

SRDC Research Project



Mackay Alignment of Grower Services (MAGS)

Final Report

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B.J. Ashburner¹, J.A. Markley J², J. Muscat³, K. Latter⁴

¹ Mackay Area Productivity Services. PO Box 117 Mackay QLD 4740. bashburner@maps.org.au

² Mackay Sugar Limited. PO Box 5720 Mackay Mail Centre QLD 4741. J.Markley@mkysugar.com.au

³ BSES Limited Now a private Cane Grower. PO Box Oakenden QLD 4741. jcmuscat@qld.chariot.net.au

⁴ Mackay Canegrowers Limited. PO Box 117 Mackay QLD 4740. kerry_latter@canegrowers.com.au

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Executive Summary:

Thy Mackay Sugar region recognized that there was room for improvement of grower services which were available in the region and the following issues were considered to exist:

- Due to a lack of shared vision, coordination of services, and leadership skills between 5 of the major grower service providers in the Mackay region, it has become clear that there is a 'system problem' resulting in confusion amongst growers about who provides what service, and also creates duplication of some services which is wasting time and money
- A competitive mindset which creates a 'silo' mentality amongst each service provider, increasing competitiveness and reducing opportunities for collaboration
- People at an operational level within each service not being aligned with regards to provision of services, creating inconsistent messages being given to growers and thus a loss of trust by the growers
- Leaders of these services managing primarily by inputs rather than outputs / outcomes which results in the outcomes not being reached effectively and efficiently
- No clear leadership at the highest regional level, resulting in no clear direction for the provision of services to growers

An Alignment group was established which consisted in its final form of 33 people covering 8 organisations with 8 elected grower leaders, 9 informal grower leaders, 11 management level leaders and 5 other selected staff members (from 3 organisations). This group appointed a Project Committee and from this Project teams were formed to complete specific tasks. There was also a Stakeholders Group which was selected by the Chairmen of Mackay Sugar Limited and Mackay Cane growers Limited. This was to enable decisions and negotiations to take place with sufficient authority (power).

The Alignment Group attended 5 facilitated workshops and was responsible for setting the vision for the project and providing the guiding steps for the Project Committee to follow. The vision was

"One structure delivering more efficient, cost effective, relevant grower services"

A survey of the Alignment Group plus some selected growers and staff where conducted and these established the perceptions of what grower services were, how well they were currently being performed and whether they were improving stagnating or declining. The results of this reflected that there was not a significant difference within the Alignment Group and allowed for the priority services to be determined.

Three project teams established and the following were produced

- The principles for the change
- Possible structures for the change to one body and
- An analysis of grower service and whether they would benefit from being part of one service

From this a first step recommendation was made to the Alignment Group and the Mackay Sugar Industry Partnership (Mackay Sugar, Mackay Canegrowers, ACFA and Australian Cane Harvesters Association).

The above opened a range of options and the reality of any possible change had to be practical to implement and have the backing of the people with the power to create the change. Thus the recommendations were limited to Research, Development and Extension with the emphasis on extension.

The recommendation was to establish Mackay Area Productivity Service as the one body through which all local R, D and E service fees were paid and they then provided the strategic direction for local R, D and E and contracted or provided the service as required.

At this point the Stakeholders Group became involved and they produced a set of directives which were

- Develop and implement 'one extension service'
- Negotiate a Service Level Agreement between MAPS and BSES to support new arrangement
- Provide sufficient skilled staff
- Provide data collection and reporting for the industry
- Review MAPS Board makeup and skill set
- Report Regularly on Key Performance Indicators (KPI,s) and progress.

Subsequent to this the basis of one extension service built into a service agreement between MAPS and BSES was developed and the implementation stage of the project started.

The people likely to be involved in the one extension service attended workshop 5 and this determined how the one extension service would be implemented. From this AgriServ Central was formed which combined the BSES extension services and MAPS services under the one banner with one work plan.

The outcomes overall are that the region has the growers and millers planning the strategic direct and needs for R, D and E together as the MAPS Board and are engaging the service providers to meet these needs. Previously this was a very fragmented system. This gives much clearer leadership and allows the service providers like BSES to have one body to negotiate with. This allows the MAPS Board to become more specialised in R, D and E issues which improves the communication between service providers and the regional leadership.

Overall the structure is more efficient. The local growers have more involvement and direct control with the funding going through the MAPS Board. This leads to improved and direct feedback to service providers.

The MAGS process could be used in all regions and it would give the stakeholders a chance to a common vision and if so to be able to look at the options for improved structures and improved accountability for service providers. It is however essential to have the right people involved and establish the clear need for change. The actual structural model could well be used in all regions however each region has a slightly different set of current structures.

Background:

The Mackay region has a production area of approximately 90,000 ha and 900 growing entities which supply sugar mills owned by Mackay Sugar Limited.

The grower services include a wide range of activities some of which are currently being delivered and some of which are being planned or will be delivered into the future. The project did not wish to limit the grower services considered and whilst there is no definitive list, it included extension / advisory, R&D, farm economics, mapping, productivity data, variety distribution, representation e.g. cane supply agreements and environmental issues.

In the past within the Mackay region, there have been quite high levels of mistrust, duplication, inefficiencies, and unnecessary competition. It is now that the Mackay region wants to become more progressive and innovative and thus they are ready to change the way they do business. The aim is to increase the service provision, encouraging self responsibility and greater proactivity regarding change.

Hildebrand (2002) recommended a mill region approach and the Mackay region has been proactive in this regard with Mackay Sugar Industry Partnership (MSIP) and Central Region Sugar Group (CRSG). The Cooperative systems project addressed issues across the value chain and this project is seen as enhancing that work to draw out regional leadership for grower services. There is also a known shortage of skilled agricultural people. All grower services will need to do more with less into the future. Thus the optimum utilisation of resources to achieve maximum benefit to growers is essential.

Key players within the industry recognised that there was a gap between where we were and where we needed to be, and this project has full endorsement of these same people.

