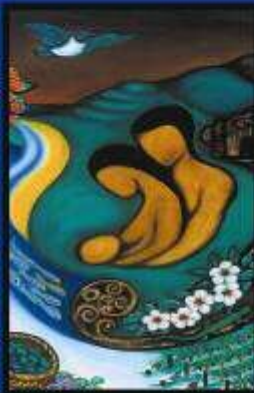
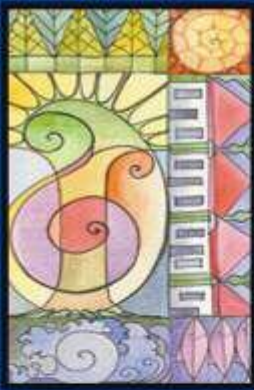


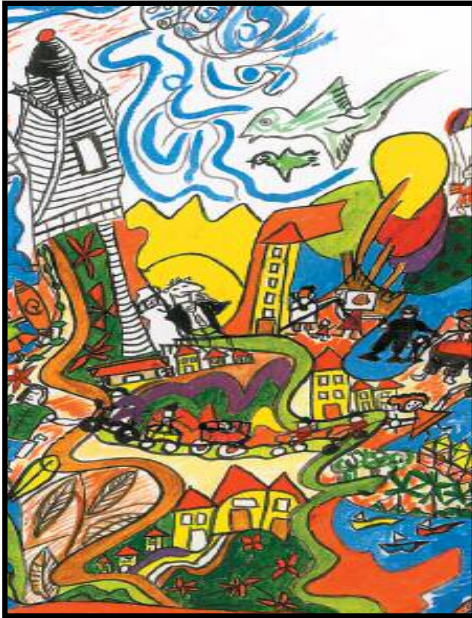
# RECIPES FOR SUCCESS



The 2005 New Zealand Post  
Management Excellence Awards:  
Community Relationships Category



Far North  
District Council



*The need for and expected benefits of the project and how it furthers the Council's vision and strategic direction . . .*

**'Recipes for Success' (appendix 1) was designed to boost the participation of the District's community in one of Council's key community planning processes, i.e. the Annual Plan and Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP).**

Recipes by their very nature are the result of trialling. This occurred last year in Council's first draft LTCCP document, resulting in community grumblings about the style of that publication. Here's a couple of typical responses:

*"... finding it difficult to read and understand ... it's important that the messages contained in it are communicated as clearly as possible."*

*"... needs a clearer summary of Council's activities and intentions..."*

*"... lacking link between ... community outcomes and Council's activities."*

Council resolved to undertake measures to improve the content and style of future planning documents. They believed that a simple-to-read document would foster more community involvement in:

- ◆ significant strategic planning issues, as well as
- ◆ developing a vision to help achieve community goals.

The expected benefits included:

- improving the community's understanding of Council's functions;
- enhancing community involvement in decision making;
- improving the Council's profile throughout the community;
- ensuring Council is making informed decisions towards the quadruple bottom line, i.e. social economic cultural and environmental;
- to demonstrate leadership and a responsiveness to concerns raised.

This project acted as a catalyst to put into practice Council's vision by providing a easy read, interesting document that encourages community participation and engagement. It links directly to Council's mission '... to value our diverse lifestyles and unique environment' and '... to build trust within stronger and safer communities'.

## Effective Project Management Techniques . . .

The new Local Government Act set the scene, providing the opportunity for Councils to achieve appropriate and effective ways to undertake their decision making, consultation, planning and reporting. Of necessity, all these undertakings needed to be in tune with their respective local communities.

Our approach involved the following:

<b>Identification of deficiencies</b>	- in previous LTCCP documents.
<b>Highlighting the key deficiencies</b>	- and their resulting negative impacts.
<b>Dedicating planning resource</b>	- this includes human resources as well as the necessary tools to efficiently and effectively deliver on the identified tasks.
<b>Assigning project implementation</b>	- this responsibility was assigned to a core team with defined key milestones.
<b>Establishing reporting timeframes</b>	- this to relay progress and to allow monitoring of progress by stakeholders.
<b>Project debrief and closure</b>	- this review to scope for improvements and to acknowledge successes.

