

GraniteNET Project Phoenix Phase One

Business Case Development and Prototype

**An “Action Research Project” between the University of Southern
Queensland and Granite Belt Learners**

Background

Community portals have usually resulted from a commercial undertaking, where a Council or group of local businesses has attempted to establish a portal to facilitate e-commerce initiatives either as a cost saving measure, or to increase market opportunity. Such portals have usually failed to realise true community benefit, as they tend to lack relevance to the local community in anything other than the business model they were originally designed for.

A community portal needs to be built from the ground up, community portal first, business portal second with portal content and functionality defined by the community so as to align with community need and usage patterns. In a true Community Portal model there is no dependence on an individual community member for its continued operation. The Portal becomes sustainable through flexible design, the ability to quickly respond to the changing needs of the community and an effective governance framework. The community must be able to operate it with shared community pride and it must be accessible to its various composite community groups, nationalities and sectors.

The GraniteNet Community Portal was established in 2000 following receipt of \$280K in Networking the Nation Funding in 1999. The portal <http://www.granitenet.net.au/welcome.cfm> is currently operational but has encountered difficulties in terms of management, sustainability and governance.

The Granite Belt Learners (GBL) group has invited the University of Southern Queensland to work with them and the local community to develop a model for community portal operation and governance that is self-sustaining and will support Stanthorpe’s development as a Learning Community.

This proposal outlines the activities of an “Action Research Project” to be undertaken collaboratively with GBL to:

- Develop a business case and funding submission to support the development of a sustainable, community designed, owned and managed portal that will enhance Stanthorpe’s development as a learning community; and
- Within identified constraints design and develop a prototype community portal demonstrator capable of showcasing the proposed capabilities (Phase one of

Project Phoenix).

The Project Phoenix Vision: What could be!

A web based portal environment that transcends Stanthorpe Community.

A virtual environment; where members of the community either individually or in social groups interact daily. Where interaction becomes part of the daily Stanthorpe experience, focusing on Lifestyle, Health, Innovation, Creativity and Opportunity within a “Learning Community”.

Using existing consumer devices (Televisions, Mobile telephones, wireless PDA’s) and broadband telecommunications, the community connects to GraniteNet Phoenix whenever, wherever.

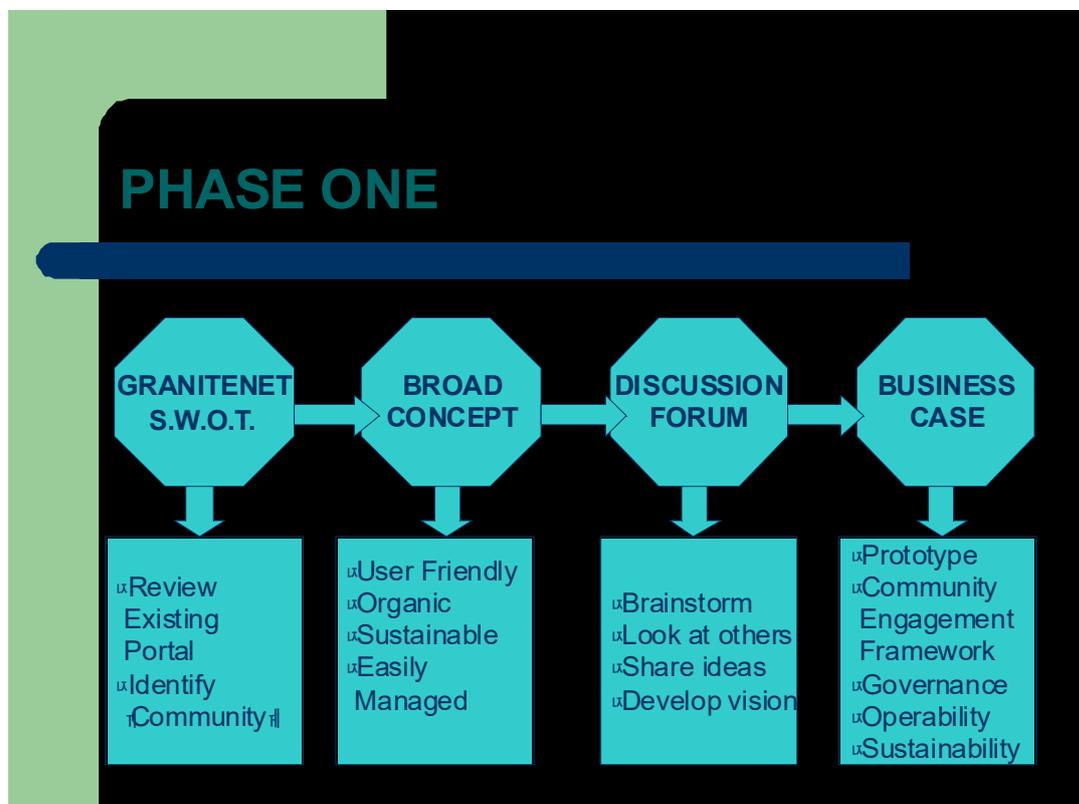
- Community groups choose GraniteNet as the preferred vehicle to distribute newsletters to members.
- Sporting clubs advertise sporting calendars, events and results.
- Bookings for services are on-line (Restaurants, Squash and Tennis Courts, Car servicing, Dental and Doctors appointments)
- All members of the community have their own email address and customizable virtual space.
- Community members can create their own Blogs and websites.
- Identity management provides individual community members with a unique identity with multiple profiles based on personal interests and Community Group membership. Age based profile establishes your Phoenix experience.
- Businesses choose GraniteNet to advertise and provide gateways for e-commerce activities that fund ongoing operation. Business has its own content management tool enabling businesses to manage and maintain their own content on-line.
- Communities of interest are established where members of the community interact in virtual environments for social online games or interactive forums and discussion groups.
- Multilingual groups are established in a virtual environment enabling members of the community with common origins to interact in their own language and virtual space.
- Secure E-Commerce gateways enable secure on-line financial transactions.

