



Business Plan Executive Summary

Northern Rivers Food Links seeks to:

- Mitigate climate change impacts associated with food production and distribution by:
 - Addressing distribution inefficiencies that result in unnecessary 'food miles' for locally produced food.
 - Supporting take-up of more sustainable food production practices with particular emphasis on farming inputs, land-use management in a changing climate and off-farm environmental impacts.
- Strengthen community resilience to climate change and peak oil impacts by:
 - Reducing reliance on highly centralised food supply chains.
 - Creating a local food economy built on strong links between the regions food producers, distributors, retailers and consumers.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change, through the Urban Sustainability Program within the NSW Environment Trust, has provided funding of \$1,999,080 for the project including:

- \$100,000 for the development of this Business Plan
- \$1,899,080 for delivery of the project through 2010 and 2011.

NR Food Links will strive to meet these aims through delivery of the following initiatives:

Village Showcase

This will support a collective village approach to improving food production, distribution and consumption. A village could be any town, village, or even a cluster of smaller hamlets.

This is a variation of the Transition Towns and Sustainability Street concept, but focused on food production, distribution and consumption. It will fund and manage one larger project in each LGA, rather than a plethora of smaller projects that are duplicating or working in isolation from each other.

Village showcases could include a combination of any of the following activities:

- Local markets - new or expanded
- Community gardens - new or expanded



This project has been assisted by the New South Wales Government through its Environmental Trust.

- Home garden projects, including 'permablitz' type activities
- Community asset gardens (eg aged care facilities, Neighbourhood Centres)
- Community Food production maps and events (eg Community Jams)
- Food promotions and events
- Public land food production plantings trials
- Community supported agriculture.

Marketing and Education

This incorporates:

- Research of consumer attitudes to and awareness of locally produced food
- Development of a marketing strategy to raise awareness of the benefits of consuming locally produced food
- Implementation of the strategy, including media campaigns and upskilling activities on how to produce and use locally produced food.
- Development of a project website providing information on local food issues and project activities
- Development and implementation of a means of identifying the source of food, to assist and inform consumers.

The campaign will also address:

- the benefits of minimising organic waste going to landfill and recycling organic waste
- ways of using organic waste, especially through composting.

Activities, comprising:

- Marketing campaign (including consumer research)
- Source identification
- Website development
- Skilling the community

Distribution Projects

This incorporates:

- 'Virtual Marketplace', a web based e-commerce facility that will provide growers/primary producers with an online platform to promote and sell their products and services
- Innovative planned and co-ordinated initiatives aimed at the decentralisation and localisation of food supply and distribution system, such as:
 - farmers markets
 - grower co-op
 - specialty retail, such as Santos Foods, Green Garage
 - mainstream retail, such as IGA
 - utilisation of existing infrastructure in the form of packing sheds.

Local Government Resource Kit

Councils across the region will need support and training with the development and implementation of food related policy, procedures and practices to deal with emerging issues associated with food production, including:

- Community gardens
- Farmers markets.

The project will develop template policy and procedures and conduct training of council staff to deal with these issues.

Food Production and Distribution in Indigenous Communities

The project will support activities to improve and upgrade food production, distribution and consumption in Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal community organisations (eg Local Aboriginal Land Councils) throughout the region. It will support a number of existing initiatives to develop community gardens and transporting and trading food between communities.

Sustainable Agriculture Projects

This consists of a number of components.

The major component relates to the support of initiatives such as:

- On farm composting and or biochar trials in a sector (say beef) or location which have limited opportunities or take-up
- Providing additional funding to training providers to allow them to extend their support beyond workshops to mentoring and/or focus groups to support people in implementing the change
- Organisations or individuals performing a facilitation or extension role with farmers to help them make their practices more sustainable.

The key principle will be to add value to services and programs currently already being delivered.

The second component will address opportunities for primary producers to make their farm businesses more financially sustainable, such as:

- on farm value adding
- cooperative marketing.

The project will also showcase existing and potential land use models (such as intentional communities, community supported agriculture), and promote and support new models by:

- providing case studies on existing models on the project website
- site visits of existing models
- mentoring to groups wishing to establish new models (up to 3 in the region), including support with appropriate legal arrangements.

The final component is the establishment of a web based bulletin board on which:

- landholders would list vacant or unused land which they are willing to make available to people intending to grow fruit and vegetables (this could include publicly owned land) and

- people wishing to grow fruit and vegetables would place expressions of interest in obtaining access to land.

Contingency Funds and Discretionary Projects

A budget allocation has been set aside for:

- Contingency in case of cost over runs or underestimates for project activities
- Discretionary funding to support innovative initiatives which may not have received support under other categories or which have arisen outside the timeframe for decisions on other categories.

These may include:

- Community based food production, distribution and use
- Food production and distribution in specific environments such as aged care facilities, public housing estates or manufactured housing estates
- Food aid projects
- Organic waste recycling and reuse
- Industry based initiatives
- Council based initiatives.

They may be:

- based in one LGA
- sub-regional or
- regional.

Governance

The scale of the project, and the involvement of 7 Councils plus Rous Water, requires that a robust governance structure, including a Project Management team independent of any individual Council (apart from day to day administrative and employment issues) be established.

All Councils partnered in this project will be represented on the Steering Committee. However, the Partners have also determined that the bulk of activities will be based in the community and industry. Accordingly, while Councils will be closely involved in most, if not all project activities, there is limited need for in-Council project teams. In the life of the project, there will be limited requirement for changed operations or practices within Councils.

The Governance arrangements are summarised in the table below:

Group	Consists of	Role / Responsibility
Steering Committee	One representative from each local council plus Rous Water	Overall oversight of project including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Approval of funding for project activities ➤ Monitoring progress and approving changes ➤ Reconciliation of differences in opinion

Group	Consists of	Role / Responsibility
		<p>and approach, and resolution of disputes arising from them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reporting on project progress to project sponsor and steering committee parent organisations ➤ Funds acquittal ➤ Any whole-of-government issues associated with the project.
Project Management Team	Project Manager	<p>Overall Business Plan implementation and associated reporting requirements (in conjunction with Steering Committee)</p> <p>Project officer supervision</p>
	LGA Project Officer	<p>Project areas</p> <p>Village Showcase</p> <p>Discretionary Projects</p> <p>Local Government Resource Kit</p>
	Regional Project Officer	<p>Project areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Distribution ➤ Marketing Campaign ➤ Source Identification ➤ Website development ➤ Skilling the community ➤ Food Production and Distribution in Indigenous Communities <p>Sustainable Agriculture Projects</p>
Reference Groups	Representatives from key stakeholder groups, including individual community members	Advisory role to steering committee and groups seeking NR Food Links support
Contractors and Consultants	Successful tenderers	<p>Development of resources</p> <p>Installation of infrastructure</p> <p>Provision of specialist advice</p>
Project Activity Proponents	Community groups, industry groups.	Delivery of projects