notes from that first post-funding workshop that I noted that all the other RPCs had found the first version of the CTC funding application (Appendix 2) with its associated business plan, had been very cumbersome and difficult for applicant communities to work with. This also proved to be the main reason why the application had had to be substantially revised for the next funding rounds. It appears that these revisions were also an outgrowth of the reflective process used at that first workshop.
4.2 Setting the Framework

The CTC@NSW program had been created to build social capital through the establishment of social enterprises which would serve to foster regional economic development in small rural communities. In regard to the latter it is important to consider Kenny’s (2003, p. 10) definition of community development as she had noted, “…community development refers to processes, tasks, practices and visions for empowering communities to take collective responsibility for their own development.” Reflecting on whether or not communities with whom I had worked had become empowered was the starting point for this research and Action Research (AR) and Case Studies seemed to be provide the best way forward.

Initially, the CTC@NSW program management team had requested that all Regional Program Coordinators (RPCs) utilize a participatory or Action Research (AR) approach during their consultations as outlined by Wadsworth in her 1997 book, especially when we prepared our monthly reports on the communities with which we were working. Additionally, each of these monthly reports formed a logical starting point in preparing the Case Studies shown in Chapter 5. The program’s managers also felt that this approach to preparing reports would enable them to better monitor the CTC@NSW program’s key performance indicators (KPIs) and to achieve the program’s target of establishing 55 new CTCs in NSW over three years.

The program’s management team was also hoping to determine if the CTC@NSW program could build social capital and deliver better long term economic outcomes for small communities than that of the minimally staffed, federally funded Regional Transaction Centre (RTC) program which was running concurrently. Although national in scope, the RTC program had only two Program Coordinators per state with minimal support provided by its Canberra office, hence the interest in determining the importance of the role played by the RPCs. The reflective process played a key role in assessing the KPIs of the CTC@NSW program since its inception. This process was also an integral component of the workshops that were held at the conclusion of each funding round. This strategy proved to be especially relevant in working with diverse regional communities across NSW as it allowed each of the RPCs to reflect on the issues that had emerged in their respective communities and share their reflections with the entire CTC team.
During the two years I worked with the CTC@NSW program, I facilitated and participated in countless reflective cycles that involved the various stakeholder groups from the 26 communities in the Northern Rivers region of NSW with whom I worked. The Case Studies, shown in Chapter 5, took shape following reading and reflecting on my past reports, unpublished literature along with the other essential reading that I have undertaken as part of my research. Additionally, I have been able to examine all this data with the benefit of hindsight as I focused on some of the thornier issues that had emerged in the applicant communities in which I worked. I have also been mindful of Kenny’s (2003, p. 337) suggestions regarding preparing for a research project,

“Community development researchers should understand the theories and assumptions that underpin research and how they determine the actual research questions and methods. For example they should:

- Recognise the theoretical perspectives where they apply
- Consider ethical issues such as confidentiality, and political issues such as the use of the research findings
- Suggest options in regard to research methods and facilitate the collective choice of the most appropriate.

In much social research, several methods are used.”

To this end I have incorporated Action Research, Case Studies and an Online Survey into my research design framework with the latter providing the quantitative data which, when combined with the qualitative framework of Action Research and Case Studies, has enabled me to draw the conclusions from this research and prepare the discussion as shown in Chapter 7.

### 4.3 Action Research

Because action research is often used in real situations to help solve real problems, it became the key component of my research methodology. I found O’Brien’s (1998) definition was both the most comprehensive as well as the most applicable to my research as he explained,

“Action research is known by many other names, including participatory research, collaborative inquiry, emancipatory
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research, action learning, and contextual action research, but all are variations on a theme. Put simply, action research is “learning by doing” - a group of people identify a problem, do something to resolve it, see how successful their efforts were, and if not satisfied, try again. While this is the essence of the approach, there are other key attributes of action research that differentiate it from common problem-solving activities that we all engage in every day... Several attributes separate action research from other types of research. Primary is its focus on turning the people involved into researchers too - people learn best, and more willingly apply what they have learned, when they do it themselves. It also has a social dimension - the research takes place in real-world situations, and aims to solve real problems. Finally, the initiating researcher, unlike in other disciplines, makes no attempt to remain objective, but openly acknowledges their bias to the other participants.”

Although I did make every attempt to remain objective during this research, I do admit to the bias I had in ensuring that the needs and wants of small regional communities were better addressed by both State and Commonwealth governments in Australia. However, during the later periods of reflection, I was increasingly aware of Wadsworth’s (1997, p. 81) direction,

“When you analyse your information and ideas, what you’re trying to do is ‘take it to pieces’ and try to see what kinds of categories, trends, themes, patterns or repeated relationships can be constructed. You are trying to see it from various points of view.”

However, it was Lloyd (2005, p. 63) who deepened my understanding of the benefits of using Action Research for this type of research. Although his thesis was focused on community engagement as it pertained to dealing with Indigenous communities in regard to protected area management issues, the parallels to the people I worked with in small rural communities, to those living in Indigenous communities with whom he worked, were quite striking. His analysis of the implications of using Action Research were very insightful and he noted (2005, p. 63–64),

“In many ways, action research appears to be simply a logical thought progression that can be adopted in day-to-day decision-making for experiential learning. Some professionals remain
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sceptical of the process as a legitimate form of research, due to
its roots as a social science in comparison to the highly linear,
quantitative and controlled structure of conventional or ‘old
paradigm science’. Yet, despite its cyclic rather than linear nature,
action research still exists as a systematic and rigorous form
of methodology, and provided it is used in the appropriate
situations, can expel claims of uselessness and be differentiated
from common everyday thought processes. Its key and
productive characteristics include the following:

- It is successfully conscious of problematising an existing action
  or practice, and conscious of who is problematising it and why
  we are problematising it.
- It is explicit about naming the problem, and more self-
  conscious about raising an unanswered question and
  focussing an effort to answer it.
- It is a planned and deliberate approach to commencing a
  process of inquiry and involving others who could or should
  be involved in that inquiry.
- It is systematic and rigorous in efforts to get answers.
- It carefully documents and records action and what people
  think about the action, and in appropriate detail and in ways
  that are accessible to other relevant parties.
- It is an intensive and comprehensive approach to a study,
  before jumping to conclusions.
- It is self-sceptical in checking hunches.
- It attempts to develop deeper understandings and more
  useful and more powerful theory about matters being
  researched, in order to produce new knowledge which can
  inform improved action and practice.
- It changes our actions as part of the research process, and
  then further researches these changed actions.”

Kenny’s (1994, p. 335) views were similar in nature regarding participatory research, “…
the community should own and participate in the research process…In full participatory
research, the researchers and the researched become one; that is, people research themselves
and own their experiences.” Although, the people on the various application committees with
whom I worked, might not at the time, have considered they were doing ‘research’, they were
never-the-less doing it in order to answer all the questions they needed to complete for their
grant applications.
It was interesting to discover that ten NSW communities had been successful with their applications in the next funding round and two of them were located in the Northern Rivers. I later noted that success was predicated on the six principles of Action Research practice as noted by Winter (in Zuber-Skerritt, 1996, p. 13) i.e.

“Action Research is seen as a way of investigating professional experience which links practice, and the analysis of practice into a single, continuously developing sequence.

1. “Reflexive critique which is the process of becoming aware of our own perceptual biases;
2. Dialectic critique which is a way of understanding the relationships between the elements that make up the various phenomena in our context;
3. Collaboration, which is intended to mean that everyone’s view is taken as a contribution to understanding the situation;
4. Risking disturbances, which are an understanding of our own taken-for-granted processes and willingness to submit them to critique;
5. Creating plural structures, which involve developing various accounts and critiques, rather than a single authoritative interpretation;
6. Theory and practice internalised, which is seeing theory and practice as two interdependent yet complementary phases of the change process.”

These concepts appeared to hold true as I reviewed other literature. I also took note of O’Leary’s (2004, p. 140) warning when I later read,

“While stakeholder collaboration is central to democratization of the research process, it can also pose significant challenges to the researcher. Yes, participation and collaboration can lead to empowerment and ownership…however the participatory nature of action research can also lead to a number of management issues…Facilitating collaboration is not always easy. Overbearing, powerful (sometimes obnoxious) individuals can usurp democratic procedures; various stakeholders can feel unheard, ignored, and/or marginalised; and personal agendas can mean that strategic plans do not logically flow from observation and reflection.”
As I reviewed my notes from the many meetings I had had with the Uki Committee I began to better understand why the facilitating of collaboration had proved to be so challenging in Uki as well as in several of the other communities in which I had worked. Reflection, after extensive readings, had highlighted the fact that some stakeholder groups had had their own agendas as to the type of businesses they wanted to establish and the nature of the equipment they would require even when they knew there were limits on available funding.

The ongoing reflective processes associated with this research have also highlighted some of the problems mentioned by O’Leary as you will note in the Case Studies presented in next Chapter. Upon, further reflection I found I had to agree with Greenwood & Levin (1998, p. 93) as to their explanation of the Action Research (AR) process,

“AR is a social process in which professional knowledge, local knowledge, process skills, research skills and democratic values are the basis of co-created knowledge and social change…a major challenge in any AR project is to design adequate arenas of communications about problems of major import to local participants.”

However, it was when I went back and re-read all the documentation associated with the CTC program that I fully understood the significance of having effective communications strategies in place during the community consultation phase; and what was required of RPCs in order to produce successful outcomes. I again found that I had to agree with the conclusions made earlier by Wadsworth’s (1997, p. 6) when she had concluded,

“Research is a process which begins with people having reasons for asking questions, then setting about getting answers to them…Research is fundamentally about understanding and explaining – about ‘knowing’. Social research applies this process to people themselves.”

The reflective cycles inherent in Action Research are also extremely effective when used in conjunction with Case Studies. Although this research offers seven Case Studies, and the reflective cycle illustrated by Lloyd (2005, p. 86) has four, Figure 4.1 clearly demonstrates how the two methodologies interact.
4.4 Case Studies

The Action Research cycle shown in Figure 4.1 clearly illustrates the reflective nature involved in analyzing Case Studies and demonstrates why this type of cyclical analysis is so often used in social research such as that undertaken in this thesis. It also serves to demonstrate how both theoretical concepts link to real-world situations. Soy (1997, p. 1) also had this to say about Case Study research,

“Case study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. Case Studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships”

I drew extensively upon the original, individual Community Reports I had written in 2001–2002 as part of my work in the CTC program in preparing these Case Studies. The use of Case Studies has allowed me to describe a range of scenarios in the context of the events and the people I had dealt with during the grant application process. These comparative Case Studies have also been informed by the literature discussed in Chapters 2. However, it is important to note that no individuals have been named in the Case Studies I have prepared as part of this research, as I had to comply with the CTC Program’s Manager’s request for anonymity. It was the ensuing reflective process that I subsequently undertook which served to inform the
preparation of the Case Studies and, as described by the Commonwealth Secretariat (2010, P. 3), have also utilized a ‘Learning History’ approach,

“... as this method involves collectively reflecting on experience in order to draw constructive lessons. It analyzes actions, events and episodes from multiple points of view in order to gain insights.”

But the reflections in these Case Studies were also shaped by the elapsed time since the original Community Reports I had been prepared. However it was my research objectives as explored in the Online Survey which served as the prism for the Case Studies in Chapter 5.

The preparation of these Case Studies enabled me to focus more clearly on the range of issues that had occurred in the communities in which I had worked and to further reflect on whether or not any lessons had been learned. Their preparation also provided fresh insight into the delivery of more effective community consultation. Although Yin (1985) had noted the value of using Case Studies as a research tool, she also suggested that they are often seen as less desirable than conducting surveys. However, Case Studies can be particularly well suited for conducting this type of social research because of the diversity of the source material I had access to regarding each of the applicant communities involved in the Northern Rivers CTC@NSW program. Wadsworth (1997, p. 56) had also suggested that Case Studies could reveal,

“...information taken over time to show a process or how change has taken place...has the advantage of allowing more detailed and possibly deeper and more interconnected understanding of what is going on...a handful of Case Studies may complement a larger scale and more superficial and fragmenting survey techniques...A case study can be generated using a variety of techniques...to assemble a range of information about a single ‘case’...It may involve information collected over time to show a process, or how change has taken place...a handful of Case Studies may complement a larger scale...survey.”

Wadsworth’s comments proved to very insightful and the reflections garnered in the preparation of the Case Studies shown in Chapter 5 are reflected in the final discussion shown in Chapter 7.
Although Tourangeau, et al 2000, p. 62 were talking about surveys, what they had to say about the role of memory in survey response could be equally relevant to using Action Research and preparing case studies, especially if much time has elapsed between the actual community work and when the case studies were written up, i.e. the greater the demands placed on memory the less accurate the report may be, despite the fact that field notes were assiduously kept and accurately dated. The methodologies discussed so far, i.e. Participative Action Research, and Case Studies should serve to clarify their use in this research. However, because they are qualitative in nature, their limitations in relation to this type of research were understood, hence the use of an online survey that was both quantitative as well as qualitative. The results of the survey will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

4.5 The Online survey

The timeliness and attraction of conducting a survey as a research tool were many and as Schutt (2001, p. 209–210) had expounded,

“Survey research owes its continuing popularity to three features: versatility, efficiency and generalizability...a well-designed survey can enhance our understanding of just about any social issue...data can be collected from many people at relatively low-cost, and depending on the survey design, relatively quickly...is appealing when sample generalization is a central research goal.

Additionally, before preparing my survey questions, I had consulted widely with the various Committee Chairs with whom I had worked in the Northern Rivers as well as the CTC Program Managers to ensure that the information I sought to obtain would be applicable as well as substantial in addressing my research questions. I received permission to conduct this survey from the CTC@NSW Program Manager with the proviso that the participating communities would not be named in the survey analysis. Additionally, the questions in this survey, and its methodology were approved by Southern Cross University’s Ethics Committee, ECN-05-34.

A Web-based Online Survey format was chosen because both the Centre Managers and Committee Chairs were used to using the Internet in their transactions with the CTC
program. This format also allowed me to overcome a significant time constraint in conducting the survey as the original source of CTC grant funding was to be fully expended in June 2005 and I didn't know how many of the original 55 CTCs would elect to join the CTC Association which had received follow-up funding. The data from this survey is discussed more fully in Chapter 6 while the survey questions can be found in Appendix 5.

While I was preparing the questions for this survey, I also asked for input from several of my former CTC colleagues. Their input, plus readings from Schutt also helped to inform the design of my survey. However, it had been my reading of Tourangeau, et al (2000, p. 1) that had guided me when I subsequently framed my survey questions,

“Survey research rests on the age-old practice of finding things out by asking questions… the interviewer’s questions and the respondent’s answers are always the central ingredients. The questions can ask about the personal activities or circumstances of the respondent (often called behavioural factual questions) or they can seek the respondent’s opinion about an issue (attitude questions).”

Although there had been few constraints placed by the CTC Program Manager regarding the outcomes of the survey, i.e. anonymity of responding CTCs, in the end the final questions had been scripted so as to address my research objectives. However, given the issues I wanted to explore, it was also imperative that the language I used in the survey instrument be as clear and precise as possible so the answers could provide the data I required to address the major objectives of this research, i.e.

1. What role does the RPC have to play in building social capital in small rural communities when they apply for a government grant?

2. Could a new approach to the community consultation process associated with grant applications help to build social capital and empower communities?

The survey also highlighted some of the other issues that arose during the application process and a few of the more notable operational issues that emerged post funding. I also wanted to explore some of the other issues that arose in communities especially as they related to the building of social capital and capacity in small rural communities.
I prepared a ‘test version’ of my survey by sending it to several of the Chairs of the Application Committees in the Northern Rivers with whom I had worked to gain their assessment as to the nature of the questions I should be asking and whether or not the questions required rewording or further clarification before sending it to the Managers in the CTCs that had received funding. I also took heed of what I had read earlier in Tourangeau, et al (2000 p. 62–63),

“The greater the demands a question places on memory, the less accurate the respondents’ answers, and all else being equal, the less accurate the survey estimates derived from them...Survey questions often contain references to times other than that of the interview.”

Although the changes I made to the final survey were minimal, I was nevertheless cognizant of the fact that some of the CTC Managers who might be completing it might not have been involved with their CTC since its inception and this became my final consideration in the preparation of my online survey. The final survey was emailed on March 2005 to all 55 of the newly funded CTCs. The email requested that the CTC Manager participate in the survey by clicking on the hyperlink embedded in the email. Although a closing date for their response was given, a reminder email was also sent on 27 May 2005 to advise that there was still time to complete the survey. There was an 85% response rate from participating CTCs when the survey period finally closed on 14 June 2005.

The survey was structured into three major sections and consisted of 29 questions. The first section, questions 1–5, incorporated basic information as to the location, size and management structure of individual CTCs. The second section, questions 6–18, sought to look at some of the issues that had emerged during the application process from the communities’ perspective, i.e. how long it had taken for their community to complete the application process, how much help and assistance had been provided by their RPC and what was the nature of the business support they were currently receiving from their auspicing organisation (all questions can be seen in Appendix 5). The third section, questions 19–29, focused on the business outcomes of the individual centres and provided general commentary as to whether expectations of the community and the Centre Manager had been met. Their answers to this survey are analysed in Chapter 6.
It is also worth noting that the online survey did not go out into a social vacuum as it was directed at people who were actively involved in all aspects of the CTC ‘movement’ and, as Thompson suggests in Bourdieu (2007 p.1) “…language is an integral part of social life, with all its ruses and inequities, a good part of our social life consists of the routine exchange of linguistic expressions in the day-to-day flow of social interaction.” Therefore, when the people who were asked to participate in this online survey received the email request, they were already predisposed to do so as they saw it as a routine exchange of information. So perhaps, as Thompson goes on to say (p. 28) “…Bourdieu’s essays on the field of politics and political discourse should be seen as a contribution to a research project which, in order to be followed through properly, would require more detailed empirical or historical inquiry.”

4.6 Chapter Summary

The reflective processes used in this research grew out of the AR process that I had used in the CTC@NSW program because of the iterative nature of the funding rounds, two rounds per year over a three year period. This reflective process was further informed by my readings as I sought answers to the questions that have driven this research and tested against the data that emerged from the survey.

The Case Studies in Chapter 5 were formulated after revisiting my original individual Community Reports and the monthly progress reports that I had prepared during my earlier work and thus formed an integral component of this research as the reflections in each of them served to highlight one or more of the issues that were the genesis for this research. They also provided further insights that were especially helpful in formulating and framing the questions for the online survey. Additionally, when used in combination, all three of these research tools have enabled me to better examine the research objectives undertaken in pursuit of this higher degree.

In conclusion, it is worth noting what Putnam (2007, p. 414) had to say about research,

“…Most empirical research on social capital thus far has focused on the quantity of social ties, but the social distribution of social capital is at least as problematic as trends in the overall quantity indicate … Social capital is generally distributed unequally –
more trusting, more joining, more voting, and so on among the better-off segments of society. Citizens who lack access to financial and human capital also lack access to social capital."

By using as variety of research methodologies, the two questions posed by this research, which both pertain to social capital, will be more thoughtfully addressed.
CHAPTER 5
Case Studies

5.1 Introduction
This chapter presents a series of Case Studies prepared following the reflections and analysis that emerged as a result of re-reading the variety of reports I had prepared from February 2001 through December 2002 as the CTC@NSW Program’s Northern Rivers Regional Program Coordinator (RPC). They also serve to focus on some of the issues that impacted on the community consultation process in the seven communities in the Northern Rivers that were successful in their Applications for a CTC@NSW Grant. They also focus on addressing one or more of my research questions. The information they contain highlights some of the issues I had to address as an RPC. No surnames have been used in any of them to ensure the anonymity of members of the various Application Committees in these communities. The reflections presented at the conclusion of each Case Study have been informed not only by my reading, but also by the benefit of hindsight. They serve to provide greater insight and contextualise the issues I am investigating.

5.2 Background
The Northern Rivers region, as shown in Chapter 3, is located in the north-east corner of NSW and covers 20,896 square km in seven Local Government Areas (LGAs). Geographically it includes three major river valleys, i.e. the Tweed, Richmond and Clarence Valleys. Australia’s Great Dividing Range bisects the Northern Rivers and separates the
region’s inland communities, villages and urban areas from the communities located on its coastal escarpment where the bulk of the region’s population is distributed.

ABS data from 2001 showed unemployment levels of 7.8% which were almost one and half times the State average (5.5%), despite good rates of job creation in the Northern Rivers in the last decade. Median household income levels are significantly lower at about 67% of the State average, and about a quarter of people 15 years and older are in receipt of welfare benefits or pensions of some sort. In general, the overall population is increasing at a rate of about 1.2% per annum. There is evidence that the workforce component is decreasing and the region has challenges associated with an ageing population, with 18.3% of the population aged 65 years and older (compared to 13.8% for NSW). The major employment sectors include retail, health & community services, manufacturing, education, business services and agriculture. Compared to other lifestyle regions, the Northern Rivers has a good capacity to contain jobs within the region (88% compared to 70% for the NSW Central Coast and 80% for the Gold Coast). Key industry sectors of tourism, education, the creative industries, horticulture, herbs, residential development, forestry, meat & dairy, aquaculture and aged care services are the areas which factor into strong growth prospects.

The Northern Rivers is still undergoing substantial social and economic change due to the effects of population shifts, e.g. the ‘sea change’ phenomenon, global competition and industry restructuring. The competitiveness of some of the region’s key industry sectors in the global economy also requires a constant focus on innovation, diversification and value-adding to increase export capacity. It is interesting to note that many of the communities in which I worked are also part of the ‘Rainbow Region’ of northern NSW, in particular, Nimbin, Uki, Kyogle and Mullumbimby. It is called the Rainbow Region because of its cultural diversity, Nimbin is perhaps best known as the epicentre of the alternative lifestyle movement that emerged in Australia in the 1970s. The Rainbow Region was a pioneer in the uptake of Internet usage and had a decade of exposure to the value of Internet access and ICT prior to the arrival of the CTC@NSW program in the region. This region had been home to one of Australia’s first commercial Internet services, Pegasus Networks Communications Pty. Ltd. They opened for business via a laptop computer and a mobile phone on 14 September 1989. According to Goggin (2003, p. 1)
“By 1993 Pegasus Communications had become the third largest Internet service provider in Australia.”

However, the history of the Internet in the Rainbow Region is also intrinsically linked to political activism, equity issues and the social consciousness of the founders of Pegasus which were evident in their goals. While the goals of the Pegasus program did not have the same economic imperative as that of the later CTC@NSW Program, they did influence community expectations in several of the communities in which I worked and undertook community consultations, particularly in Nimbin. According to Goggin (2003, p. 6), the goals of Pegasus in their 1990 – 1991 Strategic Plan were,

1. “To provide efficient and secure low-cost communications for the Australian community.
2. To pay particular attention to providing facilities for groups working on the prevention of warfare, elimination of militarism, protection of human rights, promotion of social justice, preservation of the environment, and promotion of sustainable development.
3. To support global cooperation and world peace by working with the Association for Progressive communications in establishing global networks.
4. To increase the profile of the Australian community of the company, its aims and objectives, and its role in promoting peace and socially.”

Pegasus lasted as an entity until the mid 1990s when it was integrated into what is now Optus Telecommunications. However, Pegasus served to inform many of the people living in the Rainbow Region of the value of the Internet and its potential to deliver both social and economic benefits to rural communities that had Internet access. Several of the founders of Pegasus also went on to serve on the first Application Committee in Nimbin.

These Case Studies are presented in the order in which I worked with the communities, i.e. Uki, Mullumbimby, Kyogle, Nimbin, Evans Head, Woodburn, Pottsville and Bonalbo. In keeping with the criteria of the CTC@NSW program, all communities had populations of less than 3000 people. However, Kyogle and Nimbin both required two attempts before being successful with their applications.
5.3 Case Study 1 – Uki

The CTC at Uki was to be an Outreach model, with outreach sites in the neighboring, smaller villages of Chillingham, Tyalgum and Stokers Siding (Figure 5.1). This type of CTC was supposed to combine a main CTC with smaller outreach sites in smaller neighbouring villages and have a managing community organisation that included members from each town included in the network.

