

The Collective Impact Framework – Part B, Biodiversity Example¹

This document provides one example of how the collective impact framework of Kania and Kramer might be used, taking region-wide efforts to enhance habitat biodiversity as its example.

Some context: At the Environment Network Manawatu's (ENM) 15 February 2014 workshop on collaboration, facilitator Richard Thompson (who also serves as Chairperson of the Manawatu River Leaders Accord) asked participants to consider how the collective impact framework might possibly be applied to biodiversity initiatives. This document records the ensuing conversation². This was a brainstorming session, and the comments below should be taken as an illustration of the collective impact framework rather than as an ENM position statement. The comments may have some secondary relevance as a set of ideas that could feed into further discussions about a collective and regional approach to biodiversity initiatives.

A Common Agenda

Our February 2014 discussion of a common agenda started with the following statement from the Greening Strategy of 2005, which was an early collaboration that helped catalyse the formation of ENM:

By the year 2025 people in the Palmerston North City area are proud of the health and appeal of the local environment, with awareness and respect for its ecological, cultural and spiritual values. The community has an understanding of the concept of biodiversity and accepts the collective responsibility to maintain healthy ecosystems with numerous opportunities to participate in achieving this.

All streets are regarded as liveable extensions of the neighbourhood. They have their own special, tree-lined character, connecting individual properties each with aspects of lowland native bush or compatible exotics to allow native birds to feed throughout the year anywhere in the City. Gardens are developed with the products from compost heaps, wormeries and the use of management practices that recognise the need for long-term sustainability of the environment. The increased indigenous bush areas, which have full protection from animal or plant damage and change of ownership, continue to flourish. They provide enjoyable passive recreation without compromising the health or values of the area. The waterways running within the City boundary have a strong and vibrant mauri or life-force. They are protected in riparian green corridors that extend beyond the City boundary. They maintain a natural bird and fish population that people safely enjoy as they make use of the passive and active recreational opportunities that abound both within and without the urban area. The parks in the Tararua Ranges are popular for locals and tourists, who have come to appreciate the special appeal of the Manawatu. ³

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- 1 This document has been compiled by Sharon Stevens, ENM Project Coordinator. It is available from the Environment Network Manawatu web site (<http://enm.org.nz>) under the menu items “resources” for “collaboration.” A “Part A” document outline the collective impact approach is available in the same location.
 - 2 This example in no way represents the regional environmental sector or serves as an Environment Network Manawatu (ENM) position. There were very real limits on the available discussion time, whereas a collective impact approach would likely require years to establish and to begin implementing. Workshop participation was also limited. Those present noted that many iwi/hapū groups were absent both during this workshop and within past ENM discussions. They also pointed to how these absences are reflected in the content of discussions. Many ENM member group representatives were also not in attendance. As the network grows, there is a need to continue developing ENM infrastructure to better support and coordinate our full diversity.
 - 3 Palmerston North City Council and Environment Network Manawatu. Oct. 2006. *Greening strategy: Enhancing Palmerston North's biodiversity*.

A list of additional aspects drawn from previous ENM discussions were also provided as a starting point for discussion:

- a network of biodiversity corridors from mountains to sea including mountains-to-river and mountains-to-city corridors;
- indigenous biodiversity along the length of the Manawatu River and all major tributaries;
- protection and enhancement of existing key areas, including Turitea and Kahuterawa stream catchments and the Manawatu Gorge area;
- additional enhancement of riparian areas, including urban and rural streams with attention to health of their catchment areas;
- plantings that serve flood mitigation and erosion control, particularly in highly erodible hill country;
- identified priority areas for enhancing indigenous biodiversity through eco-sourced plantings;
- identified conservation areas protected from recreation impacts;
- wetland enhancement and development;
- state of the environment monitoring;
- sustained implementation of a catchment-wide plan that sets priorities for weed and animal pest control;
- public education around biodiversity to extend the impact of council and community groups, including:
 - schools programmes,
 - enhanced public access and recreational opportunities to increase public appreciation of biodiversity's amenity values,
 - programmes targeted at private landowners, and
 - increased community involvement in care-taking projects; and
- selective development of non-indigenous biodiversity in appropriate areas, for example by planting forage plants for beneficial insects, supporting urban gardening involving diverse food species, and promoting poly-culture as an alternative to mono-cropping.

Our workshop conversation focussed on how we would need to change the above statements to develop an *inclusive, current* and *catchment-wide* common agenda for biodiversity:

- inclusion of tangata whenua and acknowledgement that an iwi/hapū voice is essential for the development of a common agenda, with their actions as kaitiaki important for implementing that agenda;
- a leading emphasis on water, recognising the interconnection of waterways and indigenous biodiversity, including not only riparian biodiversity but aquatic biodiversity;
- explicit focus on the entire Manawatu River Catchment, not just the PNCC area.

