



Sharing the load - delegation

By delegating properly, group leaders can not only lighten the work burdens on key members but, perhaps more importantly, help other members learn new skills to help them become more productive to improve their morale and motivation.

What is delegation?

Delegation is handing over your responsibility for a particular task to someone else. In doing so, you trust that person to do the work and achieve the result the group wants. It could be planning an event, getting quotes for contractor work, managing members and volunteers on site or representing the group at a function.

Reasons for delegating

The main reasons for delegating include:

- To take pressure off busy members- delegating roles to others helps leaders focus on the matters (personal, social and group matters) that require their attention
- To relieve stress and 'burn out' in overworked members (see Landcare Note: Beating 'burn-out')
- To encourage and build effective leadership (see Landcare Note: Effective leadership)
- To build members' skills, knowledge and confidence through encouragement, decision-making, power-sharing and tackling areas of activities that are new to them.

Without such chances for personal involvement, your members may feel unimportant or uninterested, or that the group's activities are irrelevant to them.

This may cause them to stop attending activities or even leave the group. It could also lead to one small group doing all the work with

the risk of 'burn-out'. Both these results are common but can be managed.

How to do it

Delegation doesn't come easily to many people. Sometimes, when people feel they know a lot about something, it's easier for them to do it than hand responsibility to others but it is important to have confidence in other members.

Before you delegate

Work out some key points about the task. These include:

- What type of task it is – communicating, overseeing, planning, etc?
- What experience, knowledge and skills are needed by the member/s being asked to do the task? (See Landcare Note 9.3: What skills and knowledge does the group have?)
- How these members work best – individually, as a team, and over a period. What is their current workload?
- What are the timelines/deadlines? What consequences are there if the job is not done properly or needs re-doing?
- What resources are needed?
- What is a reasonable outcome (and quality) of this job?
- What role you need to play to ensure its success? Does it involve monitoring, encouragement, coaching, providing resources?
- What are the best ways to control the project to make sure things are going smoothly?

Rules for good delegation

- Communicate clearly, effectively and regularly



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- Stimulate involvement
- Use meeting times efficiently
- Be open minded - think laterally
- Understand each individuals' skills, capacities and desires
- Distribute workloads
- Define responsibilities.

Build delegation into your operations

- Group structure – provide formal positions for key roles (eg treasurer, secretary, and president) and for other positions such as managing projects, the newsletter, publicity, and sourcing funding etc.
- Project management – have sub-committees for separate projects
- Rotate responsibilities regularly (eg annually) to reduce workload and allow members to gain skills and confidence (See Landcare Note: Leadership strategies and succession for more information).
- If your group finds some tasks difficult, look elsewhere for these skills rather than potentially wasting time and resources. Your Landcare Coordinator could help with sourcing specialist external skills
- Share resources and ideas with other groups and have a sub-committee to explore and promote this.

Effective delegation

Having made the decision to delegate, make sure you brief that person. Take time to explain:

- Why they were chosen
- What's expected from them
- The goals you have
- Timelines, deadlines and resources
- A suitable schedule to get updates.

Lastly, make sure the person realises you want to know if any problems occur, and that you are available for any guidance needed as the work progresses.

Some useful tools

There are a few tools available to help you delegate tasks effectively.

Delegation Log

Keeping track of what has been/is planned to be delegated, and to who, is important for good communication within the group. A simple (such as the one below) table can help.

Task	Can this be delegated? Y/N	To whom should this be delegated?

How good are you at delegating?

Answer 'yes' or 'no' to the following:

1. I delegate tasks that are not cost-effective for me to do
2. I make a list of tasks that I want to delegate
3. I believe delegation is not very time consuming
4. I select people who are capable and willing to perform the task
5. I am not afraid the person will make mistakes
6. I provide all necessary information to the person carrying out the task
7. I find out what the person already knows about the task
8. I set clearly define the responsibility of each person carrying out the task
9. I establish deadlines and milestones



Landcare Notes

10. I monitor progress and give feedback
11. I make sure I am available if a difficulty arises and help is required
12. I empower people by letting them use their own mind and creativity to complete the task
13. I always follow up with the person whom I delegate the task to
14. I give credit to the employee when a task is successfully completed
15. I believe delegation results in increased involvement and commitment

People who are good at delegating generally score 'Yes' to 80 per cent of the questions. If you scored less, you might want to think about improving your delegation skills.

Further references

McFarlane, G, Carpenter, J and Youl, R (1996)
- *Group Skills and Community Action:*
<http://web.archive.org/web/20050315170751/>

www.neon.net.au/community/environment/grp_skills/

Mindtools (2007) - *Successful Delegation – How, When and Why:*

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_98.htm

Related Landcare Notes

This Landcare Note is one of a series. These notes provide an excellent guide for the ongoing operation of your group.

Landcare Note 8.1: Effective Leadership

Landcare Note 8.3: Succession Planning

Landcare Note 8.4: Beating 'Burn-out'

Landcare Note 9.3: What Skills and Knowledge Does the Group Have?

Acknowledgments

Compiled by the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority's Landcare Support Team