

# **Modalities of Scaling-up Landcare and NRM in the Philippines: Creating space for public-private partnerships at the local level<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Background**

The debate about sustainable development brought profound challenges in bridging the gaps between science and development. While technological advancement has been successfully generated from scientific research, it continues to face the great diversity of circumstances constraining the delivery of potential benefits. This constraint requires institutional and methodological innovations where development-oriented research can be anchored. Moreover, this debate is constructed from a combination of participants, structures, cultures and processes— hence, it has become more contestable, dynamic and complex. The complex nature of this debate necessitates the construction of social systems, capable of strengthening the orientation by which research and development have to be implemented. This experience is supported by the theories of Funtowicz and Ravetz in their propositions to develop a new “post-normal” science based on extended peer communities and extended facts (Funtowicz and Ravetz, 1993).

ICRAF’s Research and Development Programme is now focused at developing technical, institutional and policy innovations, in an Integrated Natural Resource Management Research (INRM) Framework. The scale of analysis of our work begins at the farm and household level—to the village and municipal levels—and, to the provincial and national levels (annex 1). The links at various levels are clearly defined along with the strategic interplay of technical and social researches at each level. This Research and Development Framework illustrates a multi-tiered stakeholder interaction in building relationships and partnerships, in project implementation, and in project evaluation. The Landcare Program is a specific example of a partnership initiative at the local level, and is the subject of this case study.

## **Project Context**

ICRAF has been conducting research on contour hedgerow technologies for the past decade in Claveria, Misamis Oriental, and found out that low adoption of the system is not only affected by technical constraints, but also, by socio-economic and institutional constraints. ICRAF refocused its efforts in finding alternative systems that address the technical and institutional issues of conservation farming. Natural vegetative filter strips (NVS) provide simple solutions to the technical constraints of soil conservation on sloping farms. These are buffer strips laid out on the contour in which natural vegetation is allowed to re-grow into thick, protective cover. This system is being widely adopted, through an enhanced dissemination approach, called “Landcare”, which has become a challenging Participatory Action Research in ICRAF.

Landcare as an approach, fosters rapid and inexpensive dissemination of natural resource management (NRM) technologies, using the triangulation of relationship and convergence of key actors: the farmers, local governments and technical facilitators (annex 2).

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Founded on knowledge-generation and sharing, it also refers to a movement of farmer-led organisations, adapting sustainable and profitable agriculture while preserving the long-term health of the land. This dynamic voluntary movement has grown to include around 6000 farmers in almost 300 groups in the municipalities of northern and central Mindanao, and recently, in the Visayas. The participatory nature of Landcare Approach, and recent opportunities for scaling-up necessitates partnership-building with a wide range of stakeholders.

Successful partnership initiatives are largely influenced by the process in which the partnership is developed. Partnerships however, are not created, just magically. Undoubtedly, the road to building partnerships is not always silky-smooth. The goal is to scale-up technical and institutional innovations in natural resource management within a framework of a Participatory Action Research through Landcare. The Philippines' Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991 is the driving force in the pursuit of public-private partnerships, but is not necessarily the motivating factor. The Agriculture Research and Extension sector need to deal with local politics in partnerships, requiring methodological and institutional innovations to accelerate progress. This is aggravated by dwindling political situations at both local and national levels. Sustainability is almost often, held hostage by political instability. Our experience however, indicate, that one critical success factor about local partnership is the recognition of a common and compelling vision, and a conviction that each partner can bring comparative advantages into the partnership initiative, and the sustaining elements in that partnership are, by-consensus, agreed upon.

### **Dynamics of Multi-stakeholder Involvement**

The basis upon which “partnerships ” are constructed at the local level exceed beyond the impetus of legal mandates. The potentials of “partnerships” however, need to be vigorously explored and nurtured--least, it can also run the risk of exploitation and co-option. In other words, “partnership” does not always make projects invulnerable to risks, but, it can add value to project resilience. The impacts of Landcare have given rise to more challenging demands of bringing its benefits to wider areas, which basically include among others, the challenge to build and nurture relationships with more different partners at various levels.

