MASTERING MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PROJECTS:

AN 8 STEP GUIDE TO COLLABORATIVE SUCCESS WITH FUNDING PARTNERS

ACTION4 YOUTH

A FOR A
ACTION FOR AGRICULTURE

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Introduction

ACTION4YOUTH IS A PURPOSE-DRIVEN, BESPOKE PROGRAM DEVELOPED BY ACTION4AGRICULTURE TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE FROM ALL BACKGROUNDS AND EXPERIENCES TO THRIVE IN A CAREER IN AGRICULTURE.

Few areas are more critical to the security and well-being of young people than meaningful and purposeful work. It impacts every aspect of their lives: independence; mental health and well-being; and social interaction. Action4Youth aims to offer young people an enriching experience of work that sets them on the path to independence and future security.

Program outcomes include:
- Increased employer engagement in work-based learning pathways.
- Improved learning and skills development experienced by young people.
- Increased entry-level jobs offered to young people.
- Improved understanding of, and access to, meaningful work.

How can this eBook help you?

This eBook will share with you eight key steps to helping you research, design, deliver and measure the impact of multi-stakeholder projects. The eight steps are based on the best research from around Australia and internationally, collated by our industry experts at Campus Consultancy.

By learning, applying and following through on what you learn here, you are setting your project up for success, both from the client side, and the delivery side. We will share research and strategies throughout this eBook showing you how to convert learning to action and see your project thrive.

Being a Great Funding Partner

Relationships, relationships, relationships

To bring the most out of your delivery partners, focus on being a great funding partner. How do you do that? Realize that the relationship is the key. Like a seedling, a relationship must be nurtured. A relationship needs sunshine (encouragement), rain (support) and fertile ground (opportunity). Simply communicating to your delivery partners that you are a relationship-first kind of partner is a strong first step!

Relationship Capital

To support your delivery partners, brainstorm with your internal team who you know (as a funding partner) within your organization and your network. One of the first steps delivery partners will take (especially after reading this eBook) is to focus on relationships; if you can recommend a few strong players you are helping them build a team built for success. We love the question (to ask your internal team), "Whom do we know that we believe our delivery partners should know?" This could be an Audio-Visual team, a great event MC or a grant writer or PR agent, as well as many more roles.

Be Proactive, Be Responsive

Let us pitch you the dream. You fund a project. Your delivery partner does everything (without asking any questions) and delivers the perfect project in half the time for half the budget... what a world to be alive in!

We all know this is not how (or why) funding partners and delivery partners work together. As this eBook outlines, we are looking for 1 + 1 = 7 kind of relationships. We are looking to combine expertise, communicate and co-create something neither party could do alone. To help this, be proactive with praise and ideas, and be responsive to requests for support. If there is a challenge, raise it with a solution-first mindset, and set your partner up for success. How you can your organisation bring value to this project who in your organisation could add value to this project? This type of mindset will give your team members ownership of the projects success

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Understanding Your Funding Partners

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Understanding Your Funding Partners

Did You Know... According to a study conducted by the Project Management Institute (PMI) in 2020, successful projects are nearly 2.5 times more likely in organizations where project sponsors and funding partners are actively engaged.

Source: 2020 Project Management Institute (PMI)

Who or what is a funding partner?

A funding partner is an individual, group, or organization that provides financial resources for a project, often in the form of grants, donations, or investments.

They can be private corporations, government agencies, or philanthropic entities. Understanding your funding partner is paramount for a project's success because they often bring more than just financial resources to the table.

They may provide strategic guidance, connections, and visibility that can significantly bolster your project's reach and impact.

Specifically, aligning your project with the interests, expectations, and capabilities of your funding partner ensures a mutually beneficial relationship, thereby fostering long-term partnership and support.

Understanding Your Funding Partners

#1 Identifying the Interests of Your Funding Partners

Identifying the interests of your funding partners is a crucial first step in fostering a successful collaboration. These interests often go beyond mere financial return and may include strategic alignment with their mission, visibility, or social impact. Understanding these interests can help shape the project in a way that satisfies both parties, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship.
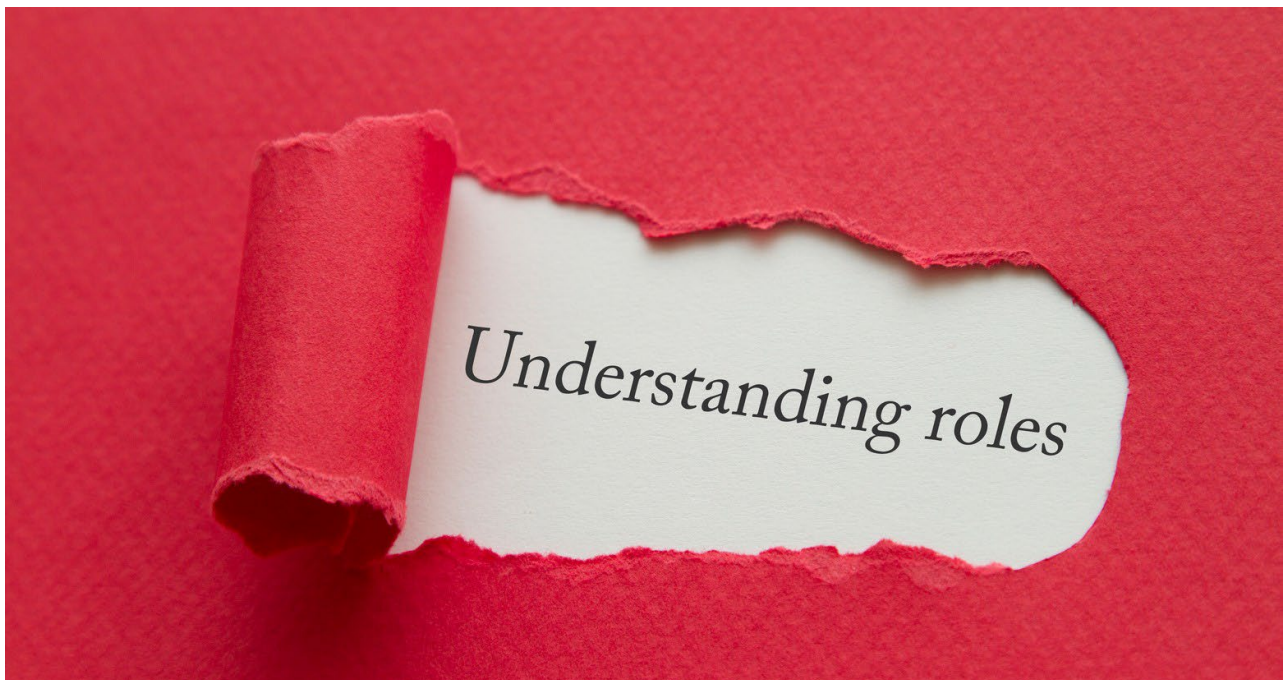
Key Question for the Project Delivery Team

Have we had a conversation with our funding partners about their short and long term interests?
If not, when can we do this and document our findings?

Understanding Your Funding Partners

#2 Understanding the Role and Expectations of Funding Partners in the Project

Once you've identified their interests, it's essential to understand your funding partners' expected roles in the project. This can range from silent partners, who provide funds without active involvement, to those who wish to participate in decision-making or operational aspects. Communicating openly about these expectations can help prevent misunderstandings and ensure that each partner's role aligns with their capacity and interest.

