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### PART VI. TARGETS, PROGRESS AND OPPORTUNITIES

# Paper 12. Targets, Implementation Issues and Achievements to 2007/08

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**Abstract.** In the Beef CRC, Sustainable Beef Profit Partnership (BPP) teams meet regularly to measure their current performance, set targets for future productivity increases, and use a profitability framework to assess the potential impact of improvements, innovations and new technologies in their beef businesses. Their decisions and actions are based on the Continuous Improvement and Innovation (CI&I) process. Capacity building and partnership outcomes are also assessed, and the BPP teams are supported with appropriate tools and resources. In this paper the achievements of the project to date are assessed against the project targets and issues in implementation of the project are discussed

**Keywords:** Accelerated adoption; continuous improvement and innovation; beef industry; profit; productivity; capacity; partnership; efficiency; effectiveness.

#### **Background**

The Cooperative Research Centre for Beef Genetic Technologies (Beef CRC) was proposed with a plan to target faster and more widespread adoption of beef industry technologies. Following acceptance of the bid, the estimated benefits from the business case proposal have become target outcomes for the Beef CRC in the formal contractual agreement with the Commonwealth Government. Given the existing situation with the level and rate of adoption in the beef industry, the focus by the Commonwealth on real industry outcomes and the value of the possible benefits, the new Beef CRC has made a strong commitment to accelerate the rate and raise the level of adoption of beef industry technologies. The challenge for the Beef CRC team managing this commitment has been to design and implement an accelerated adoption project that has the best chance of meeting these targets.

The papers in this special edition have described this project: "Accelerated Adoption through Sustainable Beef Profit Partnerships", or the BPP project. This project is based on implementation of а Sustainable Improvement and Innovation model (Paper 4), which in turn is built around a Continuous Improvement and Innovation process (Paper 3). We have outlined the scientific theories and evidence that were used to design and implement this project (Paper 2), described the main elements of the project (Papers 3 and 4), and detailed how it is organised and

managed (Papers 5-11). Here, we report on achievements and failures to date, and in Paper 13 we elaborate on the opportunities such a project presents to beef businesses and supply chains to improve their economic performance.

Figure 1.2 is reproduced below as Figure 12.1. It shows the eight major steps of the CI&I process that we have asked beef businesses and value chains to use to make improvements and innovations in their businesses. As outlined in the various papers above, we use exactly the same process to make improvements and innovations to project design and management. We have also used the same process to report our project in this special edition. Thus, Paper 1 is the Focus, Papers 2-4 are the Situation Analysis, Papers 5-11 are the Impact Analysis, Action Design and Action Taking, this Paper is the Assessment and Evaluation, and Paper 13 following is the Creation and Synthesis. By undertaking this process we have found already new areas for improvement of the project design, management and evaluation.

And to further reinforce the point made earlier, compared to existing awareness activities and technology pipeline approaches, the "Accelerated Adoption through Sustainable Beef Profit Partnerships" project:

 has a clear focus on accelerated improvement, innovation and adoption projects instead of on general awareness of technology activities;

- has been designed and managed based on scientific theories and evidence;
- is building the capacity to understand, implement and sustain such an approach;
- is working within a partnership and network of partnerships framework; and
- is providing the tools that allow partners to measure where they are now and to monitor how their business practices and processes have changed over time.

Important concepts embedded in this list of differences that contribute directly to "accelerated" achieving improvement, adoption innovation and are rapid improvement and innovation, and rate and scale of impact. Another important concept introduced been sustainable has improvement and innovation.

#### **Project Focus and Target Outcomes**

The BPP project was designed so that the Beef CRC would work in partnerships with individual beef businesses, value chains and the broader Australian beef industry to accelerate improvements, innovations and adoption and assist in meeting the overall Beef CRC target outcome of \$179 million extra profit per year by 2012.

The project has specified the following shorter-term focus, which all partnerships are encouraged to adopt: To achieve an additional 5 per cent improvement in annual business profit among Beef Profit Partners within two years.

Following from this overall focus, the BPP project has specified the following target outcomes:

- Rapid and measurable improvements in productivity, profit and growth;
- Supportive network of rewarding partnerships, contributing to accelerated industry growth; and
- Partners equipped to achieve sustainable improvement and innovation.

