



Strategic Plan

2023 – 2028

We proudly acknowledge Traditional Custodians, their rich cultural diversity and continuing connection to Country and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We recognise and acknowledge the contribution, interests and rights that Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations have in the stewardship of the land. We value our partnerships with them, for the health of people and country.



Introduction

Warrnambool Community Garden is a place for community, sustainability, and reflection.

Over many years, members and volunteers have enriched Warrnambool's community with their knowledge, skills, and commitment.

Like many community groups, our challenge is to remain viable, while pursuing the growth and change aspired to by members and the wider community.

This requires planning and decisions about our long-term goals and our annual working plan to identify how we will reach these goals.

We embarked on an extended consultation of our members and refined the resulting high-level strategic plan with concrete actions for the next five years.

Thank you to all members who generously contributed to this process.

Vision

Our community can produce its own food, has knowledge, skills, and a passion for sustainable living.

Aim

The Warrnambool Community Garden is a place all can come to for:

- Community education and learning about organic gardening and sustainable living.
- Growing and sharing food.
- Community events and gatherings for networking and friends.

Purpose

- Develop and maintain a community garden and promote sustainable living in Warrnambool.
- Cultivate a productive, beautiful and financially sustainable community garden.
- Support other community gardens in the region.
- Use organic and sustainable gardening techniques, based on permaculture principles.
- Strive to include all members of the community in activities, including people of diverse ethnic or cultural backgrounds, religion, age, ability or economic circumstances.
- Welcome all members and visitors into the garden, providing them with opportunities to use and enjoy the garden.
- Make the garden available as a place for community feasts, events and celebrations.
- Foster opportunities for different generations and cultures to work together, support and learn from each other.
- Introduce children to the joy of gardening and community.
- Integrate the arts and foster creativity.
- Promote gardening as a means of achieving good health and wellbeing.
- Create opportunities for research, formal and informal learning about gardening, sustainability, healthy foods and co-operative endeavours.
- Contribute to the preservation and improvement of Warrnambool's natural environment.
- Respect and work in harmony with each other and nature.
- Preserve and enhance the biodiversity of indigenous habitat and species.
- Protect and enhance the genetic diversity of our food.
- Advocate for the values expressed in this statement of purpose.

Overview

The high-level strategic planning resulted in eight goals across three areas: people, place, and projects.

Each of the goals included overarching statements of how we will achieve our goals over a five-year period. Goals overlap given our operations, but were listed in the area that they were most relevant to.

Four goals in the plan are centered around people, reflecting our shift towards a people-centric organization, focusing on community connections and well-being activities, especially in light of our recent evolution during COVID.

Two goals focused on the land we lease for our garden, and two goals targeted projects, including those identified in an earlier masterplan.

We express our gratitude to all members who contributed to the planning day, old and new, as it allowed us to document our shared understanding of the projects we're still to execute in this strategic plan.

2023 – 2028 Strategic Goals

People

1. We will nurture a strong and inclusive community, creating opportunities for connection and learning between members.
2. We will respect and nurture our members.
3. We will be clear about the opportunities and benefits of membership, and work with members to meet their expectations.
4. We will foster the next generation of leaders and support new members.

Projects

5. We will strengthen relationships with our partners.
6. We will seek growth and improvements.

Place

7. We will prioritise site improvements that contribute to our sustainability, increase member and visitor satisfaction and improve the garden experience.
8. We will prioritise financial sustainability.

1. We will nurture a strong and inclusive community, creating opportunities for connection and learning between members

1.1 Support new members to be involved and feel included in the community in whatever way suits them.

Review and refresh induction process, implement actions from member analysis

- Review welcome letter, content covered in current induction, map out key touch points.
- Schedule inductions on a working bee or market day and have induction be a group process.
- Have new members meet other members during induction and get a broad appreciation of all the different aspects of being a member.
- Include full site tour, provide some history and information on how things run, OHS.
- Develop an induction pack with guidelines about the garden, including a map, next 6 months of working bees, dates of activities for the next month, and other activities they could book for.

Provide opportunities for informal catch ups

- Check-ins regularly for new members at one, three and six months.
- Use the chatty café concept.
- Invite new members to social settings (working bee lunch, cake).
- Invite new members to review their first year over coffee & cake.
- Develop a list of topics for discussion at each working bee, with personal invitation to new members from convenor.

Measures

- Inductions are mainly being held on working bee days.
- Track members who signed up after the changes to see who renews.
- Induction review embedded in our annual planning cycle.
- Count how many new members have been to a working bee or other activity in their first three months.

1.2 Help prospective and new members understand what the Garden offers and support them to increase member involvement, build pride and strengthen the sense of community.

- Audit of communications including newsletter, social media and website.
- Refresh visual identity linking social media, video, and newsletter to develop our recognition.
- Develop a content plan for communications, newsletter, and social media.
- Post about individual members and work they do on social media.
- Regular workshops open to public.
- Host annual open garden with Open Gardens Victoria.
- Attend shows and expos like Warrnambool Show.

