

**The 2004 New Zealand Post Management Excellence
Awards**

**“SmartGrowth - Building Blocks to a Better Future in the
Western Bay of Plenty”**

July 2004

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Introduction

SmartGrowth is about developing a strategy for managing growth in the western Bay of Plenty sub-region over the next 20 to 50 years.

SmartGrowth was established in 2001 as a partnership between Environment Bay of Plenty, Tauranga District Council, Western Bay of Plenty District Council, Tangata Whenua and community organizations. The initiative came about as the result of mounting concern in the community about the impact of rapid population growth in the western Bay of Plenty sub-region and the inability of the myriad of agencies involved to separately manage that growth.

SmartGrowth was established to provide an integrated framework for managing growth, based on sound research and effective community relationships. The resulting Strategy encompasses a broad range of issues, providing a framework for collaborative implementation of growth management under key planning statutes including the Local Government Act, Resource Management Act and Transport Management Act.

SmartGrowth Strategy Development

Needs

Management of urban and rural growth and development in a sustainable manner is one of the most fundamental challenges facing the Western Bay of Plenty sub-region.

The area is growing at an extraordinary rate. Every week:

- 100 people arrive from other places
- 52 people leave the area
- 32 new houses are built
- 54 more vehicles go on the road, and
- 45 new jobs are created.

Population of the western Bay of Plenty in 2001 was 130,000. This is predicted to increase to 218,000 by 2026 and 289,000 by 2051. All of this leads to a need for more residential accommodation, new forms of housing, and additional business land. It means more educational facilities and new and different health care services. It requires better roads, more efficient public transportation, and greater opportunities for safe walking and cycling. It means providing high-quality water to more than twice as many people as we do now and adequate wastewater and stormwater services. At the same time, we need to preserve the environment and cultural heritage that draw people to the area in the first place and make the western Bay such a special place to live.

Benefits

The partners to the project have made a large commitment of resources on behalf of the community to development the strategy. The return on this investment has been significant, including:

- Having a clear idea of future volumes of growth, and as a result having a commitment to resourcing and developing organisational culture that view ongoing growth management as a core function.
- Recognising that effective collaboration between Councils and community organisations on long term planning can transcend short term parochial thinking and enable creative, innovative thinking that can make a large difference to long run outcomes.
- Having confidence that growth can be managed in terms of its location and timing.
- Understanding the drivers of growth, minimising surprises and appreciating the areas where public agencies can operate most effectively.
- Understanding longer term servicing requirements and the funding needs and sources
- Creating a means to provide Central Government a leadership direction for the sub region and sound base for investment in government funded services to support the community.

Development of vision and strategic direction

SmartGrowth applied a methodical vision-led approach to policy formulation.

Following the completion of the main planning investigations at the end of 2002, a draft SmartGrowth vision and outcomes statement was developed through a process of analysis and consultation with partner Councils, Tangata Whenua and Strategic Partners. Vision development focused on a “live work and play” theme, aimed at promoting sustainable development outcomes.

In tandem with this was the development of a series of growth management alternatives. Prior investigations enabled the varying impacts of alternatives to be clearly demonstrated. Complex issues were reduced down to simple concepts, often in graphical or mapped form. Decision makers and other participants were able to see the long-term consequences of growth in the sub-region under differing scenarios.

SmartGrowth then took the draft vision and outcomes and three growth management alternatives to the wider community through an innovative discussion programme called “Got a Minute”. The programme put forward no preferred option but sought feedback on the vision, the range of alternatives put forward, and the extent to which relevant issues had been identified in the work to that point. “Got a Minute” involved an extensive awareness raising campaign through news media, and sought to develop understanding of key growth issues in the community through more than 60 workshops and presentations over a three month period. This programme elicited more than 1200 public responses.