To assist in implementing efficient and effective mechanisms that will achieve the target outcomes in the context of the CI&I process, the BPP project has developed a system-wide approach to coordinating and managing the various CI&I partnerships, and a set of integrated strategies. These have been described in earlier papers.

#### **Project Achievements to Date**

In June 2008 there are 34 BPPs in the network, involving 341 businesses, more than 268,000 cattle and more than 1.3 million ha of grazing land (see Table 12.1 and Figure 12.2).

Of these 34 BPPs, 21 are fully effective partnerships with focuses and KPI data reported, involving approximately 180 businesses and 200,000+ cattle. In addition to the 34, there are another 12 BPPs under development, including large beef businesses (corporate sector), private sector sponsored BPPs and supply chain BPPs.

The partnerships are facilitated at a regional level by a primary industries extension officer and managed at the State level by a primary industries manager (see Paper 5). The partnerships meet at least twice a year and they are using a structured CI&I approach to investigate what practices and process can be improved or changed and to describe and measure the potential impacts on areas such as cost of production and profit before the change is implemented.

The partnerships are required to report to the project leadership team each quarter and these reports are collated and summarised into a report to the Industry Implementation and Adoption Committee of the Board of the Beef CRC. An excerpt from a report from one of the Victorian BPPs is shown in Table 12.2. This is mainly in relation to Outcome 1 KPIs. An excerpt from a report from one of the QLD BPP networks is shown in Table 12.3. This is mainly in relation to Outcome 3 KPIs.

The Industry Implementation and Adoption Committee report prepared by the project leadership team is more than 30 pages of dense detail. What follows is a very simplified summary.

In most businesses the changes implemented so far such as rotational grazing, improved pasture management systems and improved animal health and parasite management have been long term improvements. There has to date been little focus at the network level on rapid short term improvements and innovations and this is in part due to the expertise of the facilitators and the focus of the business owners.

The facilitators have extensive knowledge and skills in animal and land management areas and are gradually developing knowledge and skills in CI&I and business decision making. Most of the facilitators have good networking and facilitation skills and

they are enthusiastic and committed to their BPPs and the CI&I process.

There is a strong commitment to using economic tools to assess opportunities for improvement and innovation in relation to partner focuses. An example is given in Table 12.4 where gross margins have been calculated for a range of changes in four beef businesses in Central Queensland and actions have been taken to implement those changes showing the largest increases in expected profitability.

The networks are slowly providing performance data and establishing a common language, practices and beliefs. The network members have taken responsibility for managing the operation of the network and this is very evident in some partnerships where individuals have been asked to leave the network as they were not contributing or acting in the best interest of the partnerships. The partnerships have shared knowledge and information and most partnerships use farm visits as a way of sharing knowledge and learning. Most partnerships have accessed expertise increase external to knowledge and to enhance their decision making.

The networks are providing the scope for stimulating and engaging in social and knowledge transactions but there is little evidence at this stage to suggest they are seeking to stimulate business transactions between members. However as most of the partnerships are in the early developmental stage it is not unusual to find they have not engage in business members. with Also transactions facilitators do not as yet have the experience facilitate expertise to business transactions.

However, as will be expanded on below, there are still insufficient KPI data available to enable analysis of actual profitability changes except for isolated instances. Consequently, aggregated outcomes from the BPP network cannot be estimated, and this situation makes it difficult to convince CRC management of project success. A paradigm shift is required by many BPP partners and facilitators regarding the importance of measuring, monitoring and evaluation for project sustainability.

In relation to project management, the project leadership team also formally report to the Industry Implementation and Adoption Committee each quarter, as shown in Table 12.5. These reports coincide with the scheduled 90-day project leadership team

and 180-day project coordination team face-to-face meetings. The project leader also reports on overall project activities and achievements, such as capacity building workshops, other workshops (for example the "Bridging the Innovation Gaps" workshop conducted in March 2008) and completion and submission of routine documentation (Annual Progress Report and proposed Operational Plan for the coming year).

One major achievement was that the project received an Award for Excellence in Innovation in 2007 from the Cooperative Research Centre's Association, Inc. for the area of Innovation in Education and Training and Public Outreach Activities (see details at the CRC Association website at http://www.crca.asn.au/content/winners-2007-awards-excellence-innovation-perth-conference).