![Map of Northern Rivers with locations of Uki, Pottsville, Chillingham, Tyalgum, Stokers Siding, Mooball, Burringbar and Uki highlighted.](image)

**Figure 5.1** The locations of Uki & Pottsville within the Northern Rivers

Uki is also part of the Rainbow Region but it is located in the Tweed Shire. ABS 2001 Census data showed its population to be less than 1000 people. It was the first applicant community in which I worked and its Application Committee included members who considered themselves to be ‘sea changers’, i.e. they had moved to the Northern Rivers for a more relaxed lifestyle but still wanted to be able to access the same type and levels of service that had been available to them when they had lived in one of Australia’s larger urban centres. The Uki Committee had anticipated opening their CTC in two stages. Stage 1 would be the establishment of the main CTC facility located on Uki’s Main Street. Stage 2 would follow once the main site had been established with the opening of smaller ‘outreach sites’ in the nearby villages of Chillingham with a population of approximately 300, Tyalgum, with a population of approximately 300 and Stokers Siding, with an even smaller population of approximately 150. Initially it had been anticipated that these Outreach sites would consist of one or two computers, as per the specifications provided in the CTC program’s
documentation and they would provide Internet access, much like an Internet kiosk at a shopping centre or Café. They were to be staffed completely by volunteers while the main Centre would have a paid manager with more computers and offer more services as specified by the terms of the CTC@NSW program.

In the community participation section of the Application, the Application Committee had identified the following groups as potential users of the Uki CTC as:

- Tourism Marketing Groups from Uki and surrounding villages;
- Tourist Operators in the vicinity;
- Local Businesses including Home based Businesses;
- Natural Therapy/ Health Practitioners;
- High School students;
- University students;
- The local Historical Society;
- Adult learners.

They also identified other potential markets that might open up for them if they received additional funding to include a Teleconferencing facility at the main CTC.

The Application Committee had also indicated that they would be part of the CTC’s management committee if their application was successful. This group had consisted of a highly experienced Tourism Marketing Consultant, a Telecommunications Consultant who would provide ongoing technical advice, two computer specialists (one in hardware, the other in software development), the President of the local Community Association (who was also the Community Development Officer for the Tweed Economic Development Corporation) and the treasurer, who had extensive experience in administering grant funding from Government programs as well as in managing budgets. Nearly every member of the Planning Committee represented a major stakeholder group within the community of Uki.
Additionally, there were two delegates appointed from each of the designated outreach communities and it had been determined at the first organisational meeting that one or both of these delegates, preferably both, would attend all the regular, twice monthly planning meetings and then report back to their own stakeholders and communities of interest. Although each of the smaller outreach communities involved in this application, had nominated two representatives to attend these meetings this did not occur. One of the proposed outreach sites (Stokers Siding) opted out early in the process while representatives from the other two communities, Chillingham and Tyalgum became active just a few days prior to the lodgment deadline for the application. Despite the fact that they had not attended the regular meetings and had struggled to identify even casual users for their sites and failed to find appropriate and affordable sites to host their kiosks, representatives from each community decided to lodge a complaint with the Program Manager in Sydney 10 days before the application was supposed to be lodged in Canberra because they felt that their needs had not been addressed during the consultation process. They indicated that their needs for more computer equipment and a bigger share of the funding had been ignored and threatened to inform various, but unnamed senior bureaucrats in Canberra that they had been excluded from the consultation process and their communities had been marginalised in the final application. Although notifications of all various Application Committee meetings, and their lack of attendance, had been documented, the CTC@NSW Program Manager came up from Sydney to attend a special meeting I had arranged, at a neutral location so the issues they had raised could be discussed and resolved through mediation. The outcome of this meeting was:

1. The amount of money in the original application was to be substantially increased to cover the needs of the two outreach sites as shown in their own hastily prepared business plans.

2. Each outreach site would have 3 – 4 computers and training programs were to be offered along with special after-school programs

3. The Centre Manager in Uki would spend a minimum of half a day a week at each site.

However, this outcome served to highlight some of the conflicting issues that can occur when communities, with differing needs, cultures and expectations do not spend sufficient
time working together to determine their budget as well as their common needs during the consultation process, i.e. which communities would get what equipment, how they would be supported by a Centre Manager from another location, and how much money could be allocated to service each of these outreach sites. Although this application was in the first funding round and all parties had been on a steep learning curve, it highlighted the fact that the first iteration of the CTC Grant Application was not particularly user friendly and lent itself to misinterpretation. Additionally, a greater emphasis should have been on building social capital, in particular a better understanding of the difference between bonding social capital and bridging social capital as defined by Woodhouse (2006, p. 2), i.e.

“Bonding social capital refers to the social capital generated by shared members of a relatively homogenous group. Bridging social capital refers to the social capital generated and shared through interconnections between heterogeneous groups.”

Although, the final outcome was a ‘win-win’ for all the communities involved, it also stirred up some latent hostilities that had previously existed in the three communities, or as one of the Uki committee said, “It’s the old-timers in Chillingham & Tyalgum venting their spleen on the sea-changers who, according to them. “ Don’t understand the way we do business in these parts!” However, the CTC@Uki went on to achieve some good outcomes because of its dedicated Manager and her entrepreneurial skills and ability to implement the Business Plan. It also had a Main Street location, a variety of its product and service offerings as well as offering a number of training programs; on the other hand, the two outreach sites have not fared well because they had to depend on volunteers to staff them and the locations of their sites did not provide either convenient or easy access. Additionally, the Application Committee representatives from Uki remained actively involved in the ongoing management of their CTC while those from Tyalgum and Chillingham did not.

5.3.1 Reflection on Uki, et al

So what role had I played as the RPC in this small rural community? Although Kenny used the term ‘community development workers’, they do, in fact, play the same role as an RPC. Her discussion on conflict in community certainly mirrored what I had experienced in working with the people from all three of these villages. Kenny stated (1999, p. 265),
“Conflict is an aspect of a vibrant community organisation, but it can also be emotionally draining, disruptive and destructive… community development workers are partisan to the community they work with… There are many positions in any argument. Not only do protagonists hold different positions, but each protagonist may hold contradictory views at any one time and change views during the conflict.”

She could have been describing what I had encountered in working with these communities. Not only were they the ‘first cab off the rank’ for me as the RPC, they were also the most conflicted. Unfortunately, I had assumed that because these communities were in such close proximity to Uki, and all had expressed interest in the economic development aspects of the program, they could happily work together in a productive and constructive fashion to achieve a harmonious result. This was not to be. It was therefore very interesting to read Cornwell’s (2008, p. 274) comments on participation,

“…the most transformational intentions can meet a dead end when ‘intended beneficiaries’ choose not to take part, or where powerful interest groups or gatekeepers within the community turn well-meaning efforts on the part of community development workers to their own ends.”

Her remarks serve as a salutary warning to any RPC; without adequate knowledge of community dynamics and knowing whether or not underlying issues and tensions exist between stakeholders and/or communities involved, conflicts can emerge. A lengthier and more inclusive community consultation process might have better served to build social capital within these communities or at least have identified whether or not bonding or bridging social capital had existed amongst all stakeholders on the Application Committee. In hindsight as the RPC, I should have considered the need for earlier intervention when meeting attendance by representatives from all villages became problematic and the stakeholders from Chillinghm and Tyalgum did not participate in the planning process.

Additionally, it was evident almost from very beginning that the language used in all the documentation associated with the first Grant Application needed to be more accessible and ‘user friendly’. Finally, since not all parties had taken ownership of the grant application process, none of them felt particularly empowered at its conclusion. All of this highlights
the importance of the role social capital has to play in regional economic development and as Woodhouse said, (2006, p. 3) “Social capital acts as informal insurance against risk, minimizing potential negative economic and social consequences associated with the adoption of new and innovative ideas.”

5.4 Case Study 2 – Mullumbimby

The main CTC was located in the village of Mullumbimby with outreach sites in the neighboring villages of Bangalow and Brunswick Heads, with all sites being located in the Byron Shire. The Application Committee included members from each village that was to be included in this CTC network. ABS 2001 data on Byron Shire showed the population base of Mullumbimby to be less than 3000, with populations of approximately 2000 in both Bangalow and Brunswick Heads. The communities discussed in 5.4 are shown in Figure 5.2 and are all considered to be part of the ‘Rainbow Region’.

![Figure 5.2](image-url) The main CTC is located in Mullumbimby in the Byron Shire

The Application Committee for this CTC was inclusive and consisted of stakeholders from Mullumbimby and both the proposed outreach sites. It was also the largest Application Committee with which I worked. The majority of the members on this very large committee all referred to themselves as ‘sea changers’ and had come to the region for lifestyle reasons and to escape the ‘rat race’ of working for large organizations located in urban areas. While the Mullumbimby group had the largest representation as it was to be the site for the main Centre, the outreach site included representatives from their respective community’s Chambers of
Commerce as well as various other stakeholder groups. While this application took longer to complete, because it took longer to schedule meetings that everyone could attend, the lessons from the Uki application had been learned and applied.

All the members of this Application Committee, including those from the proposed outreach sites, were well-educated, articulate and highly motivated. They were also a cohesive unit and possessed a unique range of professional skills and qualifications and, interestingly, many of its members had had extensive corporate experience. The main CTC site was to be in Mullumbimby and co-located with its auspicing (please see Glossary) body, the Byron Shire Adult and Community Education (ACE Byron) Association. As home to the Shire’s local government offices, Mullumbimby also had access to an excellent potential site for their CTC in the ‘old North Power Building’, with its close proximity to the village centre. Although this building had been vacated by Country Energy and was in danger of becoming derelict, the Application Committee had successfully lobbied Country Energy to support this type of community usage in their facility at a very nominal long term lease agreement. The Committee had advised that the CTC, along with ACE Byron would serve as anchor tenants, and that they would seek further funding in order to substantially renovate the site. Other members of the Committee had successfully applied for a Regional Partnership Grant from the federal government to fund these renovations and to build additional facilities which would incorporate a Small Business Incubator on the site as well.

ACE Byron had many years of experience in running a successful community based enterprise and was exceedingly well networked across all three villages. It was apparent that there was a great deal of bridging social capital between these villages because of the interests and skills of Committee members, as illustrated by committee members who also worked with and for the Byron ACE. The business plan prepared by the Application Committee was strong because ACE Byron already operated a successful community owned and operated business and they already knew how to accurately estimate their ongoing costs for such things as rental, usage of the Centre’s computers and other facilities and management costs. As a result, this CTC has been a successful business since it opened its doors for business. However, their success was due in large part to ACE Byron’s ongoing role on the CTC Application Committee and their experience in running a community-based training organization.
5.4.1 Reflection on Mullumbimby

The experiences I had in working with this Application Committee are echoed in large part by Hansen et al (1990, p. 157),

“Consultation is a major vehicle for bringing needed knowledge and services to others... In many cases the consultation group will resemble a task-oriented group, which needs to have its purposes for meeting defined and clarified.”

This Application Committee, because of its size, over 20 members, was very task-oriented but because of the revolving nature of the locations for these meetings, with each of the outreach communities hosting at least two meetings, required that each meeting had to be well planned as well as purposeful. However, it also demonstrated what could be accomplished by an Application Committee when everyone, from the participating communities, worked together with a common vision for the common good. It also revealed how communities could leverage other funding sources with the help of the RPC so that better community outcomes could be achieved. Concurrent with their CTC Application, the Application Committee had also successfully applied for one of the Federal Government’s Regional Partnership program grants. It was also this second grant which enabled them to fully renovate a building for their CTC premises to meet their specifications. Additionally, the ongoing success of the CTC@ Mullumbimby as a social enterprise was due in large part to maintaining its strong partnership with ACE Byron.

The entire community consultation process, with its identification and involvement of the various stakeholder groups clearly demonstrated how access to such a wide variety of skills and experience could be employed to build greater social capital and ultimately empower them. There is a great deal of resonance between what I experienced in working with these communities and what Woodhouse (2006, p. 1) said, “... social capital can make other forms of capital more efficient, thus facilitating economic development...” This was certainly the case in these communities as I discovered that RPCs can play a significant role in building on existing social capital and by facilitating access to additional sources of funding which will further enhance the capacity of small regional communities to become more resilient.
5.5 Case Study 3 – Kyogle

The CTC@ Kyogle was to have its main site in the village of Kyogle with its outreach sites located in two much smaller neighboring communities. ABS 2001 data showed a population of less than 2,500 in the village of Kyogle, which was also the location of the Kyogle Shire Council Chambers. The proposed outreach sites were to be located in the general stores at Grevillea, and Grady’s Creek, both with populations of approximately 150. A map of Kyogle Shire is shown in Figure 5.3 as it is the home of two of the funded CTCs discussed in this section.

![Map of Kyogle Shire Local Government Area showing both Kyogle and Bonalbo](image)

**Figure 5.3** Map of the Kyogle Shire Local Government Area showing both Kyogle and Bonalbo

It took two attempts, and the work of two separate Application Committees, to lodge a successful grant application for a CTC in Kyogle. The first Application was driven by a small group from the local Chamber of Commerce and the Council’s Economic Development Officer with the expectation that the Regional Program Coordinator (RPC) would attend a couple of meetings with this small group and then go away and complete the application on their behalf. As the RPC, I had advised them right from the first meeting that this was not how it worked. I was there to facilitate any and all community consultation meetings they wanted to arrange in order to cast a wider net in terms of finding additional stakeholders and to serve
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as their secretariat but they had to complete the Application, develop their own business plan for a CTC@Kyogle which was to be their community owned and operated enterprise. As the deadline for this particular funding round deadline approached, the Chair of the Committee decided to try and ‘throw something together’ (his words) even though I advised against it. It came as no surprise when this Application was deemed to be incomplete by the funding panel because important sections had included the Chair’s notation ‘Does Not Apply’. However, although this application was rejected, the funding body left the door open by advising that Kyogle could re-submit another, more complete application in a later funding round.

The first Application Committee had been brought together by the local Council’s Economic Development Officer and the local Chamber of Commerce without much buy-in from any other key stakeholder groups. In our initial discussions she had indicated that the Council would also auspice the Centre and provide a suitable location in one of their properties. This later proved to be problematic. One of the first tasks this Committee had to undertake was to determine the needs of the community with a communications strategy which included the distribution of surveys and hosting a number of community consultation meetings which would be heralded by press releases distributed to two local newspapers and the local radio station. This too proved to be problematic. Although the members of the first Committee stated that they wanted to stop the outflow of their young people, provide training opportunities and help local businesses be more competitive, none of these groups had representation on the Application Committee. It was also clear that inter-generational group contact was also very limited in members of the first committee. They were older, long time residents and had only a basic understanding as to how better Internet access and ICT products and services could help local businesses and assist young people in undertaking distance education programs.

The first Application Committee was also a very homogenous group and, as such, a good example of ‘bonding social capital’ in action. Unfortunately, there was never any consultation with young people nor did they seek representation from other representative stakeholder groups. Additionally, the Chair of the committee did not delegate any of the work but tried to do too much on his own, plus run his own small business. There was never enough time for meetings to plan, implement and adequately review the work that had to be done, e.g. develop,
distribute and analyze community surveys, prepare both a marketing and business plan, look at cash flow projections, or to address any of the outstanding issues that needed to be resolved in order to lodge an application for the funding round which they were targeting. However, in the end, the biggest stumbling block for this committee proved to be finding a suitable location for the main Centre in Kyogle as the Council advised, shortly before the closing date that they had no surplus buildings or sites at that time that could provide a suitable location for a CTC in Kyogle. So, in the end, the first application proved to be unviable.

However, another Application Committee was soon formed with the help of the Chair from the first committee, but this time with wider representation from more stakeholders who had a wider range of skills, interests and the time to take on this commitment; a classic example of how ‘bridging social capital’ works; i.e. shared interconnections between heterogeneous groups that have a common goal. More importantly, this Committee also included members from the North Coast Adult and Community Education (NCACE) Organization which had recently decided that they wanted to offer training programs in Kyogle. NCACE had also recently undertaken a number of community surveys to assess needs and had already established links with a wide variety of stakeholder groups within the community including young and old as well as the representatives from the local Indigenous community. They also offered to auspice the establishment of a CTC in Kyogle. This partnership provided the solution to finding a suitable site on Kyogle’s main street. NCACE agreed that the CTC@Kyogle could co-locate with them with NCACE paying the rent in exchange for access to the CTC’s computers and Internet services. The skill base of the second Application Committee was also greatly enhanced by its partnership with NCACE as its members were experienced in running a community enterprise and had more of the skills required to complete the CTC’s business plan. The second application was thus successful and NCACE has continued to play an active role in the ongoing management of Kyogle’s CTC.

5.5.1 Reflections on Kyogle

As I looked back on my reports and notes from this period, I began to better understand why these two committees had approached the task of applying for a government grant so very differently. One of the more significant issues that came to light during the first application process was the fact that the majority of Kyogle Council’s elected representatives saw no
benefit in having a CTC in Kyogle so there were no shared values or vision for the host community. In fact, the Mayor had publicly stated that ‘a facsimile machine represented the latest in information and communications technology and that the Internet would be a passing fad’. This lack of shared vision was further compounded by the first Application Committee’s lack of time and commitment to the process of owning and operating a community enterprise. This can be attributed to the backgrounds and composition of the various stakeholders they represented. It was also particularly evident in regard to how each of the Application Committees went about the task of communicating the reasons why a CTC in Kyogle could build capacity and foster economic development in their village.

The Kyogle experience also revealed the difference in types of Social Capital at play, while the first Application Committee demonstrated the limitations of relying on an homogenous group brought together via a ‘Bonding Social Capital’ network to apply for a grant as their understanding of what was involved was limited by their similar profiles. On the other hand, the Bridging Social Capital networks of the second Committee were able to transcend this same type of limitation and were better placed for wider information diffusion and to provide linkages to external resources because of their extended frame of reference. The lack of real commitment and absence of any type of communication strategy by the first Committee also mutually flagged the underlying reasons as to why this Application failed to ‘get-up’. Hansen, et al (1990, p. 164) also later reminded me,

“It may seem obvious that communications is a significant part of group dynamics … the dynamics of the group consultation process depends on communication. Communications is an issue in terms of presenting the problem; handling the problem; and dealing with the members who present the problem.”

A good communications strategy must therefore be a key component of building capacity in small regional communities and, as Cox, in Putnam (2002, p. 337) has said,

“Social capital, however defined, is generally agreed to be intrinsic to social functioning, in that it enables the members of a society to act collectively in solving their problems and working for the common good.”
At the end of this nearly year-long consultation process it was evident that wider networks and better communications were the key to the ultimate success of Kyogle’s second application.

### 5.6 Case Study 4 – Nimbin

The CTC at Nimbin was another Outreach model with the main site located in the Nimbin Neighbourhood Centre with its main street location, while the outreach sites were to be located in the general stores in the neighbouring villages of Cawongla and Wadesville. According to 2001 ABS data, Nimbin’s population was less than 1000 while Cawongala and Wadesville drew on a population base of less than 250 each. The location of Nimbin is shown in Figure 5.4.

![Figure 5.4](image)

**Figure 5.4** Nimbin is located in the Lismore Local Government Area

Nimbin is often seen as the heart of the Northern River’s ‘Rainbow Region’, but this community had to have two attempts, involving two different Application Committees, to get their CTC application approved. Although located just 30 kilometres from the regional city of Lismore, census data indicated that Nimbin was disadvantaged in many ways; and, of particular relevance to this application, was the lack of adequate public transport and low ownership of cars. This meant that access of its residents to a range of public services was also limited. However, this community has a strong sense of place and it proved to be a very egalitarian and dynamic community in which to undertake community consultations. In Nimbin, as Woolcock & Narayan (1999, p. 3) noted, “It’s not what you know, it’s who you...
know’. This common aphorism sums up much of the conventional wisdom regarding social capital.” Most of the members on the first Application Committee knew someone who could help and all viewed volunteering as a significant contribution to the common good of the Nimbin community at large. Woolcock & Narayan (1999, p. 3) went on to note,

“Intuitively, then the basic idea of ‘social capital’ is that one’s family, friends and associates constitute an important asset, one that can be called upon in a crisis, enjoyed for its own sake, and/or leveraged for material gain.”

Although applying for a government grant does not represent a crisis, the idea of volunteering to work together for material gain, was certainly part of the Nimbin ethos and it was particularly strong in the first Application Committee. It is also interesting to note that two of its members had earlier played a key role in the establishment of the Internet Service Provider, Pegasus as mentioned in 5.2 of this Chapter.

While the individuals on the original Application Committee had a wide range of skills, with two members having postgraduate degrees in education and the arts while others had significant technical proficiency, they all viewed themselves first and foremost as ‘volunteers’ and none wanted to run a business, even if was community owned and operated enterprise, and none felt that any of the grant monies should be spent on a Manager’s salary. Many of the members of this first Application Committee volunteered at the local community centre, where the proposed CTC was to be housed and all felt strongly that the Manager’s role should also be voluntary. This Centre already hosted a range of community services including:

- the local community owned radio station, NIMFM,
- a group which rebuilt old computers,
- a School of Art which also taught writing and film production.

However, most of Application Committee meetings tended to focus on the type of equipment the committee members wanted to have in their CTC rather than how they were going to fund their business over the next few years. While all committee members professed to be interested in establishing a CTC in Nimbin, they were not genuinely interested in undertaking the lengthy and sometimes onerous tasks of business planning, budgeting and marketing
strategies which were prerequisites for a CTC@NSW grant. Additionally, because of the number of people (usually 20 at any meeting) who were on the first Application Committee, factions developed and planning did not progress. As the time to submit Nimbin’s first application drew nearer, the application was still a long way from completion, and, having been through a similar situation in Kyogle, I suggested that they advise the CTC Program Manager that they would like to submit it in a later funding round. This suggestion was welcomed and accepted as there remained a strong interest in having a CTC located in Nimbin.

A new, smaller and better focused Application Committee was quickly formed and they were also able to build on some of the survey work done by the first Application Committee, but more importantly, the Chair of the second Application Committee had a strong background in business and financial planning as well as in community development. This Committee also included a member of the local Chamber of Commerce who was very aware of the business opportunities that existed in the community and how a CTC could help build capacity. The second application was prepared and submitted well before the next funding round deadline closed and was successful.

5.6.1 Reflection on Nimbin

Although members of both Application Committees were very community-minded, the first Application Committee did not include people who had the requisite business planning and financial skills to enable them to address the grant’s criteria or its deadlines. I was reminded of what Lin (2002, p. 43) had said, “We define social resources or social capital, as those resources accessible through social connections.” Again, in Nimbin, it’s not what you know, but who you know; that’s why the second Committee was formed so quickly, people from the first Committee knew others in the community that had the requisite skills and could undertake and fulfill all the requirements of a CTC@NSW grant, and as Putnam (2002, p. 6–7) has said, “The idea at the core of the theory of social capital is extremely simple: Social networks matter. Networks have value, first of all, for the people who are in them.” Nimbin has always been a very well networked community.

However, it was when I revisited my Nimbin reports that I was reminded of some of the other lessons I learned there about social capital, capacity building and regional economic
development; although the situation regarding the two Application Committees was similar to those of Kyogle, they were also quite different because each community had its own unique characteristics and strengths. Although social capital is often seen as an important outcome of capacity building and regional economic development programs, there are other issues that need to be factored into the community consultation process when there is a grant application involved, and as Beer, Maude and Pritchard (2003, p. 35) have said, “The long term growth of regions and localities reflects their intrinsic strengths… and local and regional development programs need to capitalize on existing competencies to generate new abilities.”

5.7 Case Study 5 – Richmond River (Evans Head/Woodburn)

The CTC at Evans Head and Woodburn was an Alliance model, also catered for in the CTC@NSW program and both were located in the Richmond Valley Council (RVC) local government area. This type of configuration meant that each Centre would provide a complementary subset of the full range of services offered by a single or stand alone CTC. 2001 ABS data showed that Evans Head had a population of approximately 2000 while Woodburn’s was approximately 1000. (Casino’s population at the time of the application was approximately 8,000) Figure 5.5 shows the location of these communities.