- Community groups with assigned moderators manage GraniteNet content from their own homes or locations with user-friendly content management tools.
- An on-line Community Trader enables the community to advertise and sell items on-line.
- Health monitoring is enabled through intelligent agents located around the home, interfacing to remote 24 x 7 monitoring centres via a set-top box connected to your television.
- Household security monitoring can be linked to a central community monitoring system.
- Personal medication reminders and event calendars automatically interact with community members.
- Community television programs via (IPTV) enable community groups and others to televise events (Council Meetings, sporting events, debates etc) simultaneously.
- On-line learning programs presented, both free to air and subscription.
- Wide range of counseling services is available securely online using point-to-point video conferencing.
- Online Art Gallery enabling local artists to display and sell their art in a virtual environment.
- Children's games and entertainment on-line.
- Cultural environment established for the Arts.
- Local agriculture and market indicators for farmers.
- Online Community archive created.
- Links to external websites and communities of interest.
- Community competitions, surveys and referendums

Project Phoenix Outline

Phase 1: Development of a Business Case for a new virtual community portal

- Review and evaluate existing portal and governance arrangements and communicate learnings to stakeholders.
- Facilitate development of a prototype community engagement instrument.
- Outline key issues and considerations for development of IT models and software, governance arrangements, costs and sustainability.
- Conduct literature review and develop suitable community engagement, research and evaluation methodologies to guide subsequent phases of the project.



Phase 2: Implementation of Community Engagement Project – Design of Community Portal

- Refine community engagement strategy and project plan.
- Engage stakeholders in production of community engagement instrument/s based on Phase 1 prototype.
- Roll out community engagement strategy using instrument/s.
- Collect and analyse community feedback to inform portal design.
- Document and evaluate engagement strategy.

- Continue research into suitable IT models and software, governance arrangements, costs and sustainability aspects (national and international).
- Based on outcomes from community engagement and national and international research, develop:
 - A set of functional requirements for the portal
 - A governance framework and operational management model
 - Multiple qualitative and quantitative performance measures and strategies to enable benchmarking, ongoing performance measurement, evaluation and sustainability
 - A number of potential operational models for consideration by the community
- Develop recommendations for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the preferred community portal model in Phase 3.
- Report research outcomes to the broader community.

Phase 3: Roll-out of the Community Portal

- Pilot the preferred community portal model.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the model against agreed performance indicators.
- Continue community engagement strategies to obtain community input.
- Conduct and report on evaluation of the pilot.
- Refinement/modifications to portal design, governance frameworks and operational management model in light of evaluation results.
- Report outcomes of the project and related research to the broader community.

Project Timelines

The three phases of Project Phoenix will occur over a two-year period from October 2006 to October 2008.



Phase One: Business Case Development and Prototype

The USQ Faculty of Education, Faculty of Business and Division of ICT Services will work with GBL, Stanthorpe Shire Council and the Stanthorpe Community to undertake an Action Research Project to:

- a) Establish a Community Engagement Framework.
- b) Review the existing GraniteNet Portal features, functionality governance and management model and communicate review learning's to the local community.
- c) Conduct literature review and develop suitable community engagement, research and evaluation methodologies to guide subsequent phases of the project.
- d) Through consultation and research activities develop a set of functional requirements deemed essential for a self-sustaining community portal within the Stanthorpe Shire that enhances lifelong learning of its members and nurtures the Learning Community.
- e) Develop a suitable governance framework and operational management model in conjunction with the community, following broad consultation and expert International research.

- f) Outline key issues and considerations for development of IT models and software, governance arrangements, costs and sustainability.
- g) Facilitate development of a prototype community portal demonstrator capable of distribution via CDROM.
- h) Identify an initial set of qualitative and quantitative performance measures and strategies to enable benchmarking of the community portal and ongoing performance measurement to ensure sustainability.
- i) Develop potential operational models and establish community support for a 12-month pilot of the chosen model.
- j) Promote the outcomes of the research to the international community via various papers, presentations and forums.

Phase One Deliverables

- 1) A Community Engagement Framework Document.
- 2) Review report on the existing GraniteNet Portal features, functionality governance and management model.
- 3) A community forum to communicate learning's from the review and raise community awareness of Project Phoenix.
- 4) A functional requirements document.
- 5) A governance and management framework document.
- 6) A paper outlining key issues and considerations for Project Phoenix.
- 7) An initial set of performance measures and strategies to enable benchmarking during the pilot phase.
- 8) A CDROM based demonstration prototype of the Community Portal environment.
- 9) A number of potential operating models for a 12-month pilot.