

# EXTENSIONNET

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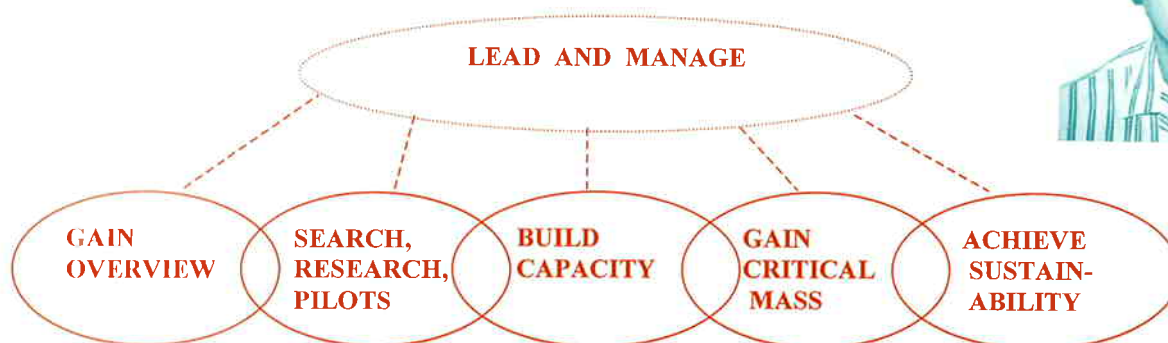
## The Rural Innovation Management (RIM) Model - An Introduction

Peter Van Beek - © SyTREC<sup>1</sup>

### Version 1

At its core, the Rural Innovation Management (RIM) model envisages innovations to progress through five phases as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1 The core RIM model – version 1



The practical value of the model stems from the guidance it provides when selecting and linking suitable methods used in each phase, and when intervening during transitions. Appropriate intervention can greatly assist in more effective development and adoption of innovations, or in more clearly articulated decisions to stop further developments. Intervention takes place mainly during the transitions between phases when major changes need to occur in key aspects such as: emphasis of the main work; the people involved; organisational support needed; forces and motives driving people; funding / resources used; scientific methods used; legal and emotional ownership; daily

control; operational / administrative arrangements; length of time required; approximate number of people involved; and outcomes and results.

### Use of the Model

To date, the RIM model has been used as:

- an *overview* to check in which phase an innovation is, and the progress made within that phase;
- a *framework* in which to link the wide range of activities, skills, techniques and methods necessary for developing and implementing innovations of substance;
- a *template* to check if developments during previous

phases have been appropriate, and if current arrangements, skills and capacities are suitable; and

- a *guide* for strategic and tactical management.

A potentially important use of the model, highlighted during the pilot-workshops, is to provide a long-term framework for individual R and D projects. Most successful rural innovations have taken fifteen years or more for their initiation, development, evolution and general adoption. However, current project-funding is based largely on three-year cycles. Single three-year projects are unlikely to reach sustainability because their funding mostly ends before phase V

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**From the Chair**

*John Bourne*

There were several items of interest from the recent Committee of Management meeting:

- Firstly arrangements are well in hand for the **National Forum for 1999** in Perth, WA. The dates are the **11th and 12th November**. Sally Marsh outlined some of the initial planning and we can be assured of an excellent forum. I would urge everyone to plan now for a trip to WA in November, and I am sure we will be hearing a lot more of the preparations during the next few months. (See Page 6 and Insert)
- Amabel Fulton from Tasmania has recently proposed that APEN initiate an **annual Extension Award**. The concept has been discussed several times at the Committee of Management meetings and received enthusiastic support. The details of how such an Award would work are still being considered but if you have any suggestions, I am sure Amabel would be glad to hear from you. (See Page 5)
- The Private Sector working group led by Peter Davies is continuing to look at opportunities for **greater involvement of the private sector in APEN**. Peter reported that he had spoken further with David Heinjus from Clare in SA. David was a keynote speaker at the Roseworthy Forum, talking about the Property Management Planning Program as a model for private and government sector partnerships. The working group is interested in seeking funding to progress this initiative and has approached RIRDC to see what opportunities may be available.
- Horrie Poussard is now back in Australia after his time in Vietnam, **welcome home Horrie**. He will be taking back the position of treasurer from Bob Edgar, probably in the new financial year, when he and Bob are able to get together to arrange a change-over.