#### *Constructing Public-Private Partnership*

First, it is important to develop an “in-house strategy” before reaching out to potential partners. We summarized two-broad strokes in building the partnership with Local Government Units (LGU), National Government Agencies (NGA), Non-government Project Holders (NGO), and local communities.

The **first step** was an examination of the partnership agenda, involving the following activities:

- ◆ **Scoping.** This is an examination of the diverse nature of our potential partners using the three lens of diversity: social differences, cultural differences and cognitive-functional differences. This resulted in a better understanding of the characters of our partners. Our early days in Landcare started with two main partners: the LGU and farmers. In scaling-up, we face more diverse stakeholders and partners. The figure below illustrates the framework of the scoping made, (although, not very deliberate) to better understand the diversity of our partners. While the

scoping was done mostly, before the partners' engagement, this was repeated more deliberately in some areas, after the partners were already identified and organized.

Fig. 1

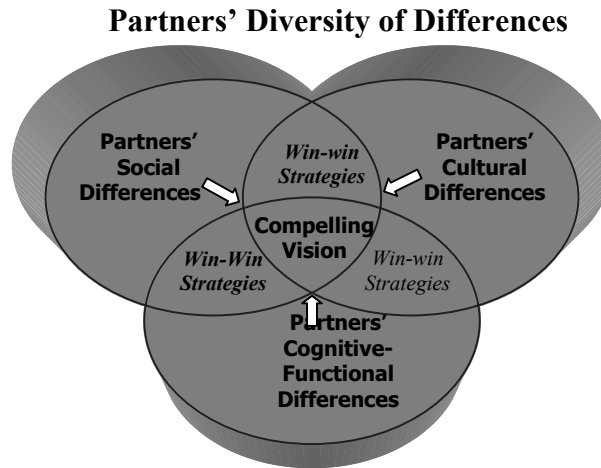


Fig. 2

**Analysis of Diversity of Partners**

Partners	Social Differences	Cultural Differences	Cognitive-Functional Differences
<i>Local Government Units</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gender: Male dominated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Working behavior: traditional to pro-active</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Task related knowledge: dependency to innovative</li> </ul>
<i>National Government Agencies (DENR, DAR, DA, etc.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ethnicity: diverse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Communication styles: bureaucratic to multi-directional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Skills and experiences: limited-bounded to skilled/experienced</li> </ul>
<i>Non-Government Organizations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Age: working age (20-50)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expectations about what constitutes effective group behavior with a team or unit: quality participation and commitment of team members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Differences in styles in accessing information and learning styles: passive to proactive</li> </ul>
<i>Private/Corporate Sector</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sexual orientation: undetermined</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Leadership styles: laizze-faire to pro-active</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Status of different specialties within the organization: medium to high</li> </ul>
<i>Community people/Landcare groups</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Physical and mental capacity: diverse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Level of fluency with the common language: high fluency of common language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Geographic spread of team members: sporadic within a provincial unit</li> <li>▪ Similarity or difference between functional and professional "cultures":               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Similarities</i>: task and output orientation</li> <li>○ <i>Differences</i>: process orientation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

◆ **Systems Analysis.** We concentrated on examining the organizational culture and task-related knowledge using the cultural and cognitive-functional lens of our partners, because the significant difference of their characters appear to be in this area. We laid out the potential strategies, by assessing the existing institutional mechanisms, working structures, program goals and priorities—resulting in the identification of pathways where Landcare can be: 1) newly created or implemented independently, adding value to what is currently or previously implemented; 2) integrated within existing projects/programmes; or 3) mainstreamed within current or future programmes/ agenda. Further, we outlined the concepts that serve as basis in constructing the modalities and pathways of the partnership.

**Contextualization-** the project or initiative is relevant within a shared goal, but can be newly created or implemented independently, adding value to what is currently or previously implemented.

**Integration-** the project or initiative is new, but can be combined or added to existing programmes.

**Complementation-** the project or initiative is implemented as a component of a “whole program” to complement those that were not achieved by one partner for either lack of skills or resources, or were not prioritized in the incipient stage.