![Figure 5.5](image_url)

**Figure 5.5** The Richmond Valley Local Government Area showing Evans Head & Woodburn in relation to Casino
The communities in this Alliance had once been part of the former Richmond River Shire Council and shared a common vision for the future growth and development of their communities, both considered themselves to be ‘coastal’ and tourism oriented. However, at the time of their application, the Richmond River Council had recently undergone a local government amalgamation with the inland, and rural industry focused Casino Council to become the Richmond Valley Council (RVC). This amalgamation had left many people in the two applicant communities deeply unhappy. Members of this Application Community likened the amalgamation to a ‘shotgun wedding’. Both Evans Head and Woodburn had suffered from what they perceived to be a loss of identity through this amalgamation with the much larger, inland Casino Council. In fact, residents of Casino regarded Evans Head as a tourist destination and a place to head in the summer for lengthy stays in the local Caravan Park while Woodburn was seen by Casino residents as a place to go fishing or waterskiing on the Richmond River on which fronted Woodburn’s ‘downtown’ shops. All three communities also had different values and visions for the community in which they lived. Therefore, there was an underlying feeling of resentment and a sense of disempowerment in members of the Application Committee from both Evans Head and Woodburn. This resentment was never far from the surface in any negotiations that took place between the Application Committee and RVC Staff and elected representatives, regarding auspicing and finding suitable sites for CTCs in these two communities. The Application Committee members and the staff of the RVC which was based in Casino were distrustful of each other’s motives from the start. This was due in large part to the fact that Casino had a larger population base and the Application Committee believed the RVC were trying to exploit both their rate base as well as their coastal location to the detriment of those living in the these small communities. However, only Evans Head and Woodburn were eligible to apply for a CTC Grant because of their size, i.e. less than 3000 people.

This distrust proved to be a major sticking point in the preparation of this particular application as the Chair of the Application Committee and the Regional Program Coordinator (RPC) had to negotiate with the RVC for the proposed sites and try to secure a three year lease with a ‘peppercorn’ rent for the CTC sites in both communities. The Committee wanted to host the Evans Head CTC in one of the recently vacated Public School buildings just off their Main Street. This particular site had also been home to the former
Richmond River Council Chambers which had been taken over by the RVC following the amalgamation and the completion of the new Evans River K-12 Public School. This site had been designated by the RVC for community usage in Evans Head. The Woodburn Alliance group wanted their CTC in another of the old Council’s empty buildings which was going to be converted into a new RVC Visitor Information Centre as it was located adjacent to the Pacific Highway and ideally located to capture passing traffic. Following preliminary meetings with the RVC, a verbal, in principle, agreement had been given regarding both sites. However, the Application Committee was advised that their site proposals would still need to be formally approved at the next Council Meeting. However, this particular item kept getting taken off meeting agendas and while the application progress moved along smoothly, there was always the underlying issue as to ‘when’ the RVC would approve the sites as the application’s lodgment deadline approached.

It was because of these postponements that the Chair of the Application Committee had decided that a contingency plan was needed in case the RVC reneged on its original promise to be the auspicing body and to make these two building available as CTC sites for a ‘peppercorn rent’. Two days before the application was due to be lodged, Council finally met and advised the Committee that although they would be happy to auspice the CTCs, but they could not make the facilities available at a peppercorn rent and that they would have to charge full commercial rents on both premises to cover their maintenance costs. The Chair’s contingency plan was then put into place, the application revised accordingly so that it would comply with CTC funding guidelines. Their application was lodged at 5 pm on the day the funding round closed. All though it went down to the wire, the application for CTCs at Evans Head and Woodburn was successful and both communities received the funding they sought and the RVC ‘changed’ their mind and decided that they would indeed lease the original sites to these two communities for a ‘peppercorn’ rent.

5.7.1 Reflection on Richmond River

Underlying political and social issues that have not been resolved can, and do, emerge and serve as impediments in building social capital when small communities apply for government grants. This proved to be the case with the Evans Head/Woodburn application as the earlier council amalgamations had given rise to many hidden, but never the less
contentious issues, that had caused a sense of disempowerment in both Evans Head and Woodburn. In particular, the proposed re-zoning and sale of land in Evans Head that had been designated as having Environmental Conservation and Historical significance was seen as a money-grabbing exercise that would benefit only the people living in Casino at the expense of residents of the former Richmond River Shire. That’s why in this instance it was a good idea to have a contingency plan in place. Although programs such as the CTC@NSW can build capacity and empower communities, they can also become a source of conflict if underlying economic and social issues have not been resolved in the first instance. But in this instance the deep, bridging networks and strong social capital that existed in these two communities saved the day and as Beer, Maude and Pritchard (2003, p. 35) also said,

“In many ways the theory of local and regional economic development is far less problematic than its implementation: making the theory work and developing strategies that are appropriate for each nation, region, town and remote settlement are the greater challenge.”

This was certainly the case in these communities, however, the flexibility of the CTC@NSW program and the intermediary role played by the RPC also proved to be crucial to the success of this application. As the RPC I had had to explain to both sides what the issues were and make suggestions as to ways and means of addressing them and moving forward. But ultimately it was the resilience and commitment of the members of the Application Committee that made it happen. Not only had it been their vision to build capacity in their communities, but they also wanted to show that they didn’t need to go ‘cap in hand’ to the RVC for the infrastructure that they thought would be beneficial to their communities. Kenny (1997, p. 10) spoke of community development as, “… processes, tasks, practices and visions for empowering communities to take collective responsibility for their own development.” So ultimately this CTC@NSW application was about community action that led to the empowerment of these two communities.

5.8 Case Study 6 – Pottsville

The CTC@ Pottsville was to be an Outreach model, with the main Centre located in Pottsville with outreach sites in the neighboring villages of Mooball and Burringbar. 2001
ABS data showed a population base of 2,500 in Pottsville at the time of their application. The communities in this application are also located in the Tweed Shire and can be seen in Figure 5.1. It is worth noting that, at the time of its application, the Tweed Shire was divided into two sections based on land usage, i.e. rural and urban with Pottsville located in the rural sector although it was a popular destination for the grey-nomads that travel north when the colder weather sets in. Pottsville, with its caravan parks, is a popular destination for these senior travelers. However, it also had a very high percentage of permanent retirees but lacked amenities for young people, who tended to leave Pottsville as soon as they finished high school. Lack of public transport was also cited as a major issue for both of these cohorts. The Pottsville CTC was to be auspiced by the local Neighbourhood Centre which already offered training programs in conjunction with Tweed Community College, another ACE facility.

Most of the Application Committee were also members of the Neighbourhood Centre Board and all its members recognised that significant economic changes were on the horizon due to the creeping nature of development that was occurring in nearby coastal locations in the Tweed Shire such as Kingscliff. While this Application Committee wanted to increase the amenities and facilities in Pottsville, they also wanted to preserve their sense of community by providing a larger training facility with better Internet access in order to better cater for the needs of both their older population as well as their youth. The members of the Application Committee included stakeholders from the local Chamber of Commerce, the Business Development Manager from one of the local Credit Unions, members of the University of the Third Age, a Community Youth Worker as well as an auspicing body that was used to running a not-for-profit business. It immediately gave evidence to the civic mindedness of what Wolstenholme (1995, p. 15) referred to as ‘local’ locals, “...people whose families have lived in town for generations … their power may not be obvious because in some cases, relative newcomers may be in positions of power but are advised by longer-term residents.”

5.8.1 Reflection on Pottsville

The Pottsville application proceeded very smoothly, not only was it one of the last communities that I worked in as RPC but also because of what Kenny (1999, p. 178) suggests,

“In the context of increasing concern with efficiency and effectiveness of programs, community development
practitioners are being urged to think more systematically about what they are doing and why they are doing it.”

Therefore, because of the experiences and lessons I had learned in working with other communities there was a skill alignment which complemented the social capital that already existed in the community. Members of its Application Committee also represented an amalgam of both bonding and bridging social capital. However, its main agent was a 72 year lady named Dorothy, who was not only a long term resident and knew all the ‘old-timers’ but also one who was also actively involved in the ‘evolution’ of this community and interacted through the scope and variety of her activities with many of the newer ‘sea-changers’ and their families that had recently arrived in Pottsville. So while the Application Committee had the experience and capacity to manage a community enterprise because of its auspicing body it also had Dorothy as a member. In addition to her wide community networks, Dorothy also had the interpersonal skills, focus and determination to ensure that the application would be successful and that the CTC@ Pottsville would open in record time once their application was approved.

So although social capital was clearly evident in this community as demonstrated by the expeditious manner in which they gathered their stakeholder groups and addressed the application’s requirements. Dorothy certainly facilitated my work as RPC and made the job of ‘getting the word out’ about the benefits of having a CTC in Pottsville easier. In fact, Dorothy almost single handedly implemented the communications strategy, including getting over 500 people to complete the Community Survey as shown in Appendix 4. The entire application process in Pottsville demonstrated how community empowerment helps residents of smaller communities feel better about where they live and the opportunities that are available to them when they act together to achieve their goals. The CTC at Pottsville has subsequently run many successful programs for its Seniors as well as hosting a highly successful film production training program for women, email training programs for Seniors as well as offering regular Online Gaming nights for its young people.
5.9 Case Study 7 – Bonalbo

The CTC at Bonalbo was to be an Outreach model with the proposed outreach sites in the nearby villages of Mallanganee, Tabulum and Ewingar. Bonalbo is located in the Kyogle Shire and was the smallest and last community, in which I worked as RPC with the CTC@NSW program. According to the 2001 ABS data used in this research, its population was less than 500, while the proposed outreach sites each had between 150 and 300 people.

Bonalbo is an inland community with its main industry being predominantly beef cattle. It is located west of the NSW Dividing Ranges, just over 50k from Kyogle, which is also the Shire’s seat as shown in Figure 5.3. However, most of Bonalbo’s residents do their major shopping in the larger town of Casino which is approximately the same distance away, but with better road access. While the ABS data indicated some significant variables for both Kyogle and Bonalbo, the overall economic picture, for both, but particularly Bonalbo, was one of a declining rural community. Such a decline, off such a low population base, made the aspirations for a CTC in Bonalbo all the more imperative as well as problematic, especially for the Centre’s long term viability. Just prior to lodging their EOI for a CTC to be located there, Bonalbo’s last remaining financial services organization closed its local office. Vinson (1999, p. 42) had also noted earlier, “… that the Northern Rivers came in fourth out of 30 in disadvantage in NSW.” Bonalbo was also listed in his ‘top ten’ of most disadvantaged communities with ranking drawn from ABS data, using electoral and administrative boundaries and postcodes. It looked at, amongst other things, the inequitable distribution of wealth, education and computer usage in Australia.

The Bonalbo Application Committee had long recognised that if their communities were to have any future, they had to find a way to better support the career and training aspirations of their young people and to improve the employment opportunities and self-esteem of the people living in the area. They particularly wanted to overcome the ‘brain drain’ as many of their young people left just as soon as they finished high school. Bonalbo also lacked access to many of the other basic services and facilities that ‘coastal’ communities in the Northern Rivers almost took for granted. In addition to very poor mobile phone coverage, access to the Internet was highly problematic although many of its younger residents could use the Internet while they were enrolled at the local high school.
Another significant issue that this Application Committee wanted to address was the amount of road travel that many of their local high school students who were enrolled in Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs undertook each week. Attending VET courses usually included a three hour roundtrip to the nearest Tertiary and Further Education (TAFE) campus offering that particular VET course. However, following discussions with TAFE, the Application Committee discovered that many other VET programs could also be delivered online if the students had access to a Video Conferencing facility. From that point onwards, the Committee worked very closely with the local high school to ensure that the Bonalbo’s Application included specific details of the type of Video Conferencing equipment that would be required and how they could incorporate its usage in their business plan so as to make sure their CTC would be viable going forward. The main focus of this application was all about capacity building in the applicant communities but it also required all the bonding and bridging networks resident in these communities to make it happen.

5.9.1 Reflection on Bonalbo

As I went back over my earlier reports as RPC, which included notes from discussions with the Application Committee as to their motivation for applying for a grant, Kenny’s (1999, p. 168) thoughts on ‘capacity building’ seemed to be particularly relevant,

“... in many state-government programs aiming to reinvigorate rural communities. Its appeal lies in its contrast with traditional welfare and aid programs, which have been donor driven and input oriented. At their best, capacity-building practices promise long-term self-determination and self-management, respect for local knowledge and local participation and control.”

This ‘best practice’ approach in Bonalbo was evident at the very first meeting and at all subsequent ones with this Application Committee. Initially, its primary focus was to build a good working relationship with local educators and some of the local businesses and to secure other input regarding the necessary technical requirements that needed to be factored into their application. It also enabled them to leverage their grant so as to secure even better capacity building facilities for their community as other funding opportunities were identified. In this instance, it was secured when they received additional funding from the NSW Department of Education and Training. Online access to a range of new products and
services delivered via ICT also went a long way towards empowering a community such as Bonalbo.

On final reflection, as the RPC in this instance, my role had more to with coordinating and facilitating what this community wanted to achieve by just helping them interpret and understand the bureaucratic requirements of the actual grant application. The people in Bonalbo were very well-motivated and had strong social networks in place to help them successfully deal with all the requirements of this grant. The social capital in this community was demonstrated not only by the success of their application, but also on the day they opened their CTC. Over 400 people from this tiny community, along with both the State & Federal members, turned out to celebrate their achievement when they opened the doors of the CTC@Bonlbo. They had certainly become an empowered community during the grant application process.

5.10 Chapter Summary

In preparing these Case Studies, my reflections were informed by re-reading past CTC documentation and reports as well as the literature discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Not only are Case Studies that include an Action Research component helpful in understanding the social issues that arise during the grant application process, but they are also very useful tools in understanding the dynamics of the community consultation process as it relates to grant programs such as the CTC@NSW. It is also worth noting, that it was apparent from the very first, that responses to questions in the Grant Application would differ from one community to the next and, that these questions were often a source of frustration for the various Application Committees as they didn’t always understand the purpose of the question. Perhaps on further reflection, this frustration may have stemmed not only from the language used in the application as well as the commercial imperative that was such a focus of the CTC application processes. Both were sometimes viewed as being at odds with the social values that were entrenched in many of the applicant communities.

I have subsequently noted that community size and composition does matter in securing this type of grant. Some of the communities, especially those west of the Dividing Range, often had to struggle to find the right people with the right skills to complete their applications.
Although social capital might be strong in these smaller communities, as evidenced by their participation and interest in building a social enterprise in their communities, they often lacked the requisite business skills as well as the 'customer base' necessary to ensure its long-term viability. It is the results of the Online Survey presented in the next chapter that have enabled me to take a closer look at some of the other issues that surfaced in the communities that had successfully applied for a CTC@NSW Grant.
Chapter 6
An analysis of the results from the Online Survey

6.1 Introduction

In order to find answers to my research questions, particularly the one pertaining to the role of a Regional Program Coordinator (RPC), I prepared and conducted an Online Survey (Appendix 5) of the 55 CTCs that had received funding from the CTC@NSW program. At the time of this Survey there were also 37 Telecentres in the CTC Network that had been funded in an earlier Networking the Nation program. They were subsequently invited to join the CTC@NSW network so that they could receive help from the CTC@NSW Support Unit and become eligible to join the CTC Association when it was established. While these legacy CTCs were part of the CTC Network at the time of this survey, they were not included in the survey because their application process had been significantly different from the applicant communities in the CTC@NSW program. There was one 'legacy CTC' from this earlier funding program located in the Northern Rivers at Clunes. They were excluded from this Survey because they had had to meet a different set of criteria which focused primarily on promoting social inclusion and did not include a business planning component. Additionally, they had had to complete their applications without the assistance of a Regional Program Coordinator (RPC). The regions in which these CTCs were located are numbered and shown in Figure 6.1 and identified by name in Table 6.1. The Northern Rivers region in which I worked is shown in the top right hand corner of this map.
Chapter 6: An analysis of the results from the Online Survey

Regional Areas of NSW

Figure 6.1  The locations of the regions in which the CTCs were located at the time of this survey with the Northern Rivers shown in the top right hand corner

The survey questions were prepared following the reading of both the published and unpublished literature. The CTC Program Final Report (Fraser, 2004, p. 3) had revealed that,

“Lack of available time from community members, and other local issues, such as drought, often hindered progress with the Application for Seed Funding and the development and establishment of Centres.”

This Report (2004, p. 4) also revealed that many of the successful applicant communities had needed more time to establish their CTCs than had initially been anticipated,
“The business concept of sustainability within three years of opening was an optimistic expectation of the Program, which in most cases has fallen short because of the inability of Centres to generate income at a local level. Centres still in development are at risk if they do not receive the support offered to other centres during start-up. To meet this need, the NSW Government extended the tenure of support staff for another year to assist with business brokerage, business and community development, maintenance of the www.ctc.nsw.gov.au website and technical support.”

These particular problems merited further investigation via the Survey as did The Final Report’s reference to technology issues that had affected the CTCs performances, i.e. (2004, p. 27),

“...The cost of maintaining the basic technology infrastructure continues to be an issue for CTCs... Bandwidth for communities continues to be a key issue... There is an expectation that access to broadband infrastructure will be readily available to carry high-level data at affordable prices in the near future... Access to appropriate and affordable training continues to be an issue particularly in the more remote communities.”

While the CTC Final Report was written to address the funding provisions of the CTC@NSW program as determined by both the NSW and Federal government, the Online Survey which was conducted in May 2005, was from an RPC/Community perspective and sought to gain greater understanding of the issues that emerged during the community consultation process associated with applying for a government grant, particularly grants which were focused on the delivery of information, communications technologies (ICT) and better Internet access.

Permission was received from the CTC@NSW Program Manager to conduct an Online Survey of the 55 communities that had been funded before December 2004 and the Survey was undertaken before the CTC@NSW program finally ceased in June 2005. However, approval was given with the proviso that individual communities not be identified in the aggregated survey or individuals in participating communities singled out. The survey was launched on 27 March 2005 with an email sent to the Managers of the 55 CTCs funded...
Chapter 6: An analysis of the results from the Online Survey

during this program. Managers were requested to participate in the survey by clicking on the survey’s hyperlink embedded in the email. A reminder email advising that there was still time to complete their survey was sent on 27 May 2005. There was an 85% response rate from participating CTCs.

This survey was designed to elicit answers from the perspective of participating communities and to help determine answers to the following research questions:

1. What role does the RPC have to play in building social capital in small rural communities when they apply for a government grant?

2. Could a new approach to the community consultation process associated with grant applications help to build social capital and empower communities?

The survey questions also sought to highlight some of the other issues that arose during the application process and a few of the more notable operational issues that emerged post funding.

6.2 How the survey was structured

The first section of the survey, questions 1 – 5, incorporated basic demographic information as to the location, size and management structure of individual CTCs. The second section, questions 6 –10, looked at the application process from the communities’ perspective, the third section, questions 11 – 18, focused on the operation and management of the individual centres as social enterprises. The answers in the concluding section, questions 19 – 29, were more qualitative in nature with the majority of answers being provided by the Centre Managers. These questions focused on management, operational and budgetary issues and provided the opportunity to provide a general commentary as to whether or not the community’s expectations had been met vis-a-vis their CTC. Questions relating to the role of the RPC can be found from question 6 onwards.

Participating CTCs were located throughout the State but the North East/New England Region had the highest rate of survey participation. Table 6.1 shows the regions in which the newly funded CTCs were located and the number of CTCs from that region that participated in the survey.
Table 6.1 Shows both the locations of the CTCs by region as well as the number that participated in the Online Survey by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number &amp; Name of Regions in NSW which had CTCs</th>
<th>Regional Locations of CTCs at end of program</th>
<th>New CTCs at June 4</th>
<th>No. of CTCs &amp; locations of Survey Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Northern Rivers</td>
<td>Uki</td>
<td>Kyogle</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mullumbimby</td>
<td>Pottsville</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evans Head/Woodburn</td>
<td>Dorrigo*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nimbin</td>
<td>Bonalbo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mid North Coast</td>
<td>Bowraville</td>
<td>Old Bar</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kendall/Comboyne</td>
<td>Taree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Hunter</td>
<td>Murrurundi</td>
<td>Tea Gardens</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denman</td>
<td>Nabiac</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Central Coast</td>
<td>Mangrove Mountain (plus 5 outreach sites)</td>
<td>Northern Lakes/</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Budgewoi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Central West</td>
<td>Condobolin</td>
<td>Grenfell</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boorowa</td>
<td>Peak Hill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canowindra</td>
<td>Trundle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oberon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. &amp; 11. Illawarra/Shoalhaven/Southern Tablelands</td>
<td>Ulladulla</td>
<td>Crookwell</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Braidwood</td>
<td>Sussex Inlet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robertson</td>
<td>Gerringong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. North West/New England</td>
<td>Guyra</td>
<td>Tenterfield</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warialda</td>
<td>Uralla</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boggabilla</td>
<td>Tambar Springs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gwabegar</td>
<td>Mungindi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Orana</td>
<td>Narromine</td>
<td>Lightning Ridge</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. &amp; 12. South East</td>
<td>Delegate</td>
<td>Bermagui</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bombala</td>
<td>Wallaga Lake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Far West</td>
<td>Menindee</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Riverina</td>
<td>Temora</td>
<td>Ganmain</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gundagai</td>
<td>West Wyalong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cootamundra</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Murray</td>
<td>Mathour</td>
<td>Holbrook</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khancoban</td>
<td>Tocumwal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Dorrigo’s CTC was opened after I had left the program and work for this community was handled by the transitional CTC@NSW Coordinator. (The CTC at Clunes was no longer operational at time of survey.)

N.B. Regions 3 & 5 as show in NSW Map, Figure 6.1, i.e. Norfolk Island and Sydney were not eligible to participate in CTC@NSW Program because of their location and size.

Although 55 CTCs were asked to participate in this survey only 44 did so and not all respondents answered every question in the survey. This can be attributed to several factors, i.e. the non-respondents might not have had sufficient knowledge of the application process.
because they were newly appointed or they did not have time to answer the questions, or perhaps a combination of both factors.

6.3 Analysis of Questions 1–5: A snapshot of participating CTCs

The answers to questions 1–5, served to provide some basic demographic details of the participating CTCs, i.e. their location, community size, the configuration of their CTC and the funding round in which their grant had been approved. The breakdown of the survey’s 44 participants revealed that it had been completed by 37 Centre Managers, 7 Chairs of CTC Management Committee (with one a member of a sub-committee of a larger organisation), another was a Committee member and one who was providing assistance to the Chair.

In order to apply for a CTC@NSW Grant, communities had to be located in small regional NSW communities with populations of less than 3000. Survey results indicated that the size of the community was not a determinant as to whether or not a community’s grant application was successful; 18 CTCs were located in communities with populations of less than 2000 and 21 CTCs were located in communities of more than 2000 people. More research is required to determine if the actual size of the community is a determinant to their success over time as a social enterprise.

The next question asked respondents to indicate, if they knew in which funding round they had received grant approval. However, only 36 answered this question and eight indicated that they either did not know because they had not been involved in the original grant application, or they had forgotten or saw no relevance in answering this particular question. Importantly, it did reveal that the second funding round had been by far the most successful as 10 communities had had their grant applications approved in the September 2001 round. It appears that low funding approval in the first funding round was due in large part to the complexity of the first version of the grant application as discussed in the Uki Case Study in the previous chapter. Further research would be required to determine the reasons for the failure of any application to be successful in the third round.
Question 5 sought to determine the configuration of the CTCs which had been funded. The most popular configuration was the ‘Stand-alone Centre with Multi-Sites coming next. The least popular proved to be the Alliance model as shown in Figure 6.2.

![Bar chart showing configuration of various CTCs.](image)

**Figure 6.2** Configuration of the various CTCs. (n=44)

Having worked with committees on all three types, it is easy to understand why the Stand-alone model proved to be the most popular. This model supports the notion of greater bonding social number when there are greater shared values. It was also apparent that the ‘Stand-Alone’ Communities met more regularly, shared tasks more appropriately based on skill sets and were all committed to the idea that by establishing a CTC in their community it would help to make it a better place in which to live, work and play. Additionally, the Multi-Site model, with outreaches involving more than one community, found linkages harder to establish; getting all interested parties to attend the planning meetings proved to be difficult; and in the case of the Uki application, the expectations of committee members from the proposed outreach sites were often at odds with those from the proposed main site. The Alliance model proved challenging because of the difficulty in planning for two suitable sites as well as equitable distribution of CTC assets so that both sites had an equal subset of the
essential assets which would enable them to deliver the services outlined in their Business Plans. This model also required both strong horizontal as well as vertical networks.

The Uki Case Study highlighted the difficulties that could emerge when dealing with more than one community and, at post funding meetings with the CTC@NSW team; other RPCs also indicated that they had had similar experiences. It appears that trying to meet the needs of more than one community does not always promote social capital but rather it can lead to conflict. Anecdotal evidence from the Case Studies indicates that neighbouring communities often see themselves in competition with one another for both funding and access to services. Although this type of multi-community structure makes economic sense from a government’s prospective, it often proves to be problematic when looked at from the perspective of participating communities.