Measures

- Ask on induction how people heard about the garden to identify the most effective channels.
- Measure the number of enquiries from outreach events.
- Seek informal feedback on our community presence.
- Number of members are involved in each areas of the garden, measure increase.

1.3 Match new members with an established member as a connection point for information, referral to groups and people who can best support their interests.

- Identify pool of members willing to take on roles as buddies for new members.
- Match new members with buddy during induction based on interests.
- Introduce to the leads of activities new member may be interested in.
- Develop new member team/champions to draw on for support.
- Seek grant funding to support this initiative.

Measures

- Survey of participants in the buddy program to determine effectiveness.

2. We will respect and nurture our members

2.1 Embed a culture supporting members to choose the ways and extent they contribute.

Provide micro-volunteering opportunities

- Audit of jobs required to keep us running, identify who does what and when.
- Develop position descriptions for each roles so people are aware of their commitment.
- Divide up what people are currently doing to engage more members.
- Develop method of tracking of who contributes, support those who haven't.

Foster diversity and inclusion

- Invite community groups (through Archie Graham, South West TAFE).
- Participate in multicultural festival.
- Establish link with Midfield, Water East Timor, and facilitate ways to contribute.
- Advertise free lunch for volunteer work in organic garden (WWOOF).

Measures

- Number of people taking on management and administrative activities.
- Count of all members who have contributed when renewing memberships.
- Count how many micro-volunteering opportunities are taken up.
- Number of community groups providing feedback on diversity and inclusion.

2.2 Support those who take on leadership roles and critical responsibilities for income generation to ensure we remain sustainable.

- Develop pipeline for leadership succession for each working group.
- Set up quarterly check-ins with area leaders and groups to see what support they need.
- Create a wishlist for each group and allocate this against the budget.

Measures

- At least two reports to the committee per year.
- Record two potential leaders for each working group.
- Succession plan in place for all major areas.

3. We will be clear about the opportunities and benefits of membership, and work with members to meet their expectations

3.1 Review membership types, incentives, benefits and prices

- Complete audit of member types.
- Move membership renewal date to end of financial year to reduce drop-off due to being late in the growing season and coinciding with an expensive time of year.
- Determine if we could offer incentive for long-term members, 5 or more years.
- Determine if we create life membership category for long term, valuable contributors.
- Ability to apply, pay and renew online to remove admin burden on treasurer.
- Expand the benefits listed to include those who are more interested in the community aspect of the garden.

Measures

- Increase in new members.
- Increase in renewing members.
- Successful membership cycle transition communicated to all members about.

3.2 Promote membership to maximise the number of people making a direct financial contribution.

- Investigate a supporter category, identify benefits and test whether there would be interest.
- Develop plan for promotion linking with other groups, council.
- Finalise tax deductibility, run a campaign on what people's donation goes to.
- Investigate a referral system for current members to bring a friend to a working bee.

Measures

- We have tax deductibility status.
- We receive regular donations from community members.

3.3 Clearly communicate the range of membership options to address the perception that you need to have an individual plot to be a member.

- Showcase members on social media, highlighting the variety of people who participate.
- Promote the working groups and their activities through social media on a rotating basis.
- List the working bee dates at the start of the member year with the renewal information.

Measures

- Measure engagement on posts featuring members.
- Increase in members attending working bees and activities.

3.4 Publish information including FAQs about membership and supporting the garden.

- Add FAQ to website and link to it in induction packs.
- Quarterly blog posts with commonly asked questions.
- Review and update policies and guidelines to reflect changes in garden.

Measures

- Page hits on the FAQ.
- Submissions to the question box on the member webpage.
- Annual review of policies and guidelines in committee calendar.



4. We will foster the next generation of leaders and support new members

4.1 Talk openly about what it takes to keep us sustainable and the importance of growing new leaders.

- Implement ideas box
 - Develop a clear process to seek suggestions from members, and how they will be assessed.
 - Identify ways someone can be supported step up to implement their idea.
- Consolidate Dropbox and Google Drive to improve and streamline record-keeping.
- Reiterate the membership agreement means everyone should contribute.

Measures

- Ideas box has submissions from members.
- Increase in member participation, with all members contributing something by renewal.

4.2 Commit to succession planning and invest in building the capacity and knowledge of emerging leaders.

- Complete leadership role audit and identify who is responsible for what, make smaller jobs available for other people.
- Complete a skills matrix for the committee, determine where there are gaps and actively recruit where there are lacking areas.
- Develop a process where current leaders mentor potential leaders.
- Written succession plan, map out what the next 5 years may look like, discuss with committee where they are at, how long they think they may be on there.
- Explore professional development for the committee.

Measures

- Position outlines for all roles.
- Plan for committee and area leader recruitment in place.

5. We will strengthen relationships with our partners

5.1 Nurture strategic partnerships that provide the resources, skills and capacity to ensure we can continue to grow our impact.

