



# Celebrating new ideas

2008 New Zealand Post Group  
Local Government Excellence Awards

## Project Submission Template

### Name of Project

**Vision 2010 Project**

### Name of entering council/s

**Buller District Council**

### Category

**Council-Community relationships**

## 1. The Rationale for the Project and Expected Benefits

The Buller Vision 2010 project began three years ago. This project came about as Council realised that in order to offer a high quality of life to residents we needed to develop a forward looking and integrated plan to upgrade sport, recreation and cultural facilities for our district. With a small rate-payer base, an innovative programme for improvement was required in order to fund facilities that are often considered as 'non-essential' infrastructure.

The Council's mission is '*to serve the residents of the Buller district, conscious of their needs, by providing facilities and services and creating an appropriate environment for progress and development.*' The council decided that community engagement was the best way to develop solutions that reflect the needs of the people of the district. The project has had the highest amount of community feedback for any consultation programme the Council has run to date, and as a result, we believe the proposed developments are a true reflection of the community's needs and wants.

With community working groups in place for each major aspect of the Vision 2010 project, the projects have truly been driven by the community and have resulted in design and construction projects for:

- Creation of a multi-use community sport and leisure centre with indoor sports hall, fitness centre, multi-purpose conference room, aquatic centre and outdoor hockey turf
- Urban streetscape upgrades of our CBD to beautify and strengthen identity
- Performing Arts/theatre upgrade
- Design of a cultural hub for Westport which will house the I-site and Museum in the medium term, and library/archive, community offices and gallery in the longer term
- A range of community facility upgrades for our rural wards, including upgrades for halls, tennis courts, theatres and pools, along with streetscape works

The provision of new facilities for sport, recreation, culture and visitor experiences will bring long needed replacements to aging facilities and raise our district to a new standard of experience for residents as well as visitors. We expect to be able to host more regional events both sporting, commercial and cultural and better present the uniqueness of the Buller to visitors. The high level of community input into the planning and design of these projects is the differentiating factor that will make our facilities a true reflection of our community.

## 2. Linkage to Council's Strategic Direction

The Council's mission statement leads our strategic direction; through creation of an environment that will enable progress and development through the facilities and services which will be provided by Council, agreed upon by the community.

Our long-term plan highlights the importance of health, education, safety, economy, environment and identity as outcomes for our community. The Vision 2010 projects support all aspects of these outcomes and respond to the major areas of concern highlighted by our community outcomes consultation. Our long-term plan highlights the importance of developing our ability to grow tourism and attract new residents and investment. Projects to improve our community facilities and provide a hub for social and recreational contact are seen as vital to the future of our district.

The outcome of these projects will have a significant effect on the strategic direction of the district, as these projects will have satisfied the needs of the community mainly in the creation of sporting and cultural facilities. The sporting and cultural hubs will also be a draw card for people to come from outside of the district through sporting events and tournaments, and tourism, therefore bringing more money into the region through tourism and hospitality.

## 3. Project Planning

A full needs analysis was undertaken in 2005. This analysis was undertaken by consultants, in conjunction with staff, key community members, sports groups and district organisations and included;

- In-depth community profile and overview
- Overview of demographic trends
- Population projections and trends
- School population projections and trends

- Leisure needs, trends and strategies
- Delivery models, including research into benefits of co-locating leisure facilities (a move away from Council's past mode of delivery)
- Full review of district wide sport and leisure facilities
- Individual sports profiles and utilisation
- Site investigations and discussions
- Projected utilisation of a multi-use facility
- Ownership and governance models
- Capital funding recommendations

Following extensive consultation, projects and budgets were clearly identified by Council and formed part of the long-term and subsequently annual plan process. Council's resolution clearly identified the timeframes and budgets for each of the projects, as well as Council's strategic expectation from the project.

Each project had a separate community working group, with a total of 79 people from the community (along with councillors, staff and consultants) forming working groups to find solutions to the needs of our community. In addition, six community members formed a community trust (Buller Arts and Recreation Trust – BART) responsible for fundraising for the Vision 2010 projects. To date, the trust has secured over 40 pledges from individuals, small local businesses and large corporate companies, with the fundraising total to date sitting at \$12 million dollars.

Each project was allocated project sponsors (generally one elected representative with support from one key staff member). A project plan was developed for each project, identifying the working group, the project deliverables, the constraints and resource schedule (which identified external support required from consultants and specialists) and a work schedule to complete the project. Each project plan was agreed to and progressed by the community working group.

A Steering Group, made up of the Mayor, a Councillor from each of the rural wards, Chief Executive, key staff responsible for overseeing projects, and external consultants, met monthly to provide an overview of progress for all projects as well as fundraising efforts.

Reports from the community working groups or the Steering Group were presented to Council at key milestones identified in the project plans.

#### 4. Project Management

Because of the large number of projects that were being undertaken consecutively, each of the community groups had a specific focus and was driven by an elected representative and staff member.

Each of the groups progressed their project and reported back to the Steering Group regularly. Each community group reported back to the full Council, via their elected representative (Chair) at key milestone points identified in the project plan.

The working groups made the projects happen; the group members were selected because of their expertise, involvement, interest or specialist skills in a certain area. The groups put forward their suggestions or other people's ideas, then with guidance from council staff, consultants and specialist advisors projects were developed and designed. Prioritisation was done where necessary to ensure budgets set by council would be met.

Where required, external, professional project management support has been bought in (ie. for the sport and leisure centre construction project).

The working groups continue to have hands-on input into project development as the projects progress. There is a far higher degree of community ownership for these projects, as people feel connected to the work that is being undertaken.