6.4 Analysis of Questions 6–10: The communities’ perspective on the program and role of the Regional Program Coordinator

Questions 6 –10 were designed to look at the role of the RPC as well as other issues arising in the application process from the communities’ perspective. In particular, the answers to question 6 indicated the majority of the surveyed communities took between three and six months to complete their CTC grant applications; it is also worth noting that only six communities were able to complete their application in less than three months. While the majority of applications took between three to six months to complete, there were a significant number of CTCs that took longer than six months to complete their applications. These responses are indicative of the long-term commitment that was required of both the Regional Program Coordinators (RPCs) and the Application Committees to the entire process associated with a CTC@NSW grant application. It is also indicative of the social networking that is essential for the on-going success of programs such as this as defined by Keast, et al (2004, p. 364),

“...networking...refers to people making connections with each other...in a myriad of informal and formal ways...to accomplish individual efforts through establishing contacts with key people.”
The networking aspect of social capital was demonstrated in all the successful applicant communities in which I worked. It is also indicative of both the horizontal and vertical networking as well as the long term commitment that is required of those engaged in building and servicing a community enterprise such as a CTC.

However, it was the responses to question 7, “Do you think that the people on your Application Committee could have completed the CTC Application without the help of the CTC Coordinator in your region?” that proved significant in answering the first research question, “Does the RPC have a role to play in building social capital in small rural communities?” The majority felt that they could not have completed their applications without the assistance of their RPC with only six of the responding communities indicating that they could have.

The results of this particular question clearly indicate the importance of the strategic role played by RPCs in helping communities to achieve successful outcomes in the grant application process. It also serves to highlight the importance that communities place on having someone ‘on the ground’ to act on their behalf to provide linkages and to assist them in responding appropriately to the CTC@NSW program’s criteria and documentation requirements. However, when linked to the information shown in the previous question it also demonstrates that it takes time to build trust as well as a good working relationship between all parties and to put in place the appropriate network structures which will not only facilitate a successful grant application but also provide ongoing support for building and maintaining social capital in CTC communities.

Language related issues also came to light in the answers to Question 7. These answers were indicative of the value of having RPCs available to reframe questions on the application so that they were meaningful and relevant to the applicant community in terms of understanding what was expected of them. It appears that there is a correlation between the length of time it takes to complete a government grant application and the language usage and requirements of that application. In the Northern Rivers it took anywhere from six months to a year with the inland communities taking the longest. Further research in this regard needs to be undertaken.
Question 8 asked recipients to rate the CTC Grant Application in terms of how easy it had been for them to complete the requisite documentation. While not all respondents were able to complete this question as they had not been involved in the actual application process, the responses are still quite telling as shown in Figure 6.3. They reveal the nature of some of the issues that proved to be problematic for applicant communities.

Figure 6.3 Shows nature of issues recipients had in completing the CTC Grant Application. (n = 44)

Business and spreadsheet skills were closely linked to a successful grant outcome as well as being essential skills for the ongoing operation of any business, regardless of size, these answers highlighted the nature of the difficulties that many communities experienced during this part of the grant application process. These answers also provide insight into the nature of the role RPCs had to play in the application process. Both Kyogle and Nimbin had to have two attempts each to successfully complete their applications; it was their networking structures that came into play when the members of the first application committees realised that the people and organisations they represented weren’t able to provide all the skills required to successfully complete their CTC@NSW grant application and, that they needed to find members for another Application Committee. They recognised that only by coming
together and reaching out to other community groups would they be able to accomplish their goal, i.e. establishing CTCs in their communities.

Question 8 addressed more of the language issues arising from the application process. However, it was the second part of this question which provided even more insight into the role played by RPCs in dealing the communications issues arising during the application process. Respondents were asked to rank the issues regarding ‘ease of application’. Those who scored it at 5 or less were asked to tick all the factors they thought applied. Their responses are shown in Table 6.2.

**Table 6.2** Responses to Question 8 which addressed language related issues arising from the application. (n = 44)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses available to ‘ease of application’ in pull down menu (Respondents were told they could indicate more than one)</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Business Plan’s Spread Sheet section was too complicated</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the questions in the application were confusing</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We didn’t have sufficient business expertise on the Planning Committee</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was too long</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It wasn’t written in ‘plain English’</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It contained too many technical terms</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is worth noting that the Business Plan’s budgeting spreadsheet, which had been designed by the Small Business Development Manager on the CTC Support Team, with input from the RPCs, was a relatively standard Excel spreadsheet. It had been included because we had all thought when we reviewed the second version of the application that the inclusion of such a spreadsheet would make it easier for applicants to complete the three year business plan which included a provision for completing cash-flow projections over three years. It appears that the entire CTC team, including the RPCs, had all assumed because we all knew how to complete a spreadsheet, Application Committee members in every community in which we were working would also have the same skill set. Although the Business Plan was ‘the’ central component in the evaluation of a Grant’s worthiness, it was also the one section of the Application that caused the greatest difficulty in all communities.

While the inland communities struggled to complete this section, the more business savvy committee members from coastal communities tried to figure out how they could make their financial projections look better so they could apply for an even larger grant. Although
it was logical to have this type of business plan when you are preparing to establish a commercial business, it often places a heavy burden on the volunteers who have to prepare one for a community enterprise, especially if they don’t have a business, accounting or retail background. That is also why it proved to be essential to have people on the Application Committee who had these specific skills if the application was to be successful. In most instances, many of the members of the various Application Committees went on to become a part of the Management Board if their grant applications proved successful.

The next question sought to better understand the nature of the pivotal role played by the local auspicing bodies during the application process. The responses to ‘other’, shown in Figure 6.4, are especially interesting as they reflect the diversity of the sponsoring organisations within these communities.

![Figure 6.4](image)

**Figure 6.4** Shows the CTC’s auspicing organisations. (n = 44)

Thirteen of the respondents were auspiced or sponsored by the local council, five by local training organisations and two by Business Enterprise Centres with the balance being sponsored by a variety of organizations. The breakdown of the 22 CTCs in the ‘other’ category indicated that ten could be classified as ‘progress associations’ making this a significant
category in its own right. However, the variety of answers to this question also indicates that many small communities have their own network structures in place which also play an important role in building social capital in these communities. Other categories in this section included: two Neighbourhood Centres; with one each of the following:

- a NSW Department of Commerce Representative Group,
- a Tourism Information Centre,
- a Community Museum,
- an ‘incorporated standalone organisation’, i.e. Community Technology Centre at Mangrove Mountain, Inc., and
- an Indigenous Community organisation.

This question is closely aligned with question ten, as shown in Figure 6.4, as it asked, “Does this auspicing organisation still provide any ongoing support?” It appears that there is a nexus between an auspicing organisation and the CTC they supported. These answers serve to provide better understanding of some of the issues that can impact on the ongoing operation and management of community enterprises after they have received government funding. The nature of the auspicing organisation and its ongoing commitment to the CTC they auspiced is shown in Figure 6.5.
It is important to consider the nature of this support as there is strong representation from the auspising organisation on the CTC Management Committee in addition to the provision of the premises for the CTC. Additionally, 11 of the auspicing or sponsoring organizations provide ongoing financial assistance, while six others generate work for the CTC, lent equipment, provided maintenance, helped to operate the centre, filled staffing gaps or provided administrative support. It appears that nearly all auspicing organisations maintain a high level of linkages with ‘their’ CTCs and are integral to its ongoing management and operation. This also demonstrates the robust nature of the network structure and the social capital that CTCs have created in the communities they serve.

**6.5 Analysis of Questions 11–18: Building stronger social networks**

Network structures appear to play an important role not only in the establishment of a CTC but also its operation and Keast, et al (2004, p. 364) indicated that these structures,
Chapter 6: An analysis of the results from the Online Survey

“...reach beyond linkages, coordination or task force action. Unlike networks, in which people are only loosely linked to each other, in network structures people must actively work together to accomplish what they recognise as a problem or issue of mutual concern.”

Questions 11–18, focused on the robustness of these network structures as viewed through the filter of the operation and management of the individual centres. One of the key factors in running a successful CTC as a social enterprise proved to be in employing a Manager who had the skills and capacity to maintain social networks and manage that business and, in the case of the CTC@NSW program, it was also one of the criteria that communities had to meet in order to get funding. Not only was this one of the main criteria for getting a CTC Grant, but it was also a line item in a CTC’s budget so it had substantial implications to their cash flow projections. At the time of this survey, 40 of the CTCs had paid Managers and only four did not. However, the question in this section, as shown in Figure 6.6 that yielded the most surprising answer was, “Has the CTC Manager had experience in managing other community organisations?” 23 respondents said ‘Yes’ while 19 said ‘No’, with the remaining not answering. Given that one of the objectives of the CTC program was to establish a community owned and operated enterprise, one can only conclude that actual business experience was seen as more important to the hiring committee.

Most of the CTC Managers did receive help from volunteers in running the CTC when it was ‘open for business’ and this is also indicative of the community’s ongoing support and commitment to the success of their newly funded community enterprise. The variations in the answers to the question shown in Figure 6.6 revealed that many of the original Application Committee members were no longer involved in the operation of their CTCs.
Chapter 6: An analysis of the results from the Online Survey

![Bar chart showing number of responses to the question about continued involvement in CTCs.]

**Figure 6.6** The number of people from the original Application Committee who have continued their involvement in the CTC they helped establish. ($n=44$)

While the results shown in Figure 6.6 seem to indicate a long term to commitment to their CTCs, a different picture emerges when the CTC Managers answered the next question “Does your CTC Management Committee provide you with clear direction for managing your CTC, a resounding 82% of the respondents said ‘No’. But it was the follow-up answers to the question regarding ongoing involvement in the management of their CTC that proved to be the most revealing, from the CTC Manager’s perspective:

- Seven indicated that they didn’t represent all the key stakeholders in the community.
- Four indicated that the Management Committee of their CTC did not meet on a regular basis.
- Four indicated that the management committee did not have enough business experience.
- Four indicated that they didn’t follow the business plan.
• One indicated that he/she was not interested in working with the CTC@NSW support team.

• Other comments were more subjective in nature and their direct quotes follow:
  - “Original committee did not seem as interested in the day-to-day running of the centre.”
  - “They trust the manager too much.”
  - “They’re too busy with their own businesses to give priority to voluntary work.”
  - “They are not as interested in the direction of the CTC as they were in the previous 12 months.”
  - “Although we try to meet on a regular basis (once a month) sometimes we just can’t get together. It’s not a real drama but can just be a little annoying sometimes.”
  - “The members have no real business experience and the previous manager had no clear directives or help from them.”

However, all of these comments reflect the nature of some of the unresolved issues that are affecting the ongoing operation and management of these CTCs, and they are indicative of key operational and management issues that need to be addressed if these community enterprises are to remain viable. It also indicates that RPCs may have a longer term role to play in programs such as this because there is a genuine need for ongoing professional assistance in addressing some of the basic management and corporate governance issues. Skill building workshops, sponsored by the appropriate government entity, organised and run to address these types of issues would help both the CTC Manager as well as the Management Committee; having an RPC on the ground would go a long way to ameliorating many of these problems, especially if that RPC could provide ongoing linkages and access to other funding programs.
6.6 Analysis of Questions 19–29: Measuring success

Answers to questions 19–29 were more qualitative in nature but also supplied more detailed information on issues regarding the implementation of a CTC’s business plan, service related issues and whether or not their community’s expectations had been met vis a vis establishing a CTC. While the answers to this set of questions are more subjective in nature, they also provide a ‘bottom up’ perspective as well as a qualitative dimension to this research. However, it was the answers to question 19, as shown in Figure 6.7, “Have you implemented all or part of your original business plan, please indicate to the nearest percentage that you think applies.” that were the most surprising, especially given the role of the RPC in helping communities in the Northern Rivers prepare their business plans. This was probably one of the most challenging aspects of being a RPC and the entire Community Consultation process.

![Figure 6.7](image)

**Figure 6.7** Shows the percentage of the original business plan that had been implemented, please indicate to the nearest percentage that you think applies. (n = 44)

In reviewing these answers to the next question, "Did your CTC generate the level of income you had hoped to achieve in its first year of operation?" It came as no surprise that 36 indicated that they had not, with only 8 saying ‘Yes’. Respondents were also asked to tick
as many of the reasons, shown on the pull down menu, that they thought applied. They also had the opportunity to provide their own reasons. While the list of reasons is long, Table 6.3 provides significant insight into some of the operational issues these communities had faced. In addition to the ongoing ups and downs of a running small business, the answers are also indicative of the ebb and flow of the various aspects of social capital as they relate to establishing and operating a community enterprise.

Table 6.3 Reveals why CTC Managers thought they had not generated the level of income they had hoped for in the first year of operation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options in the pull down menu. (More than one answer could be selected)</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not enough interest or support from local community. (This could also correlate to the actual size of the community in which they were located)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The volunteers and/or management need more IT training</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We weren’t able to open in the evenings or on weekends</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The services we were offering were too expensive</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We did not offer a wide enough range of services</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our trading hours were not long enough.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We do not have a good location</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We didn’t have a paid CTC Manager</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We do not have enough staff or volunteers to provide service</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the reasons listed in Table 6.3, 18 of the Centre Managers also ticked ‘other’ when they responded to the income question. I have grouped their answers, and quoted them directly under five headings. Table 6.4 incorporates their responses.
Table 6.4  Other issues arising in response to survey question regarding reasons for not achieving projected income streams in first year of operation

| Application Related Issues                                                                 | 1. “Income was hugely over estimated on original application.” |
|                                                                                           | 2. “The projections were unrealistically high for the size/demand of the community.” |
| Operational Issues                                                                          | 1. “Businesses that indicated they would use the service did not use it. In addition we were not able to provide some sophisticated services to clients at the beginning because we did not have the necessary expertise on tap. They went elsewhere and haven’t returned. One of the alliance partners didn’t open until much later and this meant that schedules were not met.” |
|                                                                                           | 2. “Restricted premises pending site development.” |
|                                                                                           | 3. “We are still in temporary premises.” |
|                                                                                           | 4. “Long time in setting up - from employment to equipment purchase and opening took twelve months.” |
|                                                                                           | 5. “Change of Managers” |
|                                                                                           | 6. “Cost of providing external trainers.” |
| Competitive Environment                                                                     | 1. “Training courses offered at first were not applicable to the community and too expensive.” |
|                                                                                           | 2. “Economic downturn, lack of government agencies prepared to use the CTC.” |
|                                                                                           | 4. “The restriction on competition has proven to be a very foolish one.”* |
|                                                                                           | 5. “The Library provided free internet service just after we opened.” |
|                                                                                           | 6. “Competitive neutrality*, lack of network business or government clients, high overheads in IT, lack of ADSL in town for the first 18 months.” |
| Size of CTC and/or its location                                                              | 1. “Because of our size we do not have enough large scale income streams.” |
|                                                                                           | 2. “The population base in the area is too low for the generation of income to the level budgeted.”** |
| Other                                                                                       | 1. “Too optimistic, Government services did not eventuate to the level promised.” |
|                                                                                           | 2. “We are perceived to only be here to service indigenous people so are shunned by some sections of the non-indigenous community.” |

*Refers to the competitive neutrality criteria in the application.

** Refers to one of the eligibility requirements in the Application that communities have populations of less than 3000.

While the list of reasons shown for failure to achieve projected income is long, it serves to highlight some of the issues that need to be addressed if these CTCs are to become sustainable community enterprises. These answers also highlight the need for governments to set more realistic criteria in formulating grant applications as well as provide ongoing support to ensure the long-term viability of these businesses. As one of the more cynical members of the reference group established to help formulate the survey questions said, “The first year has been a real struggle for us and I have to wonder if opening a CTC in this area has anything to do with the next federal election!” However, on a more positive note, some of the issues
flagged by Centre Managers could also serve to provide more realistic criteria guidelines for government entities when formulating new grant programs.

It was the responses to the question ‘What role does the Regional Program Coordinator play in helping small rural communities understand and benefit from government grants such as those offered by the CTC@NSW program?’ as shown in Figure 6.8, that perhaps best supports my first research questions, i.e. What role does the RPC have to play in building social capital in small rural communities when they apply for a government grant?

![Figure 6.8](image-url)

Figure 6.8 Asked how they rated the support that their Centre had received from the CTC @ NSW program on a scale of one to ten. (n = 44)

While the answers shown in Figure 6.8 cannot be measured against any specific performance objections as this was outside their terms of reference in this survey, it is indicative of the relationship that had been established with the RPC who had worked with them during the consultation and application process and during the ‘early days’ of establishing a CTC in their communities. It also reflects the communities’ perception of the value of the role played by both the Support Unit team and the RPCs, not only during the application process but also throughout their first three years of operation.
Question 27 asked: ‘Do you think your CTC has had a positive impact on the economic development of your community? If, yes please comment.’ Of the 64% who said ‘Yes’, their comments have been categorised as follows:

- 30% indicated that they felt that the program’s objective to ‘Promote community development and networks of interests in rural and remote NSW had been achieved in their community,

- 40% indicated that the objective to ‘Promote community demand for IT services in rural and remote communities had been achieved,

- 30% indicated that both of these objectives had been achieved in their communities.

Although 13% of the respondents included a negative comment to this question, most of these comments were about issues that were specific to their particular community and did not reflect any of the CTC@NSW program’s overall objectives. This type of negativity also suggests that there is other underlying, but unspecified, management related issues. Perhaps the following comment, provided by one of the survey respondents, best summed up the CTC@ NSW experience for many who were involved in the CTC program,

“Great program but expectations of business use by the CTC not met. Many set up their own systems while we were establishing business. I always found the staff of CTC@NSW very, very helpful and encouraging. I think there were some unreal expectations of their bosses about what might be achieved in limited-resource local communities. I suspect a better scoping study should have been undertaken before the program was started. Overall, a very positive experience which has benefited many people in the community with the elderly and young probably getting the most benefit.”

This comment is perhaps best contextualised by Lewis (2009, p. 194) when she said,

“Policy over the last decade has claimed much about the benefits of social capital. Most often the focus has been on its potential for improving citizen engagement, building community, and increasing social inclusion...But the means by which government might facilitate the positive aspects of social capital and these valued outcomes are by no means clear.”
6.7 Chapter Summary

This Online Survey was structured into four major sections with answers to questions in the first section, providing basic information as to the location, size and management structure of participating CTCs. The second section looked at the CTC Grant Application process from the communities’ perspective, while answers in the third section gave insight into the operational and management issues that emerged in individual CTCs since opening their doors for trading. The answers in the concluding section provided more qualitative information regarding management, operational and budgetary issues along with general commentary as to whether or not the community’s expectations regarding the CTC@NSW program had been met. All of which were relevant in providing answers to the research questions posed in this thesis. Many of the comments provided by survey participants supported the findings of the CTC@NSW Final Report (2005), but more importantly, along with the Case Studies presented in the previous chapter, the survey serves to identify some of the underlying operational and management issues which threaten to undermine the viability of CTCs as community owned and operated enterprises.

This survey has highlighted the importance of the role played by the Regional Program Coordinators in establishing community enterprises and building social capital in applicant communities. It also provides greater context as to the nature of some of the weaknesses and shortfalls in current community consultation practice and helps to provide a roadmap for delivering more effective community consultation during the grant application process.
CHAPTER 7
Discussion and Conclusions

7.1 Preamble

This chapter will discuss the trajectory of the thesis to this point, examine the implications of the previous chapter’s findings and develop conclusions in an attempt to explore the two research questions, together with the policy implications, on which this research has focused i.e.:

1. What role does the Regional Program Coordinator (RPC) have to play in building social capital in small rural communities when they apply for a government grant?

2. Could a new approach to the community consultation process associated with grant applications help to build social capital and empower communities?

The aim of this research has been to assess major factors that impact on the delivery of effective community consultation during the grant application process; the role of the RPC in the process, and to propose a new consultation model to promote the delivery of more effective community consultation. I will briefly reiterate the journey so far and then complete this thesis with a series of recommendations.

7.2 Summary of thesis thus far

This research has been contextualized by work undertaken as the RPC in the Northern Rivers Region for the CTC@NSW program and other similar programs. It includes the preparation
and presentation of seven original Case Studies of the Grant Application process for a CTC@NSW Grant in the Northern Rivers region of NSW; an online survey of the 55 CTCs in NSW that received funding under this program, all of which have been informed by the relevant literature.

Chapter One provides the background as to how this researcher, became involved in regional economic development programs and the community consultation process, both of which resulted from involvement in several government grants based programs in the Northern Rivers region of NSW. Reflecting on this lead me to try to investigate:

- the role played by RPCs during the grant application process,
- the key factors that affect the establishment and operation of community enterprises funded by grant programs,
- the impact of community economic development programs on building social capital,
- the impact grant programs may have on community empowerment.

The chapter reflected upon communications problems experienced by the people in applicant communities dealing, perhaps for the first time, with the more formal, and in some cases inaccessible, language structures used in the documentation associated with the grant application process. This research has also sought to determine if the community consultation component in applying for grants such as the CTC@NSW could be delivered more effectively in order to achieve better outcomes for those living and working in these small regional communities.

Chapter Two reviewed existing literature as it relates to community economic development, grant programs and the more generic issues that impact on the conduct of these programs, notably:

1. language usage,
2. the implications of economic rationalist and government policies for regional economic development,
3. the nature of social capital, and how it impacts on regional economic development programs and empowers communities.

While the literature of Fairclough, Luke & Gilbert, Gee, Greville, Lakoff, et al focused on the corporatization of language and how it reinforced power structures i.e. directed from the top down rather than being a two-way conversation. There are also implications for the nature of the language used by governments for grant programs. Social Capital, in all its manifestations, was also discussed as it is seen as an important by product of many Australian community economic development programs. In particular, the impact of Social Capital on the community consultation process associated with grant applications. Significantly, most of the available literature, regarding government consultation programs, has been grounded in areas such as agriculture and fisheries practices, industrial growth, mining, transportation, educational and training programs, changes in legislation and other similar programs that have traditionally seen strong links between government agencies and their clients. In particular, the role played by the RPC in reframing the often dense terminology and seemingly convoluted questions found in the application documents that had to be addressed during the community consultation process. RPCs also need to help small regional and rural communities not only better understand what was expected of them during the grant application process but also to better understand the economic implications of having more robust Internet access and better Information and Communications Technology services in these communities.

Chapter Three provides discussion and analysis of some of the unpublished, but highly relevant background reports and information that I had access to during some of the earlier ICT type grants programs in the Northern Rivers region in which I served as RPC. It also includes highlights from a report regarding some of the other government funded regional telecentre programs that were either operational or being implemented during the same time period as the CTC@NSW program. Additionally, it provides specific data regarding various aspects of social capital as well as the demographic and psychographic profiles of the various communities in the Northern Rivers region. This chapter serves to further contextualize this research.
Chapter Four presents the framework of the methodology which was used in undertaking this research. It incorporates the reflective processes that were undertaken during the discourse analysis and reflection on the reports and grant applications that I have either written or with which I had been involved in the years preceding this doctoral research. The Case Studies in Chapter 5 were drawn from the seven communities in which I worked as the CTC@NSW program’s RPC and provide greater context and insight for this research. These Case Studies also serve to support the answers to the research questions.

It was when in the re-visiting of the CTC@NSW Program Manager’s Final Report that an opportunity to collect some new data on this program by conducting an online survey emerged. The results of this survey are analyzed and discussed in Chapter 6. Each section of this survey included a component that was indicative of the role played by the RPC in building or enhancing social capital in communities during the process of seeking grant funding for the establishment of a CTC. The first section provides basic demographic information as to the geographic location, size and management structure of participating CTCs. The second section looked at the grant application process from the communities’ perspective. The third section provides insight into the operational and management issues that individual CTCs have had to deal since opening their doors for trading and the final section allowed for more subjective commentary from survey participants.

7.3 What’s involved in delivering more effective community consultation during the grant application process?

This research has set out to explore community consultation protocols during the grant application process. So it is time now to discuss the conclusions and insights drawn from it as they serve to illustrate not only the answers to the research questions, but also to address some of the fundamental issues that emerged regarding the impact language usage. It also investigated the various aspects of social capital and its interplay in government funded regional economic development programs. In particular, the implications of approaching the entire process from the ‘top down’ rather than the ‘bottom up’, i.e. from a community’s perspective. Kenny (1997, p. 108) highlighted this when she wrote about community development programs,
“Several other key conceptual developments, which have led to a renewal of interest in strengthening active engagement in society... These are the concepts of social capital, active citizenship and civil society.”