The following issues were considered to exist:

- Due to a lack of shared vision, coordination of services, and leadership skills between 5 of the major grower service providers in the Mackay region, it has become clear that there is a 'system problem' resulting in confusion amongst growers about who provides what service, and also creates duplication of some services which is wasting time and money
- A competitive mindset which creates a 'silo' mentality amongst each service provider, increasing competitiveness and reducing opportunities for collaboration
- People at an operational level within each service not being aligned with regards to provision of services, creating inconsistent messages being given to growers and thus a loss of trust by the growers
- Leaders of these services managing primarily by inputs rather than outputs / outcomes which results in the outcomes not being reached effectively and efficiently
- No clear leadership at the highest regional level, resulting in no clear direction for the provision of services to growers

Objectives:

1. Develop a 'shared vision' amongst all service providers

A shared vision amongst "all" service providers was extremely ambitious however there has been a significant shared vision between Mackay Sugar Limited, Mackay Canegrowers Limited, Mackay Area Productivity Services and BSES Limited for change in the area of extension and advisory services.

2. Increase the capacity of those within the sugar industry culture to participate as co-learners and to change

The process of "meetings without discussion" has led to a non confrontational way of establishing where everyone is and what the next steps need to be. This process may not stay but the whole region definitely has a more cooperative approach with MAGS as a word used to discuss "working together".

3. Develop a regional approach to leadership (rather than the current fragmented approach)

The regional approach to overall leadership was developing before MAGS however in the extension and advisory services the MAPS Board has certainly taken on a more responsible leadership role and represents growers and millers. The MAPS Board creates one focus point for the R, D and E issue to be channeled through and thus they can provide a more genuine regional leadership role.

4. Improve the capacity of grower service providers to deliver optimum services in their field of expertise.

The formation of AgriServ has allowed for the development of more specialized functions to deliver extension and advice. There are distinct teams which did not exist before and there is a more focused approach to customer service.

5. Develop a more collaborative team of 'leaders' within the Mackay sugarcane industry who deliver a cohesive service to its client base

As mentioned the collaborative leadership was in progress before MAGS with the formation of Mackay Area Partnership, the Cooperative systems project and then the Central region Sugar group. The chairmen of Mackay Sugar Limited and Canegrowers were able to put together a team which became known as the Stakeholders Group and from this come up with their expectations of what to deliver as a conclusion to the MAGS process

6. Develop principles and processes for regional collaboration that can be transferred and used in other areas / regions / industries

There have been consultations with Burdekin Productivity Services and with Plane Creek Productivity Services and the principles of what was done has been explained and they assess the suitability for their region. The inclusion of Proserpine and Plane Creek areas into the process was always a dilemma.

Methodology:

The process was split into three stages. Stage one was to ensure commitment to the process and to determine if there was sufficient urgency to change. Stage 2 was to decide what to do and start moving into action and Stage 3 was to start the implementation. The commitment of people and organisations was always a major consideration and stop go decisions were established at various points.

Stage 1 Engagement and Commitment

Initial Engagement

Prior to starting the project a level of commitment had been received from selected leaders and managers and their organisations. This was in the form of direct communication with the leaders by the investigators. The selection of the people to have the conversation with was based on the power to lead and influence outcomes particularly in their organisations. These were termed the leadership group.

Each individual in the group as selected above had a personal meeting with one of the consultants. This meeting included a survey about their perception of what grower services where and how well they were performing and it assessed their commitment to the overall objectives of the MAGS process. This led to a commitment to attend the first workshop.

The selection of and commitment from this group was an essential element to the future success of the project.

Workshop 1 was then held with this group. The consultants (SeeChange and Ploughman) were used for the facilitation and design. The workshop process was based on Ploughman's meetings without discussion and some time was spent on establishing this as the process to be used throughout the project. The main objective of this workshop was to obtain commitment to the project and to establish that there was a common perceived need to change. This would according to Kotter's Eight Steps Process for creating Major Change ensure there was an urgency to change and provide the guiding coalition.

The commitment was obtained and was demonstrated by an agreed statement of commitment signed by all participants. This statement was

"We agree to better co-ordination of all grower services to provide increased sustainability for the Mackay sugar area and commit to actively participate in the MAGS project to achieve this goal".

A further output from the workshop was the determination of the next steps which were to

- Ensure the "right people" were part of the future workshops including people with the power to make changes, the people who will be involved in the implementation (staff members) and the growers. It was unfortunate that the Chairmen of Mackay Canegrowers and Mackay Sugar were unable to attend.
- A clear vision

The Right People

Table 1 reflects the makeup of the final Alignment Group. The initial leadership group identified that certain other Grower and Management leaders should be present and these people were invited to attend the Alignment Group workshops.

It was also identified that growers not in an official leadership role needed to be included. A process of selecting Psychometric stars was used to determine the informal grower leadership. An extension officer (it could be anyone who has a wide network with the grower community) was asked to supply the names of six growers who had no formal leadership role but who knew and understood the workings of the local sugar industry well. Each of these six growers were phoned and asked to supply the names of six growers (now potentially 36 growers if no grower was named twice) who were then phoned for another round of names and so on. In excess of 150 growers were phoned. The names which were supplied the most often were then selected as the informal grower leadership. Some of the selected growers were invited to attend the workshops and be interviewed as part of the "Alignment Group" (explained later) and some were just be part of the interview group.

The same process was applied to select female growers starting with a member of the Mackay Canegrowers Network. Table 1 shows that there were 9 informal growers three of which were female growers.

The same process was applied to the selection of staff members which covered staff from Mackay Sugar Limited, BSES Limited, Mackay Area Productivity Services, Mackay Canegrowers and Agri-business. Five members of staff were added to the Alignment Group and the interview group.

Table 1 clearly shows the organisational affiliation of the Alignment Group.

Table 1. Alignment Group Invited to Attend Workshops showing the Selection Group they represented within the Project and the Organisation they were affiliated to.

