

A brief explanation of

The RAPID

program design model

Rigorous Audience-centred Process for Intervention Design

The need

Educators normally focus on the program outputs - messages, tactics, products, measurable results. However effective outputs depend on effective design processes.

There are a number of reasons why more effective processes are vital for the sustainability education sector:

Firstly, there is a need to address the tendency for top-down program design where an agency's policy assumptions all-to-easily substitute for realistic understanding of an audience's situation and needs.

Successful behavioural programs positively address audience dissatisfactions. ¹ Connecting to these dissatisfactions and the values and interests that underly them should be the first step in program design. This requires an initial open-ended research phase that goes deeply into audience aspirations and needs and is not restricted by a narrow interpretation of agency policy or funder's guidelines. Participative research models are emerging as effective tools for achieving such in-depth exploration of audience values and interests.

Secondly, there is the question whether a prescribed change is realistic, achievable and practical from the point of view of an audience, or is simply a wishful thinking by an agency. This question is deftly handled by the work of Everett Rogers and his colleagues under the Diffusions of Innovations

¹ See my research paper Voluntary Change, available on my website <http://media.socialchange.net.au/people/les>

theory.² Integrating Rogers' model into program design provides a starting point for critically examining ways to deliver satisfaction to an audience.

Thirdly, a number of studies show that external incentives or rewards do not produce sustained change. When the incentive stops the behaviour declines back to the previous level. This emphasises the need to go beyond simplistic notions of 'benefits' and 'what's in it for me', towards analysis of cultural issues such as audience aspirations and social norms.

Fourthly, there is the question of evaluation, reflection and improvement as part of a cycle of program design. This implies consistent attention to process. It also implies sustained funding and continuity of staff and hence the need to assess organisational capacity as part of the design process.

These issues point to the need for more rigorous program design in the sustainability sector.

The PRECEDE model

Fortunately there is no need to entirely reinvent the wheel. Green and Kreuter's PRECEDE model is a well-known process design model from the health promotion sector.³ As the most rigorous process model in current use, it provides a sound starting point. The PRECEDE⁴ model has been widely used over many years and is subject to numerous evaluations.⁵

To summarise, PRECEDE consists of 9 phases:

- 1) Social diagnosis:
A participatory analysis of the health-related needs and aspirations of a particular audience.
- 2) Epidemiological diagnosis:
A technical analysis of health status that results in prioritised health objectives for that audience
- 3) Behavioural and environmental diagnosis:
Lists all factors affecting the audience's behaviour. Prioritises factors in terms of changeability. The result is a list of prioritised behavioural objectives, stating who/what behaviour/how much/when.
- 4) Educational and organisational diagnosis:

² Rogers, E. 1995 *The Diffusion of Innovations*, The Free Press, New York, 4th edition

³ Green, L.W., and Kreuter, M.W. 1991 *Health Promotion Planning - An Educational and Environmental Approach*, Second Edition, Mayfield Publishing Company, Mountain View

⁴ PRECEDE stands for Predisposing, Enabling and Reinforcing Causes in Educational Diagnosis and Evaluation

⁵ Green and Kreuter 1991, p24

Factors capable of influencing behaviour are listed. They are divided into predisposing, enabling and reinforcing factors. They are prioritised to decide which would have the biggest impact on the behaviour.

- 5) Administrative and policy diagnosis:
Assesses the capacity the agency and it's partners to deliver the program.
- 6) Implementation
- 7) Process evaluation
- 8) Impact evaluation
- 9) Outcome evaluation

PRECEDE is an admirable model, notably for it's emphasis on audience participation in the analytic process, and for it's technical rigor. It provides a strong framework for intensive analysis of the factors that maintain and influence audience behaviours.

PRECEDE is, however, not a complete model of program development. It is exceptionally strong on analysis but neglects the pragmatic mechanics of project design. These mechanics are vital to education officers and marketers who are asked to design change programs.

Nor is it suited to the needs of those running small scale programs typically found in the sustainability sector. For such programs there is rarely the time, skills or resources for extensive formative analysis.

There is therefore a need for a program design model that incorporates PRECEDE-like behavioural analysis with the mechanics of implementation, and is suited to the scale of most sustainability programs.