This was certainly the challenge faced in undertaking this research and, although a great deal of government funding has been delivered to small regional communities, there has been little research that addresses the question of whether, or not, these monies have contributed to strengthening social capital and empowering the communities. Throughout this discussion I have been mindful of the framework and nature of social capital models and structures as explored and discussed earlier in the literature review, Lewis’s views (2009, p. 49) aligned closely with my findings:

- “It is best conceived of at an individual level.
- It is about individuals in networks.
- Its benefits can be accrued to individuals and collectives.
- It is a multi-level concept (micro, meso, macro).
- There are interactions between levels.”

The same horizontal, vertical and linking manifestations of social capital were evident in all the communities investigated as part of this research, and were highlighted in the Case Studies and survey analysis found in the two preceding chapters. There was also a great deal of synergy between my research findings and what Lewis (2009, p. 50–52) had to say about the forms and types of ties that are implicit in building social capital:

- “There are different forms of it (bonding, bridging, and linking).”
- It is based on both instrumental and expressive/sentiment ties.
- Ties have meaning in and of themselves.
- There are interactions between forms.”

This was also evident in all the communities in which I worked and reflected to a somewhat lesser degree in the answers to the survey questions. But it was the results of the survey that revealed the linkages that an RPC could provide. They were also supported by Beer, Maude and Pritchard (2003, p. 40) conclusions concerning the variety of relationships that are needed to build social capital as part of community development,

“... it is an important part of the ‘institutional milieu’ and is largely produced at the local and regional levels through the
relationships or associations between people in a community working together within neighbourhoods, community organizations, business associations and firms, people develop shared norms, values and understandings, and a wide range of social connections. These constitute the social capital that enables communities to solve common problems ... Social capital is important in both economically successful and marginalized communities.”

The Case Studies discussed in this research indicated that community size and composition does matter in securing government grants as many of the smaller communities had to struggle to find the right people with the right skills to complete their applications. However, the level of social capital in these smaller communities was often stronger, as evidenced by their participation and interest in building a social enterprise in their communities. But it was the results of the Online Survey that enabled me to take a closer look at some of the other issues that surfaced in applicant communities. It highlighted the importance of the role played by the Regional Program Coordinators in building and strengthening social capital in applicant communities. It also revealed the nature of some of the weaknesses and shortfalls in current community consultation practice.

Although Government policies often list the building of social capital as one of their desired program outcomes, it is not always reflected in the design and language used in the actual programs (Kenny, 1994, Trudgill, 1995, Wolstonholm 1995 et al). The many programs funded by ‘Networking the Nation’ program, including the CTC@NSW program, often highlighted this type of disparity even though they were established to help overcome the so-called ‘digital divide’ which existed between rural and urban centres in Australia (Regional Telecommunications Review, 2009). In particular, the CTC@NSW program was rolled out to ensure that small regional communities in New South Wales would not be disadvantaged by the privatization of the Australia’s publically owned national telecommunications carrier (Fraser. 2004). While governments and their bureaucracies were more aware of macro-economic issues that impacted on regional economic development, they often overlooked the fact that the people who lived in these small rural communities, simply ‘didn’t know, what they didn’t know’; and both sides of this divide had their own perceptions as to what the ‘real issues’ were and what needed to be done. This was especially true regarding the
role of telecommunications in regional economic development, particularly in small rural communities. For those sitting in Sydney or Canberra, equity of access to telecommunications and ICT products and services simply meant greater choice in telecommunications carriers, more affordable service delivery, access to broadband and faster download speeds; while for those living in remote or rural areas it often meant better mobile phone coverage or having access to a facsimile machine or a public pay phone located in their local general store.

It was especially interesting when writing up the case studies for each of the seven communities, to revisit the answers provided in the ‘Community Survey for a CTC’ (as shown in Appendix 4). All seven applicant communities completed this survey and yet only five of them identified other telecommunications needs as they related to an organisation or group within their community that might be interested in establishing a CTC. On another level, Kenny (1997, p. 56) suggests something else,

“...there is often an ironic convergence between community development and neo-liberal agendas. Both argue for empowering people to take control of their own destinies. However the neo-liberal approach emphasizes responsibilities over rights and sets the terms of reference for gaining the so-called ‘control’, which is individualistic in orientation and based on a commitment to individual entrepreneurship.”

This theme was played out again and again in many Northern Rivers communities, but particularly in Nimbin, Evans Head and Woodburn which highlighted the need for government bureaucrats to pay particular attention to the barriers caused by the ineffective and/or inconsistent consultation strategies that they have utilized in the delivery of grants based community development programs. The value of employing RPCs with the necessary professional skills and local knowledge should not be underestimated as they can be highly effective in the work they undertake in targeted regional communities; not only are they be able to translate the KPIs of grant programs into key ‘local’ community benefits, but also have the capacity to become genuine change agents who can provide the linking aspects of social capital which will serve to empower the communities in which they work.
7.4 Conclusions: The importance of the Regional Program Coordinators during Community Consultation

Regional Program Coordinators (RPCs) served to inform communities about the benefits of participating in the CTC@NSW program and assisted them in addressing the grant’s criteria; often by reframing the more formal language of the grant into more familiar terms and metaphors. The Case Studies and data from the online survey prepared as part of this research also support the fact that RPCs were integral to the forging of ‘linking’ social capital during both the application as well as operational stages of the CTC@NSW grant program, (Fraser, 2004). RPCs not only translated the more technical information associated with the CTC program into plain English, but they also had to meet with a wide range of community and local stakeholder networks and advocates to discuss and explain why and how they might all work together to meet the community’s needs. RPCs had to recognize the various guises of bonding and bridging social capital which they encountered as well as facilitate the linkages which could deliver an even greater level of social capital, thus RPCs became genuine change agents in the process.

But the CTC@NSW program was not a ‘one size fits all’ program, nor was the nature of the community consultation that each of the RPCs delivered. Hansen, et al (1990, p. 44) also said,

“There are numerous models and procedures in consultation. This may be because each consultant is a product of a unique set of experiences leading to differences in their approaches …most of the procedures in consultation follows a similar set of stages of planning, entry, diagnosis, goal setting, implementation, evaluation, maintenance, withdrawal and follow-up… Consultation can be described in terms of behaviors which cut across individual models.”

This certainly proved to be the case in the CTC@NSW program as each of the applicant communities had a different set of needs and expectations and the RPCs had to respond accordingly. The RPC’s role was varied and specific according to the needs of each community, from the preparation of the Expression of Interest through to the lodgement of a completed CTC@NSW grant application. Not only did RPCs have to work with specific
Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusions

communities within their designated regions over extended periods of time, but they also had to develop linkages to the various local governments, regionally based state and federal agencies, their elected representatives as well as Regional Development Boards, et al in order to assist communities and inform them about the program and how it might benefit particular stakeholder groups. This meant that RPCs had to determine patterns of existing horizontal and vertical networks within communities in order to ‘spread the word’ about CTCs.

The Mullumbimby Case Study, as discussed in 5.4, certainly revealed that this Application Committee understood the wider implications and importance of both bridging and linking social capital. Not only did they include representatives from a variety of community organisation but they also established linkages to other government departments in order to tap into additional community development funding for which they also successfully applied.

Additionally, RPCs served as guest speakers at a variety of community meetings, from Parent’s and Citizen’s Associations and Country Women’s Association to Chambers of Commerce and Progress Associations as they promoted the program’s benefits, but more importantly they had to explain the role that ICT could play in helping small rural communities remain economically and culturally viable in a changing economic climate. Building these linkages proved to be a critical factor in building wider social networks within communities and served to promote and/or build greater social capital and build capacity. However, in the first instance, it was the primary role of the RPC to help applicant communities to ‘jump through the hoops’ that were integral to successfully applying for a government grant.

7.5 The stages involved in the grant application process: Jumping through hoops

One of the first people I met when I started work as a RPC likened the process of applying for a government grant as ‘jumping through hoops’, and, as I moved through the consultation process, ‘jumping through hoops’ proved to be a very apt metaphor when reflecting on the experiences I had with the various communities. This research has explored the role played by RPCs in helping the people who live in small communities better understand what was expected of them during the grant application process; most often by reframing the language
used in the documentation so that it better matched their world views. It is appropriate now to revisit each of the ‘hoops’ encountered along the way and examine all the steps involved in applying for a CTC@NSW government grant.

![Image of Figure 7.1: The ‘hoops’ and stages of the Grant Application Process]

**Figure 7.1** The ‘hoops’ and stages of the Grant Application Process

### 7.5.1 Completing the Expression of Interest: The first hoop

An Expression of Interest (EOI) was required of each community interested in applying for a CTC@NSW grant as the information it provided was used to determine their eligibility. It was designed to provide the CTC@NSW Program’s Managers with a snapshot of the community’s demographics as well as its existing telecommunications infrastructure. The CTC@NSW EOI was a formal 8 page document and is shown in Appendix 1. It was usually prepared with the assistance of the RPC and proved to be the first challenge for the 26 communities in which I worked. The questions in the CTC@NSW’s EOI had been structured to provide the funding body with a broad overview of the community or communities that a CTC would service; but just providing the answers to the questions generally required assistance from the local RPC. While the proponents knew in which LGA their community was located, very few of them knew its size in square kilometers or the age composition of its population. The CTC@NSW’s EOI (Appendix 1, p. 2) had helpfully suggested that,

> “You should be able to make a reasonable estimate of records held by your LGA office, public library or from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.”
This presupposed that potential applicants would be able to easily access these sources when in fact, very few of these communities had libraries or any means of accessing ABS data. In more than one community, the roads were such that residents seldom went into the town where their Shire’s office was located. Stakeholder frustrations were also exacerbated by the complexity of the questions in the EOI that related to telecommunications. In particular, the residents of the inland communities usually didn’t have sufficient knowledge of basic telecommunications infrastructure to be able to understand or adequately respond to requests made in the EOI since they hadn’t even begun to prepare their CTC Business Plan. They became confused when they were expected to answer this question 9 of CTC@NSW EOI (p. 2). It read:

“The proposed site for the Community Technology Centre must be able to connect to a telecommunications network that can support the ways in which the Centre will be used. Do you intend to use Rural Link as your telecommunications connection noting that this will be the CTC@NSW preferred telecommunications method? (Please check with the relevant CTC@NSW Community RPC or ICT Officer at the CTC Support Unit if you require further information.”

The Rural Link program was part of another NSW Government telecommunications initiative which was being rolled out in regional NSW during this same time period according to the Glasson Report (2008). It was designed to provide a range of telecommunications services to small rural communities via their public libraries. Its focus was to deliver Internet access at kiosks located in these libraries with the local librarian providing assistance. The Rural Link program was run by a special team of IT specialists based at the NSW State Library in Sydney and it appeared that they were not even sufficiently aware of how libraries actually operated in smaller communities as shown in the Online Survey that was conducted as part of this survey. Additionally, there were many technical problems that were inhibiting Rural Link’s deployment which only added to the confusion of its potential to be an Internet Service Provider (ISP) for CTCs. So in addition to explaining how a CTC could build capacity within their community, RPCs were also expected to explain the capabilities of an unknown ISP that was still trialling its service offering. This additional layer of complexity was not only
confusing to potential applicants but it also foreshadowed the challenges of working on the actual grant application if their EOI was approved.

Another limiting factor in successfully completing an EOI proved to be the skills and capacity of the people who volunteered to work on it as they often planned to become part of the Application Committee. Although the people on these committees were usually very civic minded and appeared to have a great deal of ‘bonding’ social capital, they often lacked the requisite business planning skills and time to complete all the documentation, while those who had the time because they were retired or unemployed often lacked the skills; all of which indicated that ‘bridging’ or vertical network structures needed to be put in place by the RPC if they were to succeed. This was especially evident in the case of the Bonalbo Application, although it progressed smoothly, they would not have not been able to proceed if the Chair of the Application Committee had not had linkages with another organisation in the nearby, but larger community of Casino to assist with the financial aspects of the requisite Business Plan. However, as Keast noted (2004, p. 365),

“Network structures will lead to fully integrated systems in which members see themselves as interdependent – working toward systemic change – and see that, although they represent individual organizations, their perspective is a holistic one.”

In this instance the ‘systemic change’ was the successful completion of both the EOI and the grant application. But even solid networks had to address the issues posed by the ‘technacy’ of the language used in the EOI. This also proved to be yet another ‘hoop’.

Out of the 26 communities in the Northern Rivers that had expressed initial interest in the CTC@NSW program, only eight lodged an EOI with seven going on to complete the Grant Application. (The one that did not go forward was deemed ineligible by the Program’s Manager following a visit to the community and an inspection of the proposed site.) The other communities that had decided not to proceed usually cited that too much time and effort was required for too little return. One of the men, in a community that decided not to proceed said, after he had looked through the EOI and the Grant Application, “They sure want their pound of flesh, don’t they? Well, I just don’t have the time to jump through all these hoops; I’ve got a family to feed and my own business to run.”
So while the EOI for the CTC@NSW program sought to deliver sufficient detail regarding administrative needs and ICT service delivery so that the Program’s Manager could adequately assess a community’s potential, it was often a confusing process for those who had to complete it. All too often it was the RPCs who had to step-in and reframe the questions in these EOIs so that they made sense to those who were supposed to complete it and, RPCS usually had to provide the necessary linkages to actually make it happen. Thus, it was apparent that even at the earliest stages of community engagement, RPCs had an essential role to play in helping people in small rural communities to ‘know more about what they don’t know’.

7.5.2  The next hoop: establishing an Application Committee

Once a community’s EOI had been approved it signaled the commencement of the actual work on their CTC Application for Seed Funding. The work of building robust horizontal as well as vertical network structures in applicant communities began in earnest; first with a series of community information forums in which RPCs provided more background on the program to a wider audience, explained the benefits of the program in the ‘vernacular’ and tried to identify other potential stakeholder groups who might like to nominate someone from their ranks to serve on the Application Committee. The subsequent success or failure of the actual application was closely linked to building the right kind of networks, i.e. finding the ‘right kind’ of volunteers, with the ‘right kind’ of skills to work on the Application Committee. Not only did they have to have the time and inclination to participate in the process, but they also had to have the requisite business skills in order to prepare the business and marketing plans which were integral components of the CTC grant application.

Once the application committee was formed, RPCs then explained the need for conducting community surveys (Appendix 4) and assisted them in preparing and undertaking them. These surveys served to identify potential business opportunities and telecommunications needs as well as potential stakeholder groups within the community that might benefit from having access to the Internet and other ICT products and services. Several of the communities conducted these surveys by stopping people outside the general store or on the footpath in front of the shops in the slightly larger communities, with volunteers from the application committees asking and recording the answers to the survey questions right then and there. All this information was then fed into their business plans. One of the standard survey questions
used by all the Application Committees as they began working on their Grant Applications was, “What type of telecommunications services would you like to be able access in your community?” While the word ‘telecommunications’ conjured up a much wider range of visionary options than plain old telephony for me and the organizations with which I worked, to residents of these small rural communities it usually presented a much smaller vision. This is evidenced by the answers they gave; to one man in Coraki, one of the communities involved in the CTC@Richmond River Application, it meant having access to a facsimile machine at the general store so he could fax in his ‘dole’ forms, to another it meant having a public telephone box outside the general store and to another from Kyogle it meant being able to use his mobile phone west of the Border Ranges. Although a few mentioned they’d like to be able to access the Internet at home or for their business, none of the respondents in the communities west of the Border Ranges even mentioned ‘broadband services’.

7.5.3 The first CTC@NSW grant application: an unexpected hoop

The first version of the grant application, along with all its supporting documentation had been prepared by the CTC@NSW program’s city-based management team before the program was launched and had never been ‘road tested’ in the types of communities the program hoped to serve. Subsequently the first iteration of the application caused high levels of frustration for all concerned. It should have come as no surprise that only a very few of the communities that had participated in the first funding round had been successful. The first version of the application was particularly onerous for communities to work through because it contained seven ‘Community Outcomes’ that the program’s administrators had identified as they related to their desired outcomes, but not necessarily those of the communities. These Outcomes were (Appendix 2, page 6):

- “Community Outcome 1: Provision of access to all members of the community to CTC services.
- Community Outcome 2: Provision of opportunities to gain awareness of, and use of, on-line government and non-government information and services in line with community needs and with Local/State/Commonwealth Government Regional Development initiatives.
Community Outcome 3: Development of the economies, environments, people and cultures of rural and regional NSW through the provision of access to community operated technology and telecommunications facilities.

Community Outcome 4: Identification and implementation of opportunities for successful community based business and partnership ventures.

Community Outcome 5: Provision of access to educational programs through a variety of methods, including on-line and distance education programs.

Community Outcome 6: Development of the technological and human capacity required to tender for and gain access to new services and programs on behalf of the community.

Community Outcome 7: Development of small business management skills, including management of employment opportunities emerging from the operation of the CTC.

These Outcomes became the source of considerable confusion and angst for both the RPCs as well as the community people working on the application. Not only was the terminology confusing, but many on the Application Committee simply couldn’t relate to, or understand, what was expected of them when they read this application. The most frequent questions being, “What do they mean by on-line government and non-government information and services in line with community needs and with Local/State/Commonwealth Government Regional Development initiatives” and, “What’s the difference between Outcome 2 and Outcome 6?” There were many variations on these questions depending of the type of stakeholder group with which I was meeting.

Community people perceived this type of approach as ‘jargony’, to use their terminology. It is interesting to note that historically the term ‘jargon’ meant the inarticulate chattering of birds as well as unintelligible or meaningless talk or writing. But the jargon found in this particular application clearly illustrates the confusion that can occur when two differing world views collide. The first view is that of government bureaucrats who frame and deliver government programs and use ‘their jargon’ to help them frame their documentation and deliver what they have been charged to do by governments; the second view is that of the people in the community who struggle to take up these grants. The use of jargon and three letter
acronyms by the in-groups’ in government is often resented by those who have been targeted as recipients for grant programs; thus demonstrating a need for grant applications and supporting documentation that is more appropriately crafted making grants more accessible in every sense of the word. This further re-enforces the need for RPCs to be available in order to ‘translate’, i.e. re-frame the features of government grants programs into community benefits.

7.5.4 Another hoop: the second version of the CTC Grant Application

Although the people of Uki, as discussed in Chapter 5, had struggled with the first version of the CTC@NSW Grant Application; I soon discovered that they had not been the only ones to do so when meeting with the other RPCs; at the workshop that followed the closing of the first funding round, all had similar difficulties and concerns. To their great credit, the CTC Program Managers listened to the constructive criticism the RPCs had to offer and a second version of the application was drafted and circulated amongst the RPCs for further input before it was rolled out for use in all subsequent funding rounds. This version also had significant input from a newly appointed Small Business Development Manager, who went on to play a key role in helping to finalize the applications from various communities throughout the state by actually working with Application Committee members on the spreadsheet component of their business plan. Although the second version of the application also caused some angst at a community level, the RPCs were better prepared to deal with the issues that surfaced in subsequent funding rounds. This again supports the value of having RPCs serve as the interface between governments that are deploying grant programs in regional areas and the people who live and work in the targeted communities.

While the second version of the Application was much more community focused, it too caused problems for both the RPCs who still had to explain its various component parts as well as for those who had to complete it. The first five questions in Part 3 of this version of the CTC@NSW Grant Application (Appendix 3, page 7) often served as bell weather for me. If communities were confused as to what was expected of them from questions such as, “What vision do you have for how a CTC will match the needs of groups and people in your community?” I knew I was going to have to ‘translate’ or reframe the rest of the questions so their purpose would be better understood. While the use of the term ‘vision’ and the type of answer it elicits might have seemed straight forward use of metaphor to the bureaucrats in
Sydney who have used it, or to anyone who had worked with companies and organizations that had ‘corporate visions’ and used the metaphor in this context, it often proved confusing to some of the people in these small communities. To them the word ‘vision’ meant, or referred to something entirely different. In fact, the first time I used the term ‘vision’, at one of my earliest community meetings in Kyogle, a retired farmer took the word ‘vision’ quite literally and asked, “What do you mean by vision? My eyesight used to be pretty good, but I don’t like what I see happening to this town since they closed my bank’s branch office!” So when the next question used the word ‘target’ as a metaphor, i.e. “What is/are your target markets?” Another man stood up, and said, “Well, we could use a bit of target practice around here.” Although this got a laugh from the people attending this meeting and loosened up the tone of the meeting, it took a lot longer to go through this section of the application once I really started to listen, re-frame and respond to what they were saying. This means that RPCs must also be active listeners; in order to better understand the nature of local issues, especially in the early stages of the application process. The goal for all practitioners of community consultation, regardless of the model used, should be to determine, “How do I know what they don’t know?” Additionally, the importance of using language that is better aligned with their worldview in explaining the potential benefits of the grant for their community is critical in achieving successful community outcomes and should be embedded in all communications strategies. It is only when government grant funding bodies fully understand how the people in targeted communities construct their ‘worldview’ that grant programs can achieve the desired outcomes for both the community as well as the funding body. Effective RPCs need to immerse themselves in the communities’ ‘world’ to more fully understand their needs if they are to provide the necessary linkages. However, RPCs also need to meet the terms of their own employment by fulfilling their contracts, helping communities address all the grant’s criteria and supporting the delivery of the grant programs for the government entity that has appointed them.

7.5.5 Dealing with community variables: a hoop for the RPCs

The underlying culture, or horizontal social capital, which existed in the various Northern Rivers communities proved to be a significant variable in achieving successful grant outcomes. It became evident quite early on that coastal communities, which had experienced an influx
of well educated ‘sea and tree changers’, had the greatest propensity to successfully complete both their EOIs and applications, on time and without too much drama. While many of the more rural, in-land communities, which had undergone a steady outward migration of their younger, better educated, more productive citizens, for a variety of reasons, did not even complete their EOI. In the case of Kyogle and Nimbin, both of which are inland, it took two attempts each to complete their CTC@NSW Grant Applications. This also serves to emphasize the need to employ RPCs with local knowledge to provide the necessary linkages for grant programs that have been created by governments to promote regional economic development.

The Case Studies in Chapter 5 also revealed the disparity of social capital extant in each of the communities discussed in this thesis, from Mullumbimby with its dynamic and expansive linkages to the more limited linkages of those in Bonalbo. These disparities also highlight the importance of the RPCs role in delivering community consultation more appropriately to individual communities. This point had also been made over a decade earlier by Shepherd (1998, p. 204), when he stated,

“The likelihood is that the rich and non-marginalized will always be more articulate and dominant in any community or grouping. So outsiders can play an especially critical role in creating space for poor people, economically and environmentally, in terms of rights, access to services, and control over assets and services which the poor can provide to the rest of the community; and politically, by ensuring their inclusion in associations, helping them to build networks and coalitions which will protect positions gained.”

By providing a more structured approach to the consultation process, RPCs will be better able to empower communities by playing a more critical role in assessing the community needs that the grant is supposed to mitigate.
7.6 Developing a more effective community consultation model

As part of this research I was able to reflect on all the community consultation programs in which I had been engaged. I began to realize that I had developed my own model or approach to community consultation during the work I had undertaken for the CTC@NSW and other similar regional grant programs. This approach was inspired by Abraham Maslow’s theory on the Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1970) which I had utilized earlier as a primary school teacher. Although I didn’t use his exact theory per se during the Northern Rivers community consultations, but rather it was more the theoretical framework of his concepts, i.e. that unless communities address their underlying needs it will be hard for them achieve the goal of opening a CTC in their community and to build capacity and achieve more robust social capital.

This approach to the CTC@NSW consultation process was quite amorphous at first but roughly approximated Maslow’s theoretical structure as I had used it to approach the challenge of teaching a classroom of six year olds. On reflection, the entire community consultation can also be seen as a ‘journey’ metaphor as it is also similar to the journey which is similar to that which children undertake when they first start school; because you must first help the children understand how their classroom and school operates, who can help them ‘build linkages’ and how they will benefit from participating in new activities in the classroom as well as in an ever widening ‘school community’. It is during the early stages of schooling that children need to become fully engaged if they are to build their skills and understand what is expected of them at both a horizontal level with their classmates, as well as at a vertical level with the wider life of a primary school. The parallels between these two experiences were significant. They are demonstrated in the staged approach to community consultations that I undertook for the CTC@NSW program.