## A participatory approach to communicating with and getting buy in from stakeholders associated with the project . . .

The final version of '**Recipes for Success**' (*appendix 2*), issued in July 2005 includes amendments, feedback and details of the 2006 Annual Plan and Long Term Council Community Plan process. It provides the community with ongoing linkages and the opportunity to be involved with the planning for the future of the district.

The participatory approach to communicating with and getting buy in from stakeholders is best exemplified in the first paragraph of "Recipes":

*"Wondering why the FNDC has sent you this recipe book? Well, we thought if we sent you an official document about the Long Term Council Community Plan, you might just chuck it in the bin."*

This engaging, 'magazine' style contrasts with the conventional approach used in earlier Council documents.

The new communication style was well received by stakeholders and resulted from:

- the project team listening to the community and creating an easy-to-read document spiced with community contributions including community success stories and local artwork;
- the mail-out reaching all ratepayers, (resident and non-resident);
- district wide distribution in outlets such as cafes, shops, airport terminals, I-sites, libraries and service centres;
- prominent placement, i.e. on coffee tables, see-through display stands and on counter tops;
- a well-prompted feedback insert - self addressed and postage paid media releases and press packs.

## Innovation and originality in the specific award category . . .

The innovation with 'Recipes for Success' is the translation of 'council speak' to simple, every-day language presented in a magazine style. Two writers from well-known local magazines helped in designing the format with community readership in mind.

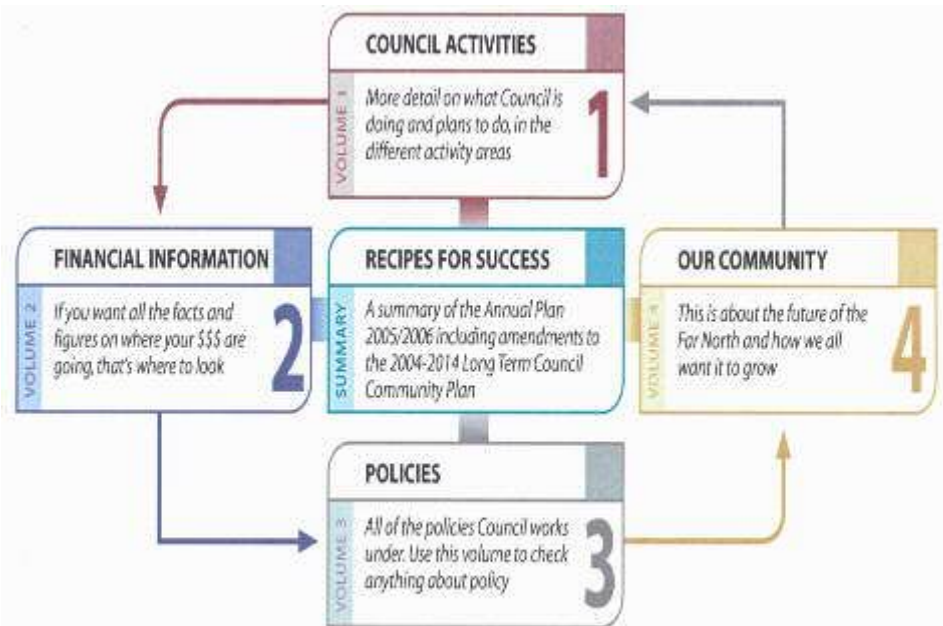
From the feedback received over previous years, the project team designed an easy to read 'recipe book' that would sit nicely on stands, coffee tables and desks all around the district. The designers sifted out the jargon to make it easier to understand and developed the concept around 'food' and 'recipes' with the following analogies:

*"This is your chance to tell the Council '**cooks**' what you want"*  
*"We've got some top quality '**ingredients**' in the North – our stunning coastline, awesome forests....."*  
*"...like all good '**recipe books**', there'll be changes and additions along the way."*

The circulation process was intensive due to the district's population spread over a large geographic area of 7,324 square km, high percentage of absentee owners (30%), high tourist and visitor numbers. The magazine's style and appeal ensures maximum coverage for all groups. Distribution was achieved to all ratepayers (both resident and non-resident) in a clear plastic sleeve for minimum risk to weather damage, within a tight timeframe, as well as strategic availability through libraries, service centres, cafes, shops, airport terminals, I Sites, etc.

