

Capacity, Education and Knowledge Management

Introduction

Coral reef management can require a high degree of capacity, depending on the complexity of the management program. In addition, education of managers, policy makers, resource users, and the general public is critical to management success.

1. Project designs have reflected unreal expectations concerning availability of appropriately skilled or experienced personnel. This often causes substantial delays in effective start-up. In addition, soft money short contracts and year on year funding delays tend to encourage staff to look for more secure positions with consequent mid-project loss of skills. Many projects have had substantial delays in start-up because of difficulties in staff recruitment, partnership development, and acquisition of facilities or equipment. In some cases the original timeline for the project has been retained despite substantial early time loss and this has led to predictable failures.
2. Management staff typically has little time for reading, research, or writing up their experience. Peer to peer learning opportunities are important but scarce. There is a lack of peer network support and project designs rarely provide for this. In the long term, there is a need to provide challenging career opportunities to retain skills and develop mentoring capacity to support networking.
3. Community-based management projects are typically context driven. Internships and on the job training by experienced personnel are often important for the development of sensitivities and trust with communities. Small scale projects provide opportunities for the community to develop capacity and project management skills. There is a body of experience of success and failure in community-based management that can provide a basis for training in different operational contexts.
4. Project designs have reflected unreal expectations of timelines for acquisition and maintenance of special equipment or buildings and this has caused substantial delays in effective start-up and mid-project hiatus with equipment failures.

Key Lessons Learned and Recommendations

1. Project designs should reflect likely availability of skilled personnel.
2. Project design and management should avoid financial hiatus to provide security and confidence to project staff.
3. Appointment and effective operation of expert staff during the application and evaluation process should adequately address and plan for the availability and start up times of staff.
4. Pay attention to the time it will take for the project to achieve the pre-implementation needed to support the intended project outcomes.
5. Establish a decision point for confirmation of the project and confirming or revising a timeframe that is realistic for project completion.

6. Project design should reflect a realistic assessment of the availability of skills and time of counterpart agency staff.
7. Regional mentoring, peer networks, attachments and exchanges can support and accelerate development of operational capacity.
8. Make clear the skills and experience required within the project implementing team and focus capacity on these needed skills rather than more broad or generic training.
9. Expert advisory groups can help and support development of capacity and program management but their roles should be clearly defined to avoid issues of control of project management.
10. Community engagement in management and monitoring builds effective management capacity and confidence of project staff.