Organisational Affiliation	Selection Grouping				
	Growers Leadership	Informal Grower	Management Leadership	Staff	Grand Total
Australian Cane Farmer Association	2				2
BSES Limited	1		2	1	4
DPI			2		2
Grower Individuals		9			9
Mackay Area Productivity Services	1		1	2	4
Mackay Canegrowers Limited	2		2		4
Mackay Sugar Limited	2		3	1	6
Reef Catchments			1		1
Agri Business				1	1
Grand Total	8	9	11	5	33

Determining Grower Service Issues

With the Alignment Group selected it was important to determine whether the various sectors of the group (Informal growers, Leaders and Staff) perceived the grower service delivery in the same light and to determine which grower services to prioritise.

The informal growers and staff were surveyed in the same manner as the Leadership individually by the consultants. Figure 1 shows the five top grower service mentioned in order of priority and the rating by each of the three sections of the Alignment group of how well these services were being currently delivered.

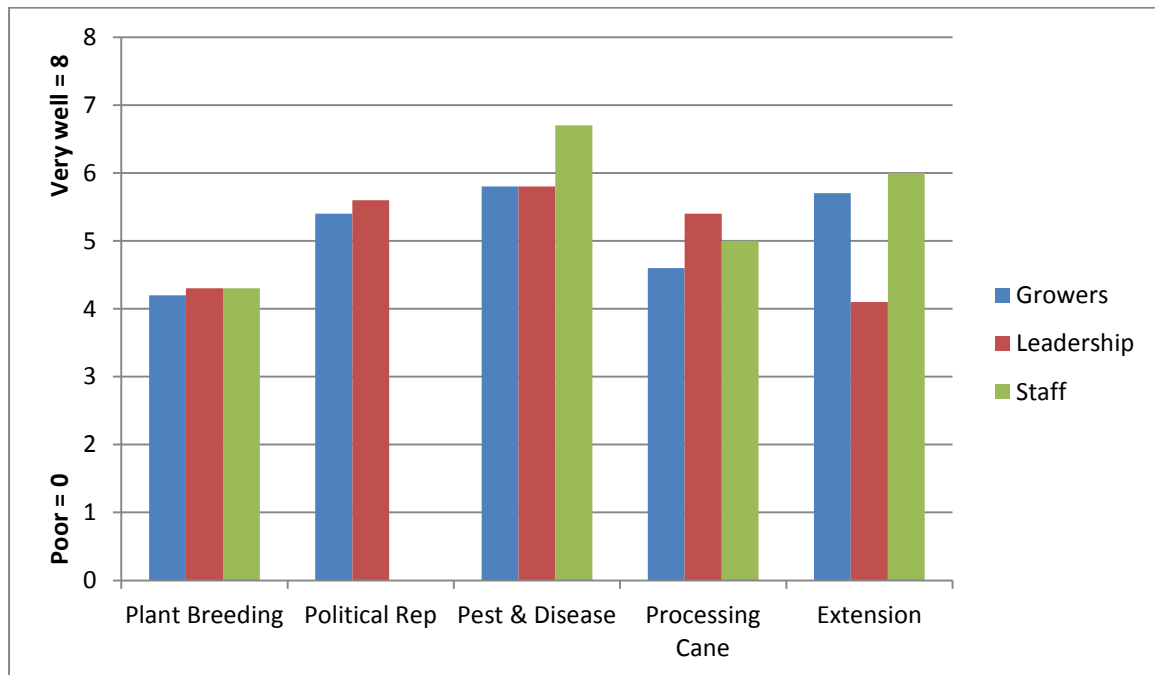


Figure 1. How well are the service providers are providing the service?

Figure 2 shows the three sectors of the Alignment Group's perceptions of whether the grower service delivery was declining or improving

The leadership, growers and staff did not perceive the current state of service delivery differently except perhaps the extension services.

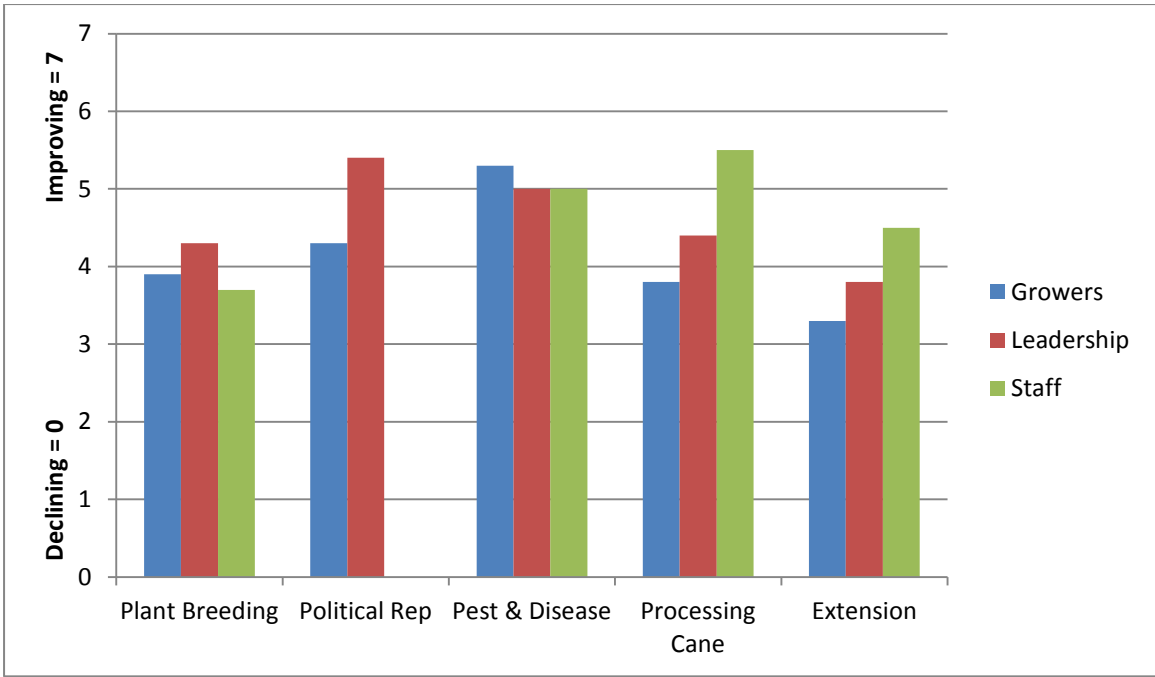


Figure 2. What are the trends in the delivery of grower services over the last five years?

