



**PROTECTED AREAS
COLLABORATION**

FOR LEARNING & RESEARCH



BLUE MOUNTAINS
World Heritage Institute

Capacity Development
for
Conservation Practitioners and Organisations
in
Melanesia and the South Pacific:
Current challenges of demand and supply

Prepared for

Protected Areas Collaboration for Learning and Research
(PAC)

&

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(BMWHI)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Executive Summary is below, and the full report is available at <https://pacollaboration.org/publications>

DISCLAIMER:

We have tried to faithfully represent the views and ideas of those we interviewed and surveyed in April 2021. In the short time available for this study, we were not able to interact with all the relevant managers of programs or organisations and they may be followed up in the next stage of engagement on this topic. We hope that our work and recommendations will be used as a starting point for further discussions leading to amendments or refinement of the ideas and that there will be on-going collaboration for change. In doing this work, we are aware that others may be investigating similar issues from different angles and that it will be valuable to compare results when the various reports are made available.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

This short study has benefitted from the critical input of several people especially Rosalie Chapple (PAC), Nat Burke (WWF), Jenny Vasseleu (JV Insights), Terry Pyke and Lea Scherl – thank you. Some of the participants in the survey and in the interviews contributed additional time to share both their concerns and potential solutions to capacity development challenges across the region and to test some of the ideas as they emerged from wider discussion. We are very grateful for their thoughtful input and that of all participants.

PAC acknowledges the additional contribution of CCSI in the preparation of this report. <http://www.ccsi-consulting.com/>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a report of a short scoping exercise intended to set the scene for further discussion and planning by PAC (Protected Area Collaboration for Learning and Research) and its network of collaborators in the South Pacific region and Melanesia in particular. The report summarises the current situation, the need for a clear capacity building strategy driven from within the region, and the demand for appropriate support and services. It focusses on the nature of the capacity building challenges and possible responses and the need for a coordinated support network and suppliers (providers) to enhance capacity in key areas. It also seeks to assess the suitability of two training programs currently available through PAC and more broadly look at how PAC might prepare a strategic response to help address the wider demand and supply issues in the future.

We noted that the broadest possible concepts of conservation should apply to this discussion around protected areas management and terminology should stress the strong links between protected area management, community-based conservation and natural resource management (NRM), food security, recovery from crises and resilience in the face of climate change. Moreover, by addressing capacity building at several levels, including community-based NRM, we can reinforce local recovery processes post-covid and strengthen the resilience of local communities in dealing with the various impacts of climate change.

To understand the issues, we surveyed and interviewed colleagues working in conservation and sustainable land and sea resource management across the region, focussing primarily on Melanesia. We have done our best to faithfully collate the comments provided by the respondents and interviewees and we have grouped them through a problem analysis and crystallised the preferred solutions as presented to us. The results show that this a complex arena, but it can be usefully unpacked and simplified so that there are clear pathways to implementing the desired changes.

It is clear from our work that urgent attention is needed to address capacity building in the region and that the demand side of the challenge is usefully summarised in three key focal areas:

1. building a ready workforce of conservation practitioners, professionals and organisations.
2. strengthening specific project-related skills and systems.
3. supporting host communities to optimise their partnerships in conservation and NRM broadly and CBNRM specifically (i.e., community based natural resource management).

It is also important that the old habit of allocating only 10% of project budgets and grants to capacity building must be replaced by a more serious commitment and up-front efforts to fill skills gaps and create the support systems that ensure success.

Our findings are generally consistent with earlier work by others in the region and we build on their ideas and conclusions. Our work is also consistent with the more global approach for developing or strengthening competencies for conservation practitioners and general natural resource management and specifically community-based NRM (CBNRM). The persistence of the key themes for capacity development suggests that any regional strategy should seek to coordinate and share the effort and focus of the programs, secure significant regional funding to build the conservation workforce and the regional support systems and ensure a coordinated supply chain for any capacity building programs.

There appear to be many good reasons and incentives for developing a capable, respected, and ready workforce. It means that the growing proportion of youth in the region can be encouraged to take up

important jobs that service the community and their own futures, engender respect, are transferrable and help establish a ready workforce, able to tackle big challenges of the region.

