



THE 2004 NEW ZEALAND POST MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Category:	COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS
Submitter:	TARARUA DISTRICT COUNCIL
Project	THE BUSH MULTISPORTS PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

Tararua District is a predominantly rural area especially suitable for sheep, cattle, and dairy farming.

The district covers 425,000 hectares, has the second largest roading network in the North Island and has several small townships. There are significant challenges in services delivery.

The population is 17,859 (2001 Census) and is declining.

A map of the district is attached as Appendix A.

Two wind farms are a major attraction.

Community facilities such as sporting grounds, swimming pools, sports fields and gymnasiums are costly to establish and maintain. They serve only small numbers of people for each individual sporting code.

THE PROJECT

To establish and enhance a community facility in Pahiatua that would encourage several sporting codes to share resources. The synergy generated would result in a better end result for all involved.

The project was named **THE BUSH MULTISPORTS PROJECT**.

THE NEED FOR AND EXPECTED BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT AND HOW IT FURTHERS THE COUNCIL'S VISION AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Community Needs

The population of Pahiatua and the surrounding area is only about 6,500.

The community's sporting and recreational facilities were scattered throughout the township. There was a run-down rugby ground with no training lights, and inadequate changing/spectator facilities.

There was a stadium of good size but with inadequate changing facilities and poor spectator areas.

There was a cricket pitch with a very small grandstand.

At various locations, there were grounds used for various sports, some of which had no changing facilities.

All of these clubs and organisations had a core group of enthusiastic volunteers (often with the same people on several organisations).

Several organisations were struggling for membership, struggling for resources, struggling for volunteers. The downward spiral had started with reducing numbers of participants (mainly children and young adults), and with increasing administration work being undertaken by fewer people.

Parents and members of sporting clubs were being asked to contribute financially to clubs that were struggling to survive, let alone expand.

The community was struggling to support a disproportionate number of small clubs that had inadequate facilities, over-worked volunteers, dwindling membership lists and bleak futures.

Expected Benefits

The Bush Multisports concept was conceived by an enthusiastic group of citizens, supported and encouraged by Sport Manawatu and the Tararua District Council.

The benefits of a multisports concept would be to provide the Bush district with modern, high-quality facilities to carry out, improve and facilitate the sporting recreational and cultural activities for the people of the Bush area.

Joining together was an attractive option for many sporting/recreational organisations; the benefits accruing to them were immediate and obvious.

Forgoing some of their independence was not attractive to some of the (larger) organisations, which frequently focused on passed glories rather than future realities.

The expected benefits were to ensure survival of smaller sporting codes, enhancement of larger sporting codes, by acting in unison in the areas of administration, premises and fund raising.

Vision and Strategic Direction

Council's vision and strategic direction is to take an active position in helping achieve the community's desired outcomes in a sustainable way. Council promotes all aspects of community wellbeing, in conjunction with other players such as central government, its agencies, businesses and non-government organisations.

Specifically, under the heading of Social and Cultural Wellbeing, Council's vision is for –

- A caring safe and friendly community
- Access to excellent local health, education and training services.
- More recreational and economic opportunities for young people
- Community unity and co-operation

Council sees the Bush Multisports Project as fulfilling its vision and strategic direction in all of these social and cultural wellbeing community outcomes.

EFFECTIVE PROJECT MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

The project was managed by a team of volunteers drawn from a wide cross-section of the community. It included, but was not dominated by, professional people. The real drivers were people who were passionate about sport, especially team sports.

The project team had active support from Sport Manawatu and from the Tararua District Council.

The project officially started with a comprehensive questionnaire to all sports clubs and physical activity providers in the Pahiatua area.

The questionnaire is attached as Appendix B.

The background to the questionnaire was a discussion paper developed by the Hillary Commission entitled – "Sport and Active Leisure – The future of club sport in New Zealand".

The project team established an Initial Draft Plan (refer Appendix C).

It had three sub-committees specialising in:

- Fundraising
- Administration
- Building

The project team reported regularly to Sport Manawatu and Council.

The milestone dates for the project were dictated as much as anything by "money".

A large charitable organisation, The Eastern and Central Community Trust, established a millennium fund entitled "The Shooting Star Project". Money was allocated on a population basis to local authorities in the charity's area.

The application had to be lodged by 31 March 2001. Funds had to be uplifted (against approvals) by 31 March 2004.

The expression of interest is attached as Appendix D.

The Project was managed by a fully functional team, empowered to act, encouraged to report regularly, and "driven" by passionate people.

A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO COMMUNICATING WITH AND GETTING “BUY-IN” FROM STAKEHOLDERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROJECT.

Participation by sporting clubs and others involved in active leisure was paramount to the success of the project.

Publicity generated by Council, and by the steering committee was pitched, in the early stages, to ensuring that all sporting clubs and similar organisations were “in the loop”. This was not difficult because money was not the main concern, it was the concept and the bringing together of minds that took the effort.