The expanded Alignment Group was invited to Workshop 2 and the main objective was to process the interview / survey results, develop a vision and to develop the next steps required to address the issues which arose.

Determining Alignment Group perception mismatch

The overall conclusion from the interviews / survey was that the growers, leaders and staff all had a similar perception as to the prioritisation of the grower services, how well they were currently being operated and the trend in the level of service. Had this not been the case then it would have been necessary to determine why. The notable differences were that the leadership felt extension was not being currently delivered as well as growers and staff felt it was and that staff did not mention political representation as a grower service.

There was also a qualitative assessment conducted and the results are attached in Appendix 1. The qualitative information did not lead to any different conclusion to the above however the extension service was again single out as having some areas perceived as operating well but others as operating at a lower level. This enabled future prioritisation to be made.

The grower service of plant breeding was rated less favourably than other services however the qualitative information suggested that this was due to the recent outbreak of smut and the limited number of smut resistant varieties which were an emotive issue at the time.

Developing a Vision

Using the meetings without discussion process the Alignment Group developed a vision which was

“One structure delivering more efficient, cost effective, relevant grower services”

With this vision the Alignment Group determined the Next Steps. These were

- To develop a project leadership structure that has the right people with forward vision to meet grower service requirements?
- To develop agreed principles of change (strategy before structure)
- To determine what grower services could be part of “one body”
- To start identifying what structure the “one body” from the vision statement should take

Project Organisation Structure

It was an important step to have the right people involved at the right time and that there was some structure to keep the project going and actually start making recommendations. The final organisational structure of the project is shown in Figure 3. To some extent this evolved during the life of the project.

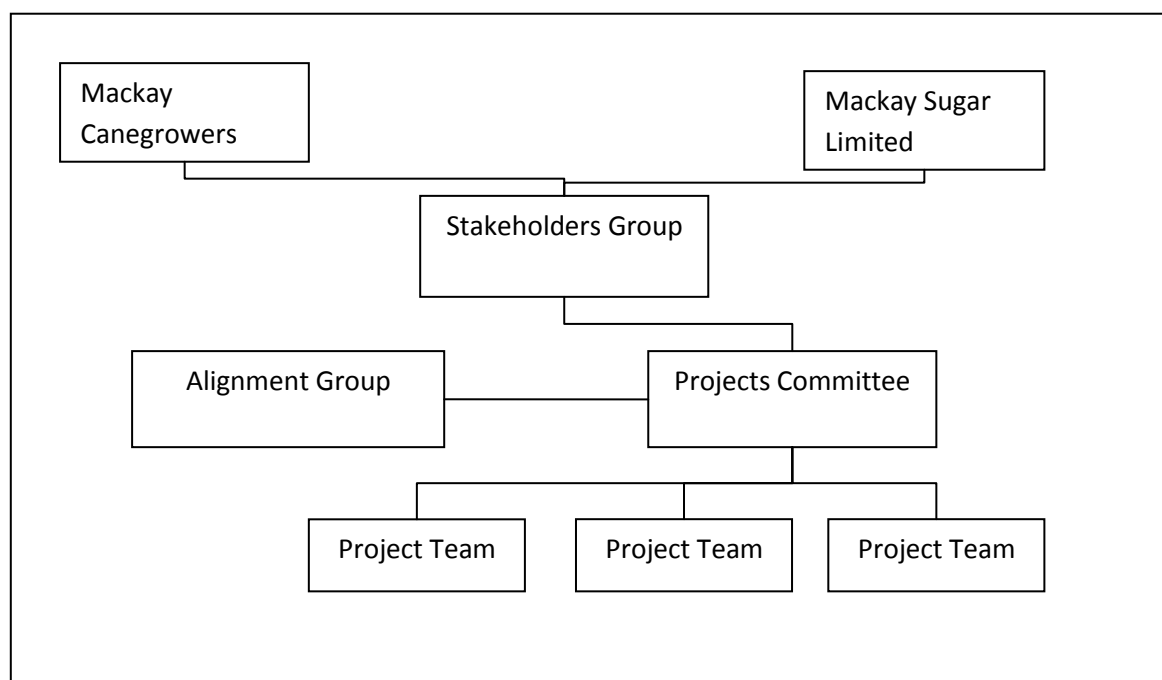


Figure 3. MAGS Final Organisational Structure

The Stakeholders group developed because there was a need for the people with the power to make a change to be engaged. This group was not selected as part of the project and was lead by the Chairmen of the involved organisations. It was initially planned that these people would be inside the Alignment Group but it was apparent that the stakeholders required discussions amongst themselves and with their Boards before decisions could be made.

The Mackay Sugar Industry Partnership became involved and was part of workshop 4 the results of which are discussed later. The Central Region Sugar Group was also investigating Grower Services particularly Extension Service offered by BSES Limited and the Productivity Services. The Stakeholder Group and BSES limited had discussions at the Board Chairmen level in order to resolve issues which had been raised not just by the MAGS project but as mentioned above by the region through other channels. Most of this was effectively outside the project but was partly as a result of the project and the outcomes had a direct bearing on the project because the stakeholders were directly affected and had the power.

The Alignment Group has already been mentioned and was the group selected to guide the project. It included a wide range of people to ensure that the right voices could be heard. This group of 33 people had 5 workshops in total.

The Project Committee was selected by the Alignment Group and consisted of 8 members. This was the group which investigated the issues and reported back to the Alignment Group and which became more involved with the Stakeholders group. This group included the project investigators.

The Project teams allowed the Project Committee to draw in the skills that may be required to complete tasks as necessary. Project teams covered the following topics.