PAC has an important role to play in encouraging a regional conversation around this topic and pathway for strategic change. On the home-base, PAC can provide a coordinated approach to the supply of vocational and skills-based training through its collaborating partners and ensure that it reflects the demand at the three levels identified earlier: competencies for conservation practitioners and professionals, specialised project-focussed skills and knowledge, and tools for supporting effective partnership with communities. PAC should coordinate and advocate for these programs from relevant Australian providers (preferably offering accreditation pathways for some) and establish a portal of information for those seeking personal professional development. In the meantime, it should continue to offer some core programs on regular schedules and invest in supporting management systems.

PAC can support the broader strategy by providing a focal point for attracting Australian funding from sources such as DFAT (Department of Foreign Affairs), private philanthropy and foundations, impact investors and business.

Our recommendations are as follows:

1. That PAC considers adopting the strategic framing we have provided at the higher level, particularly the framing of the challenge (problem) at three levels and noting that these are compatible with the suggestions made in earlier studies at both global and regional scale:
 - **Professional development and strengthening of the workforce**, ensuring development of a ready workforce for meeting the growing conservation challenges and serving CBNRM work more widely, based on standardised competencies for practitioners, building support systems, and ensuring appropriate recognition for skills and tacit knowledge.
 - **Project-focussed skills and systems** – ensuring that specific project design and delivery demands are met for time-bound, place-based, technology focussed or intensely collaboratively projects. This may include skills developed through a combination of cultural and scientific knowledge and may lead to new approaches to planning and delivery.
 - **Host community partnership support** – ensuring systems are in place to safeguard rights and interests of key stakeholders and they can maximise participation, knowledge-sharing and reaping of benefits (both immediate and long term). This includes collective planning tools, adaptive management planning, local workforce development, gender-focussed engagement, education, local enterprise development, governance and cultural knowledge integration and intergenerational transfer.
2. That PAC adopts the responses summarised in Figure 2 as a framework for opening discussions with colleagues of PIRT, SPREP and partners within PAC. There is need to:
 - Support host community and stakeholder partnerships.
 - Support internal capacity building of key organisations – improving competencies, systems (including codes of conduct).
 - Contribute to strengthening of external support systems across the region – coordinating and aligning service providers, vocational curriculum development, communities of practice, accreditation, and information portals.
 - Provide direct facilitation and direct support of the delivery of programs including on-line learning, recognition of informal skills especially those relevant to the local projects or communities, local

knowledge sharing systems, local learning hubs, recruiting locals, exchange programs or scholarships.

- Attract significant high-level funding as an investment in building momentum with regional organisations – establish model projects for capacity building or key organisations, collaborating communities or groups of organisations and professionalism of the part of the workforce.
 - Form crosslinks with similar programs in other regions of the world and other professions (e.g., ranger professionalisation)
3. That PAC considers two strategic roles - an outward-facing role focussed on building a supply process in support of the regional strategy and an inward-facing role working with and coordinating services available within its alliance/network of providers (see Figures 3 and 4).
 4. The outward-facing role might include:
 - Facilitating or encouraging conversations with other members of PIRT, SPREP, SPC etc about capacity building to create a stepwise and simple 5-year regional capacity building strategy that features professionalisation of the workforce, project skills and community support.
 - Regular monitoring of capacity needs and providers using a comprehensive and consistent framework (as presented in this report) for identifying capacity development needs and priorities within organisations, across programs and regions framework and based on the defined competences of the IUCN global competency register.
 - Facilitating international funding for coordination of a response and investment in model projects. This includes working with Australian and international aid agencies to support long-term development of the conservation and CBNRM profession in the region and beyond.
 - Working directly with the big NGOs across the region in fulfilling these outward-facing roles
 5. The inward-facing strategies might focus on enabling internal partnerships and alignment of the combined services with regional needs and opportunities:
 - Developing core agreements across the PAC alliance of members and providers for the strategic development and standards of provision for a suite of programs.
 - Establishing a code of conduct across PAC's alliances that addresses values, ethics, respect for rights of host communities, and cultural knowledge integration.
 - Agreeing on a process for accrediting some programs and curricula with providers to address competency-based approaches and aligned with IUCN.
 - Monitoring and reporting impact of training and capacity building programs using an agreed framework and cross-references to regional targets.
 - Developing a delivery schedule for 2021-22 that is reliable and builds confidence and reputation based on existing programs that can be delivered face-to-face in Australia, online in intensive or elongated format to suit remote teams.
 - Providing appropriate level of support and targeted development of training programs. Note that we learned that the demand for training in these areas was high but that conversion to paid clientele was difficult for several reasons including the need for scholarships, co-funding and other direct assistance for individual or targeted organisations.
 6. That PAC considers framing its restructure as a “start-up business”- investing in strategic positioning, internal systems and creating a strong package of training programs that is responsive to regional needs.
 7. That PAC investigates major funding options including International development agencies and impact investors interested in supporting multi-country programs and building regional resilience.