One large sporting code was reluctant to join in because it was “comfortable”, or so it thought. When membership dwindled, key committee members departed, and night training became the norm, most of their attitudes slowly changed.

The key factors in achieving “buy-in” to the project were:

- Early announcement of a significant charitable donation from a Trust.
- The enthusiasm and obvious passion of the steering committee.
- The active encouragement and support of the Tararua District Council.
- The continuing visible involvement of Sport Manawatu.
- Regular up-dates from the committee on successful fund-raising.
- A perception that a rural project would not be disadvantaged by a lack of “big-city” money.
- The committee had clear, concise, achievable plans
- There was no obvious dissent within the project.
- The project was “owned” by the local community.

By encouraging participation at an early stage, the project was “owned” by the sporting organisations within the community, which acknowledged the enthusiasm and passion of the steering committee.

INNOVATION AND ORIGINALITY IN THE COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS AREA

Bringing sporting organisations and active leisure groups together for one project is not common in New Zealand.

Barriers had to be broken down and a common purpose established.

The Tararua District Council showed innovation and originality by resolving at an early stage to approve one project as the recipient of the donation for the Millennium project. The alternative would have been to share the amount among several applicants.

Several charitable trusts showed innovation and originality by committing substantial donations to this project.

The major sporting codes in Pahiataua showed innovation and originality by actively supporting the community-based project and by encouraging smaller groups to join.

And most of all, it was the community of Pahiataua that showed innovation and originality by actively supporting the project in a comprehensive way. The project needed wide support and received it.

This degree of support is one of the advantages of a smaller, cohesive community.

The concepts involved community wellbeing, well in advance of anything in the Local Government Act. The concepts of Community, Economic, Environment and Cultural were all present during the whole project time-line.

The Community, Local Government, Central Government, Businesses, Large Charities and Sporting Organisations all combined in an innovative and original way to show that community requirements are paramount when being involved in a project such as this.

SUCCESSFUL RESULTS, IN BOTH FINANCIAL AND NON-FINANCIAL TERMS

Pahiataua now has a Multisports Stadium that is the envy of many larger towns and cities.

Virtually every organised sport (indoor and outdoor) is involved; it is the centre of sport in the Bush area.

The complex involves outdoor fields for soccer, hockey, rugby and cricket. It has:

- Floodlight facilities to competition standards
- A grandstand
- A large indoor multi-use stadium
- Squash courts
- Changing rooms, team rooms and showers.
- An upstairs lounge, kitchen, bar and balcony
- A fully equipped gymnasium
- A lift for disabled persons

The facility is in constant use day and night.

The official opening ceremony had to be “squeezed” between bookings with 300 children playing indoor hockey immediately after the ceremony, and four rugby teams training under lights during the speeches.

The financial position is not yet available, but it is positive and successful.

Donations were received from;

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| • Eastern and Central Community Trust (Millennium Project) | \$345,000 |
| • Central Energy Trust | \$352,000 |
| • Lotto | \$ 40,000 |
| • Richmond Ltd (Naming Rights) | \$ 50,000 |
| • Local Businesses | \$248,000 |
| • Tararua District Council (upgrade of Park) | \$200,000 |
| • Several smaller trusts and various fundraising | \$255,000 |

Council has committed \$30,000 per annum towards operating costs.

A full-time administrator has been appointed in the multi-role of administering the Trust, administering the complex and assisting smaller sports codes with administration work.

The project was completed in May 2004 and officially opened in June 2004.

The Project has been successful beyond any of the dreams of the establishment committee in practical terms (buildings, people, parks, atmosphere, ambience) and in financial terms (donations exceeding \$1.5 million).

CONCLUSION

The establishment of the Bush Multisports Trust and the project to develop a Multisports Complex at Richmond Stadium was a brilliant concept.

Its time was right.

The Community supports it.

The Tararua District Council is happy with the way the project has gone and with where it is going.

Sport Manawatu continues with on-going support.

Government agencies such as the Police, WINZ, and Ministry for Sport are enthusiastic for the long-term positive effects on the community.

The positive consequences of the project are already becoming evident in the community, with increased involvement in team sports, active participation by a wide cross-section of the community from young children to senior citizens, growing pressure for additional or improved facilities such as tennis, a hockey turf and netball, on-going support from across the whole community.

To summarise, this was a project that clearly established the community's requirements, responded to those expectations, and performed to the satisfaction of the community, of Council and of government agencies.

The Tararua District Council was pleased and proud to be associated with the project.

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List of Appendices

A.	Map of the District	1 page
B.	Questionnaire to Pahiatua Sports Clubs and Physical Activity Providers	5 pages
C.	Initial Draft Plan	11 pages
D.	Expression of Interest in Shooting Star Project Proposal for Multisports Club	5 pages
E.	Photographs	3 pages