Tangata Whenua involvement in SmartGrowth has enabled the direct expression of their issues principles and priorities for action. Early engagement of an independent advisor to Tangata Whenua enabled ongoing support and expertise to be provided to assist Tangata Whenua throughout the process. Tangata Whenua have been provided with a view of their own future which has created an impetus for hapu planning to cope with a predicted trebling of the Maori population in the sub-region over the next 50 years.

A Draft Strategy and Implementation Plan were formulated that provides a clear link between the vision and outcomes and actions required under a range of planning statutes. A copy of the draft Strategy is contained in the CD Rom.

The draft Strategy was publicly notified for submissions, alongside a further awareness raising campaign and a series of focused community workshops. This second phase campaign asked the question “Have we got it right?”

In February 2004, the draft Strategy was taken through a partnering programme with all of the agencies involved in future implementation ensure that the Strategy was well understood and that there is commitment to implementation.

The Strategy was formally adopted by the partner organisations in May 2004. Implementation is now incorporated into the Long Term Community Plans of the partner organisations. There is a

commitment to ongoing collaboration in the implementation phase, adopting the joint governance and management approaches developed through the project as a preferred model.

Effective Project Management

Collaboration at all levels

In the planning of the SmartGrowth project, there was recognition that a collaborative model for governance, management and operational levels was needed that could endure for at least the 36 month term of the project, and as a potential model for ongoing implementation.

The structure of the project is set out in the diagram in Appendix 1.

Key features of note in this structure include:

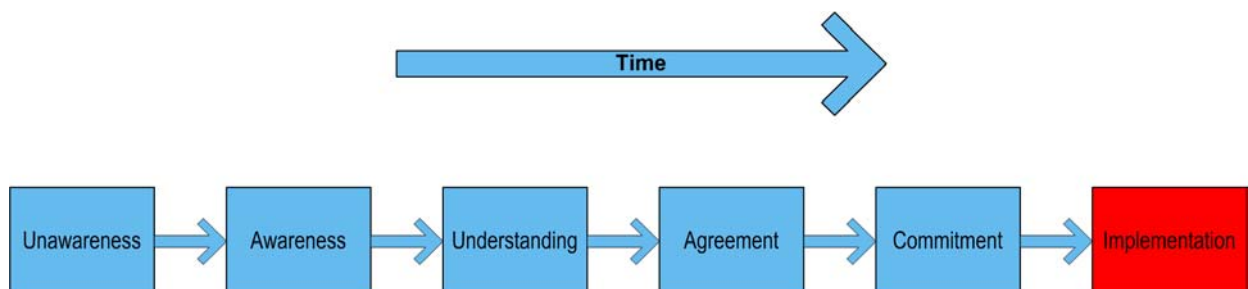
- The joint implementation committee including Council and tangata whenua representatives with equal voting rights, and an independent Chairman.
- The Tangata Whenua Forum and Strategic Partner Forum providing ongoing reference groups for the joint Committee, aiding the development of policy and implementation through timely and informed feedback.
- The appointment of an independent advisor to tangata whenua to provide support and advice to participants.
- A Project Management Group made up of personnel from partner organisations and key advisors in specialist areas of information management, communications and Tangata Whenua.

The Project Structure effectively integrated internal staff expertise across three Council organizations with independent consultancy advice. This approach was important in instilling confidence in decision makers. It contributed to a better understanding of the issues facing each organization, the developed relationships required for effective future implementation, and a culture change that now identifies growth management as a core function of local government.

A Participatory Approach to Communicatiing and Gaining buy-in.

SmartGrowth recognised the importance of effective communication with stakeholders associated with the project.

The Project team adopted the following framework to guide the development of communications with stakeholders.



From this framework came a strategy that emphasised sharing information on key growth issues, knowing that without some degree of shared understanding of key issues there would be limited chance of commitment to implementation.

This was followed through in a variety of ways. It included providing progressive briefings to the Joint Committee and the two Partner Forums on all investigation work, and publishing all materials in cost effective, accessible and highly functional digital format.

For the wider community, research findings were simplified into clear presentations and a large scale mapping “game” that was played in a series of community workshops. In one instance the game was played with nearly 80 highly interested participants.