Principles for Change

The Alignment Group identified that it was necessary to have some principle for and change. The Project Committee formed a project team to develop these principles which were approved by the Alignment Group. These were

- Define options for one structure for the central region with clear terms of reference
- Identify inclusive and effective leadership
- Identify true costs and benefits and accountability issues - and demonstrate transparency
- Identify effective and sustainable change management and communications processes
- Maintain focus on delivering better services to growers and millers
- Define grower service priorities and best practice services
- Ensure minimum disruption to relevant grower services

Determining Grower Service which will benefit from being part of “one body”

Again a project team from the Project Committee was formed to try and determine the grower services which could benefit from being part of “one body”. This process listed all the grower services mentioned in the initial interviews and asked the following questions

- Should the service be State wide, Central region or just Mackay region?
- Is there benefit to managing the service in “one body”?
- Will services improve from alignment between individual providers?
- Will services improve from alignment between providers and local industry?
- How will the service improve with 1 structure (Benefits)?
- What are the possible costs / downside?
- What are the potential blocks to change?

The objective of this exercise was to evaluate all grower services in an objective manner and provided a list for the Alignment Group to evaluate on a logical basis the results are shown in Appendix 2. The Alignment Group members had a wide range of expectations as to the extent of change that could be made and what the “one body” could offer in terms of services. It was obvious that all the services could not just be rolled into “one body” as there were current practical issues and added to this there were organisational interests which could not be ignored. The reality was that the Stakeholder Group became involved and there were practical limits set on which services should be prioritised. This led to the first step recommendation which is discussed in the next stage.

Possible Structure for the “one body”

A third project team from the Project Committee looked at the issue of what structure was the most appropriate for the “one body”. The principles for the structure were as follows

- Inclusive and effective committee/board
- Single uncomplicated management and decision making processes
- Customer focus and consultative processes
- Focus on BMP in both service delivery and extension
- Transparent funding and funding processes
- Cutting edge bias

The information produced by the Project Committee and the project teams was communicated to the Stakeholder Group and there was significant interaction with the Project Committee, the Stakeholders group and the individual organisations most affected namely Mackay Sugar Limited, Mackay Canegrowers Limited and BSES Limited. The result of this was a recommendation from the Project Committee which was practical in terms of manageable change.

Stage 2 Moving to action.

The Project Committee made the first step recommendation to a combined workshop (workshop 4) of the Alignment Group and Mackay Sugar Industry Partnership (MSIP). It was essential to include MSIP because ultimately they represented the power to make the changes. The recommendation was based on achieving the following objective

“To have **one body** which represents growers and millers and is **accountable** to them and **empowered** by them to determining the local R, D and E **strategic direction and priorities** and **ensure delivery** is efficient, cost effective and relevant”.

This statement purposely reflects R, D & E and the recommendations were based on some critical points in the statement.

One body – The MAGS project identified that MAPS (with some possible changes) is the logical one body which can represent the grower and miller needs in the Mackay Sugar region. Thus BSES only has one body to deal with and one contractual arrangement for the region.

Accountable – MAPS must be responsible and accountable to the region for successful outcomes. This clearly means that the MAPS and BSES drivers must be aligned for a successful contractual arrangement.

Empowered – initially Mackay Sugar will direct its funding through MAPS and this will genuinely empower them to contract the necessary services. Ideally the grower service fees would also be directed through the one structure and this is being explored. The objective of this is to give BSES security of funding based on contractual arrangements.

Strategic direction and priorities – MAPS must ensure that it has sufficient knowledge and skill to be able to operate at a strategic level. The implication for BSES will be that the one body will clearly be responsible for presenting the needs and priorities of the region and communicate these to BSES.

Ensure delivery – the one body has the responsibility to ensure the delivery of R, D & E services. This will be a combination of contracted services and in house direct services.

The recommendations were agreed to in principle at workshop 4. Effectively negotiations to allow the recommendations to be implemented were in the hands of the Stakeholders Group. The deliberations were also set in the context of a Central Region Sugar Group subcommittee looking at extension delivery in the whole Central region. There were extensive consultations with the Stakeholders, BSES Limited and MAPS and the result was a directive to MAPS from the Stakeholders Group. These were

- Develop and implement 'one extension service'
- Negotiate a Service Level Agreement between MAPS and BSES to support new arrangement
- Provide sufficient skilled staff
- Provide data collection and reporting for the industry
- Review MAPS Board makeup and skill set
- Report Regularly on Key Performance Indicators (KPI,s) and progress.

The MAGS project again did not have a significant role in the actual negotiation between MAPS and BSES Limited however the project had cleared the way for this to happen. The next step for the project was to implement the changes created by the decisions made.

Stage 3 Implementation

BSES and MAPS engaged to progress stakeholder expectations and one extension service was incorporated into a Service Agreement. The MAPS KPI's (including Stakeholder set KPI's) and BSES KPI's were combined and included into one work plan and an extension model was proposed which included the combination of MAPS and BSES staff. This model is attached in Appendix 3 and clearly shows geographic extension teams and topic related or passionate teams. Although the expectations from stakeholders were not negotiable the process of implementation and any issue relating to that were important in the change process.

Extension Team Implementation

Workshop 5 was held with BSES and MAPS staff and the purpose of the workshop was

- to inform the people involved why the change has come about
- what process has been followed to get to the current model and
- what the model was
- to receive feedback on what needs to happen to implement the model successfully

- define the roles of the people
- to develop plans for implementation

This allowed for implementation issues to be developed by the people who would be implementing the changes.

