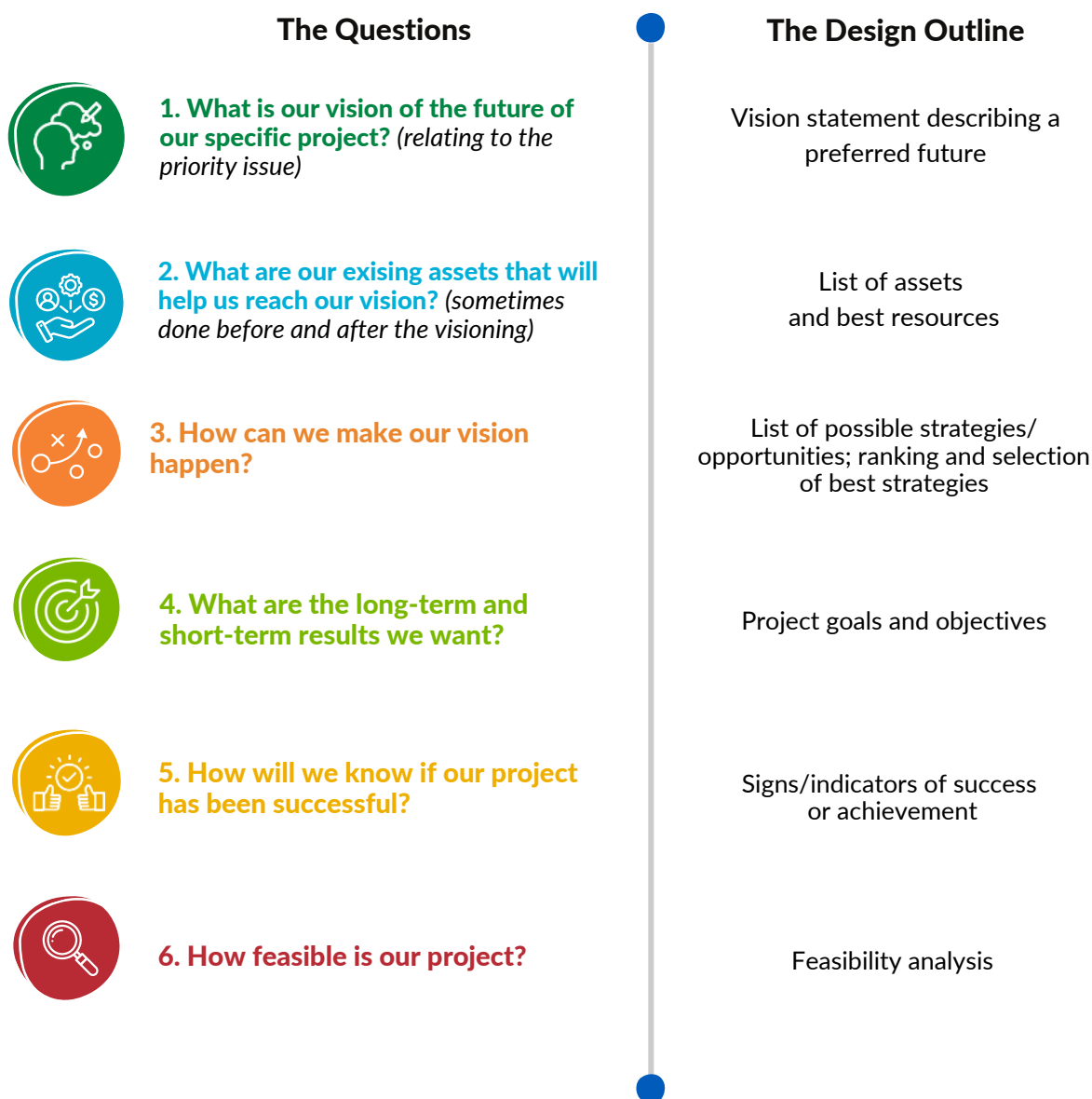# How to Design a Community Project

Once you have worked with the community to identify the priority issues they would like to address, then you are ready to help it **plan a project around the selected priority issue.**
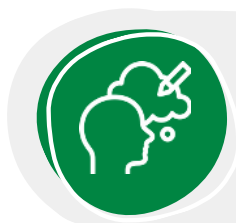
- The first major part of the planning process is creating what we call the **"basic design" or broad framework** for the project plan.