#### 5. Relationship Management and Communication with Stakeholders

The Council has a range of stakeholders for these projects, and due to the inclusive nature of the process we have undertaken, the management of these relationships has required more effort than required of Council with past projects.

The stakeholders vary, but key stakeholders include;

- The community in general

- Members of the working groups
- Funders – 87 in total, with 7 major funders, and around 80 other corporate and local funders
- A range of consultants with vested interests in the success of the projects
- Other local agencies who are pursuing projects which have links to the investment Council is making

Apart from day-to-day contact with stakeholders, there have been a number of specific ways we have engaged with stakeholders to keep them advised of progress and included in the development of the projects. Several funders evenings have been held, hosted by BART and members of the project working groups. While the Council organised these events, we took a back seat in the hosting and promotion of the projects, with trustees and community group members taking the opportunity to meet and greet the funders and present dashboards providing overviews of project progress. The Chair of each community group also provided media comment for each project. In all cases, staff support was strong, but the Council has found that there have been major benefits in increasing the level of community ownership for these projects.

Council staff assist BART in producing a regular page in the paper to provide overviews of fundraising and project progress. We also support the trustees in producing a funders newsletter that is distributed regularly.

The Buller District Council distributes a newsletter every month, providing an update of progress for the projects. Residents near the sport and leisure centre construction site also receive a flyer advising of construction progress and what work is planned for the next few months.

Media releases relating to the projects are also sent direct to key stakeholders and funders.

The trustees of BART, along with the Mayor, have been very active in the establishing and ongoing management of relationships with funders. Hundreds of volunteer hours have gone into this work, and are still continuing.

## 6. Innovation and Originality

Although there is nothing new about Councils undertaking projects to improve or replace community facilities, the Vision 2010 approach has been completely new for our district. Rather than taking each project on an individual basis, the Mayor led a process where-by we assessed the districts needs as a whole, and then planned for an integrated approach to amenity improvement. This process evolved from our community outcomes consultation, and took a holistic view of our communities needs for the next ten to twenty years. Funding these projects was given a lot of thought, with a small ratepayer base and a number of infrastructure projects underway at the time, affordability was a concern to residents. Council resolved to only proceed with Vision 2010 if 50% of the funds required were raised from external sources, such as sponsorship. This was a hefty target to meet, but the funds have been raised, and support from funders for our holistic approach has been appreciable.

The high level of engagement is also a developing area for our council. While this approach has in some cases meant that projects have taken longer to progress, the results have been impressive. In the case of the Streetscape project, the result has been something uniquely representative of our community, strongly identifiable as being representative of Buller.

## 7. Evaluation Framework

Progress with each of the projects is reported to the Steering Group and to the full Council. Budgets were set early on, and the rates contribution was fixed. As a result, there is a strong pressure for all the projects to come in on budget, which is being met.

As with many projects, the final evaluation of success is the response of the community to the work undertaken. We believe that the high level of community ownership in the projects has assisted in preventing issues such as vandalism of new projects, and a sense of pride in the work being completed.

Our holistic approach has encouraged an unprecedented level of community engagement for Buller. As at June 2008, the following achievements have been made;

- Phase I of the Westport streetscape project substantially completed, on time and within budget. Result is uniquely Buller, with input from local artists, tradesmen (including wood turners and dry

wall stone masons) high school students (street flag project) and community members in general (tile project).

- Sport and leisure centre construction well underway and due to open February 2009. Project is on time and within budget.
- Substantial progress made with planning for cultural hub and theatre relocation and renovation. Plans to incorporate these projects with Stage II of the streetscape project which will provide cost efficiencies.
- \$12million of external funding achieved.
- A range of rural projects completed or substantially completed, including five hall upgrades, tennis court resurfacing, pony club and youth centre improvements, streetscape works, pool upgrade.

## 8. Category Specific Criteria

The Vision 2010 projects have been a direct change in the way that the Council and community usually engage. From the initial consultation and debate around the merits of the projects, and if and how they should progress, through to the community working group process and project development, the positive impacts of this process have been visible.

The Buller Arts and Recreation Trust have taken full responsibility for securing funding for the projects, establishing relationships with local and corporate funders and managing those relationships. The many volunteer-hours trustees have committed are evidence of the passion and shared commitment to ensuring the projects reach fruition.

Members of the community working groups have taken community leadership roles in aspects of their projects. Council has been thrilled that individual members have extended the reach of these projects. The Streetscape project for example, has seen working group members undertake a 'community tile' project, whereby blank clay tiles have been made and group members have encouraged community members to get involved in decorating a tile. Members have visited schools, community groups and businesses to encourage individuals to create a tile. Tiles are then glazed and fired and will be included in the streetscape pedestrian structures. Members of the working group are also involved in an E4E project, whereby high school design students are designing new street flags which will link in with the streetscape project. A project that would normally have just been undertaken by a Council staff member in conjunction with the High School has now seen group members visiting the high school to explain the projects goals and aims to the students, who then incorporated these into their street flag designs. Again, the incredible number of volunteer hours provided by community members to these projects is evidence of the passion and commitment they have to ensure the projects provide the wanted result for the community.

The Council has engaged with agencies that they would not traditionally have included in these projects. The Department of Conservation is undertaking a large tourism project which is now being tied in to the cultural hub development. There has been shared use of consultants which have provided costs savings for both Council (and community) and other agencies in the district. Development West Coast (a major regional support agency) has been impressed with the holistic approach and is now undertaking a range of Major District Initiative projects which will extend the impact of Council's investment by taking advantage of other infrastructure and tourism investment being undertaken in the district. Other Councils (particularly smaller Councils struggling to gain support for community facility improvements) have contacted us about both our consultation and fundraising approach.