

Frequently Asked Questions

These questions came largely from the four local pilots.

What do I do to start?

First steps in initiating a clustering process includes:

- Pulling together all the published data available on local tourism activity. Sources include local tourism organisations, Provincial Tourism Boards, SATOUR and the local newspapers.
- Interviewing some of the senior stakeholders, in particular from the private sector, and representatives from community tourism associations. The focus of these interviews should be on identifying common roadblocks, common opportunities, and evaluating the extent to which the local players are working as a team.
- An activity checklist and timeline for starting a clustering initiative is provided in Appendix ???

How do I get senior people involved?

It is not always easy to get the local 'shakers & movers' involved during the early stages. They may well be sitting on the fence watching sceptically to see if this particular initiative will take off or flounder. Yet a clustering initiative is an inclusive process, not exclusive.

Senior people need to feel that there will be a pay-off for their time and involvement. A personal invitation from the MEC to an initial meeting can help in winning their attention.

Maintaining this attention is often dependent on generating early benefits for the stakeholders - more meetings, reports, speeches add to a workload without offering a positive impact to a business bottom line.

How should the start up be resourced?

The availability of time rather than funds is the key to a successful start-up.

But we already have a Tourism Association...

Fine. Build on it, and the team culture that is already in existence.

However, many community tourism associations have yet to establish a base that includes the previously disadvantaged, and yet to address capacity roadblocks.

The current CTA geographic boundaries may well not be appropriate for addressing the new agenda, as was shown with the Valley of the Oliphants and the Fish River pilots.

There may well be a need to re-examine the current CTA infrastructure and activities. A broad clustering agenda should provide the framework to undertake this without unnecessarily impinging on established structures.

How should the cluster boundaries be established?

Factors to consider, and they may be in conflict with each other, are:

- How do tourists - the customers - view the region?
- Travel time; 2-3 hours can be the limit
- Establishing the necessary critical mass to enable the key issues to be adequately addressed, eg promotion

How do we start in developing a 'regional identity'?

An identity for a tourism locality is more than a slogan, more than a brand. The identity needs to draw on the special characteristics of the locality, focusing on the strengths while being honest. An 'over-promise' will not stand the test of time. The identity also needs to reflect the competitive situation and make a clear point of difference.

For example, Queensland's Sunshine Coast has the clear positioning '*Just North of Brisbane. Just perfect.*' This appears on all their brochures and advertising material.

How do we get good media coverage?

See Appendix for a complete communications guide.

And in the second year?

Once a Leadership Team is firmly in place, and momentum has been established and some early benefits generated, there is an opportunity to upgrade the strategic agenda. Longer term/higher risk activities can now be undertaken without threatening the clustering initiative.

These could include developing the region's identity, safety & security programmes, increasing tourism awareness amongst school children, and joint initiatives with neighbouring tourism clusters.

The opportunity should also be taken in extending the number of people directly involved in cluster initiatives. With larger organisations, the time may be right to build on the CEO's involvement in the first year and include second level managers - tomorrow's leaders in the second year..

When do I walk away?

At times a clustering initiative simply fails to fire. Maybe the agreed action agenda turns out to have benefits that are too small to maintain the interest of the senior stakeholders, or the historic lack of dialogue/trust across the cluster is too much to overcome in a short time frame. It is not

unknown for the senior stakeholders to be sitting on the fence, waiting for each other to take the lead.

In such circumstances when movement forward is difficult, it is better to exit gracefully, always leaving the door open for a future re-start.

The subsequent provision of information on successful clustering initiatives elsewhere may be sufficient to pull the group back together later on.

Walking away is never easy; but can well be the key to reinvigorating the group.