Key Question for the Project Delivery Team

For each of our partners, what are the various levels of involvement that we have outlined for them? Are we clear on who is involved to what level and what their expectations of us are?
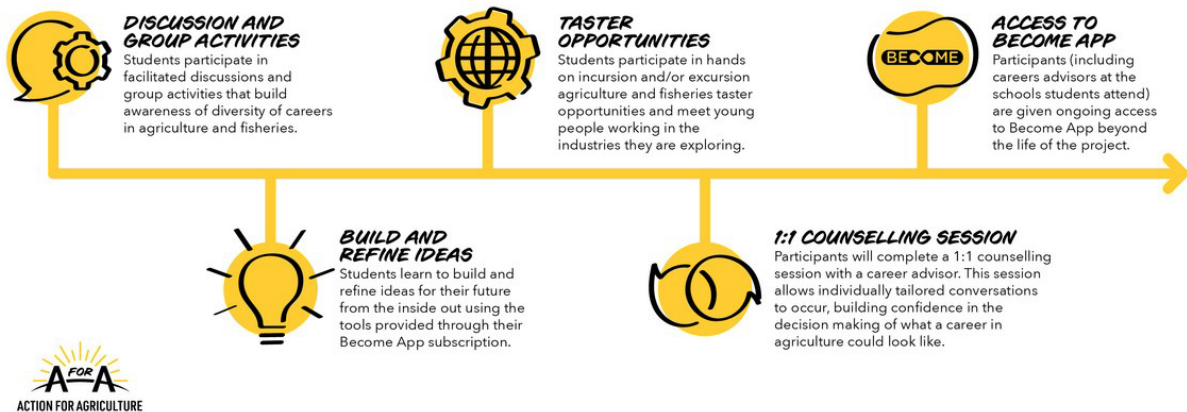
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Understanding Your Funding Partners

#3 Case Study: Action4Agriculture...

ACTION4YOUTH *EXPLORE PHASE*

300 STUDENTS participate in a series of careers awareness activities, with supported self-reflection on motivators, barriers, aptitude and interest across three key commodities: dairy, wool and fishing.

DISCUSSION AND GROUP ACTIVITIES
Students participate in facilitated discussions and group activities that build awareness of diversity of careers in agriculture and fisheries.

TASTER OPPORTUNITIES
Students participate in hands on incursion and/or excursion agriculture and fisheries taster opportunities and meet young people working in the industries they are exploring.

ACCESS TO BECOME APP
Participants (including careers advisors at the schools students attend) are given ongoing access to Become App beyond the life of the project.

BUILD AND REFINE IDEAS
Students learn to build and refine ideas for their future from the inside out using the tools provided through their Become App subscription.

1:1 COUNSELLING SESSION
Participants will complete a 1:1 counselling session with a career advisor. This session allows individually tailored conversations to occur, building confidence in the decision making of what a career in agriculture could look like.

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During the EXPLORE PHASE of this Action4Youth project, the Action4Agriculture team went through 5 key stages, including conducting discussion groups, building ideas (through a partnership with BECOME APP), provided opportunities for students to explore the careers' most interesting to them, offering 1-1 counselling and gain 12-months access to the BECOME APP. These actions are a direct result of the goals of the funding partners to have multiple touchpoints in multiple formats with young people.

Key Question for the Project Delivery Team

How can you show your funding partners your plans to deliver on their expectations based on an engaging and simple infographic?

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SUMMARY OF THIS STEP:

Understanding Your Funding Partners

Explore and define your funding partners' cultural values.

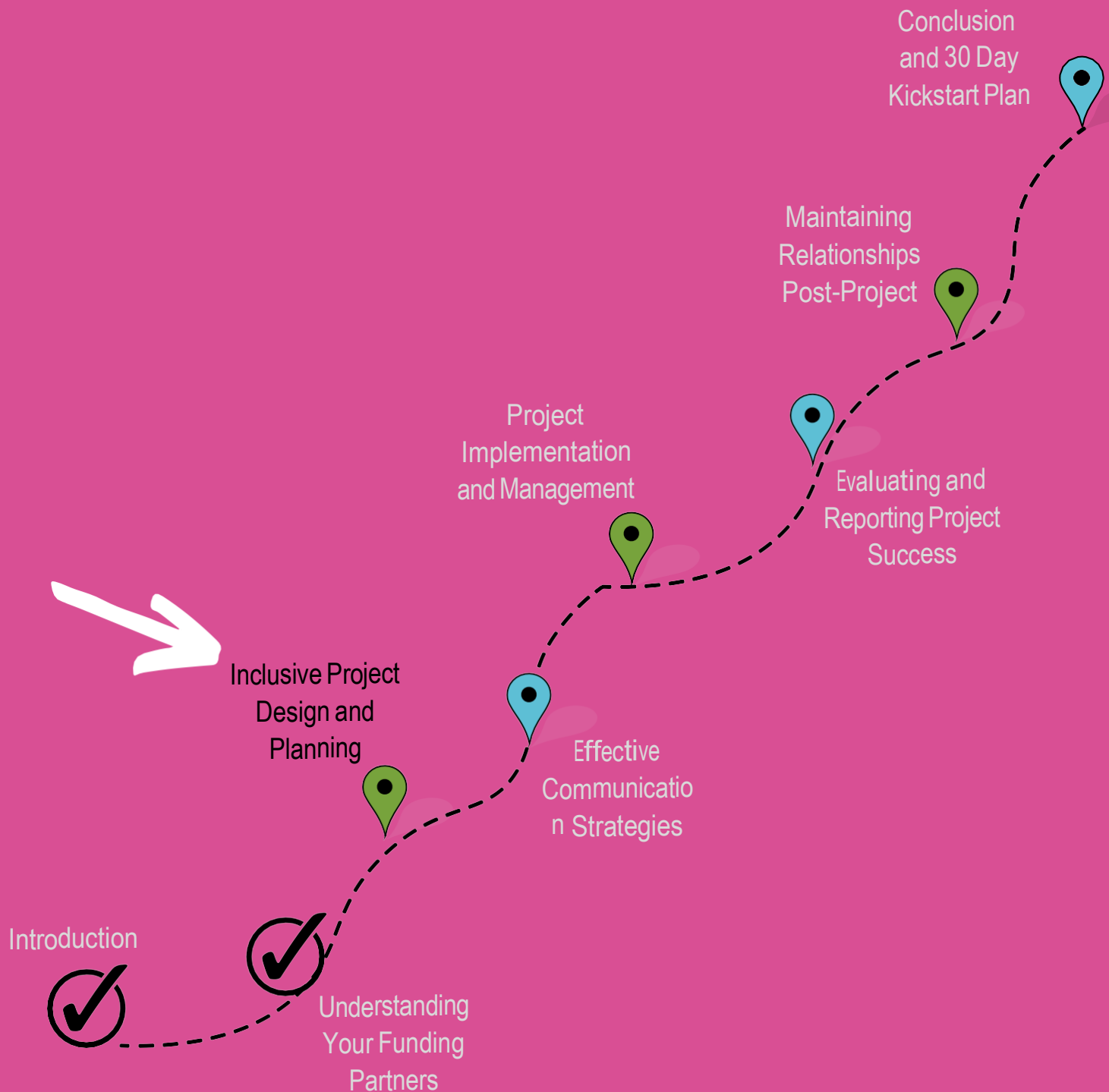Clarify the expectations of your funding partners for this project.

Seek creative input from your funding partners and ensure their ideas are re-presented to them in a digestible format.

Complete!
Ready for the next step?