#### **Issues in Implementation**

Major steps forward have been taken as described above, but there could have been more. Here we describe some of the issues faced in implementing the "Accelerated Adoption through Sustainable Beef Profit Partnerships" project.

of the major underlying mentioned in several earlier papers is that systems approaches to project design, leadership and management, and rigorous overt application of continuous improvement and innovation within projects, are not common in agricultural contexts in Australia and New Zealand. Therefore it is to be expected that many of the constraints and challenges that come with applying new, different or counter-cultural approaches will arise during implementation of the BPP project. This has certainly been the case. We need to learn from other industries and contexts where these approaches have been applied, and we need to effectively manage the dissonance that comes with change and innovation.

Issues of cultural change are particularly apparent in relation to the Capacity, Capability and Competency Strategy - primarily cultural change in the agencies supporting the beef business partners in BPP. Many of the agencies associated with the BPP project have cultures based on linear models of innovation which assume that science and research, and scientists and researchers, are primarily responsible for innovation. BPP requires a more contemporary perspective on innovation which emphasises and highlights the innovation potential of all participants in business and industry systems, and therefore

supports capacity enhancement for all partners in the types of knowledge, skills and support that will help realise this potential. Thus all BPP partners cannot necessarily be proactive and empowered, striving for self-improvement, innovation and collective wellbeing, as proposed in the initial project design.

The second cultural change issue is associated with the expectation that all partners will practice CI&I in relation to their own functions and roles in the partnership. capacity There is no better buildina opportunity than actively, rigorously and applying CI&I to one's performance. The understanding that comes with practice has significant benefits for both the individual, and the other BPP partners with whom that individual interacts. One of these benefits is a willingness to be open about and emphasise the use of the CI&I process, thereby breaking away from any tendency to encourage passive, dependent and information-fed use of the process. Such willingness has been slow to evolve. There is a significant opportunity for improving selfpractice of CI&I within the broader BPP team, and this will be a focus for the Capacity, Capability and Competency Strategy over the next 12 to 18 months.

The issues of slow institutional change and slow embracing and practicing of the CI&I process were made more evident in some BPPs where the BPP was added on to, or followed on from, existing group projects. While this made good sense operationally and probably saved time and money in the short run, it may have significant long run costs in the sense of less effective performance from the point of view of the BPP project. For example, a range of economic tools is being used to measure the profitability KPIs across BPPs, and some of these tools (nonnegotiable for contractual or institutional reasons) are only being used on an annual basis. This has not been helpful when the project is attempting to emphasise rapid improvement and innovation.

Another set of issues relate to time and effort. These are precious commodities in any project, organisation or business. Effective improvement and innovation can provide significant value to project effectiveness and efficiency. There can also be significant costs associated with not doing regular and frequent improvement and innovation (of the type suggested in Figure 3.6). Even so, it is difficult to secure the time commitment required to undertake effective improvement and innovation sessions at the appropriate time. This is a real "catch 22" situation that

requires concerted leadership and management to overcome.

One of the issues is that those responsible for leading and managing the project system require high levels of skills in these areas but have limited time to learn and apply them. same people often have other These leadership and administration responsibilities, personal professional and the and commitment needed to be proficient in these areas can be jeopardised by pressures from ineffective or unsupportive governance and organisational systems. Thus, the critical importance of the System Improvement and Innovation Strategy has become more apparent over the past year. Initially it was treated as a 'supporting' strategy, but with time recognition of its importance is growing. This strategy will require greater ingenuity and attention over the next year or so to ensure project success, efficiency and sustainability.

The amount of time and resources available to facilitators is also very limited. The lack of time and resources means that facilitators have limited opportunities to build the capacity of their BPPs to implement CI&I effectively. This lack of time also impacts the leadership team who as yet have spent little time working directly with BPP beef producers. Further, there were considerable delays in many of the BPP partnerships commencing their CI&I process, and ongoing delays, due to facilitator involvement in non-BPP activities such as drought relief workshops and the like.

The issues of culture and time and resources have also impacted on the Measuring, Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy. The MME strategy is responsible for providing training in the economic tools used by the partners, for designing and implementing a monitoring system to provide feedback to partners, and for designing an evaluation system that will demonstrate rapid and measurable improvements in productivity, profit and industry growth.