- The design is built around **six important questions**, which you and your community can work together to answer:

The Project Design

The Questions

The Design Outline

1. What is our vision of the future of our specific project? *(relating to the priority issue)*

Vision statement describing a preferred future

2. What are our exising assets that will help us reach our vision? *(sometimes done before and after the visioning)*

List of assets and best resources

3. How can we make our vision happen?

List of possible strategies/opportunities; ranking and selection of best strategies

4. What are the long-term and short-term results we want?

Project goals and objectives

5. How will we know if our project has been successful?

Signs/indicators of success or achievement

6. How feasible is our project?

Feasibility analysis

Project Design Worksheet
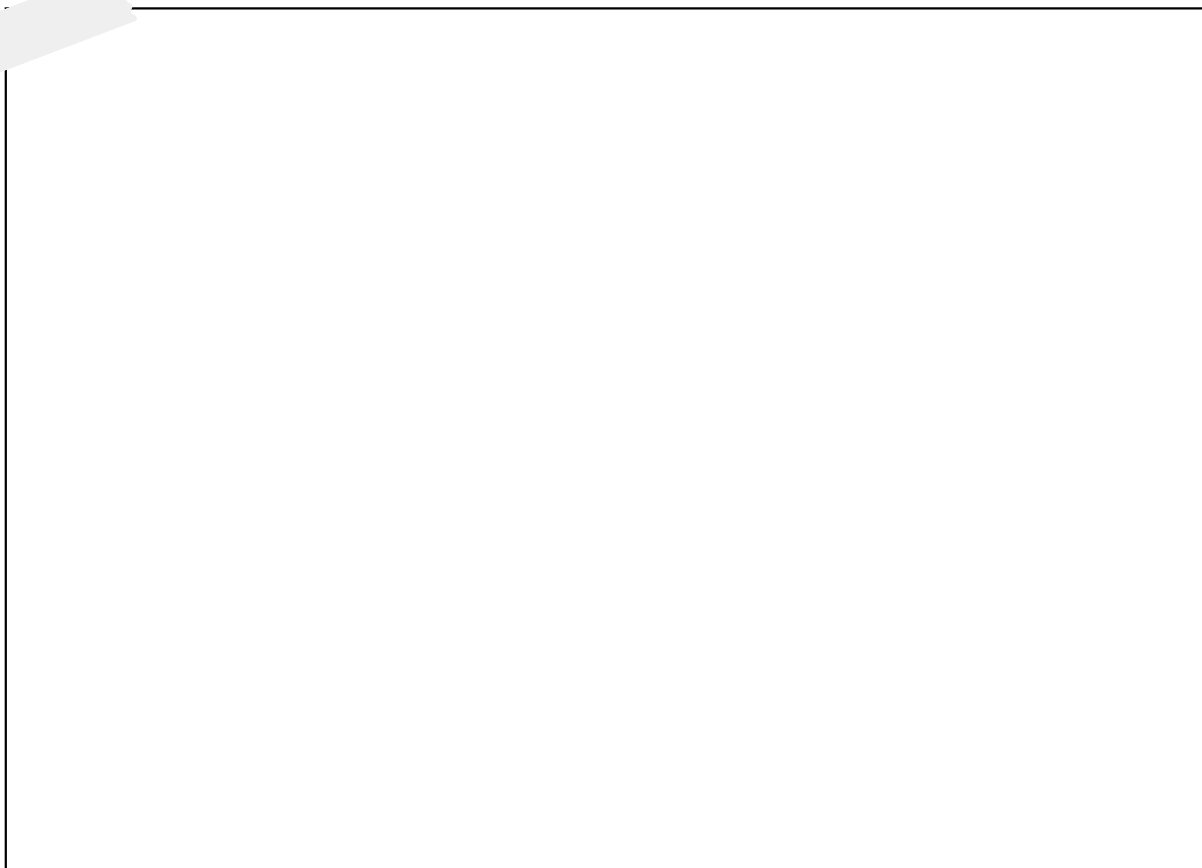
Your selected priority issue is:

_____

_____

Question 1:

What is your preferred vision of the future on the specific project?