- Ideas on the structure of Geographic team and skills required in the team
- How we communicate the change to our customers, what reaction can we expect and how do we support them
- What are the next implementation steps
- How do we work as a team

The extension model was endorsed at workshop 5 and the skills and roles required in the teams which were part of the model involved were developed. Ideas for communication with customers were generated and the next steps were determined and these were

- Identify geographic teams and areas in consultation with staff
- Establish passionate teams in consultation with staff
- Establish and communicate KPI's with staff
- Develop work plans and operating budgets
- Position descriptions
- Make formal proposal to BSES Board
- Regular official feedback and discussion with staff
- Establish a name and logo for the one extension service
- Have an official launch
- Employ any new staff required
- Address Board structure / skills
- All involved Boards to issue a statement agreeing to this model

Passionate Teams Implementation

Workshop 7 engaged the people involved in the Passionate teams. This was a separate workshop because there were people (essentially researchers and extension staff) from other areas and different organisations involved and they needed to understand the extension model and then concentrate on what role the passionate teams would play. The teams were effectively set up with some basic objectives and roles determined to allow for implementation to progress.

Alignment Group Report back

A final workshop was held with the Alignment Group to report back what had happened since the last meeting and to obtain their views on what went well and what did not and how well the project followed the change process. The learning's from the process were also established. This was a closure meeting which was important in terms of communication.

Outputs and Outcomes:

One structure

MAPS became the “one body” for local R, D & E funding to go through. There was agreement between the mill owner and the grower bargaining representatives that the Grower BSES service fee and the MAPS levy (matched by the miller) would be included in the Cane Supply and Processing Agreement to be deducted by the miller and paid to MAPS. There was a further agreement between Mackay Sugar Limited and MAPS to pay to MAPS an amount equivalent to the BSES service fee. Thus all the local R, D and E service fees and levies were paid to MAPS. In theory the MAPS Board is empowered to use this funding to purchase R, D & E from any provider. In reality BSES or MAPS themselves are the only current providers.

MAPS then had a Service Agreement with BSES to provide core services and regional services. The core services consisted of state wide R&D which was done in conjunction with other regions e.g. plant breeding and bio-security. Regional service was paid for the BSES input into the newly named “one extension service” AgriServ Central.

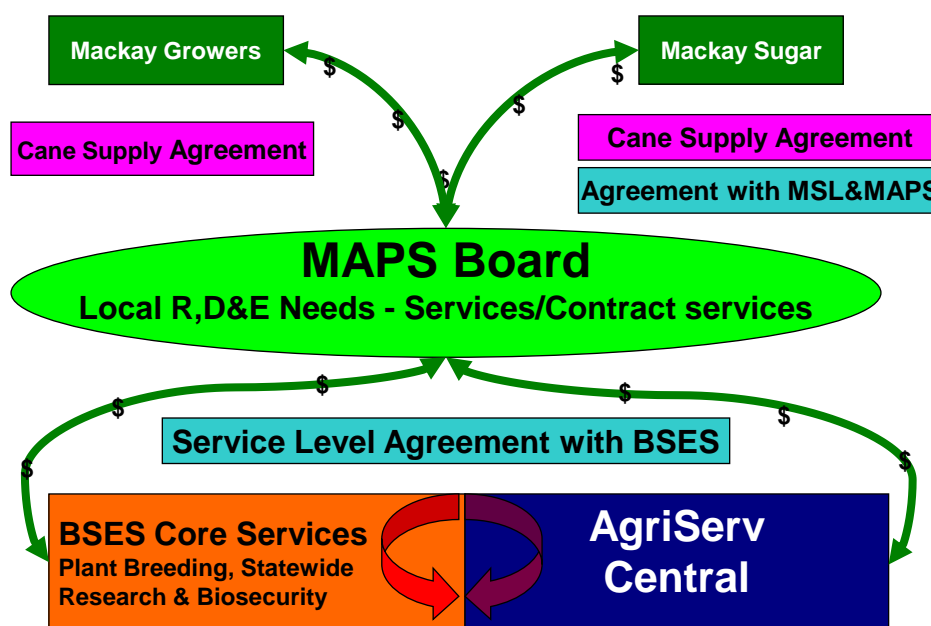


Figure 3. Flow of BSES/MAPS Grower Service Funds

One Extension Service

AgriServ Central was based on an agreed extension model with geographic teams and passionate (or topical) teams as per Appendix 2. The important issue within AgriServ is that it consists of staff from MAPS and BSES and the funds are split according to the inputs to AgriServ. The MAPS Board ultimately approves the AgriServ work plan and is responsible for ensuring it is managed and completion. There is one work plan to cover all of BSES and AgriServ functions. There is a reporting process to the Stakeholders with KPI's set by them.

The following are the outputs expected from the project and some evidence as to whether they have been achieved or not.

1. Documented perceptions of the current situation

The perception of members of the Alignment Group to the current situation with grower services is reflected Appendix 1 with Figures 1 and 2 also reflect the some of the data which was generated from the process. This output allowed the Alignment Group to achieve consensus on what the main issue were and where manageable change could occur.

2. Signed documentation showing the commitment to change and Vision and Objective for achievable change

The commitment to change and to development of a vision and a first step objective for the project was achieved with a high level of agreement. This demonstrated that there was a strong level of consensus amongst the Alignment Group of what was considered to be a more desirable state.

3. A transferable process that could be used with other industries, and with other sugar service providers to enhance the collaboration amongst groups

A clear model for the payment of funds and the contracting of R, D and E for a region has been demonstrated and shown in Figure 3. The process to obtain this is described in the methodology. As a transferable process there are limitations because the process is not entirely predetermined as demonstrated by the formation of the Stakeholder Group without which no further decisions could have been made.

4. Reflections on what worked and what didn't work through this process, as well as key learning's and generalisations from this experience.

Workshop 5 with the Alignment Group produced information on the following

- What went well and what did not go so well with regard to structures/outcomes
- Why People Resisted Change
- For the future how could we address or reduce resistance
- What we have learnt from this process and what we would we plan to do next time

The main issues were with in relation to the initial lack of "buy-in" from the hierarchy / Chairmen and the need to ensure this from the outset. This was unavoidable in the circumstances but it did lead to the project being prolonged while the Stakeholder Group formed and followed their process to come to their expectations. This is expanded on in Expected Outcomes.

5. Mapping of the culture and leadership styles

The leadership culture for Mackay Sugar Limited and Mackay Canegrowers had been mapped in a workshop during the formation of MSIP and it was not considered necessary to repeat this process.

