



Community Benefit Assessment Tool

or **“measuring the piece of string”**

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Overview

What's the problem?

Our solution

How it works

Why its good and the limitations

Did it actually (honestly) work?

What did elected members think?



The Business of Local Government



So How Do We Prioritise all That?

- Short vs long-term outcomes?
- Paying up vs affordability?
- Needs vs wants?
- Tangible outputs vs soft outcomes?
- Governance decision vs popularity contest?
- My pet project vs your pet project?



The Challenge

How can we think about expenditures in a way that would be more reflective of the value those expenditures provide to the District?

Something beyond allocating 'more' or 'less' money to roading....delaying this or that for a year to reduce debt..and so on...

How can we quantify what 'benefits' the community?



What's the problem?

- Decision making very financially/asset maintenance driven
- Hard to explain the link with community aspirations and council objectives
- Prioritisation was too general
- Needed to get consistency in 'expressions of community desire'
- Difficult to demonstrate contribution or value added



What we did..

Phase 1: Prioritising activities

- Ratepayer survey and focus groups
- Councillor shopping trolley
- Council objectives



What we did..

Phase 2: Prioritising goods, services and projects

- Developed a matrix that assesses the overall contribution to community benefit from any particular council good or service
- Projects, activities, groups of activities can be assessed to show what contribution they make to the community outcomes
- Attached it to an existing 'Capital Expenditure' prioritisation model



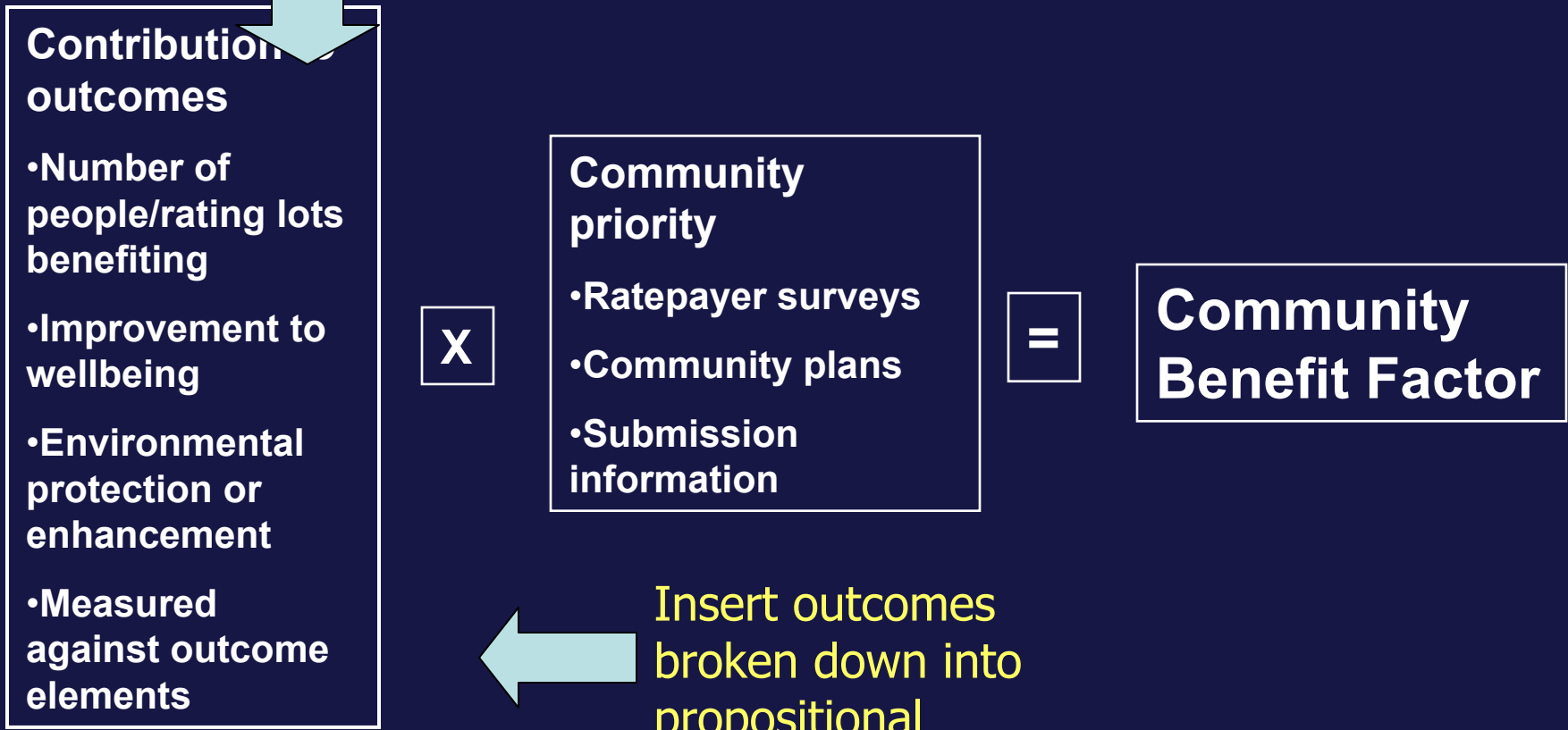
How we did it..