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Inclusive Project Design and Planning

Did You Know... According to the Centre for Inclusive Design that *inclusive design practices* can expand customer reach four fold!

Source: https://centreforinclusivedesign.org.au/index.php/services/reports/2019/05/21/inclusive-design-report/

Case Study
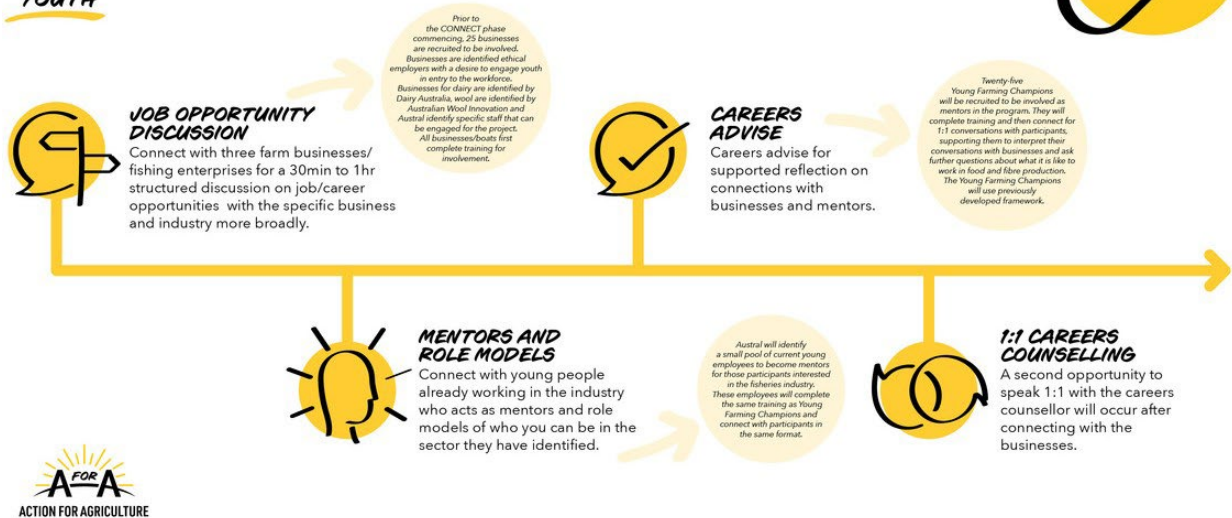
During the CONNECT PHASE of the Action4Youth project, Action4Agriculture worked with a range of partners in industry, as well as the connections of funding partners to provide four key steps for young people including a job opportunity presentation, mentoring, careers advice and 1-1 career counselling. This delivered on the key requirements from industry and broadened the students' mindset.

Inclusive Project Design and Planning

#1 Incorporating Funding Partners in Project Design

Involving funding partners in project design is essential. Their unique perspective attributable to experience in various past projects, can offer invaluable insights to refine your project's design, align it with their interests, and increase its potential for success. Furthermore, their early involvement encourages a sense of ownership, which can lead to increased support throughout the project's duration.

Key Question for the Project Delivery Team

How could our funding partners be encouraged to share their experiences with our team to help us 'see around corners' and co-create the best possible design and plan for this project?

Inclusive Project Design and Planning

#2 Collaborative Project Planning with Multiple Stakeholders

Collaborative project planning ensures that all stakeholders, including funding partners, have a say in the project's direction. This collaborative approach promotes a shared understanding and commitment, enhances coordination, and reduces potential conflicts. By actively engaging all stakeholders in planning, you can tap into a diverse range of views and skills, leading to more robust, innovative, and successful project outcomes.

Key Question for the Project Delivery Team

What are the top 10 actions that are needed for this project to be a success? Can we 'chunk' the project down into pieces with our funding partners to help them identify where/when to support?

SUMMARY OF THIS STEP:

Inclusive Project Design and Planning

⭐ Ask partners up front to share any concerns so you can build them into your project design.

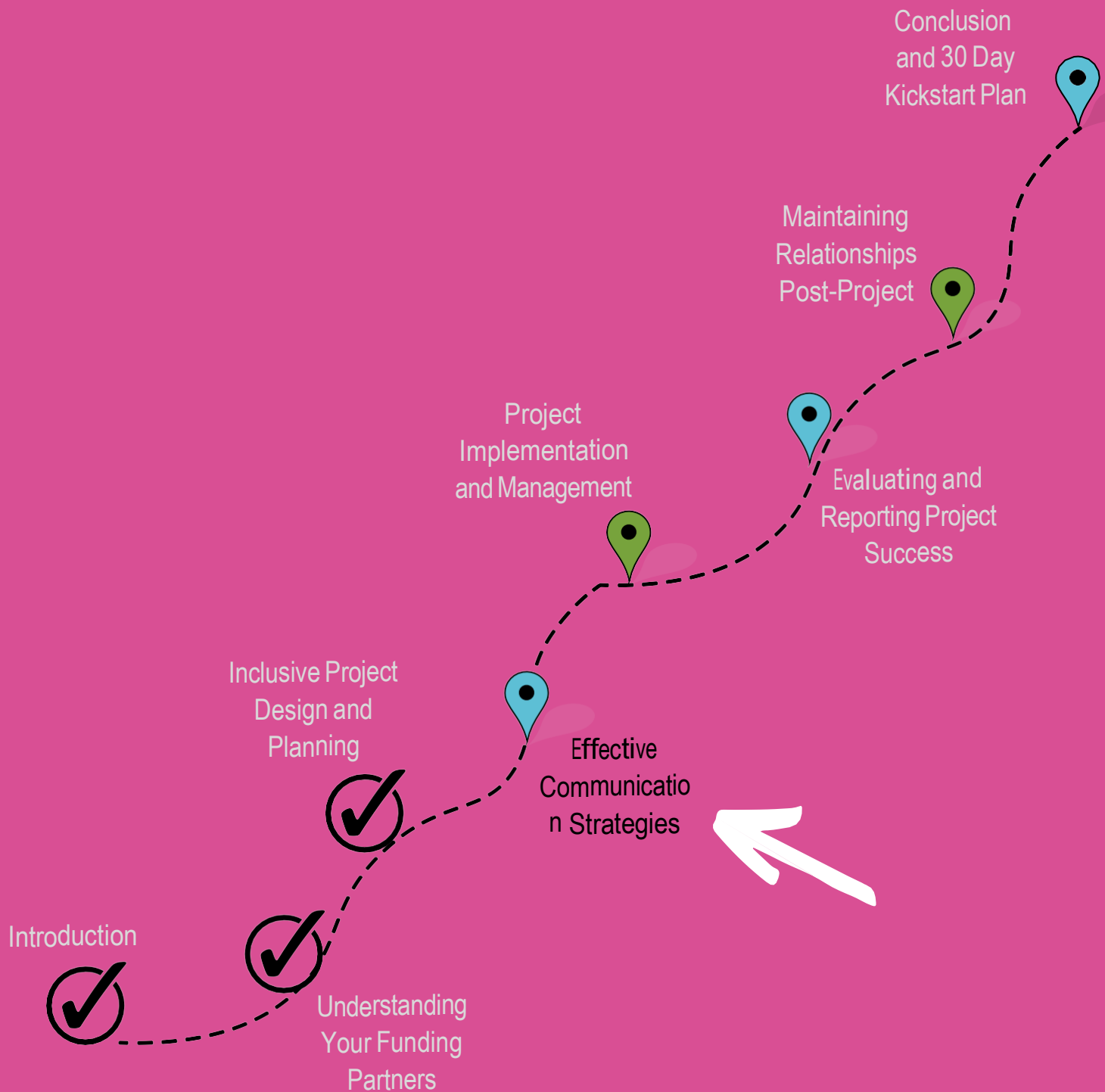⭐ Break down the project into key deliverables and milestones to be shared with the partners/

⭐ Seek input from the partners on your 'first draft' of the plan with feedback being seen as a 'gift' in the early stages.

