

20 Clues to Creating and Maintaining a Vibrant Rural Community

1. A group of **local passionate community builders** who provide leadership and are committed to spending their time, energy and other resources it will take to make positive local development a reality.
2. A **positive 'can - do' community mindset** that focuses on optimism, belief, expectation, hope and together we can make a difference.
3. Continuous renewal and development of **local leadership**, especially young people and women.
4. A **shared community vision** of the future, coupled with widespread resident participation and support.
5. A willingness to **embrace change, seek smarter ways, experiment, make changes, welcome alternative thinking, take risks and invest in the future.**
6. **Opportunity obsession** - that never ending search for new and appropriate ideas, development options and possibilities and a smart consumption of outside resources.
7. Recognition of **healthy and sustainable community behaviours** such as inclusive community participation, consensus decision making, win-win solutions, collaboration and continuous stewardship of resources.
8. **Continuous connecting and mobilising of assets, capacities, skills and passions** of the community and its residents.
9. A focus on **youth engagement** and their active meaningful participation in the community.
10. **Welcoming and integration of newcomers** into the community.
11. The continual recruitment, involvement, development and recognition of **volunteers**.
12. Evidence of **community pride and confidence** in terms of physical presentation and local investment.
13. Recognition of the importance of **local business vitality** through actions of appreciation, local support and actions to build and support local entrepreneurship.
14. A **practical development agenda** which includes bite size and medium to long term initiatives, and continuously evolves through regular consultation and participatory planning initiatives.
15. A **local development organisation** responsible for facilitation, coordination and management of local economic and social development.
16. The identification and promotion of a **clear and unique marketable identity** based on the community's point(s) of difference.
17. **Forging of partnerships with neighbouring communities** and external agencies for collaborative action and shared learning.
18. Strong belief in, and support for **lifelong local education opportunities**.
19. Presence of **positive communication mechanisms**, both print, online and via social media.
20. A **positive and proactive local government council** which takes seriously its leadership role in building a healthy and strong community, and is viewed as a 'facilitator' rather than 'regulator'.

(Based on work undertaken by Bank of I.D.E.A.S. with 1500 rural communities throughout Australia and overseas over the last 30 years)