Focusing on your priority issue, imagine the future you want for your community.

Use pictures, symbols, and/or words to create your vision of what this future looks like in the space below!

Question 2:

What are your community's existing assets that will help you reach your vision?

Think about all the strengths and resources your community has that could help it reach its vision.

What are the physical resources? Groups such as civic organizations, NGOs, government services, and businesses? Individuals with relevant skills and experience? Strong relationships or affiliations with others from outside of the community? Use the space below to list as many of these resources and assets as you can identify.

Physical Resources

Groups
Civic organizations, NGOs, government services, businesses

Individuals
With relevant skills and experience

Relationships/ affiliations
With others outside the community

If you want to deep dive in the stage you can go through the Stakeholder Analysis Resource.

Question 3:
What strategies or approaches will work best?

Considering the nature of the vision and the resources available to the community, think about the different ways you might approach the project.

What strategies can you think of that might work well? What opportunities are out there that you could use? Let your mind flow freely and think of several different approaches. Write them down below.

Opportunities

Possible Strategies/Approaches

1 →

2 →

3 →

4 →

Selection of Best Strategies

1 With your planning partners, weigh the strengths and weaknesses of the strategies on your list, narrowing the options down to two or three strategies.

2 Then, decide what criteria you want to use to make a final decision.
Some possible criteria include: acceptability to the community, sustainability, cost, number of people benefited, greatest likelihood of success in the short term, and so on. Sometimes, it helps to use a decision matrix to structure this process.

Possible Strategy	Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3

Adaptation from Roles of the Volunteer in Development Toolkit for Building Capacity, Peace Corps, July 2022

Question 4:
What are the long-term and short-term results you want?

1 **Let's start with the long-term results.** Look at the work you have done so far in this design — your vision, the list of community assets and resources, and best strategies or approaches for the project.

2 **Now, think about the desired result(s) you want to get out of this project.** (Pretend for a moment that you have just finished the project and you've invited a partner to see the results. What would that look like?)

These major results are the goals for your project. The number of goals will depend on the scope of your project. Most small projects have only one or two goals.

Project goals

These goals...

Restate the vision and approach in terms of what is to be accomplished

Define the long-term results or changes that the project will bring about

Are realistic and **include an overall time frame**

Adaptation from Roles of the Volunteer in Development Toolkit for Building Capacity, Peace Corps, July 2022

3 **Write your goal(s) in the spaces provided below.** Leave the sections for "objectives" and "signs of success" blank for now.

Project Goal #1

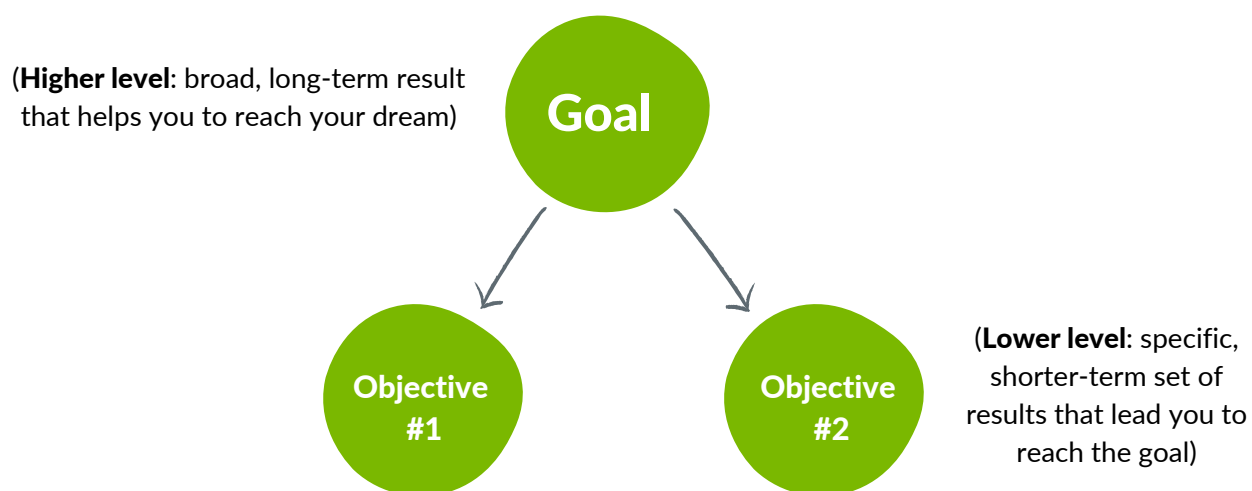| Objectives	Signs of Success
Objective 1	
Objective 2	