7.7 Recommendations

The Community Consultation Model shown in this thesis emerged as a result of this research and was contextualised from my own earlier experiences in community consultation practice. It is a step by step approach that seeks to have RPCs deliver more effective community
consultation during the grant application process by using language more effectively as well as systematically identifying and utilizing the horizontal and vertical networks that exist in most small communities. The first step in this model involves engaging in a genuine conversation with a variety of stakeholders and community networks. The basic premise of the first step is to help all parties to ‘know what they don’t know’. It commences from the bottom up, i.e. from the communities’ perspective and serves to raise awareness of the underlying issues in a community that also need to be dealt with as well as identifying extant social capital structures. Finally, this model provides a methodology that enables communities to remain empowered long after the actual grant has been lodged as it offers a staged approach to the consultation process along with checklists for every stage or step along the way.

7.7.1 The Model’s First Stage: Inform and engage communities in a genuine conversation

This stage focuses on what the people who live and work in these small communities perceive to be the issues within their community. In addition to the RPC becoming a more active listener to determine whether or not a particular grant can assist in meeting their basic ‘survival’ needs, it is also vital for the RPC to begin to map the nature of the social capital within the community, i.e. whether it’s more bonding than bridging in nature and what linkages need to be established. This stage is predicated on Kenny’s (2002, p. 251) suggestions regarding communication strategies,

“In practicing community development in a rural setting it is important to:

• understand the many situational difficulties faced by rural communities,
• work at the pace of the community whatever that pace may be...
• understand the politics and tensions at the local level...
• identify existing resources and work with them,
• understand how existing networks and processes operate and link in with them.”

The first stage, as shown in Figure 7.2, is not only the most time-consuming of the entire process, but it is also the most consequential in its contribution to a positive final outcome.
For the RPCs, this stage includes:

- Raising awareness of the grant program in the wider community through the use of local media and other communications channels,
- Engaging and informing targeted groups about the benefits of applying for the grant,
- Helping members of the community flag potential ‘survival’ issues which may be inhibiting social and economic development in their community,
- Identifying other individuals or groups that may wish to be involved in the consultation process,
- Promoting social inclusion by communicating with all stakeholder groups that appear to have ‘survival’ issues,
- Understanding the nature of extant social capital structures within the community and identifying the influencers within targeted groups
- Recruiting potential members for an Application Committee. i.e. building horizontal as well as vertical network structures,
- Forging linkages with local governments, state and federal government agencies, elected representatives, businesses and professional organizations, educational and training organizations, community based organizations, etc,

In the initial stages of a grant program’s deployment it is strategically important to establish a meaningful and relevant dialogue with all members of a community so that robust social networks can be built and/ or maintained. For communities this involves determining if there are any underlying social issues that may inhibit progress; for the RPC it involves developing a better understanding of the prevailing world-views in a particular community, participating in a genuine exchange of information while at the same time raising awareness
of how a particular grant might be beneficial to the community. This can be achieved in a variety of ways, from media releases through to having the RPC give presentations to various local clubs, schools, volunteer organisations and associations, where appropriate, within a community. However, from a Government’s perspective, it is also important to encourage as many potential applicants as possible as this helps them to target funds to the most promising projects; or as the more recent catch cry has become, to demonstrate that they have ‘shovel ready’ projects that have regional significance. Inevitably there will be plenty of competition for grant funding. Bridging social capital practice also plays a key role at this stage and as Kenny (2007, p. 240) points out,

“In community development work, one of the early tasks is always making contacts, or networks. It is important to develop trust and build alliances with other people, link into existing formal and informal networks, tap into local knowledge and respect and learn from the accumulated experience of the members of the community.”

The first stage in this Model serves to initiate a genuine, on-going conversation that incorporates active listening by all parties. It also sets the tone for the entire consultation process as it serves to help communities articulate the issues that they believe are impacting on their growth and social development. While this stage delivers that all important ‘bottom up’ focus on community issues, it also prepares them to take the next stage. It is critical at this early stage for RPCs to have done their own community research to ensure that there is a genuine match between the community’s needs and the grant program’s desired outcomes as specified in the grant’s criteria. This stage also demonstrates the crucial role that RPCs play in the application process as the interface between the government agency offering and the targeted recipients; at this stage the RPC must also ensure that the desired policy outcomes actually align with the community’s actual needs. A checklist such as the one shown in Table 7.1, can help RPCs to better prepare communities to proceed to the next stage in the grant application process.
Table 7.1 Checklist for RPC’s for the 1st Stage in the Community Consultation Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1 Checklist</th>
<th>Additional Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before program is ‘officially launched’ discover as much as you can about the</td>
<td>Gather general information regarding LGAs, including ABS data, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>targeted communities in your region, i.e. issues, problems, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify potential media outlets that can be used to reach targeted communities.</td>
<td>Local newspaper, radio &amp; TV stations, websites, School &amp; club newsletters, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify organisations, as appropriate, where you can be a guest speaker and</td>
<td>Clubs and service organizations, etc. match audience with goals of program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talk about the program.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet with elected representatives of the Local Council, as well as senior Council</td>
<td>See if you can get a program link or page on the Council’s website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>staff, to ask if you can make a presentation at one of their Council meetings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact and meet with your local State or Federal Member, as appropriate, and</td>
<td>Their Media Advisors can become key allies. Prevents fragmentation and/or duplication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tell them about the program. Ask them if there are any other communities or</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>groups that should also be included. Determine if there are other similar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programs being rolled out.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find out if there is a Regional Development Australia (RDA) Committee in your</td>
<td>Visit the RDA website <a href="http://www.rda.gov.au">www.rda.gov.au</a> to identify the Committee in your region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp; meet with the CEO to discuss what you are doing and find out who else you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>should meet with. (The RDA serves as a conduit to both State &amp; Federal governments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for regional organizations, businesses and communities.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure you have additional support material to leave behind following all</td>
<td>Can be printed on demand to prevent wastage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meetings – including a business card with your contact details &amp; title.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find out if there are any other grant programs currently operating in your</td>
<td>This helps to prevent duplication of effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>region.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other items that might be applicable to a specific grant program, i.e.</td>
<td>More research may be required by RPC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infrastructure, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By using such a checklist at the beginning of the consultation process, RPCs will be better able to engage with the targeted communities as it is out of these early conversations that networks of key community stakeholder groups begin to emerge along with potential Application Committee members.
7.7.2 Stage 2: Identify key stakeholders and social networks within a community

RPCs need to actively encourage community involvement in the grant application process, and as Kenny (2007, p. 243) suggests, “…members of a community recognise a need for someone to work with and for them.” That’s why it is inappropriate for an RPC to list potential stakeholders and groups based on generalized assumptions; the application process must comprehensively engage all the targeted groups in a community to help them find ‘their voice’. If grant applications are to be successful, they must not only meet the grant’s criteria but they must also be socially inclusive and reflect the needs of all parties. The next stage in the process is shown in Figure 7.3.

![Figure 7.3](image-url)

**Figure 7.3** The 2nd Stage in the Community Consultation Process

The importance of identifying key stakeholders in a given community is also a significant ‘learning’ that needs to occur at the onset of the consultation process as this enables the RPC to assess the levels of bonding and bridging social capital that may already exist in a particular community. It also allows the RPC to identify potential linking opportunities. The checklist shown in Table 7.2 will assist with this process, as identifying and recruiting key stakeholders to work on the Application Committee is a critical factor in achieving successful outcomes. While Application Committees should include people from all relevant stakeholder groups, its members may also need to build bridging networks to others within the community who may have the requisite business acumen, marketing and computer skills required to successfully complete the application, particularly if it entails a business plan and the financial skills to acquit it if the application is successful. This type of bridging social capital is also one of the hallmarks of an empowered community.

In the CTC@NSW program it was often the people from these various stakeholder groups who were best able to respond to an EOI as it was often this document that foreshadowed what was involved in completing the actual grant itself. Not only can RPCs help ensure that
a community’s expectations are in alignment with government policy but they are also in a better position to provide the Grant Program’s Managers with the answers they need to questions such as those found in the checklist shown in Table 7.2:

**Table 7.2** Checklist for RPC’s for the 2nd Stage in the Community Consultation Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 2 Checklist</th>
<th>Additional Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you identified all the groups in the community that will benefit if the grant application is successful? i.e. Youth? Seniors? Etc.</td>
<td>Refer to criteria of grant for guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does this community want to achieve from this grant?</td>
<td>Should reflect Grant’s criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can the grant help promote and support social inclusion initiatives?</td>
<td>Will vary from one community to the next.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are community needs aligned with the government’s desired program outcomes?</td>
<td>Further consultation might be required with other representatives of the funding body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there data to support this need?</td>
<td>ABS is a good starting point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the issues raised and who is affected by them?</td>
<td>Will vary from one community to the next.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the demographics of the applicant community?</td>
<td>ABS data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are any organizations or stakeholders in the community already addressing these issues?</td>
<td>Will vary from one community to the next but RDA Committees might be able to assist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who are potential allies/partners and have all the stakeholder groups that may benefit from this grant been included?</td>
<td>As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any existing programs/activities and gaps in services that other organizations or government departments may be working on that coincide with this grant?</td>
<td>As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What other information is needed to complete this grant application?</td>
<td>More consultation, consider using surveys and open forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other items that might be applicable to a specific grant program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While using a checklist such as this will get you off to a good start, the committees that achieve the best outcomes often have a gatekeeper like ‘Dorothy’ as a member (Broadhead & Rist 2010). Dorothy said at the onset of the CTC application process in Pottsville, “I don’t know much about ICT but I do know how to make a good cup of tea, get people to attend meetings and do what they said they’d do.” She was certainly right in that regard; she also exemplified both the bonding and bridging aspects of social capital as defined by Bourdieu in Putnam (2002, p. 5) as she was a long time resident of the community but interacted
with many groups within the community. So what was Dorothy’s motivation for wanting to get a CTC into her community? She wanted to do something to keep the young people in her community from drifting away to Sydney or Brisbane and she saw ICT as a means of slowing their departure. While all Application Committees benefit from having a ‘champion’ like Dorothy who can provide both bonding and bridging social capital networks, they also need strong representation from stakeholder groups who voiced their concerns by saying such things as, “We need to have more young people involved in our Community Radio”, or “We need to have a place where kids can go on a Friday and Saturday night to play computer games” or “Our Seniors want to find out how to send emails so they can stay in touch with their grandchildren”. Although the Pottsville Application Committee was one of the last with which I worked, it served to confirm all the things I had learned about working with other communities, i.e. that solid network structures enable you to bring together all the people who are willing to work together to build capacity and empower communities.

Stages 1 and 2 are intrinsically linked to the next one, e.g. mentoring the growth of the specific skills that are required to complete an application. Although this stage may actually lengthen the application process it does ensure better outcomes. So while Stages 1 and 2 may overlap, the mentoring in Stage 3 is often required throughout the life of the entire program. This is an especially important consideration if the grant is for the establishment of a community enterprise or if the grant monies are to be acquitted over an extended period of time. In the case of the CTC@NSW program, it was over a three year period.

**Stage 3: Build Skill Base of Application Committee along with Social Capital**

It was the answers to Question 7 as shown in Figure 6.5 of Section 6.4 that again demonstrated the importance of the mentoring and the linking role played by RPCs in the CTC@NSW program. This survey question asked, “Do you think that the people on your Application Committee could have completed the CTC Application without the help of the CTC’s RPC in your region?” Although, six respondents answered ‘Yes’, thirty-three said ‘No’ they could not have completed the application without the RPC’s assistance. These responses highlight the transformative role that RPCs have to play in achieving positive outcomes.
in programs such as this. This also demonstrates why Stage 3, as shown in Figure 7.4 is so important.

**Figure 7.4** The 3rd Stage in the Community Consultation Process

The ongoing mentoring role played by the RPC was central to both the application process as well as the successful deployment of the entire CTC@NSW Program. This was confirmed time and again at the Program’s ongoing staff workshops and through casual conversations with other RPCs both during, and at the conclusion, of each funding round. This collegial consultation amongst the program’s RPCs also contributed to the success of the CTC@NSW program as it facilitated the flow of information and flagged issues encountered in the other participating regions of NSW. It was also a form of linking social capital in and of itself. In addition to the mentoring role played by the RPCs, communities were also able to draw upon the skills and expertise of the CTC@NSW’s Support Unit who also served in a linking as well as mentoring capacity. This meant that the mentoring aspect of the community consultation process was able to:

- Provide a source of up-skilling and on-going support to build capacity,
- Increase the skill and knowledge base within communities,
- Build networking skills for members of the Application Committee,
- Provide a methodology which allowed program participants to acquire new or expanded competencies,
- Grow and gain confidence in themselves and what they were doing to build capacity along with social capital within their communities,
- Provide additional strategic linkages.
The Stage 3 Checklist, shown in Table 7.3, shows the types of questions that RPCs need to ask applicant communities at this stage of the consultation process.

**Table 7.3** Checklist for RPC’s for the 3rd Step in the Community Consultation Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3 Checklist</th>
<th>Additional Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you analyzed the grant’s EOI or application to see if any specific skills or knowledge are required to complete it? i.e. Business planning? Accounting? Technical skills?</td>
<td>Do all involved understand the implications of the grant’s criteria?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any training organizations or resources in the region that can help provide training to the Application Committee?</td>
<td>TAFEs, ACEs, and perhaps even gratis by an RTO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I provide linkages to other groups or regional organizations that share the same interests?</td>
<td>Liaise with various State Government’s Regional Business Development Managers or your local RDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I need to incorporate competency based training into the process to facilitate the grant application process?</td>
<td>Check with Program Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can I help the community gain confidence, while maintaining realistic expectations?</td>
<td>Establish milestones as well as timelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will we measure success?</td>
<td>As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other items that might be applicable to a specific grant program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although RPCs must remain engaged with applicant communities throughout the entire grant application process, they must also be available to undertake some tactical mentoring along the way. In the role of facilitator and ‘trusted counselor’ RPCs not only share their knowledge of the program along with their professional skills but they can also serve as a sounding board and a coach who can support and encourage the building of capacity and social capital within applicant communities. While mentoring can lengthen the application process it can also provide the resources and means by which communities can reach Step 4.

**7.7.4 Stage 4: Successfully Complete Grant Application**

Since a wide range of skills are needed to successfully complete a grant application, the ‘skill levels’ of the people on the Application Committee are critical factors in building capacity within a community as well as its social capital; this is shown in Figure 7.5 as the penultimate stage.
Building capacity is often listed as a ‘desired’ outcome by governments when developing and deploying regional economic development programs via grant funding, it is also a measureable outcome of a successful application. The building of capacity is also an essential aspect of empowering communities. While the CTC program was based on ICT and establishing a community enterprise, the steps shown in Table 7.4 will vary only slightly from one grant program to another.

Table 7.4 Checklist for RPC’s for the 4th Step in the Community Consultation Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 4 Checklist</th>
<th>Additional Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognize the achievement of your community in successfully applying for a government grant</td>
<td>Celebrate your success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value the work you have done for your community by working together</td>
<td>Social inclusion is also a by-product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform the wider community and region of your success through targeted media releases</td>
<td>Call your local TV &amp; radio stations and let them know. Write letters to the editor of your local newspapers &amp; tell them of your achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquit your grant monies accurately and in a timely fashion</td>
<td>Enables you to demonstrate your capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain the linkages you have established with other stakeholder groups both within your community as well as other agencies, etc.</td>
<td>Enables you to continue building capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View your elected representatives as ‘change agents’</td>
<td>New grant programs may be made available to coincide with elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put the skills you have learned in applying for the first grant to work for you and continue to work for the common good by facilitating other linkages.</td>
<td>Leverage your success against other grant opportunities that may be available. Remain empowered.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.7.5 Community Empowerment: The final stage

It was the upward trajectory of the hierarchical model shown in Table 7.4 that enabled me to develop a better understanding of the community consultation process and to better address
the underlying needs of small regional communities and to help them to actualize their goals during the grant the application process. While this approach to the community consultation process is focused on applying for grant monies to build community owned and operated ICT based enterprises, rather than health, safety or education, it also proved to be a better way of actualising or empowering small communities.

Fundamentally this model enables the RPC to provide a more structured approach to guiding communities through the application process. It also enables the people in these small communities to address all of their needs as they move through the stages required to establish a CTC in their communities. The Uki Case Study in Chapter 5, section 5.3.1, serves to highlight the importance of developing strong bridging networks as well as linking strategies during the process in order to ensure the long term viability of the social enterprises that were created by their CTC@NSW funding.

Although not all of the communities discussed in the Case Studies went on to leverage the success of their applications, all of them achieved greater capacity to exploit the greater levels of social capital they had achieved as they began to understand the relevance of bridging and linking social capital as it pertains to working more effectively in undertaking other community based initiatives. In Putnam (2002, p. 5) Putnam & Goss, stated that,

“In recent years scholars in many fields have begun to explore multiple sources and manifold consequences of varying stocks of social capital... One of the most striking features of the development of work on social capital is the range of disciplines in which the concept has been found useful – not merely in sociology and political science, where it originated, but also in economics, public health, urban planning, criminology, architecture, and social psychology, among others.”

This research also clearly demonstrates the important role that the various aspects of social capital have to play in regard to regional economic development. However, Cox, in Putnam (2002, p. 358) also suggests that in Australia,

“There is a public policy failure here in not recognising the importance of the state as arbiter and, through its partnerships with the community, mediator and constraint on the market. Social capital may be the major enabler of democracy, but

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further work on indicators is needed to gauge the critical levels of distrust that can put democracy at risk... The Australian experience suggests that a clear need for the state to provide the framework and the stimulus for access to these opportunities... The building of social capital may depend on everyone having equitable and culturally appropriate opportunities for establishing the networks that will allow for linking and for cross-group cohesion."

The upward mobility of this model is shown in Figure 7.6.

**Figure 7.6** The completed model for achieving community empowerment

It is clearly evident from this research that RPCs have an important role to play in delivering effective community consultation because this process needs to be carefully structured in order to give people who live in rural and remote regions a voice as well as the capacity to deal with issues that arise which may otherwise fuel misunderstanding and prevent them from gaining access to the resources they need to ensure that their community's basic needs are met.

Effective community consultation not only serves to build capacity and social capital within communities but it also serves to empower them so that they can take on other economic development challenges they may wish to address in their community. While many of the communities that were successful in their CTC funding applications achieved only some of the goals they had articulated in their applications, their success has never the less enabled
them to build greater capacity as well as social capital within their communities. Many of the successful applicant communities have gone on to apply for other grants using the skills they acquired when applying for their CTC@NSW Grant. This empowerment was clearly demonstrated in Kyogle, Richmond River & Pottsville as discussed in 7.8.

7.8 Post CTC@NSW Funding: Empowered Communities at ‘Work’

The post-funding achievements of the CTCs at Kyogle, Richmond River and Pottsville exemplify how they built on the skills they had gained in applying for their CTC@NSW grant to remain empowered. The CTC@Kyogle successfully sought another government grant to fund and establish an *ALive and Driving Project* targeting the young people in their community. The CTC Application Committee had identified lack of public transport as a major issue in their community which was compounded by the fact that many young people were not safe drivers. Moreover, there had been a horrific road accident shortly after their CTC had opened that had claimed the lives of three young people from their community and this galvanized them into action. The CTC Management Committee, which had grown out of their Application Committee, established this driver-mentoring program at the CTC@Kyogle. The *ALive and Driving Project* provided learner drivers with access to a car and supervisor in order to gain the 50 hours of driving experience they needed to sit for their NSW driving test. Learners paid a $50 membership fee for the first 10 hours access to a car as well as petrol costs during their driving session. After this they could pay a further $50 to access as many hours as required until they got their license. This project was supported by funding received from the Australian Government under its Regional Partnership program, the Myer Foundation, and through partnerships with organizations and volunteers from the local community. The CTC@Kyogle Management Committee had utilized the linkages they had established in applying for a CTC@NSW grant to successfully apply for additional grants.

Evans Head, part of the CTC@Richmond River wanted to use the equipment and ICT at its newly funded CTC to create a virtual museum in order to preserve its rich and varied history. Since opening their CTC in 2001, members of the various sub-committees that were established by the Management Committee, have used their new equipment to scan
and digitize thousands of old photographs and documents, records and preserve interviews with some of World War Two veterans who were stationed in their community over 70 years ago. They have also been able to catalogue and map graves at the local cemetery and provide facilities for local residents to research their family histories. This virtual museum has received accreditation with Museums Australia and is now an integral part of this CTC. Its Management Committee continues to play a vital support role in mentoring other community organizations that want to apply for government grants. These outcomes clearly demonstrate the work of an empowered community as they continue to work together to build capacity and social capital within their community.

In early 2005, the CTC@Pottsville was awarded a grant from the NSW Premier’s Department Office for Women to conduct a training course specifically designed to help women learn filmmaking, computer and marketing skills. The project, “Reeling in Women’s Stories”, saw 16 women of all ages; create a ‘Short Bytes Film’ based on stories relating to womanhood. The participants undertook 14 free workshops at their CTC to learn new computer and film making skills, they included storyboarding, filming, producing and editing and marketing techniques. At the conclusion of the course, they held a movie night at the local cinema to showcase their combined efforts. The event was well attended by people of all ages from the local community.

In addition to empowering communities, the linking aspects of social capital were also demonstrated in the empowered communities of Kyogle, Evans Head and Pottsville. Not only will ‘linking’ social capital continue to support these empowered communities but it will also encourage them to undertake other capacity building projects in the future. These three communities have certainly reinforced what Brooks (2005, p. 4) had to say,

“...while it may not be commonly agreed how social capital is constructed, it is still actively referred to as one of the essential elements in producing capacity of communities to be adaptive and innovative in times of physical or economic stress. As a result, despite the current contention over the elements of social capital, the concept continues to feature prominently on the agenda of rural Australia.”
The CTC@NSW program provided not only the context for a more effective community consultation model it also demonstrated the effectiveness of a staged approach to the process. This new model is also applicable to other grant programs which have been designed to promote regional economic development. It is not only easy to replicate, but when implemented, it will serve to engage communities at the grassroots level by helping them to identify all the issues that a grant may help them to mitigate. It will also help to empower them as they continue to build greater capacity and social capital within their communities.

7.9 Research outcomes and key findings

The model proposed in this thesis for use in the community consultation process can also be readily implemented as an integral component of any government grant program which focuses on building both capacity as well as social capital via regional economic development programs. This model has been further enhanced by the inclusion of the checklists shown earlier in this chapter in Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4. Building greater social capital as well as the long term empowerment of many small rural communities should be recognized as a significant outcome of the grant application process. The importance of the role played by the RPC must also be factored into this equation. According to Davis (2005, p. 2) and many others,

“Research studies have suggested that social capital can make a positive contribution to outcomes in many areas of social concern such as health, community safety and education.”

We need only look at some of the projects undertaken by some of the CTCs in the Northern Rivers, as discussed earlier, to see how these communities have become empowered by using the skills they developed through the CTC grant application process. As empowered communities they have continued to build capacity and social capital in their communities as exemplified by the projects they undertook after establishing CTCs in their communities.

7.10 Concluding Comments

How language is used during the community consultation process is closely linked to good communication skills and the latter is a prerequisite for the delivery of effective community
consultation by practitioners, i.e. RPCs. Additionally, an understanding of the way in which things are done in particular communities and actions that need to be taken when addressing a grant’s criteria is also essential. This means that whatever a regional economic program has been created to achieve and whatever a RPCs views may be regarding the differences between rural and urban life, they must also be sensitive to rural isolation and worldviews and there effects on language capabilities (Kenny, 2002). However, as illustrated in the several of the Case Studies, non-verbal communications and existing relationships within small rural communities are not always conducive to traditional consultation strategies; unfortunately this issue is not always clearly addressed or defined by corporatized or bureaucratic language structures and, as Trudgill (1995, p. 2) has revealed,

“...two aspects of language are very important from a social point of view: first, the function of language in establishing social relationships; second, the role played by language in conveying information about the speaker.”

The coastal communities in the Northern Rivers region of NSW discussed earlier in this research had more ‘sea and tree changers’, they generally had higher levels of both language and communications skills on their Applications Committees; so if success was to be determined by the amount of grant funding received, they were also more successful. One such community received grant funding worth $55,000 more than all of the inland communities. These inland communities simply did not possess the same level of communications and business skills and therefore their grants were for substantially smaller amounts. It appears then that one of the major challenges faced by RPCs in working with such communities is in being aware of the necessity of reframing and ‘translating’ the more densely worded questions in grant applications and in the provision of ongoing mentoring.