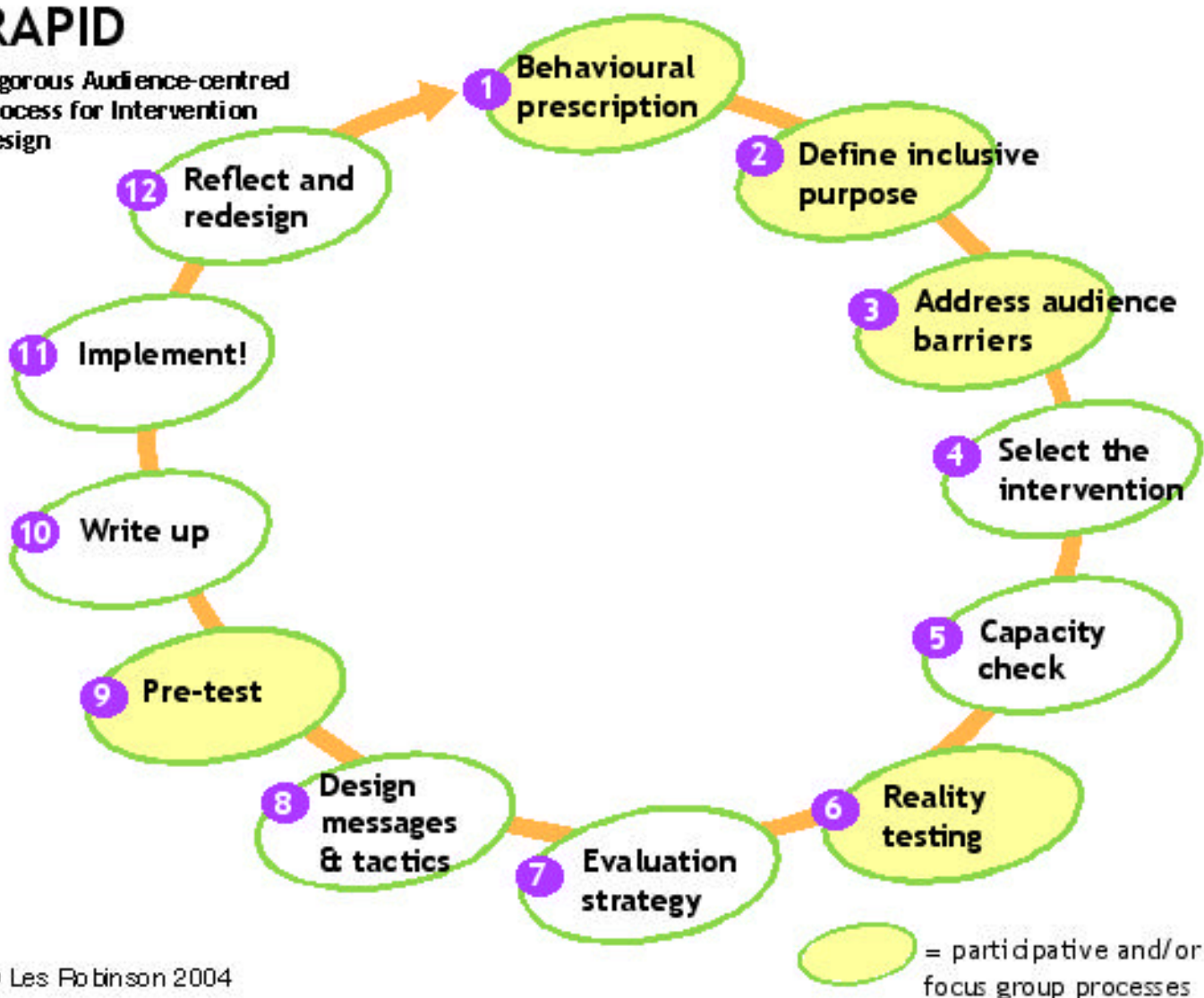
The RAPID model

The RAPID model has gradually emerged as a result of workshops I have given to environmental educators over the past three years. It responds to the needs of coordinators of small to medium-sized 'behaviour change' programs targeting urban and rural audiences. These educators need a rigorous process that efficiently connects the mechanics of design with the values, aspirations and norms of a particular audience, and yet is relatively straightforward to apply.

RAPID is short for Rigorous Audience-centred Process for Intervention Design.

RAPID

Rigorous Audience-centred
Process for Intervention
Design



The following table describes the twelve steps.

Step	Explanation	Enabling Change Tools*
1) Behavioural prescription	Analyse the problem, its causes and likely solutions. Prioritise who needs to act, the desired actions and how they will be measured. (Best done participatively with members of the audience).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step-by-step participative TOOLS for problem-cause-solution-action analysis • ATRACTORS CHECKLIST
2) Define inclusive purpose	The 'purpose' is the basic vision or mission statement of the program and defines all that follows. An 'inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive purpose TOOL

	purpose' occupies the 'intersection zone' between agency policy and the audience's values, aspirations and norms. (DOOR 1**)	
3) Address audience barriers	Understand the audience's behavioural barriers and plan how to address them. These are generally of three kinds: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Rationalisations for inaction; (DOOR 2) 2) Lack of confidence; (DOOR 3) 3) Lack of products and services that deliver convenience (DOOR 4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web of behaviour TOOL
4) Select the intervention	Select the delivery mechanisms appropriate to the audience's attention spans and energy levels. (DOORS 5,6,7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 4 intervention approaches MODEL • Adoptable Action CHECKLIST (from Diffusion of Innovations) • EE Decision TOOL • Sequenced Program MODEL • Testing Your Intervention CHECKLIST
5) Capacity check	Check that your organisation and its partners have the capacity to deliver this program in a sustained manner that matches audience needs and expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational capacity CHECKLIST
6) Reality testing	Use focus groups to test your assumptions and, if necessary, re-design.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group questions
7) Evaluation strategy	Define how you will collect evidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bennett's Hierarchy TOOL
8) Design messages & tactics	Develop messages and tactics to reach each of your audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iceberg Theory of Messages MODEL • Message Matrix TOOL

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tactics Matrix TOOL
9) Pre-test	Use focus groups to pre-test messages, images and materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-testing questions
10) Write up	Carefully record your strategy, assumptions, and learnings to date. Set out your action plan, timeline and budget.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write up TEMPLATE
11) Implement!	Roll out your program, collecting evidence as you go.	
12) Reflect and redesign	Review evidence and critically redesign the program on the basis of what you have learnt.	

- The tools and checklists are from the *Enabling Change* training course.

**DOORS 1-7 are described in the Seven DOORS program model, available at <http://media.socialchange.net.au/people/les>

[The RAPID Model is copyright Les Robinson 2004]

Les Robinson

April 2004

Email: les@socialchange.net.au

For more, see: <http://media.socialchange.net.au/people/les>