- Complete stakeholder mapping and analysis, develop procedure/guidelines on tracking this. Try and populate with generic email addresses for an organisation so that if someone leaves we still have a contact point.
- Determine which levels of council we deal with, their responsibility and what we need from different departments.
- Work with Council events group to establish internal event planning process and how we can launch the quarry.
- Develop a list of possible joint projects where partners are equal – use Fruit Rescue with Permaculture South West Victoria collaboration as a trial.
- Focus on intergenerational relationships, kids, parents, grandkids, across the age spectrum.
- Networking should be recorded for future reference – develop an easy to use system that collates this information.
- Invite stakeholders to key events, note them in annual reports and send them a copy, highlight relationships on social media.
- Keep a list of attendees for tours and activities we run and circle back to them for feedback and ways we can improve this.
- Visits to other gardens for all community, not just our members.
- Create a list of opportunities we could offer or how we could share our resources.

Measures

- Stakeholders communicate frequently, recorded in a database.
- Stakeholders attend events and invite us to theirs.

5.2 Ensure we have strong, healthy relationships with partner agencies and organisations to add value to what we are able to achieve.

- Collate history/information and develop partner database.
- Formalise relationships with schools and overcome staff changes.
- Link to other gardens in Warrnambool and community gardens in the region.
- Art in the gardens, link to F Project and other groups.

Measures

- Formalised relationships with key partners.

6. We will seek growth and improvements

6.1 Maintain an ongoing site manager role.

- Financial audit and annual budget developed.
- Log and review what is taking up a month of hours to look for efficiencies.
- Determine what is critical for this role, and what can be delegated.
- Wishlist for different groups – anticipating needs and forward planning for things.

Measures

- Site manager has the things they need to do the job, and the support to do it.

6.2 Assess decisions to increase activities or implement new initiatives on their cost of delivery and the human resources required to sustain them.

- Research into the biodiversity of the site – look at options for the pond, rehabilitate this area, discuss with local Landcare/Coastcare facilitators on options, highlight the work we do in this space publicly.
- Discuss with council putting a free picking area outside the garden, claim the corner of our parking lot with fun signage telling people what they can take.
- Develop process around seed library and seed saving, tools and equipment, look at getting a donation box, grant funding for this.
- Investigate processor for olives for community picking.
- Support the Fruit Rescue project in collaboration with Permaculture South West Victoria.
- Art in the garden with workshops, relationships with artists, photography.
- Investigate mobile seating options, places people can use to relax and enjoy the site.

Measures

- Projects mapped out, ready for potential funding opportunities.

7. We will prioritise site improvements which contribute to our sustainability, increase member and visitor satisfaction and improve the garden experience

7.1 Implement the masterplan, prioritising key projects based on the extent to which they contribute to the garden's vision, mission and goals of this plan.

- Develop clear plan for the remaining stages of the quarry – what needs to happen, by who, when
- Finalise plans and costing for:
 - site signage, welcoming market and plans to make site easy to navigate
 - west boundary plantings
 - additional toilet facilities
 - all abilities access to the quarry.
- Investigate costing and funding sources for:
 - the tractor and shed for ongoing maintenance
 - vehicle access track and loop track around site
 - all-abilities area corral area near entrance
 - a second hot house
 - a children's garden hub, BBQ, playspace and power to the shelter
 - more storage and better layout of the HUB
 - extension and enclosing of the verandah.
- Begin discussions with council to develop plan for car park area.
- Begin discussion with council on the Miura Friendship Japanese Garden.
- Audit bush food garden, replacement of missing plants from original design.
- Label all the fruit trees, identifying the specific type.
- Create a list of site projects ready for grant funding when there is the opportunity.

Measures

- Have a project plan for each area, check-ins and better budget oversight with monthly reporting structure to committee.

7.2 Undertake a basic feasibility assessment of proposed projects to fully understand the initial and ongoing costs required to deliver and maintain them.

- Develop the assessment document from the strategic planning process, promote this to members.
- Assessments are reviewed by committee and members are supported to propose new projects.

Measures

- Form is in use and understood by members.

8. We will prioritise financial sustainability

8.1 Review our financial sustainability plan.

- Update our financial sustainability plan and determine what is required to support ongoing site manager.
- Develop a plan to finalise tax deductibility status.
- Investigate using My cause donation portal.
- Establish an events group to advise and coordinate use of site and facilities, develop process and guidelines for event hire of the quarry and other areas of site.
- Create a business plan for the quarry for the next 3-5 years, including strategic and operational considerations.
- Explore second part time employee to assist in events program planning, delivery and increasing opening days.
- Develop a list of grants and donors.
- Investigate fundraising activities.

Measures

- New financial sustainability plan circulated to all members.
- Garden has tax deductibility status.
- Events group is promoting the space with at least four bookings a year.

8.2 Focus on consolidating the role of the market as the major generator of income, visitors and new members.

- Complete market review in time for spring season, consider financial and volunteer sustainability.
- Investigate [Community Supported Agriculture](#) (CSA) as an alternative stable income.
- Expand the number of stall holders, rotating stall holders to keep it fresh with activities and workshops running in conjunction with market times.

Measures

- Market has support and resources required to run successfully.
- New people are coming through regularly, measured by monthly survey.

8.3 Create a business plan for the market for the next 3-5 years.

- Determine who is leading this.
- Determine timeline for plan, ensure it's measurable.

Measures

- Market business plan is developed and reviewed annually.