

The economic value of inputs from the community itself to a community road safety partnership

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Abstract

This project assessed the economic value of the community inputs to a Community Road Safety Partnership (CRSP). Information was collected principally by a series of meetings between the research team and partnership committee members and other stakeholders, supplemented by documentation, follow-up telephone calls and emails. This enabled the team to gain an overview of the various activities and their place in community life, and the commitment of paid and volunteer time and other resources required to deliver them. To ensure that all contributions were assessed in a systematic manner, a systematic approach to estimating the value of items such as paid time, volunteer time, travel and venue hire was developed and applied. This assessment of community inputs provided not only an overview of the value of the CRSP to the community, but it also provides useful information for planning the future of the program. For example, the amount of resources put into an activity could be compared with perceptions (or possibly objective measurement) of what it has achieved. The extent of the various inputs gives a guide as to which organisations are already making substantial contributions, and which organisations might possibly have scope for further contributions. The lessons learned in this project were incorporated into a short guide to valuing a CRSP which is intended for use generally throughout Tasmania. It consisted of a set of straightforward instructions that should enable a CRSP to value the inputs to its program, produce an estimate of the overall value of the inputs to the program and identify how resources are allocated across different activities.

Introduction

Background

The potential benefits of road safety programs delivered at the community level have been recognised for some time now. These include the abilities to:

- identify and address local examples of more general programs
- address specific problems arising from local factors
- mobilise community organisations and resources to address safety issues
- encourage individuals to take ownership of local problems and become involved in activities
- communicate effectively with marginalised groups.

Despite these points in favour of community programs, it is difficult to show they are having the desired effect or to convincingly demonstrate that they actually reduce crashes. The essential reason for this is that most local government areas have too small a population for there to be statistically significant changes in crashes on a year-by-year basis. This is further complicated by the fact that many individuals travel across more than one local government area in the course of their daily routine, so that it becomes difficult to link changes in crashes with local programs, and to separate out the effects of local activities from the effects of state-wide programs, especially when the local activities are designed to give a local focus to state-wide programs.

The project

The critical question for road safety programs at the community level is, are the resources devoted to them a good investment? Faced with this question, the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources (DIER) commissioned ARRB Group to assess the economic value of the community inputs to the Circular Head Community Road Safety Partnership (CRSP), one of Tasmania's more successful CSRPs, and to develop a framework which could readily be applied to other CSRPs to enable the estimation of the economic worth of their inputs. It also requested that the ARRB team consider how successful the Circular Head CRSP had been in making the potential advantages offered by a locally-based program into a reality.

This paper summarises ARRB's development of the economic framework and the resultant evaluation of the Circular Head CRSP, and presents conclusions regarding the CRSP and how well it is fulfilling the recognised objectives for community programs. The framework should be readily applicable to community or local government programs in other jurisdictions.

The Circular Head Community Road Safety Partnership

The CRSP embraces a wide range of community organisations, under the leadership of the Circular Head Council in close collaboration with the other key partner, the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources (DIER).

The main activities of the CRSP are:

- Look Out For Your Mates(LFYM) is an extensive program of activities aimed at reducing drink driving, speeding, inattention, and non-use of seat belts. The Circular Head Liquor Accord supports a designated driver program and breathalyser units in a number of venues.
- The CRSP provides a safety focus at strategic times of the year through local newspapers and newsletters. While much occurs directly as part of the LFYM program, other components are stand-alone, such as the Christmas publicity.
- The CRSP supports and plays a practical role in organising Keys 2 Ps, a workshop aimed at young drivers and the people who teach them to drive (typically parents).
- The CRSP supports the Rotary Youth Drivers Awareness Program (RYDA), a more 'hands-on' experience to alert Grade 10 students to driving risks. While RYDA is a separate national initiative and not specifically a CRSP activity, it is closely aligned to and supported by the CRSP in Circular Head.
- The Learner Licence Assistance Program (LLAP) helps persons with low literacy skills to pass the Learner Driver Knowledge Test in order to acquire a learner's licence. The program is provided by the Circular Head Aboriginal Centre (CHAC) and the Smithton LINC.
- Learner Driver Mentor Program. The North West Learner Driver Mentor Program has been established in Burnie under the auspices of the Red Cross. The program assists drivers to acquire the mandatory hours of supervised on-road driving practice required before attempting the driving test, targeting those who are unable to access a vehicle and/or a suitable supervising driver. A CRSP representative is a member of the Steering Committee and attends quarterly meetings. A proposal from CHAC is investigating options for funding to introduce the program in Circular Head.
- The Roadside Crash Marker Program is a joint project between DIER and Council that involves the placement of guide post style crash markers at the sites of recent serious and fatal crashes. Only one marker was installed during 2011–2012, but in other years there have been several.

