

ENTRY CATEGORY

- ☒ Innovation in Organisation and People Development
- ☐ Transforming Service Delivery
- ☐ Innovation in Council-Community Relations
- ☐ Collaborative Government Action
- ☐ Innovation in Policy and Regulatory Development

NAME OF ORGANISATION SUBMITTING ENTRY

Tararua District Council

NAME OF PROJECT

Tararua Business Network

PROJECT SUMMARY

80 local businesses can't be wrong!

The 2013-2018 Economic Development Plan (EDP) for the Tararua District identified a need to support and enable growth of small-medium-sized enterprises (SME's) in Tararua. With more than 1800 SME's, we recognised that if we could grow each business by at least one employee we would have a more sustainable economic base. With this goal, the Tararua Business Network – (a stand-alone operational unit to drive business development, investment, and resident attraction) - launched in December 2014. Since then we have supported 80 local businesses, and that number continues to grow.

Embracing the Council's mission statement: "A strong, growing, prosperous, local economy that attracts welcomes and retains businesses and residents", this grassroots support agency links, facilitates and enables development in business capability across the district. It recognises potential in individuals, businesses and community, and acts as a conduit for Council Regulatory Services for all business enquiries.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

*"2014/15 was the third year of our 2012–2022 Long Term Plan, focused on improved core infrastructure, prudent financial management, and **more emphasis on economic development**.*

Key results achieved against the agreed targets included setting up the Tararua Business Network (TBN) as a stand-alone operational unit to link, support, facilitate and enable small to medium business growth. Additionally, the business incubation service was developed in order to help fledgling businesses."

- Tararua District Council 2014/15 Annual Report

Throughout 2011-2013, Council hosted strategy meetings with the business community as part of their consultation process, and this feedback was used to develop the 2013-2018 EDP. One of the key initiatives was the establishment of the Tararua Business Network.

With a minimal budget and only minor increases forecasted, we encouraged a local entrepreneur to fund the upgrade of a building that was fit-for-purpose, and in close proximity to the main Council office.

One key strategy is to act as a conduit for Council's regulatory services – this means linking a business's requirements to all Council departments with **one** meeting. It also helps eliminate cross-over and a lack of cohesion; stream-lining the regulatory processes. In order for the model to function successfully, a business must approach us to receive support – this has proved effective thus far with a total of 80 businesses receiving assistance over the course of one year.

One risk was that the business community would not see this service as valuable. In order to gauge the response from local business and community, we actively and consistently survey all using our services, providing us with valuable feedback for early alleviation of problems. (*Refer Appendix 1 & 2*)

Local feedback highlighted that some of the services we provided were competing with local business offering these services commercially and we have addressed this overlap.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

A business plan was developed using the base information from the EDP on 'Retaining and Expanding Local Business'. The business plan was sectioned to departments, projects and resourcing capability. (*Refer Appendix 3*)

To encourage investment into economic development we needed to demonstrate what could be achieved at different levels of investment (within a financial year). This is demonstrated in the business plan - in levels bronze, silver and gold; to date we have achieved all of bronze. With an additional resource, we have also achieved portions of silver and gold. We have exceeded our key performance indicators. We meet with our Economic Development Portfolio Holders on a regular basis to discuss projects, progress, timeframes and support required.

Specific elements of the Business Network include:

- Training environment/partnerships
- Conduit for regulatory services
- Incubating business
- Developing collaborative relationships
- Linking to support networks

We utilize two project management tools to assist us to manage and evaluate projects. The DOSAC method helps us monitor individual project progress and programming. It also helps us evaluate our strategic direction and framework. We also have a digital system for project organisation (Trello) and a manual system (scrumboard) as an overarching indicator of workloads and progress.

After 6 months of operating, we reviewed our procedures (including administrative documents); streamlining our services to better satisfy customer and community needs and expectations.

Business surveys were requested from various services provided; this information was utilised to target areas for improvement and has been the evidence base for our decision to open a satellite TBN office in the Southern Ward. This will be launched in conjunction with the Southern Tararua Business Awards. Businesses utilizing our services there will also be surveyed.

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

We have established and developed brilliant relationships with a wide range of stakeholders including:

- Building Clever Companies;
- Vision Manawatu (regional economic agency);
- Inland Revenue Department;
- Destination Manawatu; and
- UCOL.

This enables us to utilise their communication networks to assist the development of local business. We, in turn, help support and mentor other regional initiatives and projects and this returns to us in a multitude of ways.

We continue to build on our existing relationships with local entities, including the Chamber of Commerce. We also continue to engage and support local community groups and organisations to drive economic initiatives.