The language used by grant-makers must also be more socially inclusive, especially when grant programs are to be used for the delivery of government policies in targeted rural and regional communities. This means that a more ‘user friendly’ community consultation process must become an integral component in the provision and delivery of all government grant programs. So while Economic Rationalist policies were embedded in the documentation associated with the CTC@NSW program, this research has revealed that it was the RPCs who played the pivotal role in the success of this particular program over the duration.
of its funding as they served as ‘practitioners working on the ground’; not only did they identify and expand the bonding and bridging social capital that was extant within applicant communities, but they also facilitated additional linkages that would also help to empower them in the longer term.

Although government agencies may be actively seeking to encourage as many applications to their grant programs as possible, the most deserving communities might not always be able to prepare and submit the ‘best’ applications. That is why government funding bodies, when releasing grants, need to prepare and distribute ‘plain English’ Information Packs that include such things as:

- A clear statement in plain English of the Funding Program’s objectives,
- A list of the appropriately articulated criteria against which the application will be assessed,
- Information regarding the additional supporting documentation that might also be required,
- The contact details of the people who may be able to assist communities with their applications, i.e. the RPCs, their local RDA Committee,
- Information regarding any other resources that might be available,
- Any specific requirements that pertain only to that particular grant program,
- Information as to the number of funding rounds and their closing dates or, if it’s a one off program, the actual closing date.

While a great deal of carefully structured and comprehensive community consultation is required during the application process, the crucial role played by the RPC in this process must not be overlooked or underestimated. It is the linkages they have created and the ‘skill levels’ that they have nurtured that are the determining factors in achieving favourable long-term community outcomes.

This research has also revealed that there are other factors that serve as determinants to empowering communities participating in a grant application process, they are:
• The capacity of the Application Committee to understand all the requirements of the grant application process,

• Their ability to articulate community needs, and,

• Their ability to build vibrant horizontal as well as vertical social networks,

• The community’s commitment to the project for which they were seeking grant funds,

• Their access to ongoing support and mentoring as required in order continue building capacity and social capital within their communities.

This research further confirms the importance of the role RPCs play in helping small rural communities understand and benefit from grant programs, because at the beginning of the application process, most applicant communities simply, ‘Don’t know, what they don’t know’ as to how the grant might be used to address a particular need within their community or the needs of specific stakeholder groups such as youth or seniors.

It is also worth noting that establishing a community owned and operated enterprise such as a CTC, the RPCs role is crucial in helping communities achieve positive outcomes; they often have to assist Application Committee members in establishing their own ‘linking networks’ with a variety of government departments so that they can continue to access services and information needed in their communities. While the unwritten goal of government agencies that employ RPCs, may be to make them redundant, this may prove to be a very short-sighted goal as RPCs can add significant, long-term value to regional development programs by remaining actively engaged with recipient communities and by helping them remain empowered and pro-active in meeting the challenges of building capacity and maintaining social capital within their communities. I am again reminded of what Davis, (2005, p. 4) had to say at a Conference I attended,

“...Fostering social capital may become a useful way to support other policies and programs in achieving desired long-term outcomes. This will require allocation of resources to communities identified as being most in need of support, as well as monitoring the effectiveness of the policy.”
While the role and term of the RPC may change post funding, it is imperative that they continue to provide the necessary linkages with other government agencies so that communities remain empowered long after their grants have been acquitted. There is also a strong case to be made for having well-trained RPCs, who understand the intricacies of the grant application process, and who are able and available to work on other government grant programs within their regions. Successful outcomes from government grant programs must be viewed from two perspectives, that of the funding body’s and that of the applicant community’s. More pragmatically, successful outcomes are predicated on the delivery of a grant programs that meet the needs of all parties involved in the process.

In concluding, it is important to consider that while there are significant milestones in achieving each step in the new community consultation model shown in Figure 7.6, it remains an ongoing challenge for both governments and communities to ensure that communities that have become empowered remain so. While the work I undertook for the CTC@NSW program serves to illustrate how governments can help empower communities, the expectations that the CTC’s will remain self-funding community enterprises without continued government support is either naïve or at best cynical if they are not offered ongoing support by the government(s) that provided their initial funding. It is essential to consider how a community’s ability to remain empowered is challenged by the very nature of public policy; as it is these policies and the number and nature of government grants programs that are made available to regional communities that impact on regional economic development.

While governments cannot overcome all the variables associated with the actual delivery of grant funding for a variety of reasons, they can continue to support the communities they have helped to empower in other ways. For example, support services could be delivered by expanding the role of Regional Development Australia (RDA) Committees. This was a jointly funded initiative of Australia’s state and federal governments; 55 RDA Committees were established throughout Australia in 2007 – 2008 with a mandate to provide a conduit to assist government’s with policy decisions that impact on people who live and work in regional Australia. Not only would this type of support and linkage assist community enterprises it could also serve to overcome the fragmentation and duplication of other government grant programs that are so prevalent when these two tiers of government operate in isolation from
each other. Although small rural communities throughout Australia will continue to face social challenges as well as the impact of the economic forces associated with globalization, they need to continually focus on building capacity, maintaining social capital within their communities and remaining empowered if they are to remain viable and attractive places in which to live and work.

Genuine community consultation cannot take place with communities when there is an underlying feeling of ‘us and them’ or when needs are not being adequately considered or when some groups believe that they are being marginalized. Meaningful community consultation and engagement can only occur when there is genuine social inclusion and a spirit of cooperation by all parties that are genuinely engaged in the process. This type of outcome comes from the ‘bottom-up’ rather than the ‘top down’; government grant programs need to meet both the needs, as well as the expectations, of targeted communities. However, if Government programs that have been created to deliver policy outcomes give the appearance of being linked to election cycles because of their implementation timelines, they produce a level of cynicism in communities that precludes successful long term outcomes. Adequate resourcing is critical to helping small rural communities become, and remain, empowered.

To paraphrase Lao Tze, ‘Regional Program Coordinators should go to the people, live among them, learn from them, love them, start with what they know, build on that; then these people will say, ‘We have done this all by ourselves’.

### 7.11 Final considerations

Although this research has focused on the CTC@NSW grant program, the respondents to the online survey represent a wide cross-section of small rural communities throughout the length and breadth of New South Wales. However, more research needs to be undertaken in order to give voice to a range of significant concerns that impact on many of those living and working in small communities throughout NSW to insure that they are not marginalized by governments because of where they live. Although the information provided by this research provides a valuable resource for policy makers who plan to use grant programs as a means of delivering regional economic development programs for Australia’s small rural communities more research needs to be done to ensure more equitable access to these programs.
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APPENDIX 1

CTC Expression of Interest

Expression of Interest in Community Technology Centre Funding

When completed please return to:
Community Development Manager
CTC@NSW
Office of Information Technology
Level 3, 346 Panorama Avenue
Bathurst 2795
NSW Community Technology Centre Program
Expression of Interest

Defining Your Local Community

These questions are designed to provide a broad overview of the community or communities that the proposed Community Technology Centre would serve. The NSW Community Technology Centre Support Unit is seeking a general description of the town’s basic facilities, services and the local economy.

1. Names of towns and Local Government Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name(s) of town(s) in which the CTC will be placed</th>
<th>Local government area(s)</th>
<th>Area of LGA(s) (sq km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main site</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach site(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. What [CTC@NSW] Priority do you consider your town aligns with? (please check with the relevant [CTC@NSW] Community Coordinator or the [CTC@NSW] Support Unit if you require further information). Please circle or tick response.

   - Priority 1
   - Priority 2
   - Priority 3
   - Priority 4

3. What is the size and age composition of the population in the town(s) and the LGA(s)? (You should be able to make a reasonable estimate from records held by your LGA office, public library or from the Australian Bureau of Statistics).

   - Population - Town(s)
   - Age composition - Town(s)
Population - LGA (s)

Age composition - LGA (s)

4. Are any of the following within the identified town(s), or, within the geographic area that will be served by the proposed CTC and any of its outreach sites? Please provide appropriate information as shown:

a. Town(s), with over 3,000 people, providing computing services within 50 kms (name and distance)

b. Other towns within 50 kms (name and distance)

c. CTC or Telecentre within 50 kms (name and distance)

d. Rural Transaction Centre (town(s) located in)

e. Post Office (name and type)

f. Telstra Exchange (town(s) located in)

h. Banking service

i. Health services

j. Local call Internet access

j. Library service (location, opening hours, mobile service)
5. Are there State or Commonwealth Government agencies in the identified towns? In which towns are they located? (for example, Centrelink, Medicare Easyclaim, Government Access Centre, Police Station, BEC)

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

6. Are there schools, Adult and Community Education providers, TAFE, universities, or any other educational centres in the town(s)? If yes, provide details.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

7. Briefly describe the main types of business and industry in the area (for example, farming, forestry, mining, regional service industries, retail, tourism)

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
8. Employment. If employment is a significant problem in your area, is it spread generally throughout the community or are there any particular groups that have few opportunities to gain employment in local business and industry? (for example, youth, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, women, people with disabilities, older people, people from non English speaking backgrounds, isolated people).

9. The proposed site for the Community Technology Centre must be able to connect to a telecommunication network that can support the ways in which the Centre will be used.

a. Do you intend to use Rural Link as your telecommunications connection noting this is in the CTC@NSW preferred telecommunications method? (please check with the relevant CTC@NSW Community Coordinator or the ICT Officer at the CTC@NSW Support Unit if you require further information). Please circle or tick response.

Yes   No

If No, why

If you answered Yes please go to question 9b, otherwise go to questions 9c and 9d.

b. Which town are you proposing as the Rural Link site? (please note that in the case of EOIs for multisite CTCs only 1 (one) site is generally eligible for Rural Link).

Please go to question 10 if you are proposing only 1(one) site. If you are proposing more than 1 (one) site please go to 9c and 9d.
c. Which of the following telecommunications are you proposing? (please tick appropriate boxes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main site</th>
<th>Outreach site(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Link</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-way satellite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADSL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISDN (for example On Ramp)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW.net</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dedicated Fibre Optic Cable access through &quot;parent&quot; organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dial-up through phone line (not recommended for main site)</td>
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<td>Other:</td>
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10. Why do you want a Community Technology Centre in your town?

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11. What services do you see a Community Technology Centre providing in your town that are not currently being provided?

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12. Have you obtained a letter of authority for $1,000.00 from a Financial Guarantor for the period from the lodgement of the Expression of Interest through to the end of the first year of operation? If Yes, please attach the original. If No, please advise on what steps are being taken to obtain the Guarantee.
CERTIFICATION
By a Representative of the Organising Committee

I certify that the information in this Expression of Interest is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

I also certify that there are a number of individual and community groups who would be interested in exploring the concept of a Community Technology Centre in this town.

SIGNATURE:                             DATE:
PRINTED NAME:
ADDRESS:
PHONE / FAX / E-MAIL:

ALTERNATIVE CONTACT NAMES

NAME:
PHONE / FAX / E-MAIL:
NAME:
PHONE / FAX / E-MAIL:
NAME:
PHONE / FAX / E-MAIL:
NAME:
PHONE / FAX / E-MAIL:
APPLICATION FOR SEED FUNDING FOR A COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY CENTRE

Town in which CTC facility will be located:

____________________________

Name of Applicant Organisation

____________________________

Name of CTC@NSW CTC Community Coordinator

____________________________

Funding Sought from CTC@NSW

____________________________

Date of Application for Seed Funding

____________________________
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PART 2 - PRIORITY RATING ................................................................................................................

PART 3 - COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION .............................................................................................

PART 4 - COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE PLAN .........................................................................................

PART 5 - TECHNOLOGY PLAN ............................................................................................................

PART 6 - MANAGEMENT PLAN .......................................................................................................... 

PART 7 - MARKETING PLAN ............................................................................................................... 

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PART 9 - FUNDING REQUIREMENTS ....................................................................................................

REFEREES ...........................................................................................................................................

ATTACHMENTS ......................................................................................................................................
Introduction

Thank you for your interest in CTC@NSW. CTC@NSW provides rural NSW communities with the opportunity to participate in the information economy. It provides seed funding for community based facilities, that is Community Technology Centres (CTCs), that reflect the needs and development goals of local communities.

It is important that you read this Application for Seed Funding thoroughly and respond to all elements. You should also read the Program Guidelines that accompany the Application for Seed Funding. You may need to refer to the Guidelines in order to complete the Application. It is highly recommended that you complete this Application in partnership or consultation with a CTC Community Coordinator.

Working through the Application for Seed Funding

The Application for Seed Funding takes you through seven key questions related to the development of your CTC. Addressing these questions in a planned way, over a number of weeks, will enable you to coordinate and rationalise the thinking, planning and actions needed for a successful CTC.

Using the Application for Seed Funding as a project management tool, used progressively over a project development period, will enable you to make the best use of your community’s time and build the Application at the same time.

Your CTC Community Coordinator will be able to assist in developing and recording an “Application for Seed Funding in Progress”. The Coordinator will also be able to gain feedback from the CTC@NSW Support Unit at Bathurst on specific aspects of your Application. Specialist personnel at Bathurst are available in relation to community development, business planning and financial management, information technology and telecommunications, and marketing. Progressive completion of each of the parts of the Application will better enable the Coordinator to gain feedback from the Bathurst Unit.

Seven Key Questions

The seven key questions for CTC development and their relationship to the Application for Seed Funding are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key question</th>
<th>Application for Seed Funding relationship</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who are we as a community?</td>
<td>Part 3 – Community Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What services and programs does our community need?</td>
<td>Part 4 – Community Enterprise Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How could a CTC help?</td>
<td>Part 5 – Technology Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who do we need to operate the CTC and what will it look like?</td>
<td>Part 6 – Management Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will we get people to come into the CTC &amp; use it?</td>
<td>Part 7 – Marketing Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will we manage the costs of operating our CTC?</td>
<td>Part 8 – Financial Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What seed funding do we need to get our CTC started; what in-kind or monetary contribution can we make?</td>
<td>Part 9 – Funding Requirements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ver 1.00 – 2.1st Version of CTC Grant APPLICATION.doc 20-Jul-10
Page 3

Copyright CTC@NSW
These questions form a life cycle view of developing an Application for Seed Funding as shown in the following diagram.
Community Outcomes

CTCs are an important facility for a local community. They enable a community to build its capacity to develop its resources.

Successful CTCs are strategic community owned organisations. Successful CTCs plan their services, programs and operation within a strategic framework. Having a strategic framework enables the CTC to make sound decisions about what activities the CTC will undertake and enables the CTC to express to stakeholders how the CTC meets the economic and the social needs of the community.

The Community Enterprise Plan is designed to allow you to identify what your CTC will do within such a strategic framework. The framework used by CTC@NSW has seven strategic areas or “Community Outcomes as they are called within the Application documents. The seven Community Outcomes are:

1. Provision of access for all members of the community to CTC services;
2. Provision of opportunities to again awareness of and use of on-line government and non-government information and services in line with community needs and with local/State/Commonwealth Government regional development initiatives;
3. Development of the economies, environments, people and cultures of rural and regional NSW through provision of access to community operated technology and telecommunications facilities;
4. Identification and implementation of opportunities for successful community based business and partnership ventures;
5. Provision of access to educational programs through a variety of methods, including on-line and distance education programs;
6. Development of the technological and human capacity required to tender for and gain new services and programs on behalf of the community;
7. Development of small business management skills, including management of employment opportunities emerging from the operation of the CTC.1

In assessing your Application, the Funding Panel will consider, among other criteria, the capacity of your proposed CTC to provide services, programs and management strategies that address these Community Outcomes. However, it may be appropriate to add further Community Outcomes where specialised issues are important for your community. The CTC Community Coordinator in your region will be able to assist with further developing a strategic framework for your proposed CTC.

Application for Seed Funding forms and attachments

As noted above, the Application for Seed Funding is designed to help you design and plan your CTC. We have provided you with two hard copies of the Application for Seed Funding and a supplementary document, the Community Enterprise Plan, so that you can use one copy of each as working documents. The Community Enterprise Plan outlines your proposed services and programs, the likely users of the CTC and budgetary information related to the services and programs.

Only a single final signed copy of each of the Application for Seed Funding and the Community Enterprise Plan need to be submitted.

You will also need to attach the following to your Application for Seed Funding:

1 Your proposals for Community Outcome 7 will be addressed in Part 6 of this Application for Seed Funding rather than in the Community Enterprise Plan.
• The Community Enterprise Plan
• The Financial Plan spreadsheets (printed and electronic copy)
Appendix 2: 1st Version of CTC Grant Application

- Letters of support from local organisations and service and support groups
  - A copy of community surveys of other community development actions (for example focus groups) and a summary of documented results and participating groups
  - A letter from a Financial Guarantor for $1000 for the first year of operation
  - A letter from the building owner(s) of the proposed CTC site(s) indicating occupancy conditions and arrangements
  - A town map or maps showing the location of the CTC site(s)
  - A floor plan of the CTC showing room layouts, dimensions and access arrangements
  - Letters of support from two Referees

Submitting your Application

The Application for Seed Funding, the Community Enterprise Plan, and attachments are to be provided in hard copy (for the purpose of signatures). Electronic copy of the Application for Seed Funding and the Community Enterprise Plan should be also be submitted.

Please forward your completed Application for Seed Funding to:

  Community Development Manager
  CTC@NSW
  Office of Information Technology
  PO Box 143
  Bathurst NSW 2795

Getting Help

If you have any difficulty you may discuss your Application for Seed Funding with the Community Development Manager of the CTC@NSW Support Unit by calling 02 6332 8180 or 1800 282 679 (toll free), or the relevant CTC@NSW Community Coordinator for your region (contact the CTC@NSW Support Unit)
Certification by a Representative of the Applicant Organisation

I certify that the information given in this Application for Seed Funding is true and correct and that all conditions for the award of the grant will be complied with if funding is approved.

Signature ____________________ Date ____________________

Printed Name ___________________________________________

Position Held ___________________________________________

Name of Organisation ____________________________________

Note: Grant monies can only be paid to an incorporated body or not-for-profit organisation such as a local government body. If the CTC is not incorporated, or is not a not-for-profit organisation at the time this Application for Seed Funding is submitted, it can be lodged by another community-based Incorporated Body, that is prepared to act as a host applicant. If this happens, a clear audit trail for grant monies needs to be established by the host organisation.
Appendix 2: 1st Version of CTC Grant Application

Part 1 - Applicant Details

1. **Name of applicant organisation to which the grant will be paid if approved**

2. **Contact details of applicant organisation**

   Contact Name

   Position

   Address

   Postcode

   Telephone

   Email

3. **Day to day contact person for the grant Application for Seed Funding:**

   Name

   Address

   Postcode

   Telephone

   Facsimile

   Email

4. **Applicant organisation status**

   Please circle appropriate status

   4.1 Incorporated association created solely to manage the proposed CTC (please provide a photocopy of the incorporation certificate as an attachment)

   4.2 Incorporated association created for another purpose (for example Rural Transaction Centre) that will extend to include management of the proposed CTC (please provide a photocopy of the incorporation certificate as an attachment)

   4.3 Section 355 Committee of Local Government

   4.4 Cooperative

   4.5 Other (please describe)
5. Please provide details of the structure of your organisation and its relationship with any other relevant committees and bodies in your community.

6. Financial Guarantor
A letter of authority for a $1,000 Financial Guarantor for the first two years of operation must be attached to this Application for Seed Funding. This is required should the CTC encounter a financial emergency, such as an unanticipated bill that must be paid immediately, for example, electricity, telephone, etc.

Name

Organisation

Address

Postcode

Telephone

Facsimile

What date do you plan to open the CTC?

____
Part 2 – Priority Rating

1. What type of CTC is proposed? Please refer to the Program Guidelines.

2. What priority group does your proposed CTC align with? Please refer to the Program Guidelines.

Part 3 - Community Participation

In this section of the Application for Seed Funding, we are seeking information on how widespread the support is for the proposed CTC. It is important that information is provided showing that a broad range of people in the community (including economic, social and demographic groups) has actually committed to using and supporting the proposed CTC. It is also important to show how you have involved as many people and groups as possible in the planning for the CTC.

1. Briefly outline what steps you have taken to build community support for a CTC. (That is, establishment of a formal committee, assessment of community needs, sourcing possible funding avenues, development of a business plan etc.)

2. Briefly outline what further steps you propose to take to develop community support. (Just the key steps - further details on this need to be provided in Section G relating to your proposed business plan.)

3. What specific community support and involvement has already been achieved? (Provide evidence that the community is interested in the project, ie. Letters of support as an attachment, list of local organisations, service and support groups who are interested in getting involved in project, list of people on a Steering Committee, number of potential users and client, surveys, etc)

   Please see attachments.

4. Based on your community development activities, provide details on what groups in your local and wider community will be users of the CTC. (Please be as specific as possible, eg. Chamber of Commerce, CWA group, farmer’s association, local aboriginal association)

   Local to your town

Application for Seed Funding for a Community Technology Centre
### Potential Customers
(type of customer and/or specific organisations)

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<th>Yr 1</th>
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**Outside your town** *(Some business opportunities may exist outside the local area. Remember that a CTC would link to networks extending far beyond your local area or be a facility used by tourists and travellers.)*

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Part 5 – Technology Plan

In this section of the Application for Seed Funding, we are seeking to gain information on how you propose to link the service and program needs of your community, as well as the needs of people, to technology and telecommunications. It is important that you are able to demonstrate that it is the people and their needs that define the range of technology and telecommunications proposed for the CTC. The CTC@NSW document – Recommended ICT Models for CTCs– will assist you in making decisions about technology configurations.

1. **What information technology equipment is proposed for the CTC?** (The purchase and maintenance of the latest technology equipment is fundamental to providing up to date services and information to the local community. Indicate what equipment you plan to purchase and the relationship to services and program as well as the anticipated cost of equipment)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology group (eg., Server, Desk top computer)</th>
<th>Types, brands (optional) and specifics (eg., laser colour printer 6ppm)</th>
<th>Number of units</th>
<th>Unit Cost</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
<th>Service or program supported by the technology (refer to Community Enterprise Plan; may be multiple services and programs supported)</th>
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*Please add extra pages or rows as needed.*
2. **What software is proposed for the CTC?** (The purchase and maintenance of the latest software is fundamental to providing up to date services and information to the local community. Indicate what software you plan to purchase and the relationship to services and program as well as the anticipated cost of equipment)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Software group (eg., word processing, operating system)</th>
<th>Types, brands (optional) and specifics (eg., Microsoft Office, Linux, Windows NT)</th>
<th>Number of licences</th>
<th>Cost ($)</th>
<th>Service or program supported by the software (refer to Community Enterprise Plan; may be multiple services and programs supported)</th>
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*Please add extra pages or rows as needed.*
### 3. What telecommunications technology is proposed for the CTC?
(The provision of high bandwidth is fundamental to providing up to date services and information to the local community. Indicate what technologies you plan to purchase and the relationship to services and program as well as the anticipated cost of equipment)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Telecommunications type (eg., satellite, dial-up, ISDN, ADSL)</th>
<th>Supplier(s)</th>
<th>Bandwidth</th>
<th>Annual costs for &quot;line&quot; $</th>
<th>Annual costs for &quot;data&quot; $</th>
<th>Service or program supported by the telecommunications (refer to Community Enterprise Plan; may be multiple services and programs supported)</th>
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</table>
Part 7 - Marketing Plan

1. How will you introduce members of the community to services and programs provided by the CTC? (Eg., advertising, Open days, Membership, free trials, etc)

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<th>Activity</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Annual Costs</th>
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2. Outline what activities the CTC will undertake to market its services to the community.
Indicate possible target groups and the strategies to be used. (Target groups could include businesses, other community organisations, government agencies and individuals.)

The activities outlined above will create awareness of the CTC throughout virtually all of the community with minimal cost.

The centre management and steering committee will monitor the performance of the centre on an ongoing basis to assess the success of reaching potential high yield users of the centre and specific campaigns will be developed to reach these groups. These groups would include:

- All small business operators;
- Tourism operators;
- Arts / Crafts producers and retailers; and
- Primary producers.

As part of its ongoing marketing activity, the Centre will be looking to encourage repeat usage amongst high yield user groups. Strategies for this will include collection of name and address details for database creation and continually ensuring that the hardware / software available meets the needs of the market.

