



Visioning

Description

Visioning is a term used to describe a process for identifying community aspirations as a basis for developing a strategic and/or action plan. Visioning is often carried out in response to the question “Where do we want to be?” It is a useful way to define specific and more general strategic outcomes, as identified by community and other stakeholders.

How and when the tool is used

Visioning is used in a range of circumstances, including for social development and wellbeing, tourism and recreation, economic development and environmental protection and management. It allows participants to individually and collectively contribute to the development of a shared vision, usually through a range of participatory processes. These processes typically include the application of research and intensive planning tools, with a focus on maximising community involvement.

A number of mechanisms can be used to maximise community and other stakeholder involvement in the vision development. These could include focus groups, surveys, hui, community meetings, workshops and charrettes ([focus groups and workshops](#) 🍯; [charrettes](#) 🍯). Other tools such as Shared Decision Making (SDM) and Interest Based Negotiation (IBN) have recently been used in large scale, multi-sector planning situations, where tourism, environmental, economic, social, agricultural, and local government interests are involved. The Great Barrier Island visioning exercise showed the need for a range of participation tools to increase community participation in the process.

It is important to ensure that the vision statement still reflects the aspirations of the community and to ensure that decision-making informed by the vision (including when it informs statutory planning documents) are consistent with evolving community aspirations. This could be done in a timeframe that is similar to that of the [Long Term Council Community Plan process](#) 🍯 (i.e. three-yearly).

Application

Visioning exercises are relatively commonplace, although the level of community participation in them varies. Some are more structured, occur over a longer period of time and employ a number of participatory techniques to encourage wide involvement. Others are narrower in scope and community participation may be reduced to a one-off public meeting and consultation with key stakeholders.

Experience has shown that it is very difficult to get wide participation in a visioning exercise and people can feel as if they had insufficient opportunity to participate. Also, the time and resources needed to accommodate cultural values in tourism-oriented community visioning exercises are considerable. Significant issues arise for iwi/hapu in tourism planning (for instance as people grapple with commercialising aspects of tikanga) and the visioning process needs to allow time for issues to be aired and debated.

Another criticism often voiced about visioning processes relates to their application. One of the most common criticisms is that vision statements are seldom reflected in statutory planning documents and, as a consequence, the plans of action are seldom implemented.

There is an opportunity for communities and councils to effectively develop a shared vision as part of the Long Term Council Community Plan ([LTCCP](#) 🍯) process. Changes in the Local Government Act 2002 require territorial authorities to carry out LTCCPs. These plans are intended to show how territorial authorities plan to contribute to communities’ desired outcomes. These desired community outcomes, which reflect community aspirations, are developed through a consultative process. Communities and councils agree about these goals, which should then be integrated into local authority strategies, policies and activities. The plans are to be based on the principal that the local authority’s role is to promote social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of their communities, taking a sustainable development approach.



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However, there is a difference between a vision statement and an LTCCP. A vision statement reflects community aspirations while the latter is an operational document. That is, it will indicate how the council will implement and fund any identified works and services. It can also state how council activities might work with other agency work programmes to achieve the identified community outcomes.

Our evaluation

Our experience is that the development of a vision statement necessarily needs to occur over an extended time period and employ a range of participatory techniques. Even then, however, it is still difficult to get wide community support for and participation in the process. For instance, on Great Barrier Island, some people were sceptical about the independence of the process and needed convincing that there was not 'an agenda' behind the exercise. They needed convincing that the resulting statement would not end up reflecting the views of, or advantaging, one stakeholder group.