Figure 1

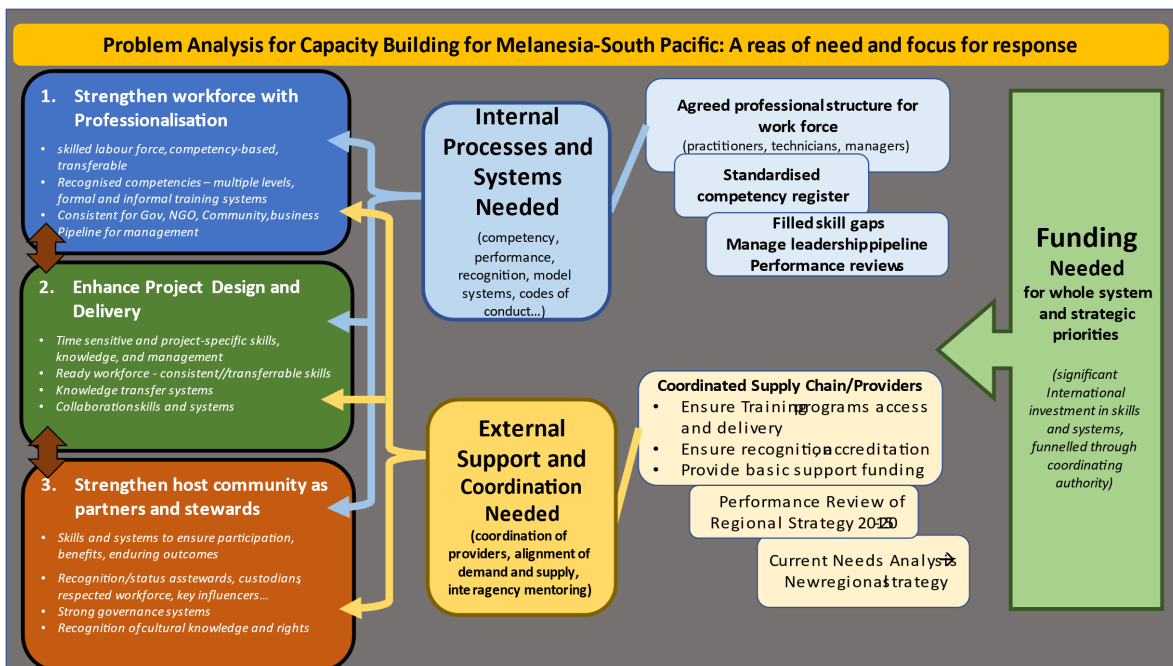


Figure 2

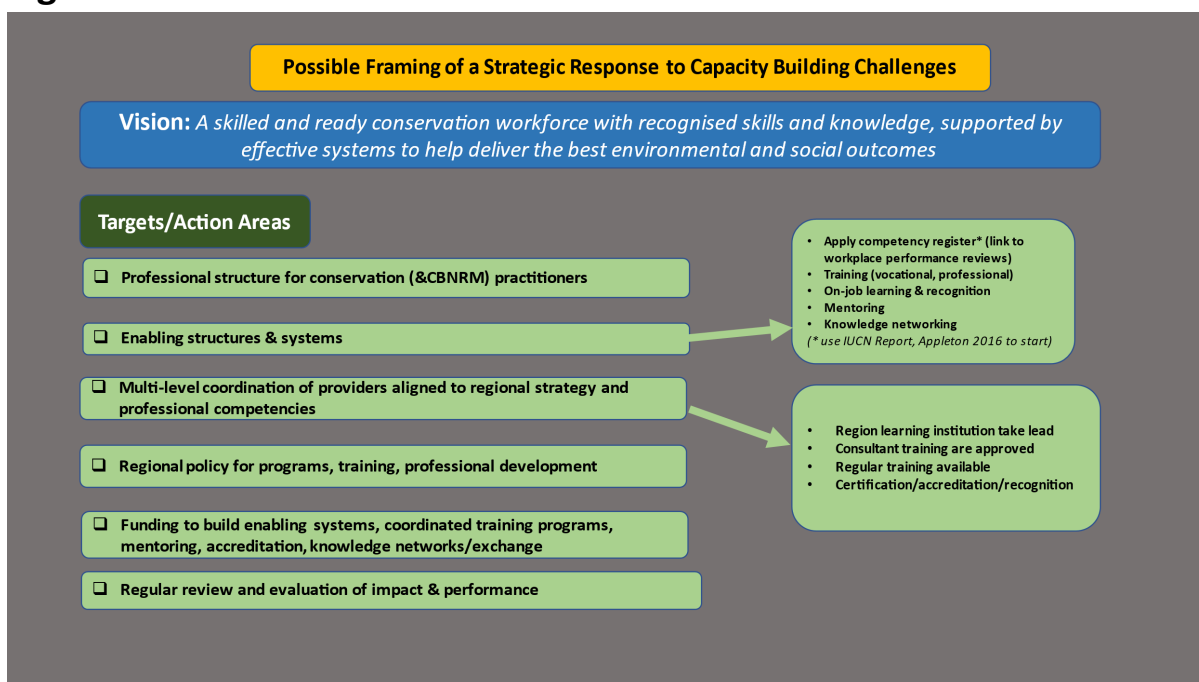