Project Goal #2

Objectives	Signs of Success
Objective 1	
Objective 2	

Project objectives

Objectives are similar to goals but **much more specific and focused on the short-term results you need to meet the longer-term goal(s) of the project.**

- Goals and objectives form a hierarchy as illustrated below.

- For each project goal, you should have at least two objectives.

(**Higher level**: broad, long-term result that helps you to reach your dream)

Goal

Objective #1

Objective #2

(**Lower level**: specific, shorter-term set of results that lead you to reach the goal)

Project objectives...

Are the **short-term result**s you need to meet the longer-term goal(s) of the project

Are SMART:
Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic
Time-bound

Answer these questions:

– Who is the target group or individuals expected to change?
– What action or change is expected?
– When will the desired action or change be accomplished?
– How much change is expected?

4 **Go back to the grid on the preceding pages and write in your objectives** for each of the goals you've listed.

Question 5:

How will you know if your project has been successful?

This important question helps you to **determine how to measure (or evaluate) the achievements you expect from the project.** It pushes you to think about what "success" means with regard to this particular project.

For example:

If your project centers around **increasing local awareness of the need for forest preservation** and **a major strategy is to design and conduct environmental awareness camps for youth at the local preserve:**

- What would indicate to you that you had achieved something? One measure of **short-term success** is an increase in knowledge about local environmental concerns on the part of the students attending the camp. You could administer a pre- and post-test to measure their learning more precisely.

- Though hard to do, you should also think about what **larger and lasting impacts** you hope your project will have on the people and the environment. In this same example, maybe you hope that youth will begin volunteering to work on some small environmental improvement activities sponsored by the preserve, or bring their parents and siblings to special events at the preserve.

Look at the objectives you have set for your project. What are some ways you could measure your achievement of each one? List at least one "sign of success" beside each objective on the worksheet.

Question 6:
How feasible is your project?

At several points in the planning process, you should stop and **consider the feasibility of the project.** Is this project logical? Is it possible?

Use the following questions to help you test the feasibility of the basic design you have created here. The insights you gain from this analysis will help you determine if you need to adjust your goals and objectives.

Feasibility Test

1 **What, beyond your direct control, could cause this project to fail?** (For example, drought or flooding could negatively affect an agricultural project, local elections could mean the loss of a leader who strategically supported the project, etc.)

2 **How can you (the community) improve the likelihood that the project will succeed?**

3 All things considered, **do the benefits justify the costs?**

4 **Does the community have the capacity to handle and sustain a project of this type and scope?** If not, how can we narrow the focus to make it more manageable and sustainable?

Congratulations!

You now have the basic design for your community project.

- Although building this type of framework may seem tedious and downright difficult at times, **it is a critical part of the planning process** and community members (such as a design team or committee) should be fully engaged in its development. This is how you are building capacity in others to do project planning in the future without you!

- Also, it is helpful to remember that **the design (along with the action plan) is a living document in the sense that it may need to be updated and amended** as the community begins implementing project tasks.

The Project Action Plan

After community members have completed the basic design for their project, they are ready to **prepare the action plan containing the details for how the project will be implemented.** The action plan includes three components:

- **The tasks** for each project objective
- **Roles and responsibilities** of the community and other project stakeholders
- **The timeline** for getting the project done

Action Plan Worksheet for Project: _____

Goal # _____ *(from the Project Design Worksheet)*

Objective # _____ *(from the Project Design Worksheet)*

Tasks: What to do? (List in sequence)	Roles: Who will do it? (Place asterisk beside name of person with primary responsibility)	Timeline: When will it start and finish? (Expressed in weeks or months)										

Adaptation from Roles of the Volunteer in Development Toolkit for Building
Capacity, Peace Corps, July 2022