Our communication channels are designed to reach a cross-section of our community, which includes hard-to-reach rural communities, tech-savvy users, business entrepreneurs, stakeholders and the community in general. We meet with our business community regularly and ask the question 'what do you need?'. We also address business meetings and community meetings to talk about our business unit and how the community can utilize our services.

We manage a communication service for Council and the Tararua Community, which includes:

- a page in the local weekly newspaper (delivered free to every household);
- Council website;
- Tararua Business Network Google+ page;
- Council Facebook page;
- developing a new tourism website; and
- developing and rolling-out a Council digital newsletter.

All of the communication channels listed above have been used to advertise our services to promote training and business opportunities. We regularly interview the businesses who use our services and this is publicised widely.

We pitch our communications to ensure our messages accommodate for age, gender, skill level and geographical location. Examples of this include the facilitation of a business-networking group for women, and the imminent establishment of the TBN satellite office.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Like any new business, we discovered areas for improvement and one of the lessons learnt was that we could better streamline the processes for Council Regulatory Services, the TBN and communication platforms with business.

To address this, we have a Business Administrator, whose role is to act as a 'go-to' for each business on all enquiries that relate to Council Regulatory Services. This has streamlined the communication during the regulatory process and flags enquiries early to Council teams. We are now able to ensure we are 'ticking all the boxes' for Regulatory Services – while creating a positive and enabling environment for the business customer. Using TBN as a conduit for Council Regulatory Services is now business as usual. This is going to be beneficial when we extend our services to the southern ward as this will flag any business enquiry early for our regulatory departments.

We have further developed the relationship with our regulatory teams with regular meetings regarding activity in the district. This has also led to an assessment of our processes and procedures across the Tararua District Council; from the moment the enquiry is taken, through processing, until the customer is presented with the relevant permissions.

This has had a wider implication on the service we provide in all areas of Council; working successfully to bridge the gap for the end user.

PROJECT SUCCESS

In the Long Term Plan 2015-2025, a key strategy is to increase the resources put into promotion and economic development. This year sees another moderate increase in the level of service.

Prior to the establishment of the TBN, the Economic Development unit was focused on business as usual (communication and marketing). With the establishment of the facility, we have been able to maximize opportunities derived from new business relationships, service providers and regional partners. This has had substantial benefits to our unit's opportunities and we are now recognised as a leader in business development.

Council have transitioned from viewing economic development as a minor service, to being a key service we provide. This is evidenced by the increase of portfolio holder's assigned to economic development; growing from just one in 2011 to four in 2015.

The nature of our districts geographical dynamics meant we were always going to be challenged to reach all of our businesses and we found that we were missing opportunities in our southern ward - (a sole trader struggles to leave their business to attend training etc.). We are now in the process of opening a TBN satellite office to support these businesses. This office will be in the Pahiatua Council Service Centre, which is currently underutilized.

Surveying our customers provides a platform for reviewing and improving our programme. A very new initiative has been the establishment of case studies – this allows us to take a deeper look at how our service is viewed by the customer, and how we can do better.

The TBN utilizes work programmes through Work and Income and ACC to staff this unit. The individual on such a scheme gains confidence while upskilling, the TBN gains a resource that is sustainable, and the flow on benefits to the community are substantial. To date, we have had four staff on schemes and helped place two of these into local employment opportunities - and we continue to utilize the services of one other on individual business events.

We are in the business of developing potential, whether it's business potential, community potential, marketing potential – or individual potential.

There are real tangible benefits that we can report from the business sector e.g. three local businesses, who were contemplating closure, have remained opened with the support and guidance of the TBN.

The TBN identified a need to facilitate the relationship between local business customers and Council Regulatory Services. The TBN acts as a conduit in order to aid compliance and create a positive and enabling experience for the customer. We are able to tick the regulatory boxes and assist compliance while nurturing relationships with business – a 'win/win' situation.

We believe that the TBN is an effective and proactive model for how Council and the business community can work together to grow sustainable and viable economies.

What about the project outcomes, lessons etc. is this transferable to other local authorities and why?

Developing the link between Council Regulatory Services and the business community has been both effective and efficient – this model is easily transferable to other local authorities to enhance customer satisfaction and compliance.

Economic development is now on everyone's radar and the timing is right for Councils to evaluate their relationships with local business and community groups affecting economic development. We are receiving enquiries from all over the North Island enquiring about the way that we are operating at the TBN. Additionally, our regional partners are very impressed with the facility and have commented, "There is nothing quite like it".