✅ **Complete!**
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The Australian Government supports ACTION4YOUTH through National Careers Institute Grant Program funding.

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Effective Communication Strategies

Did You Know... Businesses share that *communication is the single biggest variable* that impacts the results of a project?

Case Study
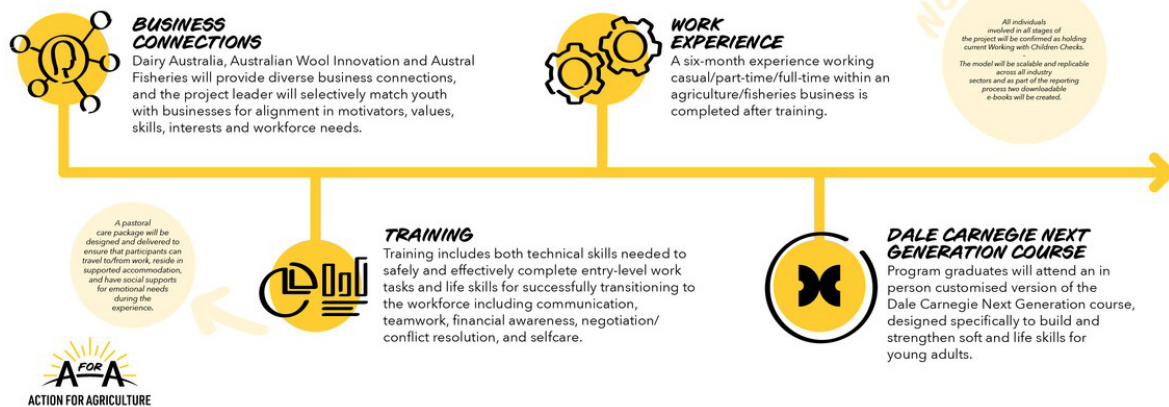
During the SUPPORT PHASE of the Action4Youth project, Action4Agriculture doubled down on communication. The connections with businesses, work experiences, training and ongoing online courses develop the key skills for students, as well as show a commitment to multistakeholder engagement from Action4Agriculture throughout the program.

Effective Communication Strategies

#1 The critical role of transparent communication

What do we mean when we say 'effective' and 'transparent' communication? The ultimate goal of communication is to either maintain or change how another thinks, feels or acts. For example, effective and transparent communication that maintains a partner's confidence in your project delivery timeline might include sharing weekly update photos, status reports and/or identifying barriers and sharing plans to overcome them. Likewise, effective and transparent communication that shifts what a funding partner is feeling might be sharing a solution and a milestone update that shifts the feeling from one of unease/stress to one of calm.

Key Question for the Project Delivery Team

What is a key shift you want to make for your funding partner?

Effective Communication Strategies

#2 Best practices for keeping funding partners and other stakeholders informed

Ask yourself, *"What do I want the funding partner (or other stakeholder) to focus on? How do I want them to feel (about us, our work and the project)? What do I want them to do (or not do)?"*

Start all communication planning with these questions. Then, identify the best medium and frequency for communication. Is the medium a in-person visit, a phone call or an email? Is the frequency weekly, monthly or quarterly? The key here is to agree on mediums/frequency with your funding partner in advance, then you can fulfil your promise and align with their expectations.

Key Question for the Project Delivery Team

How could we rethink our medium/frequency of communication?

Effective Communication Strategies

#3 Tools and platforms for effective communication

Five great tools for effective communication (with clarity and purpose) are Google Docs, Google Sheets, Trello, Miro and Jira. Google Docs allows you to create working documents that either allow partners to directly edit, or comment. This avoids multiple revisions of a Word document. Likewise, Google Sheets allows for live project planning such as budgeting and Gantt charts where you can tick off milestones, or delivery using agile project management principles. Trello, Miro and Jira are three platforms (with free and paid versions) that allow you to visually represent projects, including whiteboarding, sticky notes and dashboards (all in a digital format).

Key Question for the Project Delivery Team

What platforms are best for our team to use?

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SUMMARY OF THIS STEP:

Effective Communication Strategies

⭐ Identify all of the key partners and stakeholders whom you are communicating with

⭐ Specify what changes/maintainaince you are aiming for in thoughts/feelings/actions