The format encourages the community to pick it up, flick through it, put it down and then return again and again to read various snippets. It encourages the reader to engage in community planning at the local level with the ability to drill down to four detailed topic specific volumes . . . . .

Direct phone help and website resource availability form part of the consultation innovation which improved the Council profile and relationship with a wider community audience.



For some years now Council has run artwork competitions that feature local artistic works on the covers of Annual Planning documents. This innovation has been repeated for 'Recipes', providing local colour and symbolism that induces additional reader curiosity.

The magazine came with a loose-leaf submission and feedback form that allowed comment on issues highlighted in the document. Its simplicity included fold lines and freepost arrangements to make it easy for the reader to make a submission. This has resulted in wider audience engagement with record number of submissions from people who have not previously engaged with Council.

Another key facet of the project's originality is community engagement using fresh communication strategies that have the community at heart. These include targeting our communities to ensure they are actively encouraged to engage, individually, as a group or agency. An example of this targeting is encouraging Maori engagement. A six weekly forum (Te Waka Motuhake O Te Tai Tokerau) is held where Maori engage with staff and managers. A regular agenda item focuses on Annual Plan and LTCCP issues. Relevant managers attend and provide information on Council operations. This increases Maori capacity to participate in Council's planning and submission processes.

### Successful Results . . .

The new-look '**Recipes for Success**' (2005/2006 Annual Plan and the 2004/14 Amended LTCCP) received 4169 submissions.

	<b>2004/2005</b>	<b>2005/2006</b>
Total Submissions	993	4169
Total Submitters	256	809
Number of Hearings	159	204

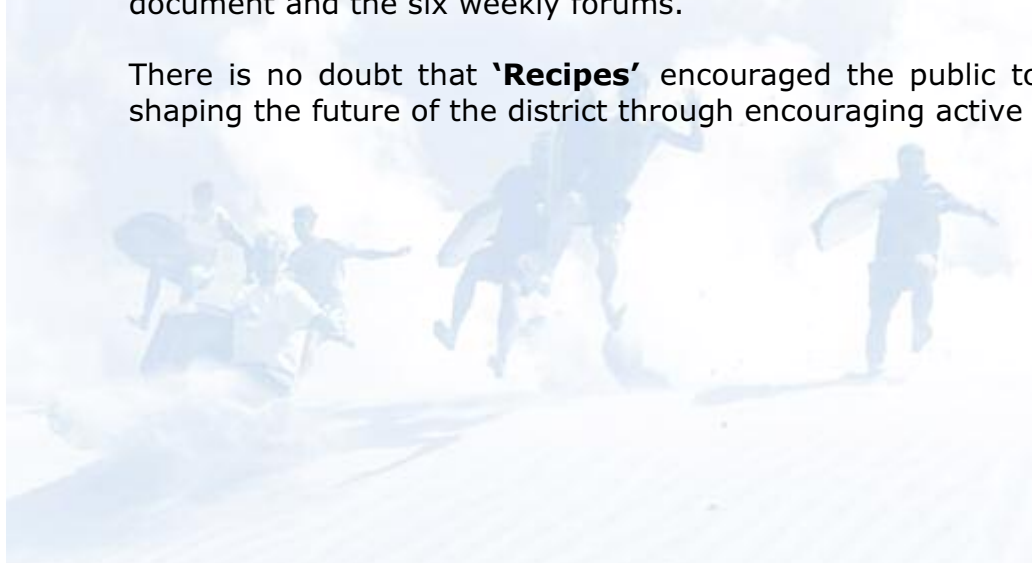
In summary, 74.7% of the feedback received from the community highlighted the communities' satisfaction with the clarity of the document. The following comments are a measure of the community satisfaction with '**Recipes**';

*" I congratulate the Far North District Council on its Draft Annual plan 2005/2006 Recipes for Success magazine. This is far easier to understand."* M & W Bedggood – Okaihau – Submission #87

*" My submission is confined to congratulating those responsible for the publication of such a clear bulletin..."* Clifford Goodall – Submission # 43

In terms of Maori engagement, a survey carried out last year identified less than 1% Maori participation. The same survey this year identified 14% of submissions were from community members who identified themselves as Maori a direct result of the reformatted document and the six weekly forums.