However, these objectives and responsibilities have not yet been fully achieved, for a range of reasons. First, there has not been a sufficient awareness among many facilitators of the project focus on rapid adoption. Even though the information and training provided by the Capacity, Capability and Competency Strategy and the Communication, Information and Marketing has emphasised "accelerated Strategy adoption" and has provided evidence relating to rapid cycle improvement and on the opportunities for selecting a focus for action that has short as well as long term time frames (Paper 3), not every individual partner has selected a focus which could be categorised as "rapid improvement and innovation". This has negated many potential achievements: more rapidly achieving improvements and rewarding results; more efficiently generating a greater range of improvements; more efficiently capturing improvement ideas to share and learn about; and better maintaining interest motivation.

There has been much debate about efficient reporting frameworks (see Paper 11) which has distracted some partnerships from recording and reporting what they have achieved. By its nature, the reporting and support framework has to provide a sufficiently detailed and flexible mechanism to capture and transmit all of the many and varied large and small changes in practices, processes and outcomes across all partners in the BPP network. However it also has to be sufficiently simple so as not to waste time and incur other costs. Because of the multiple users of the information, and the multiple environments in which it is expected to be the BPP reporting and support framework has been a difficult framework to develop. There have been several versions that have been adapted and improved over time, but we hope that it is now sufficiently flexible to capture real changes in practices, processes and outcomes.

Since not all partners are effectively practicing CI&I in relation to their own functions and roles in the partnership, there has not been a sufficient awareness among many facilitators of the interdependent nature of the three project outcomes and thus the need for reporting on outcomes two and three.

In relation to the R&D Strategy, there were substantial delays in getting it up and running and integrated into the BPP project system. This has impacted on the project's ability to provide evidence back to facilitators of which methods and tools seem to work best in which situations.

Finally, of the six possible Partner Types outlined in Paper 9 (Small/Medium (SMEs), Businesses Large Businesses, Departments, Government Industry Agencies, Commercial Organisations, and Education/Training Institutions), partnerships developed to date only involve SMEs, Government Departments and Industry Agencies, and many of these are not fully effective. The quality of partnerships with industry agencies needs improvement, as does the quality of involvement of industry leaders, and organizational management. New partnerships need to be developed with Large Businesses, Commercial Organisations, and Education/Training Institutions. Overall, the processes of institutionalisation, a key component of the underpinning SI&I model need designing (Paper 4), and contribute implementation to the to sustainability of the partnerships and their improvements and innovations.

#### **Conclusions**

Beef CRC has made a strong commitment to accelerate the rate and raise the level of adoption of beef industry "Accelerated technologies through the Adoption through Sustainable Beef Profit Partnerships" project. This project is based implementation of а Sustainable Improvement and Innovation model (Paper 4), which in turn is built around a Continuous Improvement and Innovation process (Paper 3). The project has a focus to achieve an additional 5 per cent improvement in annual business profit among Beef Profit Partners within two years, and has specified the following target outcomes:

- Rapid and measurable improvements in productivity, profit and growth;
- Supportive network of rewarding partnerships, contributing to accelerated industry growth; and
- Partners equipped to achieve sustainable improvement and innovation.

In this paper the achievements of the project to date were assessed against the project targets and issues in implementation of the project were discussed. While significant progress has been made in some areas, it has been slower than hoped for in other areas. Some major issues have been encountered during implementation in the areas of awareness and commitment to the new culture of improvement and innovation, application of CI&I by all members of the partnerships and limited time and other resources to properly build capacity in key areas.

## **Appendix**

Table 12.1. Current BPP network (June 2008)

	BPPs	Businesses	Cattle ('000)	Area ('000ha)
QLD	10	63	192	1,125
NSW	10	107	>26	>75
VIC	7	105	>30	>68
SA	2	18	na	na
WA	3	20	>10	>30
NZ	2	28	>20	>30
Total	33	341	>268	>1,328

VIC includes Charlton/Cargill Supply Chain BPP, WA includes Harvey Beef Supply Chain BPP.