**Mainstreaming-** the project or initiative is placed within the central agenda as an overarching goal. *For example, environmental concerns are given considerations in social welfare projects and are given equal weight in project planning and implementation. Mainstreaming environmental concerns in a “Municipal Comprehensive Plan” for example, means that environmental management programmes are given equal attention and appropriate investment.*

Based on the above concepts, the following modalities evolved.

Box. 1 Modalities and Pathways for Scaling-up Landcare

**MODALITY 1: Mainstreaming:** *Scaling-up through the Local Development Planning Process (From Claveria to Lantapan).* This mode requires an engagement with LGUs in their local development planning process, resulting in the institutionalisation of the project at the planning stage as in Lantapan. Landcare is embedded in the bigger NRM and Development Plan of the municipality.

**MODALITY 2: Integration:** *Scaling-up through “integration” within the conventional extension programmes of local government line agency, the Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO) (from Claveria to Malitbog, Bukidnon).* The local government of Malitbog invited ICRAF to help them develop their Landcare programme. Landcare was then embedded in the extension programme of the MAO in Malitbog that provided both human resource and fund support. Local champions – persons committed to Landcare – play an important role.

**MODALITY 3: Mainstreaming and Integration:** *Scaling-up through the local development planning process and integration in existing local programmes (Lantapan to Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon).* This modality is a marriage of the two modes cited above.

**MODALITY 4: Integration:** *Province-wide scaling up through integration of programmes implemented by government-line agencies and special local warm bodies at the provincial level (Lantapan and Claveria to other municipalities in the two provinces).* This mode required a review of the different line-agencies and special warm bodies operating within a provincial scale and involves an understanding of their mandated programmes and identifying committed local champions who can mobilise programs on a provincial scale.

**MODALITY 5: Contextualization:** *Scaling-up through networking and collaboration with existing special projects implemented by both public and private sectors (for provincial, regional to national levels).* We identified pathways whereby NRM can be implemented in the context of protected area management and ancestral domain management. This was implemented in the context of meeting the mandatory goals of Protected Area Management Board, Provincial Planning and Development Office and National Government Agencies.

**MODALITY 6: Complementation:** National Government Agency-led projects (DAR, DENR, DOF) have special needs on technical knowledge and skills in their project areas. We worked with them on this particular need, rather than, take the whole piece of the pie as a prescribed menu. For example, DAR’s priority need is on soil and water conservation technologies, rather than facilitating the adaptation of the whole Landcare Approach. The agreement is reached for ICRAF (as a partner) to compliment this particular need of DAR.

The **second step**, was the opening of the partnership agenda with potential partner/s. The nitty-gritty part of the partnership-building process begins at this stage.

***Knowledge Integration, Involvement of Dissemination Agents, Confidence –building.*** Although, the articulation of Landcare seemingly comes from a “supply-side”, we believe it can easily capture a sense of purpose that is connected with sustainable development—breaking the animosity of such a concept. One difficulty in engaging local partnership, is that, expectations could easily rise, when one gets closer to the first-tiered stakeholders (vulnerable LGUs and communities). The partnership is usually threatened when expectations by local partners are not met. To manage this potential threat, we started by deliberately increasing our visibility in public occasions to share our