The information obtained is a resource for the community, and is of value to all agencies having to address growth issues. Having information obtained through collaboration means that key agencies will have agreed common assumptions for future planning.

Innovation and Originality in Building Community relationships

Partner Forums

The establishment of two Partner Forums within the governance structure of the project was a successful innovation that strongly supported the buy-in to end results. The approach proved to be both an effective and efficient way to gauge views and preferences and achieve guidance that closely reflected the wider community.

The Strategic Partner Forum was comprised of 20 Community organizations representing a range of environmental, social, cultural and economic interests. The Forum met monthly for the duration of the project and was chaired by the independent Joint Committee chair. The Forum established its own operating arrangement. It was provided with reports and information that paralleled the Joint Committee enabling timely and well informed feedback.

The Tangata Whenua Forum was comprised of members from iwi and hapu across the subregion, bringing together into one group the separate tangata whenua advisory groups of the Tauranga City and Western Bay of Plenty District Council. The Forum also met monthly, chaired by the Tangata Whenua Advisor and established an operation approach of its own. The Forum has contributed to the capacity building within hapu groups and provided a far higher awareness of understanding of growth issues, including issues affecting their own people that had never been given serious consideration within a growth management context before.

The success of these arrangements has seen them continue into the structure established to implement the project.

Other Community Relationship Tools

Initial project planning identified the need for a unique approach that would enable the project to stand out amongst many other competing issues. Innovative components of the communications approach were:

- Lively branding that promoted interest and awareness
- Use of large scale gaming techniques to explain concepts and promote discussion at community meetings.
- Special purpose, independent website providing up to date information
- A phone in submission hot-line for people to busy to put ideas in writing
- Publication of materials in CD ROM format to promote ease of distribution.
- Hand out materials that promote awareness through simple ideas and dramatic impact.

A copy of some of the publicity materials used in the communication of SmartGrowth is included with this nomination.

All investigation work has been published progressively in CD Rom format that is easily distributed and highly cost effective. The publication of the CD Rom has provided evidence of a large shift in how the community receives its information and the high expectations for access. A copy of the CD ROM is included with this nomination. As outlined, consultation and public involvement have been central themes in the SmartGrowth project.

The communications approach has very been successful in raising community awareness and understanding of key growth management issues. After the initial launch of the project, surveys

identified that community awareness levels were around 24 %. After completion of the Got a Minute Campaign in mid 2003, awareness had increased to 58%. This result far exceeded the expectations of the project team.

Results

SmartGrowth achieved the overall objective of producing a growth management strategy for the sub-region..

Key success factors were

- The systematic approach to developing commitment to implementation,
- Collaboration at all levels, including the creation of community based Partner Forums
- The emphasis on culture change to embrace ongoing growth management, and
- Extensive internal and external information sharing.

The project exceeded the scope of the project plan in several areas, related closely to the higher level of public consultation than initially specified.

Financial results show a minor degree of expenditure above budget. This was largely a consequence of project creep into implementation work, and the level of work in the closing "partnering stages of strategy development.

A Good, Sensible and Right thing to do

SmartGrowth has been an important initiative for the western Bay of Plenty sub-region. Poor and fragmented relationships with the community had created a public perception that there was little or no growth management in the sub-region. SmartGrowth has assisted in building the public awareness, understanding and confidence in local government. The long-term commitment to strategies that promote sustainable development is more likely to be achieved.

Feedback from the many community forums and public displays have consistently reaffirmed community support for the work and that a strong leadership position on growth management should be taken by local government.

The power of collaboration has also been clearly demonstrated in the project. The extent of quality planning investigations is a clear benefit of this approach. Equally important is the extent to which constructive working relationships have been able to be developed between partner organizations and community organisations. The project has set new standard or working relationships.

It is clear that people and organisations have changed as a result of this project. Those who have taken part are proud of what has been achieved and .the contribution that has been made to promoting sustainable development in the western Bay of Plenty.