Table 12.2. Hamilton BPP summary, outcome 1, as at June 2008

ВРР	Facilitator	Number & type of businesses	Herd size	Property sizes	Focuses	Benchmarks	Status / comments
Hamilton		16 businesses;  Breeding, backgrounding fattening, bull beef	Range: 75 to 2,800 breeders;  1,000 steers grow  550 bull beef unit	40 ha to 1,200 ha (more to come)	To improve enterprise profit (beef enterprise gross margin) by an average of 5 % per year by improvements in:  • More efficient on-farm management systems -use of NLIS technology (short-term 12-24 mths)  • Improved parasite management programs (medium term)  • Improved pasture systems (species & bug management) for a 5 % increase in annual beef production (kg/ha) (long-term 24+ months)  • Every group member to have picked up on average at least 3 practice changes by the end of the second year  • Throughput- an average of 5 % improvement in kg liveweight /ha/yr by the end of the second year  • Cost of production - 75 % of the group to have reduced cost of production (adjusted for the effect of drought) by the end of the 2nd year.	2005/06 Financial Data 14 data sets submitted. Cost of Production: Range \$0.75 to \$2.07/kg Gross Margin: Range \$0.58 to \$2.46/kg  2006/07 Financial Data 11 data sets submitted. Cost of Production: Range \$0.74 to \$2.49/kg Gross Margin: Range \$0.58 to \$2.46/kg	Linkage to the EVERGRAZE project of Sustainable Farms CRC and Hamilton trial site, particularly as an aligned extension project to an EVERGRAZE supporting site enabling good opportunities and additional partnership sessions.  Each participant has identified and detailed individual key performance indicators that they are now evaluating against.  The economics specialist has undertaken further analysis of COP data on behalf of the Hamilton and Ballarat BPPs with breakdown into component costs.

Table 12.3. Central QLD BPP network summary, outcome 3, as at June 2008

Type, number and value of information products and sessions		• Information sessions and field trips have been undertaken by all groups to investigate specific areas of interest relevant to their improvement options. The important issue with these events is to ensure that they are tightly connected back into progress through the CI&I process, and do not just become information gathering for the sake of information.
Type of knowledge and skills needed		<ul> <li>Knowledge and skills audits have been conducted with all teams. Detailed results of these assessments can be found in separate reports.</li> </ul>
Type, number and value of skills training		<ul> <li>Value in Beef (VIB) teams have undertaken Breeding EDGE training, training in accessing and using market assessment tools, and MSA training</li> </ul>
		<ul> <li>Research to Reality (R-2-R) teams have undertaken a range of training from interpersonal issues such as communication and succession planning through to range and animal management. These teams have taken an interesting approach where 1 or 2 people who are particularly interested in a topic attend the training and then make an assessment of the event which they then pass on to other people in the R-2-R network. In this way they have been able to direct partners to highly effective training events, and provide advice about events they found less valuable.</li> <li>All CQBEEF teams have undertaken some form of training, mostly in interpersonal skill areas. They have used field</li> </ul>
		days and bus tours to tackle other topics such as animal appraisal and market assessment.
Type and value score of resource kits		<ul> <li>The project leader of the R-2-R project has passed on comment that the BPP resource kit has been valuable.</li> </ul>
Improved knowledge and skills of concepts, methods, tools and technologies		<ul> <li>Dalrymple VIB team: evaluation has showed significant knowledge and skills improvement in genetic improvement and selection practices, crossbreeding, bull and breeder management and fertility improvement, herd budgeting and economic analysis using programs in the Breedcow Dynama package, and utilisation of devices for herd recording.</li> </ul>
Type and number of organisations supporting BPP	16	<ul> <li>Fitzroy Basin Association, Burdekin Dry Tropics NRM,         Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, Beef CRC,         MLA, Resource Consulting Services, Department of Natural         Resources &amp; Water, CSIRO, James Cook University,         University of Queensland, NLIS, Ausmeat, Australian         Agricultural Colleges (Burdekin), AgForce/AgForward, MSA</li> </ul>
Type and number of leaders supporting BPP		<ul> <li>A small number of leaders in State departments of agriculture associated with the project are providing support. However, the level of organisational and network leadership required for sustainability needs to be considerably greater.</li> </ul>
Type and number of leaders using a process of CI&I		<ul> <li>The project leadership team is attempting to use the CI&amp;I process in leading the project, and with the project coordination team which includes coordinators from each participating state. However, there is a significant opportunity to improve the level of practice and competence in CI&amp;I by leaders.</li> </ul>