- A trailer which measures the speed of an approaching vehicle, and then displays the speed plus a text message by means of a Variable Message Sign (VMS), is used from time to time at key locations to raise awareness of travel speeds and to promote key messages, usually aligned to LFYM. Deployment and recovery is done by Council staff.

An important feature of the Partnership is its good working relationship with the district's own newspaper, *The Chronicle*. Each edition (weekly) carries a spot for CRSP news and announcements, in addition to road safety related matters in a regular police feature. *The Chronicle* has also run a series of features in partnership with the CRSP on road safety featuring local people, and runs other road safety related stories when they are judged to be of sufficient interest to the community.

Other programs are conducted in Circular Head which are independent of the CRSP but are likely to have a beneficial impact on road safety. These include the Good Sports program which encourages responsible consumption of alcohol and which is well-supported by sporting clubs, and a drug and alcohol screening procedure to establish fitness for duty (including driving) developed by the CHAC.

Method

Information about the CH CRSP was collected by a series of meetings between the ARRB team and the Circular Head CRSP committee, which is mainly comprised of representatives of the stakeholder organisations, during a visit to Circular Head, supplemented by documentation supplied by the committee, and follow-up telephone calls and emails. This enabled the team to gain an overview of the various activities and their place in community life, and the commitment of paid and volunteer time and other resources required to deliver them.

The method developed for valuing the program involved the following steps:

- Identify the activities to be included in the evaluation.
- For each activity, determine the number of paid hours and the rate paid; adjust these hours to make suitable estimates for overhead costs (Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission 2007); multiply hours by adjusted rate to determine value.
- For each activity, determine the number of volunteer hours and suitable hourly rate at which they should be valued (Centre for Risk and Community Safety 2004); multiply hours by rate to determine value.
- Determine the number of kilometres travelled for each of these activities.
- Determine the value of travel by multiplying the kilometres by the relevant rate (Australian Taxation Office 2013).
- Determine the value of the provision of the venue for each activity.
- Determine the value of catering cost for each activity.
- Determine the cost of any major items of expenditure incurred over the year for each activity.
- Determine any other costs associated with the activity.
- Add up these amounts to produce an estimate of the value of the activity – this shows how much effort and resources are being put into each activity.
- Add the values of each activity to produce an estimate of the value the program delivers to the community.

- Add up the amounts for each of the categories across projects to gain an understanding of how the value of the program is made up.

This process provides not only an overview of the value of the CRSP to the community, but it also provides useful information for planning the future of the program. For example, the amount of resources put into an activity can be compared with perceptions (or possibly objective measurement) of what it has achieved. The extent of the various inputs may give a guide as to which sectors are already making substantial contributions, and where there may be scope for further contributions.

Analysis by activities

The value of the program was estimated at approximately \$49,000 (allowing for rounding errors). The contribution of each of the different activities is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Estimated value of road safety activities

Activity	Value	Activity	Value
CRSP committee meetings	\$4,634	Award night	\$1,097
Xmas promotion	\$78	Learner licence assistance program	\$1,497
Keys 2 Ps	\$1,470	Learner driver mentoring program	\$1,465
RYDA program	\$1,337	Lions food van	\$8,011
CH show	\$2,572	Speed feedback trailer	\$2,525
Look out for your mates (LFYM)	\$7,930	Other supporting activities	\$1,794
School crossing count	\$157	Local newspaper articles	\$11,200
State-wide presentation of LFYM	\$3,244		

The largest contribution came from the series of articles in the local newspaper, followed by the Lions food van which had been operating for long hours on Saturday nights during the football season. The LFYM program also accounted for a considerable contributed value as the VMS required frequent set-up and recovery. Although the committee meetings were a substantial item, they accounted for less than 10% of the value of the program.