⭐ Decide on the most appropriate medium for communication

⭐ Decide on the most appropriate frequency for communication and milestones to be shared with the partners
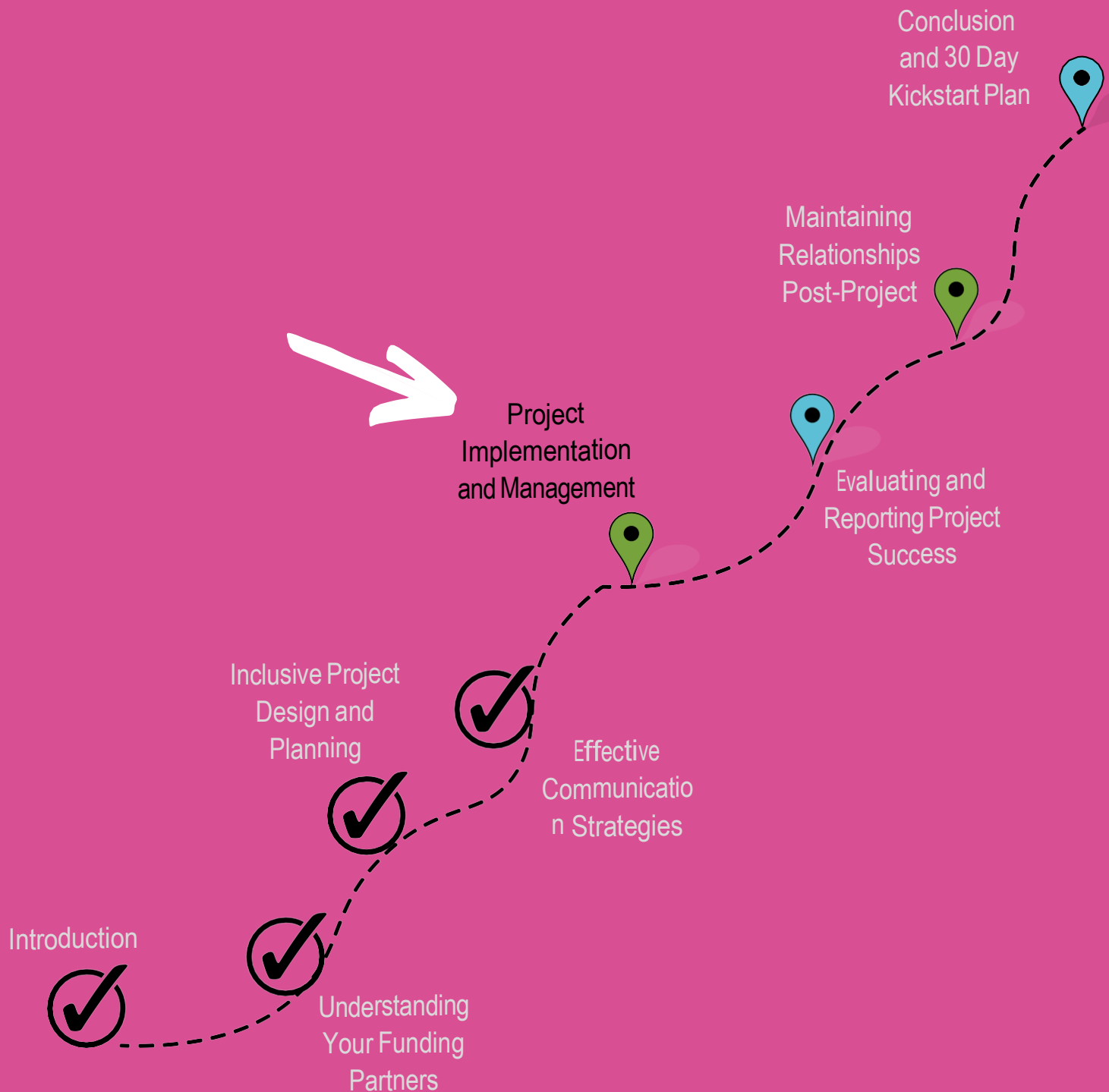
⭐ Utilize digital tools for transparency at all times
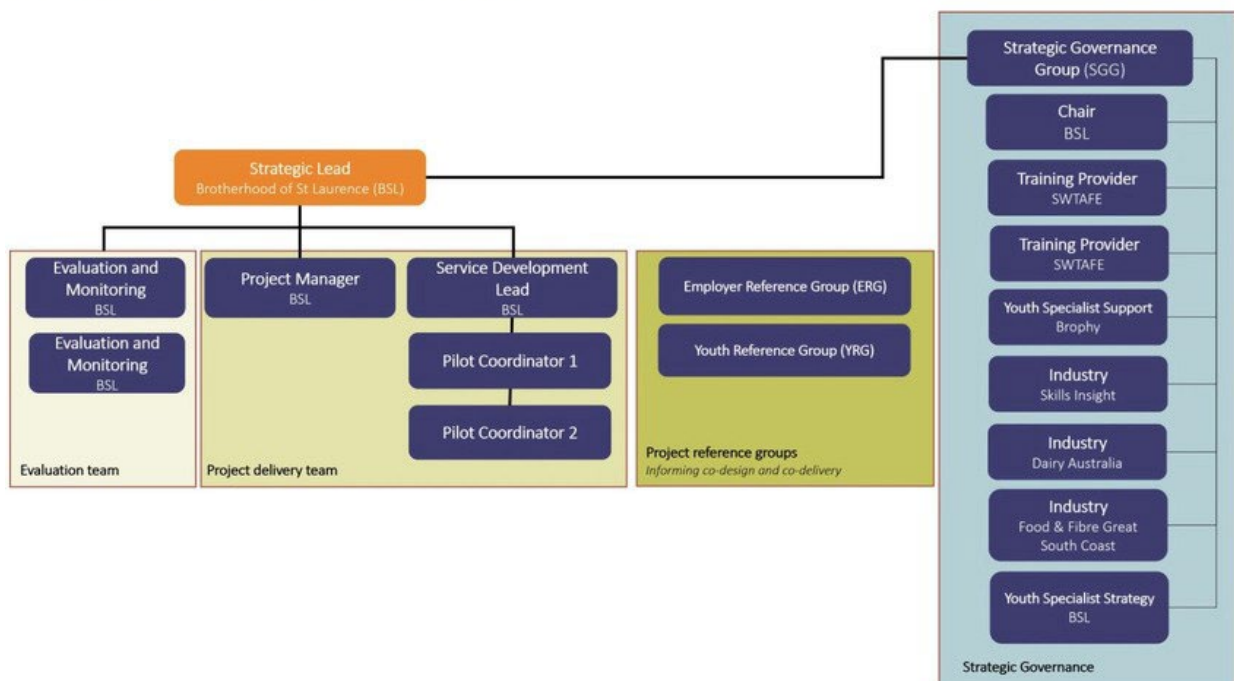
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Project Implementation and Management

Case Study: AgFutures

AgFutures Governance Structure

A great example of clarifying roles, responsibilities and managing expectations is the AgFutures Partner network. They split their stakeholders into four groups, Strategic Governance, Project Reference Groups, Project Delivery Team and Evaluation Team. By grouping similar stakeholders and funding partners, the medium/frequency of communication can be managed together as well as distinguishing roles (e.g. Reference Groups 'specify who the project should focus on helping', Strategic Governance 'advises on what work to do to help', Delivery 'does the work', Evaluation 'measures the impact of the work').

Project Implementation and Management

#1 Clarifying roles and responsibilities among stakeholders

A great first step in distinguishing roles and responsibilities is to use the metaphor of a sporting team. In an Australian context, how could we not use cricket? What goes into running a Test Cricket Match? Well, you might say there are 12 players on the team. Some players bowl and some bat. There are a few special positions like a wicket keeper and an allrounder. But then there is a coaching staff, including a head coach, batting coach, bowling coach, fielding coach as well as physiotherapists, psychologists, statisticians and more. Then there is the marketing team, the executive teams as Cricket Australia, sponsorship teams and event management teams. When we turn on the TV we see the finished product (the 'project') and often don't see everyone who went into it. As you see in this example, each 'person' has a roles [who they are] (e.g. Head Coach, Psychologist, Bowler) and each 'role' has unique 'responsibilities' [what they do] (e.g. leading the team, managing the mental wellbeing of a key player, bowling the ball). In your project, take time to make an organizational chart, or a list of all key people and their contact details. Specify their role/title, as well as their specific responsibilities on this project.

Project Implementation and Management

#2 Managing the expectations of funding partners and other stakeholders

A technique to manage expectations as you complete the project is to specify who, is doing what, by when while informing whom about what how frequently. Let's say that again in another way. Imagine part of your project is to create a press-release about the launch event. The person (who) doing the press release (what) needs to deliver the press-release 48-hours before the launch event (when) and they need to inform the three major funding partners (who) about where the press-release is going (what) on the day it is submitted (when). The who-what-when-who-what-when framework layers together project implementation and project communication in a simple way that says, "Do the work, communicate the work."

Key Question for the Project Delivery Team

Who is doing what by when? How is this communicated?

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SUMMARY OF THIS STEP:

Project Implementation and Management

⭐ Identify who needs to know about what by when

⭐ Clarify all roles of key people

⭐ Specify the responsibilities of key people
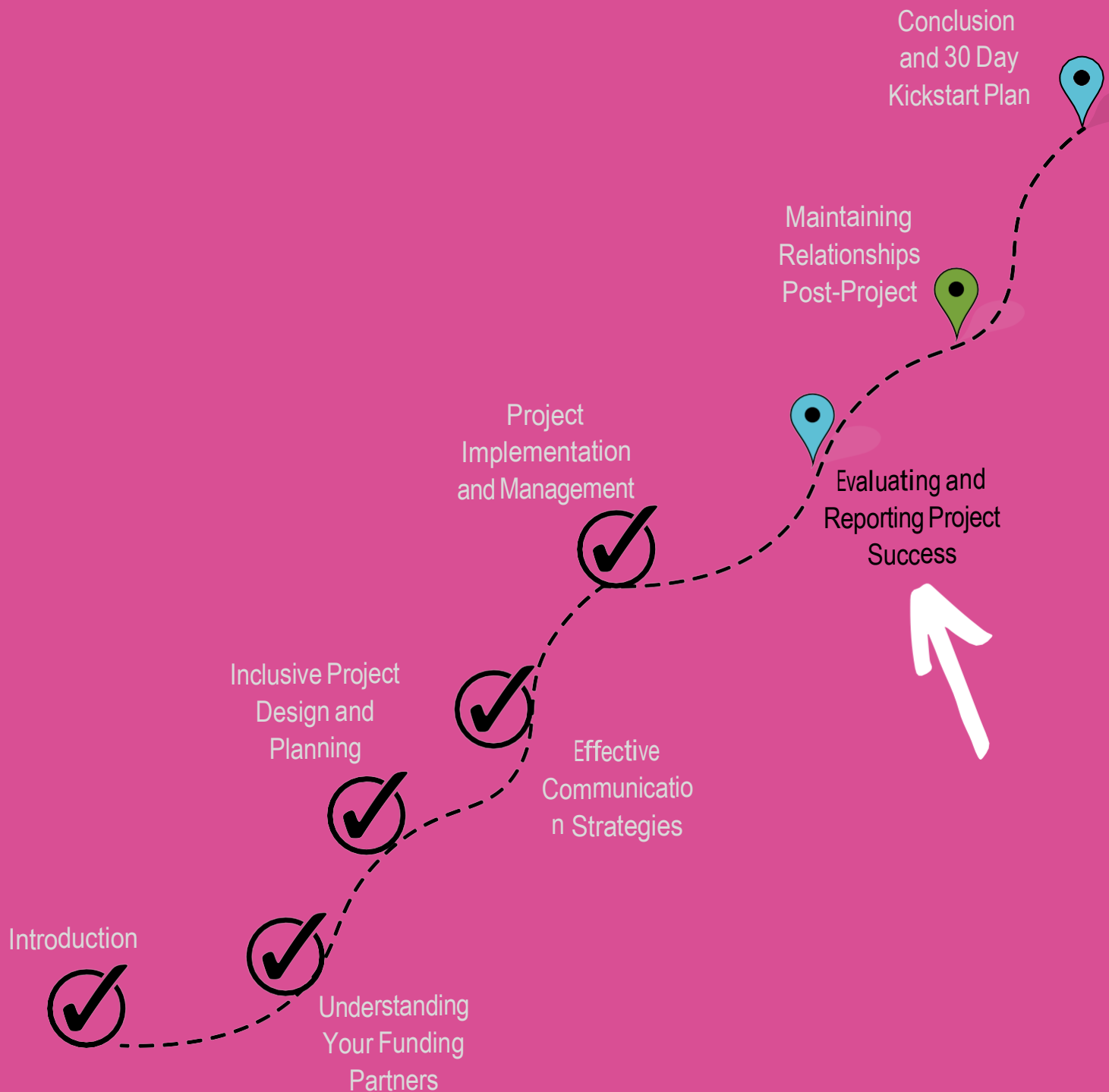
⭐ Update partners on what the key people are doing

⭐ Ensure partners are reassured around timelines, deliverables and key milestones

✅ **Complete!
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Project Implementation and Management

Case Study: Managing 6 Training Suppliers

To deliver the Action4Youth program, Action4Agriculture worked with nine training providers.

- Illawarra YES co-designed a training model to meet local needs.
- Australian Training Company helped source participants and provided training.
- Backtrack provided an insight into the needs and challenges of disadvantaged youth.
- Modern People assisted with the design of training models.
- Campus Consultancy designed training models and collated eBooks.
- GoAhead Business Solutions provided agricultural industry insights.
- Scibus to collaborate on delivery of training workshops.
- Jaydee Events who delivered 6 dairy awareness incursions to schools.
- Dale Carnegie who delivered skills for success workshops.

For each provider, clear timelines, deliverables and resources were identified such that a central organizing team could manage the project. By having coherence between the providers, no overlap was created and the maximum value was delivered at cost for participants.

Evaluating and Reporting Project Success

#1 The importance of regular project assessment

To show the importance of regular project assessment, take the metaphor of assessing a student in a high school. The ultimate assessment of the project (though up for debate in education circles) could be said to be the academic, emotional and social achievements of the student by 18 years of age. What happens if we don't regularly assess their progress and wait until the end of Year 12 to assess their grades and social ability? If we spot a problem, it might be too late. If we spot an area of potential, we might not be able to steer them towards the opportunity. Alternatively, imagine if students were assessed across academic, emotional and social domains each term or year. Teachers, school leaders, parents and caregivers would have more data, more time and more opportunity to support students. In some ways, we do this! Report cards on a regular basis are designed to deliver regular assessment, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Evaluating and Reporting Project Success

#2 Metrics to evaluate project success

As shared in the sections on understanding and including funding partners, project success metrics must be agreed upon in advance. The activity of 'writing the final report' before the project is done is one technique to identify what a funding partner expects, both in terms of what will be measured (metric) and what the expected standard is (success measure).

For example, imagine a parent paid for a mathematics tutor for their child, but they didn't specify the metric for success or the success measure. For 10-weeks, the tutor was working with the child. At the end, the child's algebra scores went up 10%. The parent (imagine) is furious! "Her algebra was already great, I wanted you to help with calculus and we needed a 20% increase to get into pre-university study!" The tutor, although helpful in one domain, didn't help in the right way, the right amount. That's the key to metrics.

Imagine instead if the parent said, "Over 10 weeks do you believe you can help my daughter increase her calculus score 20% or more?" The tutor can they say yes or no, giving agency and responsibility to the tutor. If they say yes (and perhaps 2 sessions a week is needed rather than 1 as originally planned by the parent) the tutor and student get to work. This time, algebra goes up 5% (wonderful side benefit) but calculus goes up 23%.

The metric (calculus score) and success measure (20%+ improvement) are delivered on, and everyone is happy!

Evaluating and Reporting Project Success

#3 Communicating project results to funding partners and stakeholders

Once you have identified the key metrics of success for the project (what needs to increase or decrease – e.g. increase number of students enrolled, decrease CO_2 emissions, etc.) and you have specified the success measure (e.g. increase by 10 students, decrease by 20%, or 20 tonnes, etc.) the next task is to report on an ongoing basis to your partners.

Like the student example, rather than waiting until the end of term to find out the child is struggling in mathematics, if this is communicated at the end of the second week, the teacher, parent and student can come together to brainstorm a solution (e.g. a tutor). For your project, speak with your key funding partners about what they want to be updated on, what medium (dashboard, phone, email, etc.) and what frequency. You may also share a '%-complete' update as well as a timeline.

For example, if you need to deliver 10 articles in 5 months, delivering 1 article every 15 days keep you on track. If you're 2 months in and have 4+ articles submitted, you're working to the timeline. If you fall behind, communicate this as well as a plan to get back on track.

Key Question for the Project Delivery Team

How are we communicating the key metrics and measures of success to our funding partners in a format that is appropriate?