The centre will be looking to be entrepreneurial and proactive in the service offered, i.e rather than waiting for a customer to identify what they need, the centre will survey visitors / users of the centre to assess their current level of marketing activity and to identify how the Centre can create value by reducing marketing costs (creating shared resources) for target groups.

Specialist promotional activities will include:
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Target Group</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Annual Costs</th>
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APPENDIX 3

2nd Version of CTC Application

APPLICATION FOR SEED FUNDING FOR A COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY CENTRE

Town(s) in which CTC facility(ies) will be located

Name of Applicant Organisation

Name of CTC@NSW CTC Community Coordinator

Funding Sought from CTC@NSW

Date of Application for Seed Funding

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<th>Section</th>
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<tr>
<td>PART 1 - APPLICANT DETAILS</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>PART 2 - PRIORITY RATING</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>PART 3 - YOUR COMMUNITY AND THE CTC MARKET</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>PART 4 - MANAGING YOUR CTC</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>PART 5 - OPERATING YOUR CTC</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>PART 6 - MARKETING PLAN</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>PART 7 - FUNDING YOUR CTC</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFEREES</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTACHMENTS</td>
<td>25</td>
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</table>
NOTE: IT IS IMPORTANT THIS DOCUMENT BE COMPLETED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE APPLICATION FOR SEED FUNDING HELP DOCUMENT

Certification by a Representative of the Applicant Organisation

I certify that the information given in this Proposal for Seed Funding is true and correct and that all conditions for the award of the grant will be complied with if funding is approved.

Signature ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Printed Name: ___________________________

Position Held: ___________________________

Name of Organisation: ___________________________

Note: Grant monies can only be paid to an incorporated body or not for profit organisation such as a local government body. If the CTC is not incorporated, or is not a not-for-profit organisation at the time this Proposal for Seed Funding is submitted, it can be lodged by another community based Incorporated Body, that is, prepared to act as a host applicant. If this happens, a clear audit trail for grant monies needs to be established by the host organisation.
Part 1 - Applicant Details

1.1 Name of applicant organisation to which the grant will be paid if approved.

1.2 Contact details of applicant organisation

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Address</th>
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1.3 Day to day contact person for the grant Application for Seed Funding:

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1.4 Applicant organisation status

*Please circle appropriate status*

- Incorporated association created for another purpose
1.5  **Financial Guarantor**
A letter of authority for a $1,000 Financial Guarantor for the first two years of operation must be attached to this Application for Seed Funding. This is required should the CTC encounter a financial emergency, such as an unanticipated bill that must be paid immediately, for example, electricity, telephone, etc.

Name  

Organisation  

Address  

Postcode  

Telephone  

Facsimile  

Please see Attachment B

1.6  What date do you plan to open the CTC?
Part 2 – Priority Rating

2.1 What type of CTC is proposed?
(Please refer to the Program Guidelines and tick the appropriate Type)

2.2 What priority group does your proposed CTC align with?
(Please refer to the Program Guidelines and tick the appropriate Priority.)
Part 3 - Your community and the CTC Market

3.1 What vision do you have for how the Community Technology Centre will match the needs of groups and people in your community?

3.2 What is/are your target market(s)? (Be as specific as you can, e.g., small business providers of farm equipment, distance education students)

3.3 What gap(s) in service and program provision have you identified as priority areas?

3.4 What other providers have you identified in your area that may provide opportunities for joint ventures or partnering? (For example, Adult and Community Education or TAFE providers, website developers. Remember your CTC must not provide services already provided in a town)

3.5 Who are your major competitors? What steps have you taken to negotiate with/or partner with those competitors, or address the issues of competitive neutrality in the context of those competitors?

3.6 Describe the approach you have used to identify the proposed CTC’s services and programs.
3.7 Briefly outline what steps you have taken to build community support for a CTC. (That is, establishment of a formal committee, assessment of community needs, sourcing possible funding avenues, development of a business plan etc.)

_________________________________________________________________________

3.8 Briefly outline what further steps you propose to take to develop community support. (Just the key steps)

_________________________________________________________________________

3.9 What specific community support and involvement has already been achieved? (Provide evidence that the community is interested in the project, ie. Letters of support as an attachment, list of local organisations, service and support groups who are interested in getting involved in project, list of people on a Steering Committee, number of potential users and client surveys, etc)

_________________________________________________________________________
3.10 Based on your community development activities, provide details on what groups in your local and wider community will be users of the CTC. (Please be as specific as possible, eg. Chamber of Commerce, CWA group, farmer’s association, local aboriginal association)

### 3.10.1 Local to your town

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Name</th>
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3.10.2 Outside your town (Some business opportunities may exist outside the local area. Remember that a CTC would link to networks extending far beyond your local area or be a facility used by tourists and travellers.)

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Part 4 – Managing Your CTC

Organisational Structure

4.1 Please provide details of the structure of your organisation and its relationship with any other relevant committees and bodies in your community.

The Management Team

4.2 List the names and proposed positions of the individuals on the CTC Management Committee who would have responsibility for implementing the program. (Please include details of their qualifications and experience related to the proposed project and their involvement in the community.)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee Member</th>
<th>Proposed Position</th>
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4.3 What experience and skills do members of the Management Team have to undertake the following: (Please include experience and skills of key individuals where relevant)

4.3.1 Manage grant funds and a budget:

4.3.2 Manage a community based enterprise:

4.3.3 Develop and support the implementation of a Business Plan:

4.3.4 Select and manage paid staff or volunteers:
4.3.5 Publicise and market services:

4.3.6 Describe the strategy you propose to use to identify new funding and grant opportunities (for example, regular check of Westnet website)

4.3.7 What strategic linkages, in terms of participation and communications forums, will your Centre develop in relation to the key regional stakeholder groups that are conduits or providers of grants monies and income sources?

4.3.8 Describe the strategy you propose to use to develop skills in tendering and meeting tender requirements?

4.3.9 Describe the outcomes of any discussions you have had with CTC@NSW Support Unit regarding services and/or programs from "external-to-the -community" sources that may be suitable for your proposed CTC.
**Staff**

4.4 What paid and voluntary staff do you intend to engage and under what award?  
(Depending on the type of CTC organisation, employees may be covered under local government award or under the Clerical Award)

*Note:* The annual costs for these activities need to be included in the Spreadsheet.

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<th>Activity</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
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</table>

4.5 How will the CTC personnel keep their skills relevant to the implementation of new services and programs and to emerging technologies and telecommunications? (Consider how the Centre staff will maintain awareness of emerging technologies and communications and access professional development programs.)

*Note:* The annual costs for these activities need to be included in the Spreadsheet.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
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4.6 How will the CTC remain relevant to the needs of the community over a period of time? (For example, consider how the Centre staff will maintain awareness of emerging technologies and communications, maintain awareness of Commonwealth and State government information technology strategies and policies, etc.)

*Note:* The annual costs for these activities need to be included in the Spreadsheet

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<th>Activity</th>
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**Accommodating the Centre**

4.7 CTC@NSW operational policy encourages new CTCs to seek co-location opportunities with other similar not for profit organisations (For example, public library, NSW Government Access Point, Rural Transaction Centre, Visitor's Information Centre, Business Enterprise Centre, Adult and Community Education College).
Is this Proposal for Seed Funding for a co-located CTC?


4.8 Where is/are the proposed sites for the Centre. (Please provide addresses for all sites where a Multi-site Centre is proposed using the sections following.)

Stand Alone Centre, or, Main Site for a Multi-site Centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Postcode</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Facsimile</td>
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<td>Email</td>
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Outreach Sites or Alliance Sites (if insufficient space provided please attach additional sheet)

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<th>Address</th>
<th>Postcode</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Telephone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Facsimile</td>
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4.9 Is/are the proposed CTC site(s) in a main street location?

4.10 Is the rent for the CTC site(s) being provided as an in-kind contribution from the community?

If Yes, please indicate the CTC’s responsibility for payment of rates, power, etc.

4.11 Is/are the proposed building(s) and/or site(s) subject to any Heritage or Environmental or Zoning restrictions?

A written Statement from the building owner(s) will be required prior to release of any funds.

4.12 Is disability access provided at the site(s)?

4.13 If a site(s) has been selected has a floor plan for the CTC been prepared

4.14 Is/are the site(s) for the CTC able to be cabled at a reasonable cost?
Access Policy

What hours of business are planned for the Community Technology Centre?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours open (staffed)</th>
<th>Access available (non-staffed)</th>
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<td>Sunday hrs</td>
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4.16 Will the Community Technology Centre have 24-hour access?

4.17 How have you determined the communities need for the opening hours mentioned above?

Pricing Policy

4.18 Describe your approach to a pricing policy.

The products and services offered will be priced to cover both direct as well as indirect costs and make 10-15% return on invest (ROI) whilst keeping in mind the low discretionary income of area residents and issues surrounding competitive neutrality issues. This will enable us to fund expansion of services, replace & update equipment as required as well as subsidise services that we plan to offer to targeted groups, e.g. Seniors, Indigenous, etc.

Your approach to a pricing policy.

I will take into effect:
- Depreciation on PCs, software and network
- Insurance costs, including public liability
- Administrative expenses, e.g. enrolling students, taking phone enquiries, bookwork
- Telecommunications costs
- Electricity, heating, rates, etc
- Manager's time
Review of Operation

4.19 How do you intend to review the performance of the CTC?
(You need to consider the management role, income from services and programs, usage of balance sheet items, fixed and variable expenses.)

4.20 Proposed audit arrangements for the Organisation.

The Auditor must be independent of the organisation and have an understanding of audit philosophy and practice, eg. Accountant, Finance Manager, Bank Manager. It is understood that the person providing audit services will verify that the accounts reflect a true and fair view of the financial position of the Organisation.

Note: Audit costs may be included in the business plan as a cost, or as an "in-kind" donation as appropriate.
Part 5 – Operating Your CTC

The Spreadsheet details the programs, services, staff, promotion, technology and telecommunications, plus operating expenses associated with operating your CTC.

Prepare the Spreadsheet of revenue and costs over a three-year period using the templates provided.
## Part 6 - Marketing Plan

6.1 How will you introduce members of the community to services and programs provided by the CTC? For example, advertising, open days, membership, free trials, etc.

**Note:** The annual costs and revenues for these activities need to be included in the Spreadsheet

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<th>Activity</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
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6.2 Outline what activities the CTC will undertake to market its services to the community. Indicate possible target groups and the strategies to be used. (Target groups could include businesses, other community organisations, government agencies and individuals.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Target Group</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
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Part 7 - Funding your CTC

7.1 You may be seeking funding for other facilities and services that will be co-located with the CTC (for example, Rural Transaction Centre). If so, please provide details of the funding Applications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency/Organisation</th>
<th>Funding Sought</th>
<th>Details (include what the grant will be for and over what duration)</th>
<th>Approved (Y/N)</th>
<th>If not Approved yet, indicate date funding announcement due</th>
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7.2 Does the success of this CTC proposal depend on successfully obtaining those grants shown in Item 7.1 above?
7.3 How will you distribute the CTC funding you are applying for in this Application for Seed Funding?

Equipment funding

**Note**: This is a one-off Grant, generally to a maximum of $50,000.00, and may only be used for the purchase of computer software and for technology such as servers, cabling, photocopiers, computers, facsimile machines, scanners, printers, data projectors, digital cameras to name a few. This Grant is not to be used for building modifications, fixtures, furnishing or fittings. Should your Application for Seed Funding be successful you will be required to provide a list of equipment you intend to purchase prior to funds being released.

Salaries funding

**Note**: This is a funding contribution to salaries, generally up to a maximum of $35,000.00 in Year 1, $20,000 in Year 2 and $15,000 in Year 3, and should be factored into your Business Plan. This will be subject to State Government funding allocations and the CTC meeting an annual Resource and Performance Agreement. The extent of funding is dependent on the opening hours of the CTC and outreach/alliance sites if relevant. As a general guide there is an expectation that the Centre will be open for a minimum of 35 hours per week.

Operating and telecommunications expenses

**Note**: This is a one-off Grant, generally to a maximum of $30,000.00, payable over two years. It may only be used for the purchase of furnishings, for marketing and advertising activities, insurance, utilities, security system, telecommunications, accounting and legal services, travel, printing, postage and stationery. Should your Application for Seed Funding be successful you will be required to provide a list of equipment and services you intend to purchase or contract prior to funds being released.

**Total CTC@NSWFunding Sought**
Referees

Please provide the names of two persons with knowledge of the community who are not directly associated with the applicant organisation but can comment on the ability of the organisation to undertake the project.

Referee reports must be attached to the Application for Seed Funding. Please see Attachment G

Name:

Name:

Referees should comment on the following:

- The relevance of the project to the needs of the community;
- The significance of the project in improving access to business opportunities, education and training, social, information and/or other services;
- The capacity of the organisation to undertake and complete the project.

Notes: Referees may also be contacted in the future to seek their comments on the CTC’s impact on the community.
Attachments

Please ensure that you have the following attachments included with your final Application for Seed Funding:

- The CTC Application Spreadsheet (printed and electronic copy)
- Letters of support from local organisations and service and support groups
- A copy of community surveys of other community development actions (for example focus groups) and a summary of documented results and participating groups
- A letter from a Financial Guarantor for $1000 for the first year of operation
- A letter from the building owner(s) of the proposed CTC site(s) indicating occupancy conditions and arrangements
- A town map or maps showing the location of the CTC site(s)
- A floor plan of the CTC showing room layouts, dimensions and access arrangements
- Letters of support from two Referees

Submitting your Proposal

The Application for Seed Funding, Spreadsheet and attachments are to be provided in hard copy (for the purpose of signatures).

Electronic copy of the Application for Seed Funding and the Spreadsheet should be also be submitted.

Please forward your completed Application for Seed Funding to:

Community Development Manager
CTC@NSW
Office of Information Technology
PO Box 143
Bathurst NSW 2795
Email: kerry.fraser@ditm.nsw.gov.au
APPENDIX 4
Community Survey for a CTC

Community Technology Centre Outreach Survey

What is a Community Technology Centre?
CTCs are community owned and operated businesses that have been established by the local community to provide access to a range of products and services that might not be currently available to them.

While the main Centre can provide such things as: access to a range of training programs, services and programs for small businesses, homework clubs for kids so they can use the latest in computer technology to complete school work. They can also provide Seniors with short courses so they can learn to send email to distant family and friends, they can also assist nearly everyone in the community gain access to computer and Internet skills and find out how to access the full range of “Online” services offered by governments as well as larger businesses.

Smaller ‘Outreach’ centres can also be established in nearby villages to provide basic services such as a public computer & printer, a fax machine as well as Internet access on a fee for service basis.

The reason for this survey
This survey is being circulated to help us find out which services are needed in this community and who would use them. Please complete and return to the Brooms Head General Store by Wednesday 18th September.

1. Would you like to be able to access a range of Computer and Internet services from a convenient location in Brooms Head? [ ] Yes [ ] No

2. Do you currently use a computer at:
   [ ] School [ ] Work [ ] Home? [ ] Not at all

3. Would you like to find out how to:
   [ ] Send email?
   [ ] Do Internet research?
   [ ] Gain some basic computer skills?
   [ ] Take courses and training programs in either Maclean or Iluka?
   [ ] Other, e.g. Internet & Computer training, etc. please indicate ________________________________

4. Would you like to have local access to a FAX? [ ] Yes [ ] No

5. Please tick one of the boxes below to indicate your age:
   Between 10 - 18 [ ] 19 - 35 [ ] 36 - 55 [ ] 56+[ ]

Your comments: ________________________________

(Please write on the back if you need more space)

Thank you for your help!

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# Appendix 5

## CTC@NSW Online Survey Questions

**Online Survey of funded Centres in the CTC@NSW program**

To be completed by the CTC Manager or Chair of the Community’s CTC Management Organisation or Board

Please note: Although the author has been given permission by the CTC@NSW program to conduct this survey, it is being undertaken as part of her Academic research. No personal details as to who completes or participates in this survey will be incorporated into the final report, although the results will be shared with the CTC@NSW program.

1. Please indicate your position/relationship with the CTC in this community?  
   - [ ] Centre manager  
   - [ ] Chair of CTC Management Committee  
   - [ ] Other, please specify ______________________________

2. In which region of NSW is your CTC located? (Pull down menu)  
   - Northern Rivers, North East/New England, Mid North Coast, Hunter, Central Coast, Illawarra, South East, Murray, Central West, Riverina, Orana, Far West

3. What is the approximate number of people in the community in which your main CTC is located? (Pull down menu: less than 1000, 1000 to 1500, 1500 - 2000, 2000 - 2500, 2500 – 3000, more than 3000)

4. In which funding round did you receive your seed funding from the CTC@NSW program? (If known)  
   - [ ] December 2000  
   - [ ] September 2001  
   - [ ] December 2001  
   - [ ] March 2002  
   - [ ] September 2002  
   - [ ] December 2002  
   - [ ] March 2003  
   - [ ] June 2003

5. What type of CTC did you seek funding for?  
   - [ ] A Stand Alone Centre, e.g. Single town/single managing community organisation?  
   - [ ] Multi-Site, e.g. Main Centre in largest community with outreach sites in neighboring communities?  
   - [ ] Alliance model, e.g. two or more centres with each hosting a subset of the services and equipment usually found in a Stand Alone Centre

6. How long did it take you to prepare your application?  
   - [ ] less than 3 months  
   - [ ] 3 - 6 months  
   - [ ] 6 - 12 months  
   - [ ] longer than 12 months

If you did not work on the application please proceed to Question 9
7. Do you think that the people on your Application Committee could have completed the CTC Application without the help of the CTC Coordinator in your region? [ ] Yes [ ] No

8. If you worked on the Application, how would you rate it in terms of ease to complete:

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<tr>
<th>Very Difficult</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Straightforward</th>
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If above ranking is 5 or less, please tick all that apply:
[ ] It was too long
[ ] Some of the questions were confusing
[ ] It wasn’t written in plain English
[ ] It contained too many technical terms
[ ] We didn’t have sufficient business expertise on the Planning Committee
[ ] The Business Plan Spreadsheet section was too complicated
[ ] Other: ________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

9. Who was the local Auspicing body for your CTC application?
[ ] The local council?
[ ] A local training organisation?
[ ] Other: ________________________________________________
(Please specify)

10. Does this Auspicing organisation still provide any ongoing support?
[ ] Yes [ ] No

If yes, to Question 10, what is the nature of this support? (Please tick all that apply)
[ ] Members of the Auspicing organisation are also on the CTC’s Management Committee
[ ] Ongoing financial assistance
[ ] Provision of premises for CTC
[ ] Other: ________________________________________________
(Please specify)

11. Does your CTC have a paid Manager?
[ ] Yes [ ] No

If no, proceed to question 14
12. How many hours does the Manager work?
[ ] 35 + hours a week  [ ] Between 20 - 35 hours a week
[ ] Less than 20 hours per week [ ] other ________________
(please specify)

13. Has the CTC Manager had experience in managing other community organisations?
[ ] Yes  [ ] No

14. Who manages your CTC when it is open?
[ ] The CTC Manager
[ ] CTC Volunteers
[ ] It is run in conjunction with services offered by the Auspicing body
[ ] Other, please specify ______________________________

15. How many volunteers does your CTC currently have?
[ ] 1 - 3  [ ] 4 - 8  [ ] 9 - 12  [ ] more than 12

16. How many people from the original CTC Planning committee (the group that worked on the CTC application) are still involved with the management of your CTC?
[ ] All of them  [ ] 1 - 3 of them  [ ] 4 or more  [ ] none of them

This Section to be completed by the CTC Manager only:

17. If you are the CTC Manager, does your CTC Management Committee provide you with clear direction for managing your CTC?
[ ] Yes  [ ] No
If no, what are the main issues that affect you? (Please tick all that apply)
[ ] They don't meet on a regular basis
[ ] They don't have enough business experience
[ ] They don't represent all the key stakeholders in the community
[ ] They don't follow the business plan
[ ] They aren't interested in working with the CTC@NSW support team
[ ] Other (please specify) ______________________________

18. Does your CTC Management Committee hold regular meetings?
[ ] Yes  [ ] No
If yes, how frequently do the meet?
[ ] Once a month  [ ] twice a month  [ ] weekly
[ ] Other (please specify) ______________
This Section can be completed by either the CTC Manager or the Chair your CTC’s Managing Organisation

19. Have you implemented, all or part of the original business plan (the one prepared as part of your CTC application), please indicate the nearest % that you think applies: (drop down menu)
   - Less than 25%
   - Less than 50%
   - Less than 75%
   - Less than 100%

20. Did your CTC generate the level of income you had hoped to achieve in its first year of operation?
   [ ] Yes   [ ] No

   If no, please tick the reason(s) you feel might have caused this shortfall:
   [ ] There was not enough interest or support from the local community.
   [ ] The services we were offering were too expensive.
   [ ] We did not offer a wide enough range of services.
   [ ] Our trading hours were not long enough.
   [ ] We weren’t able to open in the evenings or on weekends.
   [ ] We didn’t have a paid CTC Manager.
   [ ] The volunteers and/or management need more IT training
   [ ] We do not have a good location.
   [ ] We do not have enough staff or volunteers to provide service.
   [ ] Other, please specify________________________________________
       ___________________________________________________________

21. Has your CTC achieved its budget in its second year of operation? Please indicate the % that applies: (Drop down menu)
   10% over budget
   More than 10% over budget
   Achieved budget
   10% under budget
   20% under budget
   More than 20% under budget

22. If yes, to Question 21 to what do you attribute the improvement? (Please tick all that apply)
   [ ] We revised our business plan.
   [ ] We did more to advertise and promote the products and services we have to offer.
   [ ] We conducted surveys to get more input from the community.
   [ ] We added additional services in response to requests from the community.
[ ] We formed additional partnerships with other regional stakeholders.
[ ] We provided more training programs
[ ] The CTC@NSW provided us with more opportunities to participate in new programs and activities designed to generate revenue for us.
[ ] Other, please specify: __________________________________________________________

23. If you revised your Business Plan, did you have outside help in doing so?
[ ] No  [ ] Yes

If yes, who helped you revise your Business Plan?
[ ] Someone from the CTC Support Unit
[ ] Someone from the Auspicing Body
[ ] The Management Committee did it
[ ] Other, please specify, _________________________________________________________

24. On a scale of 1 – 10, how would you rate the support your Centre has received from the CTC@NSW program:

Poor   Average       Outstanding
1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

25. Do you think that your CTC promotes and provides increased access to Information and Communications technology in your community?
[ ] Yes  [ ] No (Why not?)

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

26. Has your CTC done anything or offered any programs that are different from other CTCs in your region?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
27. Do you think your CTC has had a positive impact on the economic development of your community?  
[ ] Yes  
[ ] No

[ ] If yes, please list them

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

[ ] If No (What do you think is the main reason it hasn’t had a positive impact.)

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

28. Has your CTC experienced any long standing technical problems regarding telecommunications services?

[ ] No  
[ ] Yes (please list them)

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

29. Do you think that the Manager of your CTC should receive ongoing IT & technical training in order to provide a higher level of technical service and support for customers of your CTC?

[ ] Yes  
[ ] No

[ ] If yes, please list the type of training you think is required

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

30. If you would like to make any additional comments about your experience in participating/working with the CTC@NSW program, please use this space:

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________
Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

ABS  Australia Bureau of Statistics
ACE  Adult and Community Education
AR  Action Research
Auspice  Provide patronage
CCD  Census Collection District
CEO  Chief Executive Officer
CTC@NSW  Community Technology Centres at New South Wales
DCITA  Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
DSARD  NSW Department of State and Regional Development
EOI  Expression of Interest
IAP2  International Association for Public Participation
ICT  Information and Communications Technology
ISP  Internet Service Provider
ITOL  Information Technology Online program
Kb  Kilobytes
KPI  Key performance Indicator
LGA  Local Government Area
MSST  Main Street Small Town Program
NOIE  National Office for the Information Economy
NSW  New South Wales
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NTN</td>
<td>Networking the Nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDA</td>
<td>Regional Development Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPC</td>
<td>Regional Program Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTO</td>
<td>Registered Training Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCU</td>
<td>Southern Cross University</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Tertiary and Further Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>TLAs</td>
<td>Three Letter Acronyms</td>
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<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<td>WLL</td>
<td>Wireless local loop</td>
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