Table 12.4. Expected gross margins for enterprise changes in four Central QLD beef businesses, as at February 2008 (AE: adult equivalent)

Herd size	Property sizes	Focuses	Benchmarks	Status / comments
800 AE	15,000 ha	Increase weaning % by 10%	Current GM \$108/AE	Very rough country, no subdivision fencing, weaning rate<50%, high
		Halve death rates	GM of change \$121/AE (12% inc.)	death rates, sells 2 YO steers Has started better lick management and has planned better bull and
			GM of change \$133/AE (23% inc.)	female management
1790 AE	10,800 ha	Feed and sell steers younger	Current GM \$225/AE	Already a high performing herd with 81% weaning rate, sells 2-3 YO
		Feed and sell steers younger, and sell higher % of turnoff as bulls	GM of change \$241/AE (7% inc.) GM of change \$260/AE	steers and stud bulls  Has started using BREEDPLAN to improve the bull breeding herd
600 AE	3,300 ha	Increase weaning rate to 80% and sell 3YO steers	(15% inc.) Current GM \$55/AE	Low weaning rate (41%), selling light weaner stores
			GM of change \$125/AE (225% inc.)	Has started strategic supplementation of heifers and breeders and has planned to join breeders earlier.
180 AE	320 ha	Use molasses based supplements for steers,	Current GM \$167/AE	Weaning rate 72%, sells 2 and 3 YO steers to meatworks
		and increase fertility levels in breeding herd	GM of change not yet done	Has started to improve fences, yards and supplement facilities

Table 12.5. Strategy leader reporting, as at June 2008

Strategy	Leader	Status / comments
Communication, information and	Cynthia Mulholland	A BPP Newsletter was distributed to the BPP network in March.
marketing strategy		The BPP website has been regularly updated with information for the BPP network.
		A document titled "Integrated Delivery of Beef CRC Products to the Australian Beef Industry" was produced for discussion/consideration by CRC management.
Capacity, capability and competency	Janice Timms	CI&I Refresher Workshop for BPP Facilitators was conducted in Wagga Wagga on 29 <sup>th</sup> May, 2008.
strategy		Capacity support was provided to State Co-ordinators and individual BPP Facilitators when requested (e.g. advice on implementation of CI&I processes and tools)
Measurement, monitoring and evaluation strategy	Andrew Alford	Feedback and support has been provided to State Co- ordinators and individual BPP Facilitators to improve the level and quality of reporting on KPIs. Outstanding reports are still being sought from several BPP facilitators.
Research and	Paul Hyland	Ph D student (Daowei Sun) commenced in April, 2008.
development strategy		Accelerated adoption R&D plan was developed for the 2008/2009 Operational Plan.
Partnership and	Richard Clark	"Bridging the Innovation Gaps" workshop was conducted on 27 <sup>th</sup> March, 2008.

network strategy		Large beef business strategy was developed and support was obtained from Qld DPI to lead and implement the strategy.
		The design of Regional Innovation Forums that will involve BPP teams from central Queensland and north Queensland, has been commenced. The Forums will take place during the second half of 2008.
System improvement and innovation strategy	Peter Parnell	A BPP Co-ordination Team 180-day Workshop was conducted in Adelaide on 26-27 <sup>th</sup> February to review and improve performance of the BPP network across states. A major focus of the workshop was improving the BPP reporting process to provide greater feedback and support to individual BPP partners, and to facilitate better reporting of achievements across the BPP network and to CRC management.
		Leadership Team meetings were conducted 2-3rd April, 7 <sup>th</sup> May and 6 <sup>th</sup> June to review project progress and improve strategy design and implementation.
		Members of the BPP Leadership Team were involved in a Innovation Systems Workshop, 12 <sup>th</sup> June, 2008.
		Presentation of Annual Progress Report and proposed 2008/2009 Operational Plan to Scientific and Industry Review 15 <sup>th</sup> May, 2008.

Figure 12.1. The eight steps of Continuous Improvement & Innovation designed to achieve improvements and innovations for impact on profit now, and in the future

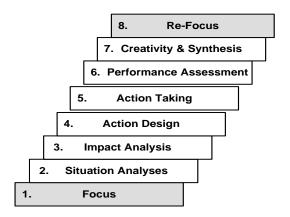


Figure 12.2. BPP locations, as at June 2008