There is no doubt that '**Recipes**' encouraged the public to become directly involved in shaping the future of the district through encouraging active participation.



## Good, Sensible and the Right thing to do . . .

As a result of community grumblings during last years draft LTCCP, Council developed a formal planning document to meet the needs of its local communities. It is essentially a 'move away' from the conventional style Annual Plan to a new look document that encourages active community participation and recognises that building community relationships is the core to good governance.

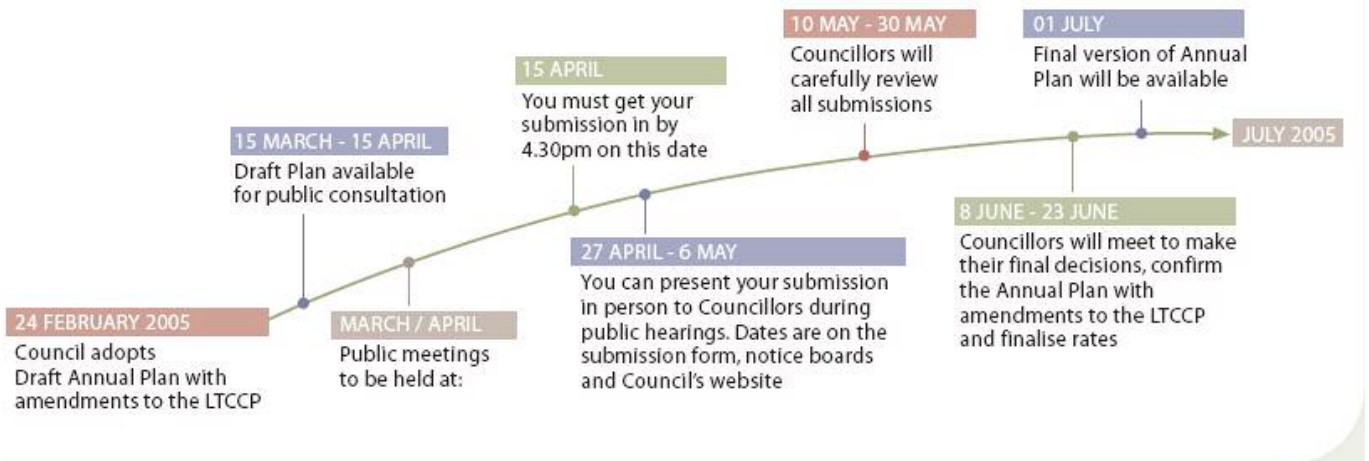
The community is at the heart of democracy and the move towards engaging the community has been a sound investment for Council as can be seen from the following community comments:

*"I like the format of your booklet. As we are absent landowners who are very interested in all the developments it would be good if you could provide more feedback on things that are happening in the different locations. Your Council has a good image as a forward thinking, progressive Council. Long may that continue – well done."* Anthony Ford – Submission # 17.

*"Hokianga Health Enterprise Trust congratulates the Council on producing such an accessible document with a well articulated vision for the future of the Far North. This broad vision is fully endorsed by the Trust."* – Submission # 536

The final version of '**Recipes for Success**' (appendix 2), issued in July 2005 includes amendments, feedback and details of next year's Annual Plan and Long Term Council Community Plan process. It provides the community with ongoing linkages and the opportunity to be involved with the planning for the future of the district.

### How the Process Works - Time-Line



In summary, the project has been a journey of cementing strong relationships with the community and great progress has been achieved. The expected benefits we set out to attain, such as improving community understanding of what we do plus more community involvement in decision making, are now important features in the way we operate, communicate and engage.

## **SUPPORTING APPENDICES**

1. **Recipes For Success** – A summary of the statement of proposal for the draft Annual Plan 2005/2006 and the proposed amendments to the 2004-2014 Long Term Council Community Plan;
2. **Recipes For Success** – A summary of the Annual Plan 2005/2006 including amendments to the 2004-2014 Long Term Council Community Plan.

### **Artwork Credits:**

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