These above comments point to where further conversation would need to occur before we could formally express a common agenda that would truly serve the full sector.

Common Progress Indicators

The goal at this step of the discussion was to brainstorm around some measurements that multiple groups could agree would serve as indicators of their collective impact, things that would go beyond the outcomes of a single project and that would instead capture the overall health of the region. Such measures could then be used to communicate within the environmental sector, to funders, and to the public at large.

Suggestions (not a comprehensive list):

- We should look for gross environmental indicators with broad public appeal, even though this would include some imprecisions: for example, how many swim-able sites are there on the river today?
- Once we agreed on these indicators, we could display them with a gauge at the Manawatu Gorge as a way of communicating to a broad public.
- Bringing in the public to participate in bird surveys is another approach to engaging people with indicators of overall regional health. We've noticed, for example, changes in bird life in urban parks where conservation projects are underway.
- Other species might similarly serve as indicators—the presence of surf clams in various areas, for example.
- Schools could get involved in water quality monitoring or other types of monitoring. While the data schools can easily collect might not hold up in environment court, they nonetheless serve as a sufficiently accurate measure for general purposes. Mike from WECA has access to inexpensive water monitoring kits.
- Another set of indicators might be removing problems: how soon can we stop using the river as a drain, i.e. how many point source discharges remain?

Engaging the public in the process of measurement increases interest in a healthy environment. Making measurements available contributes to accountability. One suggestion was to have a simple list of 10 goals and to ask, at every meeting, if we're making any progress.

A question was raised about the way we do measurement. We tend to have easy, one-dimensional measurements, but it's important to have a holistic view, i.e. to take a Māori approach. We have *A Cultural Health Index for Streams and Waterways (2003)*⁴; can we develop something similar for biodiversity? How do we merge scientific indicators with other ways that we experience and value the environmental health of our region?

Mutually reinforcing activities and Continuous communications

At the workshop, Heike Schiele (a PhD student serving on the ENM board) presented a “communities of interest” approach to thinking about mutually reinforcing activities and communications⁵.

The Manawatu Gorge Project was then discussed as an example of diverse communities of interest working together, and working in various ways. For example, community groups are included in the Gorge Project, in some cases working within a single-activity niche. Iwi and hapū are providing holistic kaitiakitanga. Funders, landowners, local and regional council and agencies and others all have roles. The activities of each group contribute to a whole and reinforce an overall vision that is being held by a core group.

4 Tipa, G., & L. Teirney. 2003. A cultural health index for streams and waterways: Indicators for recognising and expressing Maori values. New Zealand Ministry for the Environment. <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/water/cultural-health-index-jun03/cultural-health-index-jun03.pdf>. Accessed 14 May 2014.

5 This presentation is summarised in a separately downloadable document available from the ENM web site, (<http://enm.org.nz>), under the menu items “resources” and “collaboration.”

Following on from the above example, participants offered the following questions and comments.

On mutually reinforcing activities

- How can we support one another instead of getting too locked up in our projects? Example – Save Our River Trust (SORT) could provide some type of support to the Water and Environmental Care Association (WECA).
- Could we develop a shared project—such as one relating to the river—that could capture the interest of all of our groups, and of funders, and bring us all together?

On communications

- How do we communicate effectively within our networks without creating an email echo chamber?
- A new online tool, Loomio (<https://www.loomio.org/>), may offer a good approach to online collective decision-making.
- Taking time out for collective reflection and workshops can “sharpen the axe,” i.e. help create and renew network links and catalyse closer communication and cooperation.
- What is the best way to create a hub for communications?
- The Environment Network Manawatu's historic role has been to promote “communication, coordination, and cooperation.” ENM is growing through an increase in member groups and also through an increase in network relationships that extend beyond our members. As we grow, we will need to keep re-evaluating the most effective ways to fill these functions for the regional environmental sector.

A Backbone Organisation

A backbone organisation has several roles:

- to coordinate work efforts;
- to provide an overview;
- to avoid the duplication of efforts;
- to build the success of people working together.

The Environment Network Manawatu can in some ways fulfil these functions to increase our collective environmental impact, but its formal members do not include all organisations that are relevant to our work. For biggest collective impact on regional biodiversity, there is a need to bring ENM's current members into a structure that also engages

- iwi and hapū,
- the rural sector,
- catchment care groups (such as the Oroua Catchment Care Group),
- labour, including volunteers and schools.

Questions that a backbone organisation could address:

- Where do we want to do plantings? What are our collective priorities?
- Which groups are best suited to which types of plantings?
- What connections can be made between our reserves, street trees, green corridors, community projects, and catchment care?
- Are there opportunities to link these plantings within a Palmerston North strategy, regional strategy, or similar?