early research results (NVS, etc.). This generated interests and created a boost in ICRAF's work. This has also encouraged "self-selection" by interested LGU, NGA and NGO partners. Our earlier assumption was that, farmers are interested in resource conservation to improve production and increase income. On the other hand, LGUs are legally mandated to respond to community needs, while Technical people are socially responsible in ensuring, that derived technologies reach the user groups. This was the focal issue in our initial discussions with partners. On the basis of the recognition of these mandatory roles, common interests and social obligations, a "Compelling Vision" was recognized by LGUs and NGAs, resulting in the expression of commitment and creation of a partnership agenda. It was therefore, a "need-based" agenda, elucidated through progressive discussions with a "pseudo-supplier" of knowledge products. Following a series of orientation meetings, field visits were organized with partners. These have been a major start-up activity. Partners were exposed to our research sites to observe and learn from a solid evidence of groundwork. The value added to this activity was the exposure of participants to a process of reflective brainstorming. We found this very useful, as we begin to build relationships. These activities did not only help build confidence, but also provided opportunities for knowledge exchange, generation and integration. For example, the Agriculture office of Malitbog shared their successful experience in a forage project and identified areas of complementation of Landcare and the forage project in their area. In Lantapan, the local Technicians agreed to integrate soil and water conservation technologies with IPM in Farmers' Field Schools (FFS). While research topics may not have been explicitly discussed at the incipient stage, the idea to test the Landcare Approach in their own local conditions, with opportunities for launching their own innovations, was very much appreciated. As the program was progressing, farmers' needs have gone beyond the field level of technology adoption. Farmers begun to look at other areas of improving production and income, community-based activities, and experimented on many other things (eg. Cross-breeding of native eggplant with a hybrid variety: Claveria). Farmers in Lantapan expressed their interests on rice varietal experimentation, OPV of maize, and timber tree seed propagation techniques, among others. We then, supported their interests by implementing farmer research through the FFS (Farmer Field School) approach, in cooperation with the local Agriculture Technician.

***Equity, Subsidiarity and Complementarity.*** The partnership agenda between and among our partners is carried-out by their choice of the modality, as presented— so, is our involvement and investment into the partnership agreement. For example, Modalities 1 & 3 as applied in Lantapan and Manolo Fortich, involved more detailed and longer processes than others, requiring more investments. To establish a level playing field for decision-making, a series of meetings and planning were held with different partners. In some areas, **rapid field appraisals and stakeholder analysis** were conducted with results being used as basis for **visioning exercises and planning activities**. Following government bureaucratic procedures, series of meetings and dialogues were held with officials at the executive and legislative levels. This was usually followed by discussions with Local Development Councils, composed of multi-sectoral groups in the community. Sometimes, these have to be done at the village level. Engaging NGA participation requires several meetings with key officials, with field personnel—then, with farmer-leaders assisted by these agencies. Similarly, NGO participation also requires several planning meetings with key officials and farmer leaders or Peoples' Organizations (PO). To some extent, there could be unintended marginalization of some sectors, particularly during the infancy stage of Landcare, but, that has been eventually resolved, when we have started involving other sectors in the program, such as, the schools, the women group, and the business sector.

**Roles of Partners.** ICRAF holds the responsibility for implementing a training program to capacitate partners to implement the Landcare Program on their own, with continuous technical backstopping, as deemed necessary. Extent of investment is concentrated only in the nodal sites (Lantapan and Claveria), with much lesser and different scales of investments in some “up-scaling” sites. LGUs, NGAs and NGO project holders perform management roles and provide policy (in the case of local governments) support, while farmers shared most of the social costs of participation and some low-cost materials. In the municipal and provincial levels, Advisory Councils, comprising key stakeholder representatives are usually created. Partnering with NGAs, normally requires a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), while MOAs with local governments and NGOs has been optional. The partnership bond relied much on verbal agreements and understanding.

**Hindering Forces.** **Politics in partnerships is inevitable**, particularly involving government politicians at the local level. The noble aim of decentralization in equity of decision-making is desirable, but field experiences, were not always favorable. Traditional government officials tend to encourage participation in a manner that is exclusionary. Politicians, NGA or NGO partners sometimes push their distinct working cultures, and are usually interested with accomplishing outputs, than paying attention to the research process. Some LGUs may have also perceive Landcare as a formula for achieving its targets that are not necessarily in the best interest of all farmers. To minimize the effects of such a “weak” partnership, we exercise full **transparency** in our human, financial and technical capacities—and without seizing, continue demonstrating our commitment and enthusiasm. We work hard in learning the art of “effective facilitation” in dealing diverse situations, and emulate that adaptive management may have early dead-ends, and should emphasize transformative learning. For example, LGUs tend to corrupt participation by favoring to distribute seedlings to farmers, rather than, encourage farmers to “sow and learn propagation techniques”. We have to explain, that growing seeds is more beneficial to sustainability. We also implemented a “**Landcare Facilitators’ Training Program**”. Facilitators directly interact with Landcare groups and other partners. Their orientation will, in one way or another, influence the quality of the partnership. The Training Program gives emphasis to facilitation values, attitudes, skills and a research-orientation towards improving processes in the delivery of desired outcomes.