The creation of a hub for both the local community and business community has enabled the establishment of a common skills pool for utilization to the benefit of business and community development. This model can be recreated in other locations; as long as the principles remain intact, which is linking, enabling and facilitating.

Providing training opportunities enables the upskilling of community groups and businesses – providing a sustainable improved base to grow economy. The model for this utilizes our relationships with regional and national service providers – which we believe is key to the success of this business unit and a model that can be introduced by other Councils regardless of their size.

A strategy that has been successful within the business unit is the **incubation of start-ups and fledgling businesses** - including one-on-one support, mentoring and linking them to business opportunities. This service could be transferable to other local authorities, providing they understand the model and have developed relationships with their business community.

The TBN model is an effective and extremely worthwhile function of our Council - as it continues to develop, our district continues to grow and flourish.

We are experiencing real and sustainable growth, with the goal of ensuring a "strong, growing, prosperous, local economy" for future generations.

SUPPORT MATERIAL

- ✓ Link to a 2-3 minute video uploaded on YouTube
- ✓ PowerPoint Slide in the correct 16:9 widescreen format
- ✓ An electronic file of your organisations Logo (in a format suitable for print, preferably an EPS with transparent background)

D Confirmation that a ticket has been purchased for Gala Dinner (will be emailed separately)

D Other:

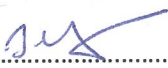


Appendix 1: Survey results for the 2014/15 Financial Year

Appendix 2: Geographical statistics

Appendix 3: Tararua Business Network Business Plan

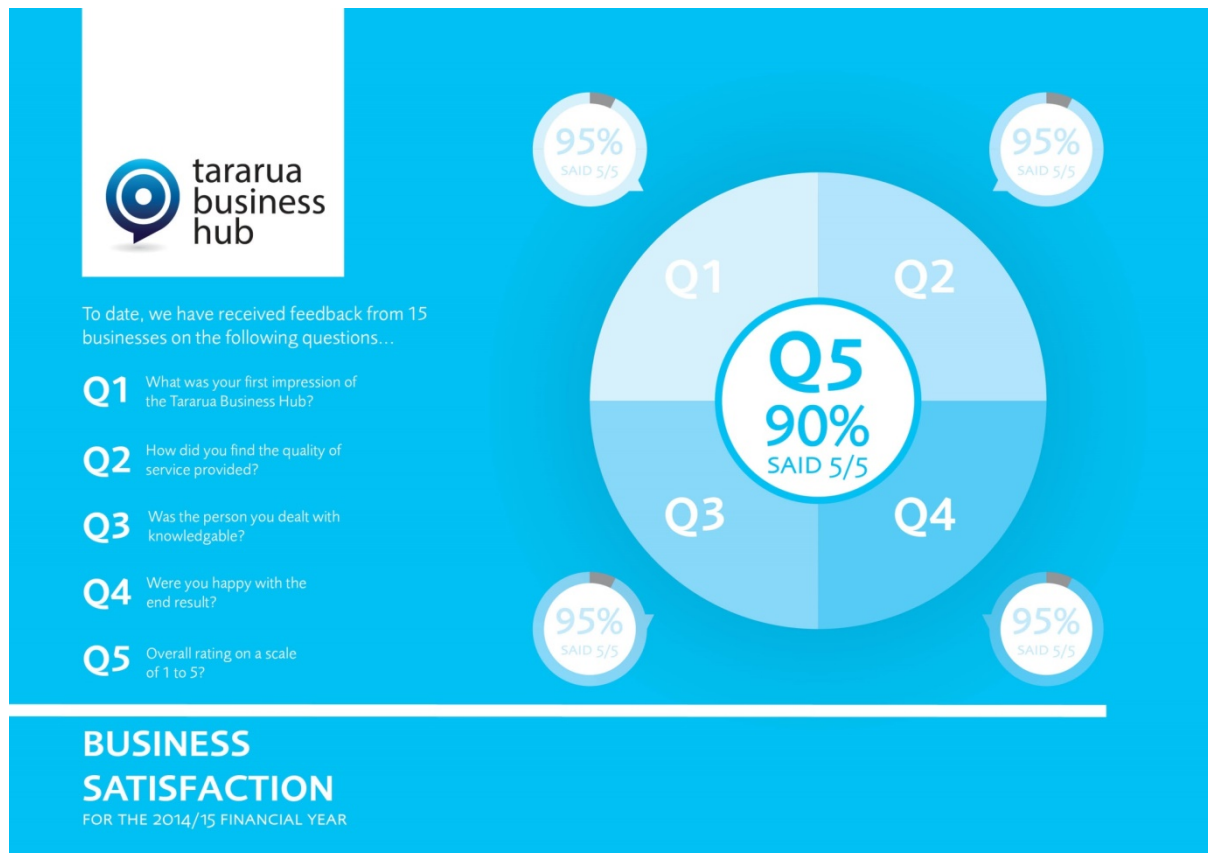
REQUESTING A SPACE AT THE MARKETPLACE

D Please tick if your organisation wishes to book a space at The Marketplace to showcase your project. The booth must include one or more representatives from your organisation being available at The Marketplace to talk about your project