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SUMMARY OF THIS STEP:

Evaluating and Reporting Project Success

⭐ Identify what the metrics of success for the project are

⭐ Identify what the measure of success for the project are

⭐ Clarify how these metrics will be measured

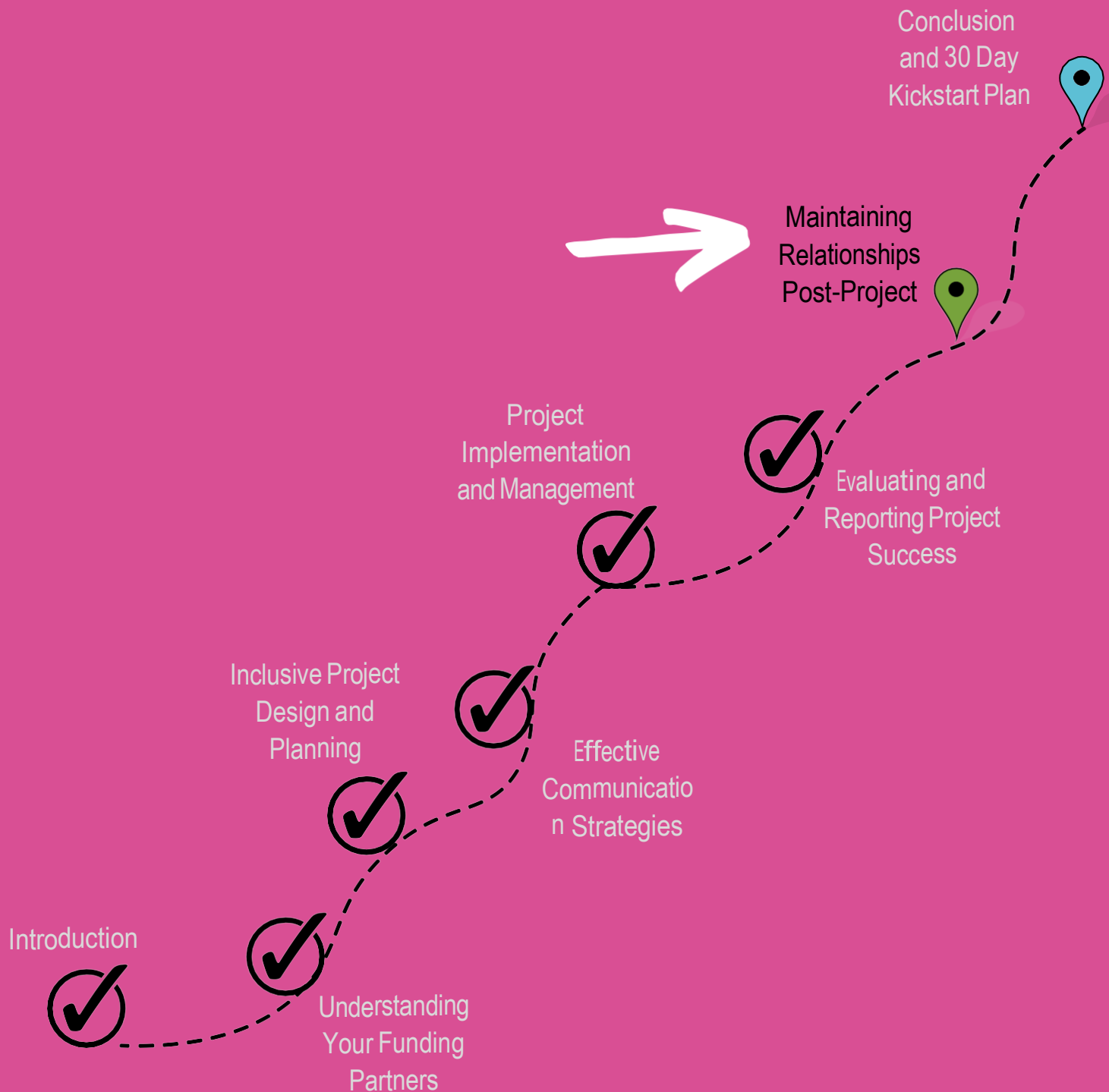⭐ Clarify how these metrics will be reported and through what medium at what frequency

⭐ Periodically update funding partners on progress to date and key milestones

✅ **Complete!
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Maintaining Relationships Post-Project

#1 The value of continuous engagement

Take the example of home builder and a personal trainer.

If you know your home builder is crafting your forever home, and after that you will never see them again, you might be tempted to see the relationship as a one-off. You might not stay in touch after the house is built, even though you and your family enjoy it every day. On the other hand, your personal trainer you might see every week, and know you might see them for another 10-20-30+ years! How do you think differently about those relationships?

In your projects, the funding partners are much more like personal trainers, helping you do the work to be your best and leave your mark on the world. The relationships are ongoing, and if you have a new project idea/opportunity (or want to run a marathon, start to body-build, or bounce back after an injury) you will likely go back to them to discuss working together again. The key here, is to continuously engage with your partners during and post project, by sharing wins, updates and stories of success.

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Maintaining Relationships Post-Project

#2 Strategies for maintaining relationships with funding partners

A simple strategy for Maintaining Relationships with Funding Partners Post-Project, is to send a monthly/quarterly update on where your project is now, and the impact it is having. If you've followed the rigorous set up of metrics/measures of success, the reporting on an ongoing basis will serve up stories of impact that make for great newsletter or email content. For example, imagine your project is designed to help empower high school students to explore careers in agriculture and as part of the project students create works of art. Where the art ends up, how it is used, who benefits from it and where the students are now are all examples of updates that can be shared with partners. Don't be afraid to reach out to your beneficiaries, staff and subcontractors to get information on what is new 3-6-12 months after project completion to capture these stories and then share them with your partners.

Maintaining Relationships Post-Project

#3 Single Source of Truth Platform

Action4Youth utilized a design thinking process with UNSW Business School and Digital Sustainability Knowledge Hub to leverage the web expertise and answer the question, "*What does it take to establish a sustainable model, who do we need and what could it look like if it was all in one place?*"

This digital space gives multiple points of access (e.g. professionals to become mentors, students to sign up for mentoring, and teachers in schools to access resources. The three career exploration bodies worked with contributed links to resources that are now freely and accessibly displayed on the Action4Youth website:

https://action4youth.com.au/resources/

Maintaining Relationships Post-Project

CASE STUDY: A thank you to everyone in Action4Youth

Below is a summary of all the partners and a simple single sentence summary that speaks to their amazing contribution to this project. Dairy Australia identified jobs for inclusion in the Become App, and provided an entry level Learning Management System (LMS) for the Action4Youth website. DairyNSW provided employment resources, engagement programs, career pathways, a workplace attraction and retention specialist and a valuable link between employers and employees. Austral Fisheries conducted workshops and student incursions and identified jobs for inclusion in the Become App. Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) also identified jobs for inclusion in the Become App.

We worked with nine training providers.
1. Illawarra YES co-designed a training model to meet local needs.
2. Australian Training Company helped source participants and provided training.
3. Backtrack provided insight into the needs and challenges of disadvantaged youth.
4. Modern People assisted with the design of training models.
5. Campus Consultancy designed training models and collated eBooks.
6. GoAhead Business Solutions provided agricultural industry insights.
7. Scibus to collaborate on delivery of training workshops.
8. Jaydee Events who delivered 6 dairy awareness incursions to schools
9. Dale Carnegie who delivered skills for success workshops

Government bodies included the Office for Regional NSW which provided research and connections, Education Pathways Program (Shanna Fuz and Sandy Edgar) and Regional Industry Education Partnerships both sourced schools and supported the delivery of the program. With their commitment, time and energy we were able to work with schools to achieve impressive outcomes. The National Careers Institute (Careers and International Skills division) provided career guidance sessions with professional practitioners and RDA (Regional Development Australia) Sydney provided links to networks and insights into the training culture.

Professional education bodies such as the Australian Association of Environmental Educators and NSW/ACT Geography Teachers Association provided links to networks and an understanding of the barriers and challenges facing teachers and schools. Career exploration and showcasing services were provided by Become Education, Study/Work/Grow, and The Career Department.