**Helpful Forces.** Although, decentralizing governments are still grappling with understanding the concept and good practices of “**Decentralization**”, it has remarkable contributions in the pursuit of local public-private partnerships. It creates opportunities and spaces for participatory arrangements under diverse institutional landscapes in pluralistic situations. Except for isolated difficulties, our experience in dealing with our partners has been generally easy, given that they are closely situated and decisions are made locally. Our strong **network with other service providers** also influenced the way trust and confidence was developed in the partnership. **Communication is kept open and accessible**, and the relationship is easily built-, in the spirit of camaraderie. Maintaining good relations however, entails high social costs that are not often perceived as costs, even those incurring them. These costs are not included in project overheads, but, are fundamentally essential in nurturing partnerships (D. Catacutan, et. al, 2001). The implication being, is for partners to recognize the cost value of social relations, although they are hardly monetised.

**Degree of Participation.** The concept of **participation** is widely debated, because, the typologies of participation remain relative and subjective. Some of our partners were active in the planning stage, and gradually fades in the implementation stage. Some of them became visible again, in the

evaluation stage to raise arguments and criticisms. In some cases, this happened with LGUs not being able to provide sufficient resources for the joint implementation of activities, or of some NGO partners advancing their own interests. To ensure that Landcare groups' participate in decision-making, a trajectory training program on "Group Leadership and Organizational Management" was provided, to develop leadership skills and improve participation. This maybe overly simplistic, so we suggested, that a Landcare Federation Officer sits in the Landcare Advisory Council, as well as in the Local Development Council of the municipalities. We also promote simple experimentation (eggplant cross-breeding) by farmers as an effective self-empowering experience. This implies the need for Researchers to test a range of approaches of on-farm experimentation. We learned, that participation will rise, when the social costs and benefits of participation are considered in project management processes. Despite this situation, a good number of our partners (LGUs and others) have maintained, if not increased, the synergy of participation, with more investments allocated to sustain the program. For example, a village government in Lantapan is now funding and managing an on-farm research project by farmers, with technical guidance from an ICRAF Researcher. The research topic originated from farmers and the research was cooperatively designed and implemented by farmers and the Researcher. Participation levels therefore, varies with partners and within different events, but it can be sustained in a "participation continuum", when relationships are nurtured and process-based systems are in placed. The relationship needs nurturing through a fashion of "facilitation"—requiring more human and social investments.

**Addressing Sustainability.** The sustaining elements of our partnership relies much on three important aspects: Process, Content and Internal Control. **Firstly**, it is important that partners pay attention to a "process"—which addresses the methodological and institutional aspects of sustainability. On this aspect, four important interventions were in placed: 1) institutionalizing an IEC (Information, Education, Communication) Programme and Facilitators' Training for our partner institutions. This means, developing Facilitators and peers to inspire others, share skills on Landcare, and capacitate partners (Queblatin, E. pers.com); 2) institutionalizing support through local policies that enable the LGU to pursue long-term partnerships in the implementation of Landcare. We also engage the LGUs in consolidating the gains of Landcare through joint-meetings with Landcare Advisory Councils. The LGU of Claveria, promulgated a policy that allocates annual funds in support of Landcare; 3) an external support also comes from a Landcare Trust Fund that is supported by the Spanish Cooperation Agency in the Philippines, for Landcare groups to avail of small grants in support of activities or projects that are beyond their own financial or technical capacity to implement; and 4) the formation and training of Farmer- Trainers to be able to promote farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing. **Secondly**, to ensure a continues generation of quality technical input ("content"), formation and training of Farmer Research Committees (FRC) within Landcare groups is invisaged, such that farmers are able to implement research projects of their own interests and value, and in order to support a continuous knowledge-generation process, in the hope of addressing site-specific technical needs. On the part of ICRAF, we are trying to address the evolving technical needs of farmers, by anchoring our research to farmers' own progression of interests, and support research projects through the FRCs—thereby, developing and disseminating technologies in a step-wise manner (Mercado, A., pers. com.). **The third** aspect, is the maintenance of good relationships through "Internal Control in Partnerships". This means, adhering to principles of adaptive management—requiring flexibility, transparency, communication, planning, increasing networks, and participatory monitoring of progress and outcomes. While this requires "systems", social relations that is predisposed to trust and confidence is equally important in the internal control

of partnerships.