The following are the outcomes expected from the project and some evidence as to whether they have been achieved or not

1. Increased grower engagement in the decision making process regarding services that require delivery (Stage One)

The inclusion of the informal grower leadership in the Alignment Group was essential to the project. The selection method produced growers with credibility and the fact that they were not representing a particular organization was important. These growers combined with the leadership allowed for different views to be heard by the people with the powers to make changes within the system.

2. An understanding of the causes of the current situation, and thus the need for change if the industry is to survive (Stage One)

The need for change was never in dispute and thus to try and determine the causes to create a need was not an issue. There appeared to be no issue that the current situation needed changing the issue was more with how to make this change without organisations feeling that they were threatened or negatively affected.

3. Increasing synergies between organisations (trust, openness and honesty) through clear, structured communication (Stage One)

As the project progressed the organizations were able to clearly have their say in the process. Using the meetings without discussion allowed everyone to be heard. The increased synergy between organisations was apparent by the fact that there was an agreed significant change to the system of determining the regional R, D and E requirements and ensuring the delivery of these.

4. Agreement and commitment to a shared vision for the local industry (Stage Two)

A shared vision was developed quicker and more easily than expected and it has been documented earlier. The fact that this process appeared relatively easy is a testament to the three outcomes above. Without sufficient grower engagement in the process, a good common understanding of the current situation and good (improving) synergies between the organisations this would not have been the case.

5. An increased awareness of leadership styles and culture and the impact these are currently having on the industry (Stage Two)

This was dropped as a formal part of the project due to the fact that a similar exercise had been carried out previously with the formation of the Mackay Sugar Industry Partnership. However informally this was part of the issues which were being faced and in hind sight perhaps a revisit of this may have been useful. It is not felt that the organisation have a good awareness of the impact of their leader styles and culture on the industry.

6. An enhanced ability to give and receive feedback, communicate effectively and participate as co-learners (Stage Two)

The communication between Mackay Sugar Limited, Mackay Canegrowers Limited, MAPS and BSES has improved significantly with MAPS being the central body to deal with the R, D and E issues for the region. BSES have a clearer line of communication in the region with a single body to deal with contractually and for the development of ideas and future plans.

7. A regional approach to leadership which creates improved communication, improved decision making and greater consistency in the way services are delivered (Stage Three)

The MAPS Board consists of an equal number of grower directors and miller directors and this Board has an expanded role in being accountable for the R, D and E delivered to the region. The MAPS Grower Directors are elected by all growers. There are only two members of MAPS the Grower Member and the Miller member. The grower member of MAPS is held by Mackay Canegrowers Limited in trust for all growers and the Miller member is Mackay Sugar Limited. Thus growers through their elected Board members and the Mackay Canegrowers Limited organisation have a direct input into the determination of the R, D and E services. Prior to this Mackay Sugar Limited, Mackay Canegrowers Limited and MAPS worked independently in determining R, D and E needs and negotiating these with providers where possible. There was certainly no formal agreement for this to happen. This structure means that growers are definitely more engaged in the overall decision making

8. Improved delivery of services by each and every service provider - greater efficiency, less duplication, saving time and money (Stage Three)

The project was limited to R, D and E issues and thus each and every service provider was not possible. However the formation of AgriServ has enabled the extension service to be enhanced with more direct grower input to meet their needs. This has given more focus and clarity of job descriptions. The formations of the Geographic and Passionate teams are a reflection of this. The one work plan and management system has reduced duplication and added efficiency to the extension program.

BSES have one local body to present and have agreement on their overall work plan for the region which must improve the service direction from a local perspective

Intellectual Property and Confidentiality:

There is no intellectual property that prevents free access by the industry to the technology and outputs of the project.

Environmental and Social Impacts:

An improved extension and advisory service ultimately leads to improved farming systems and optimised input se which has potential positive implications for sustainability

The social effects of the MAGS project are in the cooperation and trust which has continued to be built between organisations which were seen as competitors previously. Along with this is an

improvement of the communications, openness and attitude of the staff at all levels particularly at field level.

Expected Outcomes:

The following are the longer term outcomes expected from the project

1. A more co coordinated, efficient and effective service provision in the Mackay District

This outcome is in the process of being achieved and with the combination of the productivity services and the BSES extension there is already significant improvement in the coordination with one organisation. There is reduced duplication of effort with one work plan ensuring that role is clear and therefore increased efficiency. Being under one banner also ensures that there is a consistency of the extension messages to the growers.

With the MAPS Board being responsible for ensuring the R, D and E delivery in the region there is more coordination overall with the region being able to determine the services required by the region. The strategic direct is determined by the MAPS Board on behalf of the whole region.

This model could be considered for other regions of the industry to allow the grower and milling sectors to combine under one banner to strategically provide direction for R, D and E. This also enables the R, D and E service providers to have one body to deal with which again leads to improved coordination, efficiency and ultimately the region will receive the service expected.

2. A more profitable growing sector in Mackay

This has not been specifically measured and the magnitude of the increase will be difficult to isolate when measured against other drivers of profitability.

3. Increased confidence among the wider Australian Sugar Industry that structural reform can occur

There has been a definite structural change with the advent of AgriServ Central and this has certainly been noticed by other regions of the Sugar Industry. There have been direct approaches from the Burdekin and Plane Creek areas to understand the process used and how the model works at present.

4. Improve grower satisfaction with the delivery of services

The feedback from the grower leaders is that there is an improvement in the services particularly in coordinating local events and in the attitude of the staff within AgriServ. It is considered too soon to get an formal evaluation of general growers satisfaction with the new services. One grower on the Alignment group believed that he could already feel that attitude of the AgriServ Central staff was more positive.

The Learning's from the project

Appendix 4 provides the Alignment Groups feedback on the project which was obtained from a facilitated closure workshop and table 2 reflects the learning's recorded at this workshop. This

clearly gives some feedback on issues which are important when following a process like that of MAGS.