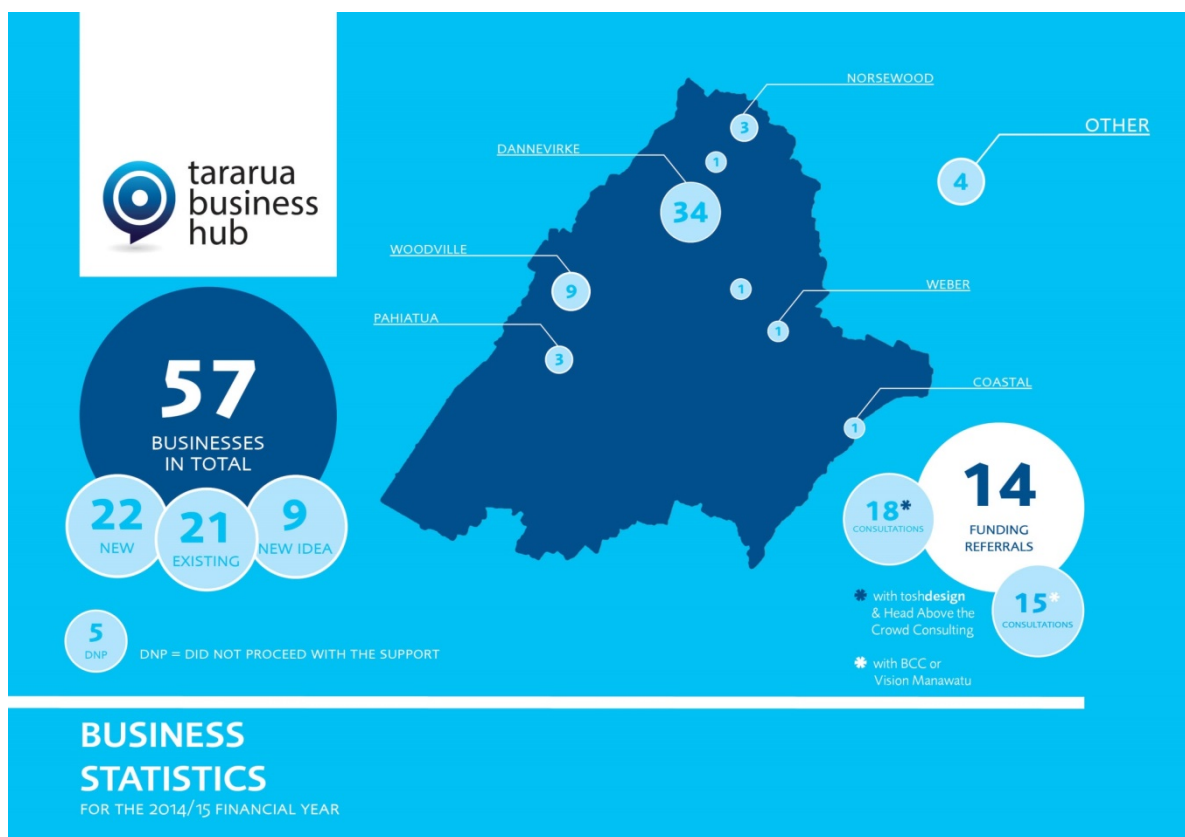
Contact Details (The person to contact at your organisation in	Name: Lianne Simpkin Email: lianne.simpkin@tararua.govt.nz Phone: 027 5947006
Signature of your organisation's Chief Executive or Nominee	Signature:  Name:  Title:  Title: CHIEF EXECUTIVE Date: 29/1/16
Entry Instructions:	Once completed please print, sign, scan and email this Entry to Raymond.horan@solgm.org.nz to reach him no later than 5pm on 3 February 2016. Please also attach to the email your support material as noted above. If you have not already done so please purchase at least one ticket (required as a condition of each entry) to the Gala Dinner.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey results for the 2014/15 Financial Year



Appendix 2: Geographical locations of businesses worked with in the 2014/15 Financial Year



Appendix 3: Tararua Business Network Business Plan