Figure 3.

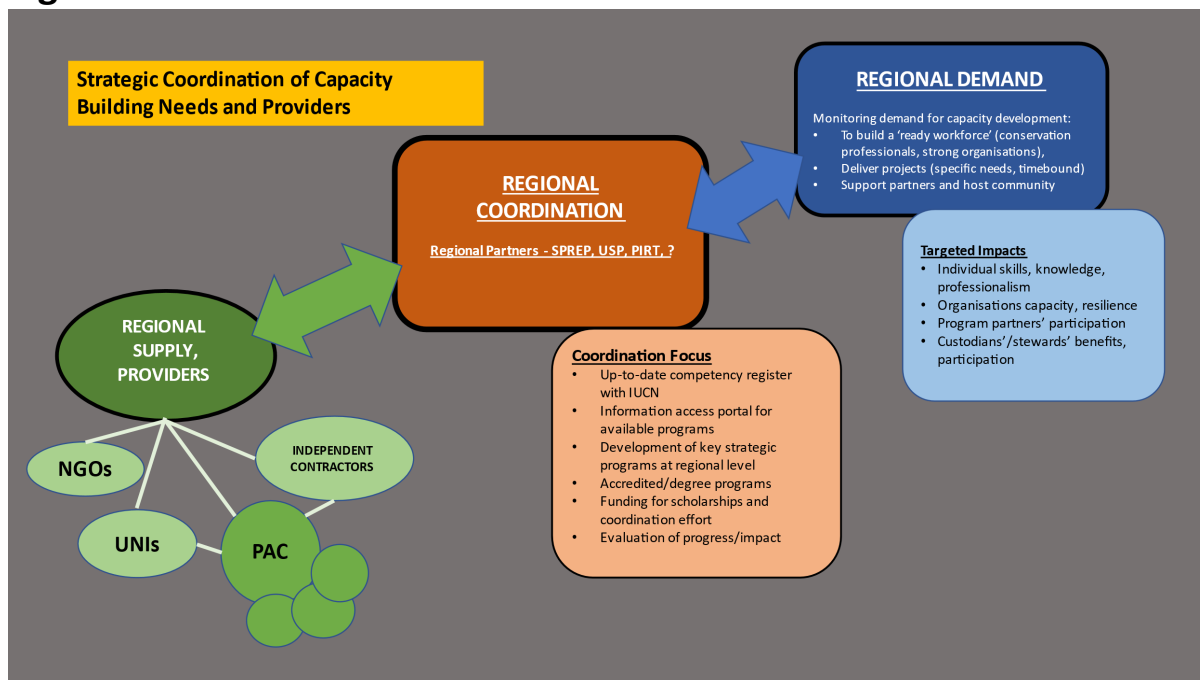


Figure 4.