We worked with community services and NGOs who all brought together connections, resources, research and shared knowledge. These were the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Mission Australia and Shoalhaven Community Investment Committee.

APM Employment Services co-designed training products specific to youth needs and provided support to both employers and employees. Other partners included UNSW and Ground Creative and Opal Heart Media for graphic design and reporting assistance.

As well as working directly with these partners we have introduced them to each other to facilitate ongoing and mutually beneficial relationships. For example, we have introduced AWI to ATC and introduced DairyNSW to Shoalhaven Community Investment Committee, Illawarra YES, Mission Australia and Brotherhood of St Laurence.

SUMMARY OF THIS STEP:

Maintaining Relationships Post-Project

Think of your partners as relationships for life

Decide how often to communicate post project

Proactively capture stories of success from the field

Routinely check in with other stakeholders to capture case-studies and stories
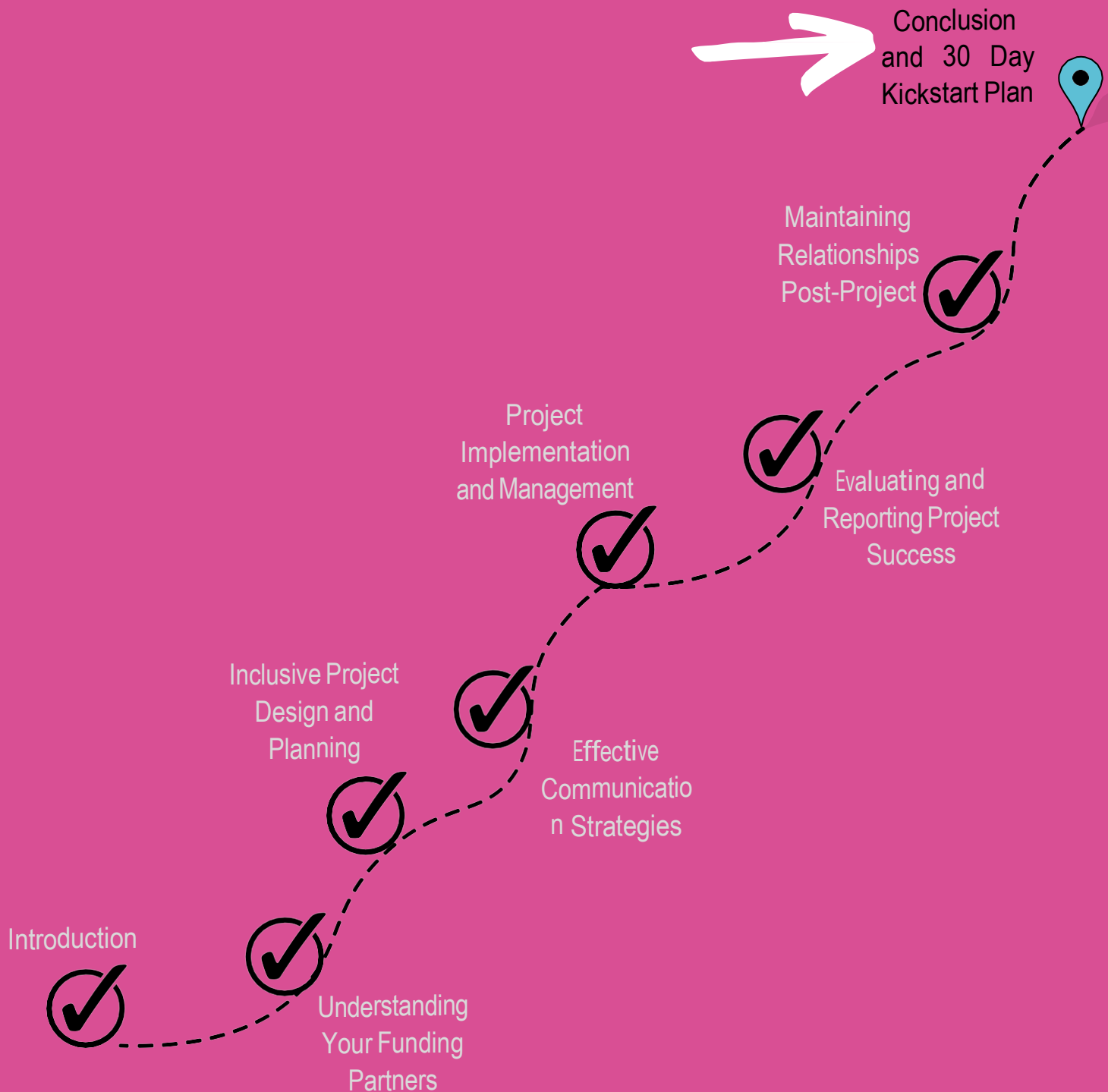
Follow key people on social media (e.g. LinkedIn) to stay up to date with their achievements

Complete!
Ready for the next step?

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The final step...

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Summary

Imagine a project where the following steps are followed...

Before beginning, you conduct a thorough needs analysis with your funding partners and clarify the goals of their organisation and then the goals of this specific project. You then design the project to include your funding partners, seeking their input and clarifying all roles and responsibilities. With clarity and transparency established, you create a clear project timeline with deliverables for every party, major milestones and dates identified and a communication strategy that keeps everyone informed without being bogged down with too many emails, questions or unnecessary meetings. You get to work implementing the project, seeking opportunities to innovate as you go, updating your partners and keeping all parties confident throughout the process with ongoing reporting on the key success metrics/measures. Finally, you capture the results of your project and make a plan to continue the relationship in the future sharing the wins and keeping the door open for future project together.

Doesn't this sound like an ideal way of working?

It is possible, and our hope is that this eBook has shown a series of practical case studies and techniques for you to make this dream a reality!

10 Steps to Success

1. Conduct a thorough needs analysis with your funding partners
2. Clarify the goals of their organisation
3. Clarify the goals of this specific project
4. Design the project including your funding partners' ideas
5. Clarifying all roles and responsibilities
6. Create a clear project timeline with deliverables and major milestones/dates identified
7. Create a communication strategy
8. Report on the key success metrics/measures
9. Capture the results of your project
10. Share the wins and keep the door open for future projects together

Conclusion

You now have the knowledge, the steps and the clarity on exactly what to do to create win-win-win relationships throughout your project. Where you start is up to you. Take a few minutes to review your favorite sections and commit to 3 actions below, then take a few minutes to schedule them into your calendar!

Action 1

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Action 2

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Action 3

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## My support people are:

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Did you love this eBook?

Please share it with one employer or leader in your sector or industry so they can support their young people in all they do.

Acknowledgements

This eBook was only possible because of the input, support and guidance of a large number of people and organizations.

To dive a bit deeper, check out some of this wonderful new book:
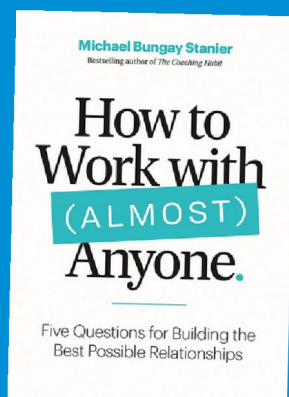
A great book on this topic is Michael Bungay Stanier "How to Work with (ALMOST) Anyone." available here:

https://www.amazon.com.au/How-Work-Almost-Anyone-Relationships-ebook/dp/B0BSMXRTJ6

We would also like to extend our thanks to all the students, parents, schools, educators, employers and champions of the young people who will benefit from this eBook as well as the Action4Youth program.

Thank you for all that you do.

Would you like to know more?

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