Table 2 - Learning's from the MAGS Process

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT FROM THIS PROCESS (LEARNINGS)	WHAT WE WOULD WE PLAN TO DO NEXT TIME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Like minded group (key people) with passion and commitment can make change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear common objectives. Select likeminded people. Survey recipients of project to define needs. Clearly define stakeholders. Consultants to clarify and assist with process. Set short term 'wins'.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involve range of views. Focused group needed to implement change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All stakeholders. Positive and negative. Be prepared to accept views and combine to best plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set realistic but hard/goals with high achievable outcome. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to work hard time/commitment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective, consistent communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speak as often as possible from one hymn page.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short term wins. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staged process good to communicate.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must have the right people in the room and power? The Project Committee must combine with power (stakeholders group) at the right time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine early how to engage. Understand and identify obstacles / resistance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other stakeholders may not share my enthusiasm for change despite obvious benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> View change from all viewpoints. Positive and negative. Identify issues and address.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People nod and say yes but are not with you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try and identify them and what the issues are.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following process prevents the unexpected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow a process to anticipate reactions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication must be maintained even if nothing to report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication plan. Who, when, how.

Table 3 shows what went well and what did not go well in achieving the outcomes. The following points are highlighted.

Having the right people involved is essential. One of the biggest issues with the MAGS process was that the Chairmen of Mackay Sugar Limited and Mackay Canegrowers Limited were unable to attend the initial workshops (due to unforeseen circumstance rather than a lack of commitment). This led to their slight alienation from the project although they were kept informed. Thus when the

recommendations were made the Stakeholders Group was required to give them the time and opportunity to assimilate and assess what was acceptable to them. This in turn led to a delay in the process and a certain lack of continuity for the participants in the Alignment Group. Having the people with the power to make decisions is essential and they need to be fully engaged at all times.

A clear vision statement is essential. The Alignment Group believed the vision statement (developed with relative ease and speed) was important to keep the project on track and clear about what was required.

The Project Committee function was important. The Project Committee was appointed by the Alignment Group and was considered to have included the right mix of people and functioned well as a team. Getting this group right is essential to the project progress. There needs to be sufficient skills and credibility.

Resistance to change is very real and needs to be managed where possible. The following points were made by the Alignment Group on the reasons for resistance to change in this project

Why People Resisted Change

- Positional power fear of losing the power
- Threatening their existence or identity (loss of organisation relevance).
- Fear of the unknown
- Perception of change in financial position.
- Happy with status quo -human nature
- Perception – negative (communication).
- Legal issues (changing the structure).
- Not knowing all the facts.

For the future how could we address or reduce resistance

- Identify where to expect to get resistance from at the start. Create a process (formal) to deal with expected resistance.
- Engage with 'key people' (power to make decisions). This is going beyond outward agreement and getting genuine buy in.
- Engage with wider group who will be affected by the change (is the urgency there?).
- Influence people – make them feel that it is their idea (ownership).
- Accept that 'knockers' can be useful and use their ideas to develop change.
- Create a diversified group (good mix) of drivers (skills, attitudes) of the change.
- Staff involvement – ideas etc to create ownership.

Table 3. What went well and what did not go so well with regard to outcomes?

Outcomes that went well	Outcomes that did not go so well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership at all levels. • Driven by all levels of stakeholders. • Getting all stakeholders involved at start. • Inclusive of main stakeholders. • Regional approach. • Buy in of key stakeholders. • Structure/project acceptable across political divides. • Joint approach by stakeholders to BSES hierarchy. • Involving staff that have to implement changes. • Practitioner support to developing plan. • Development of shared vision. • Created a vision • Smaller Project Committee was good to get things done. • The Project Committee was the right mix of people. • Informed leaders group was good. • Middle of the road outcome. • Good results for effort. (BSES / MAPS as a grower service unit - the model). • Extension model ok. • SLA agreement negotiated • Stakeholders KPI's are a good idea. • Problem identification good. • Defining the issues to structure. • Good processes utilised to select eg. Selecting Project Committee and developing the vision statement. • Facilitation was good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No complete buy in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chairman involvement ○ Canegrowers, Mackay Sugar. • Commitment from some powerbrokers. • Barriers to commitment from some. • Not considered important enough by key leaders. • Getting all stakeholders involved and continuity of involvement. • Grassroots – Grower involvement and commitment interest. • Retention of stakeholders buy in varied (in & out of process). • Not the right people at various stages. • Management of different perceptions. • Threats perceived rather than benefits. • Large group (hard to manage). • Staff got mixed signals. • The “Mackay Grower Services” could have involved more parties. • KPI'S imposed. • Stakeholders KPI'S (unrealistic, no vision. Do more for less). • No new culture of decision making with stakeholders group. • SLA not signed off and no miller funding commitment to it. • Length of time it took • Too much time on process.

Future Research Needs:

There is no doubt that further alignment of grower services for a more streamlined and effective service is possible in the Mackay region. There are two areas of possible future research

Firstly there is no doubt that there are some grower services which could better aligned across the whole Central Region. The inclusion of Plane Creek and Proserpine regions into a project to explore these options could be a future need. This would require a common vision for grower services and some belief that service will not be reduced but enhanced.

Secondly there are still a number of additional services (not just extension) which could benefit by being part of or more closely aligned to the one body within the Mackay Sugar area. It is understandable that organisations may resist having services rationalised particularly if they feel threatened. A process would need to be developed along the same line as MAGS to continue the engagement process based on a common vision and need for continual improvement.

There are also options to better align grower services across the whole industry and the talks about the change to research and development organisations is effectively part of this.

Recommendations:

It is planned to explore the options of combining further services into the one body. In particular there are a number of grower services currently provided by Mackay Sugar which may benefit from being combined more with extension and advisory than milling for example the use of GIS information for potential precision farming. The project has effectively set in motion the realisation that benefits can be made from alignment and rationalisation.

The opportunity to include Plane Creek and Proserpine regions into the delivery of more aligned grower services will be explored. The extension model and one body concepts will be explained to Plane Creek in particular.

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