Analysis by inputs

The breakdown by type of input is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Estimated value of different contributed inputs

Type of input	Value (\$)
Paid hours	9,562
Volunteer hours	12,387
Travel	1,220
Moving VMS and speed feedback trailer (staff time and vehicle use)	7,770
Depreciation	1,620
Venues	750
Catering	253
Advertising	1,141
Bus hire	500
Local newspaper articles	11,200

Not surprisingly, people's time was the largest input, with slightly more value in paid time (if the time for moving the VMS is included) than for unpaid time. The value of local newspaper articles also stands out.

Accuracy of the figures

This was a first attempt to pin down actual values for these various activities, and occurred many months after the events so that the estimates relied to some extent on memory and extrapolation. It is therefore entirely possible that some items have been overlooked, and some items not accurately estimated. It is therefore likely that this estimate is an underestimate of the true value of the program. It would be preferable to conduct a prospective study which accurately captured inputs such as meeting attendance, travel to and from venues and time spent on activities.

Assessment of the CRSP against objectives

The CRSP was assessed against recognised criteria for local government programs. It was found that community resources had been mobilised in the service of road safety, effective action was being taken to reduce road trauma focussed on the Look Out For Your Mates campaign to address behavioural issues and a night-time fast food van to reduce travel to other centres at high risk times, road safety messages were reaching the community and there was evidence of ownership of local problems and capacity building to deal with the challenges of road safety. Although the team did not spend long enough in Circular Head to reach a firm conclusion about the extent to which road safety messages were getting through to the community, there appeared to be effective channels through which to spread messages when necessary.

Table 3: Summary of evidence that the CRSP is meeting its objectives

CRSP Objective	Supporting evidence
Mobilisation of community resources	Circular Head Council give strong administrative support, operate the VMS trailer and contribute funding to Keys 2 Ps and other events; the Aboriginal Corporation's development of drug and alcohol screening and, together with Smithton LINC, providing the LLAP; Lions Club initiative in setting up a food van; local media series of road safety stories.
Effective action in key road safety areas	Two activities stand out as having made an impact note that we cannot directly link to crash reduction.- Look Out For Your Mates communicates via the VMS and through hospitality venues; hospitality venues also support the Good Sports Campaign, although this latter is not directly part of the CRSP. The Lions food van followed a very different approach by reducing the amount of travel at high risk times, particularly by young people.
Evidence of road safety being integrated into local activities	High uptake of the Good Sports Campaign, the adoption of CHAC's drug and alcohol screening procedure by a major local employer, and annual participation in the Circular Head Show indicates general acceptance of the CRSP program and the legitimacy of its messages.
Reach and penetration into community networks	No direct evidence, but most CRSP committee members are representatives of other community organisations, and there are good opportunities to communicate directly with the public via the local newspaper and community events.
Capacity building	Capacity for dealing with road safety issues has been developing in a number of areas, including: assisting disadvantaged people obtain a licence, drug and alcohol screening, running campaigns focussing on different behaviours through LFYM, effective and efficient deployment of the VMS and the speed feedback trailer, and reducing travel at high risk times through the Lions food van. Wide uptake of the 'Good Sports Campaign' means many bar staff are experienced in responsible serving of alcohol.

The lessons learned in this project have been incorporated in a short guide to valuing a CRSP which is intended for use generally throughout Tasmania. This consists of a set of straightforward instructions that should enable a CRSP to value the inputs to its program, produce an estimate of the overall value of the inputs to the program and identify how resources are allocated across different activities. It could readily be applied to community or local programs in other jurisdictions.

Conclusions

1. The Circular Head CRSP generates contributions worth approximately \$49,000 per year.
2. Paid hours, unpaid hours and media coverage are the three major aspects of contributed value.
3. More accurate estimates would be obtained by a prospective study that captured inputs as they happened.

4. The pattern of road-safety related activities in Circular Head indicated that the CRSP was succeeding in its objectives of mobilising community resources, engaging in effective activities, integration of road safety into local activities, encouraging local ownership of road safety problems, and developing capacities to deal with problems. In its limited time in the municipality, the team was less able to assess the extent to which road safety messages had permeated the community.

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