***Knowledge Codification and Scaling-up.*** The success of Landcare is phenomenal in the pursuit of a demand-driven and grass-roots oriented partnerships. The initial success in Claveria and Lantapan brought new challenges in scaling-up Landcare to neighboring provinces. We now focus on “Process Documentation Research” and “Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation” (PME) of outputs and outcomes of Landcare in the nodal sites, to consolidate gains that have implications for national level adaptation. We also take the challenge of testing the Landcare Approach in wider locations under different biophysical, socio-economic and socio-political contexts, and examine its potential for cross-regional implementation. Initially though, we have begun incorporating Landcare as a key institutional element of a negotiation support system (NSS), highlighted by our work in Indonesia, and soon to start in Vietnam. While opportunities are promising, the Philippines’ experience serve as the defacto incubation phase (Queblatin, E., pers.com) for the SEA region, as we begin to work with our IFAD partners in the MMSEA region. In anticipation of issues arising from context-specific conditions, concerning the potential spread of Landcare in the region, ICRAF, along with IFAD and other partners recently completed a study on the experiences of Farmer-led Organizations in these countries. The findings of the study will help retool the ICRAF team and its partners, as it gets into a “Landcare type” initiative in the MMSEA region.

### **Conclusions, lessons learnt, recommendations**

Just like participation, partnership-building entails high social and transaction costs, but provides more promise of stability and long-term sustainability. While our experience is still a work in progress, some lessons are noteworthy.

- ◆ To aim for sustainability in partnership initiatives, require partners to pay equal attention to both process and content, and internal control, in achieving the desired products. Partners need to re-orient, that the sustainability of partnership is as much as a process as an end.
- ◆ Research Partnerships should not be introduced with a project nomenclature, rather, a “program” with short and long term implications. The challenge of those involved in Agriculture Research is to explicitly uphold, a more process-oriented approach--being equally important with the delivery of desired outcomes.
- ◆ This also requires flexibility in the midst of decisiveness in decision-making and planning. Partners and project managers should anticipate mid-course renovations– forming part of an adaptive management and an action research itself.
- ◆ Those involved in technical research should demonstrate explicit linkages of technology development to dissemination, and involve direct stakeholders in that process, so that the immediate value of the technology is easily adapted by user groups, before users lose their interests, and the potential value is forgone, or otherwise, overturned by events. The economy of scale and time must be equally considered, without necessarily losing good science. This is particularly more challenging at the local level, as you get closer to the first tiered stakeholder, the more expectations arise, and unmet expectations are more difficult to handle.
- ◆ The pursuit of partnership-building requires a corresponding “capacity-building” program among partners. The program could be very broad, requiring further, a multi-disciplinary team of Researchers “cum” Trainers.



- ◆ Partnership-building at the local level demands more tangible outputs, physical presence and direct involvement, and more precise, but flexible context-specific approaches—needing IARCs and its partners to externalize their planning process. IARCs should be prepared to face another challenge of doing research with unconventional partners in the most unconventional ways.
- ◆ One who initiates the partnership should put forward the converse relationship of “costs-benefits and participation” and clarity of objectives and roles, into the partnership agenda. This requires though, an arsenal of tools and expertise from Researchers themselves to effectively bridge good science and practice.
- ◆ Partnerships may rise and fall, but this should not be taken against a project. With such trends on partnership and management experimentation, some early steps could be “dead-ends”, and will need to be changed. Success therefore, should be measured on the degree in which the process is contributing to specific areas, rather than the over-all project.

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