**From the Editor**

*Elwin Turnbull*

This edition includes two articles of greater length than normal. The first by Peter Van Beek is a popular topic of conversation and application for those associated with Peter in his teaching and consultancy work. It is a very useful model of the process of intervention that a change agent aspires to because it covers the whole continuum from initiation towards an end goal of a flexible and more sustainable use of technology. As such the RIM model gives us a total road map to allow constant critique and questioning of direction as we move through projects in communities.

The second article by Manir Ahmad, Andrew Davidson and Tanvir Ali is of interest because it shows in objective terms the paradox when extension is funded by private enterprise that the welfare component of government funded extension is no longer a priority. Lost is the mixed bag of productivity and social equity goals that government funded extension has traditionally had to deal with. The recent conference in Roseworthy and the ongoing strategic planning of the APEN Private Sector Working Party are ways we are attempting to adjust to this new scenario in our profession. **If any members have ideas or needs they feel could be met by our APEN network please get into contact with Peter Davies at 03 5881 2314.**

**To be a network we need more articles for this newsletter** so please send me your observations on the pleasures and trials of your day to day life in the profession of extension. Also if like Peter Van Beek you have a model or approach which you are finding very useful please let us know about it. Send the articles to either Rosemary Currie or Elwin Turnbull.

I'm looking for someone to take over the Editor's job as my two year term comes to an end at the next AGM. – Interested? It's very rewarding!

*APEN is pleased to acknowledge the support of:*



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can be completed. Understanding how far an innovation has progressed within the context of the RIM model may thus be extremely valuable to people who apply for, or make decisions about, funding for sequential projects.

The RIM model and its associated management processes are thus particularly useful for:

- senior field-people who need to understand the wider context of their activities;
- regional managers who need to select methods and staff; and
- program managers and funders of rural R and D who need a long-term framework for their decisions.

### Basic assumptions

The Rural Innovation Management (RIM) model is based on the following assumptions:

- managing the development of a potential innovation starts when an idea for something new is acted upon;
- the innovation then often develops through five distinct, but overlapping phases (or can be terminated at any point);
- during these phases, development work consists of sets of diverse but complementary activities;
- in the areas of overlap between phases (the transitions) major changes occur in many key aspects and major decisions are made, currently often by default; and

- strategic intervention during transitions can assist in more effective development and adoption of an innovation, or lead to more clearly articulated decisions to stop further development.

### Version 3

The original model in figure 1 benefited greatly from contributions by many people during consultancies, courses and workshops (see Origin and Development), resulting in more detailed versions. Version 3 (figure 2) is the current working version which pays particular attention to the Initiation processes and the intervention between phases. As such it is comprehensive, but rather complex.

### The phases

#### Initiation

An innovation is here seen as something new and potentially useful to an individual or group. Ideas for innovations can come from flashes of insight, careful situation analyses, policy decisions, research, literature and market searches, or general learning. However, the RIM process starts when someone decides to turn the idea into reality. From then on, there is an increasing need to be clear about what the innovation really is. The perception of what the innovation is often changes considerably during its development.

#### Phase I - Gain overview

The main aims in phase I are to obtain an overview of the relevant situation(s), and to identify or confirm relevance, opportunities and potential problems. Methods suitable for use in phase I include: Rapid Rural Appraisal, Participatory Rural Appraisals, Rapid Multi-perspective Appraisals, archive studies, public meetings, focus groups, scientific analyses, surveys, problem - tree analyses. (NB most methods can be used in several phases.)

#### Phase II - Search, research, develop pilot products, and conduct marketing studies

The aim of phase II is to develop the innovation and associated activities far enough to gain clarity about its possible value(s) and chances of success. Phase II can include: searching and researching; developing pilot products and conducting preliminary market studies; and assessing effectiveness, social impacts, ecological effects, marketing and economic viability. Methods suitable for use in this phase include: literature searches; traditional laboratory and on-station research; farming systems research, on-farm research, participatory research; pilot studies; building prototypes; using test sites and technical reference groups; Local Consensus Data (LCD) and Best Practice Groups; and marketing studies.

#### Phase III - Build capacity

The aim of phase III is to build enough capacity to produce or provide the

**Figure 2 The Rural Innovation Management Model – Version 3**