- Based on qualitative risk assessment framework
- Uses Standards NZ risk management standard template
- Integrated into software model which includes other important project information
- Made it easy and quick to complete



Formula based descriptors-can apply to any council

How it works..



← Insert outcomes broken down into propositional statements here



How it works..

**Community
Benefit Factor**

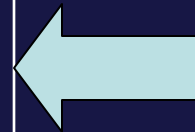
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CAPEX FACTORS

- Asset condition
- System quality
- Legislative requirements
- Timings
- Industry standards
- Growth requirements

=

**Overall delivery
priority**



Insert your
own tool
here!

What it looks like..

	Planning for growth	Impact of people is minimised in future	Heritage sites are protected	Healthy community	Clean and healthy waterways	Natural ecosystems recognised / enhanced
	1	3	7	10	13	14
Stormwater project for large catchment area	Insignificant	Major	Minor	Moderate	Extreme	Extreme
50,000 worth of library books			Insignificant	Insignificant		
Large multi sports centre complex		Insignificant		Major	Insignificant	
New playground in Thames				Insignificant		
Sustainability strategy	Major	Extreme	Major	Major	Major	Major



What it looks like..

Community Outcomes Overall Result		Community Priority Result	Community Benefit factor	Capex Factor Table	Delivery Priority
304.50	55.99%	Extreme	Very Important Community Priority	Very High	Stormwater → Critical
124.50	23.69%	Minor	Very Low Community Priority	Low	Library books → Not Important
164.50	44.68%	Moderate	Moderate Community Priority	Medium	Sports centre → Not Important
54.50	18.35%	Insignificant	Very Important Community Priority	Medium	Playground → Not Important
294.50	74.70%	Extreme	Moderate Community Priority	High	Sustainability strategy → Important




Overall delivery priority

- A weighted and calculated percentage producing an ordered list of items or projects
- Falls into 'bands'
- Affordability and funding tools examined after this to make final decisions
- It is this banding that is used in Council 'conversations'-critical, not important



Its good because..

- It can show where Council is directing the most effort and the gaps
-  Can demonstrate a customer driven planning process
- Its can be hardwired in to business cases, CAPEX models etc
- It is objective-strict thresholds were deliberately imbedded to prohibit the triumph of the pet project
- Can be applied to any set of outcomes and any item including operational projects
- When there are disagreements you know what they're about!



Limitations...

- The community benefit needs a technical matrix or similar component to pick up other essential things like maintenance, legislation or LOS commitments
- Doesn't mean we know about actual benefit- must be reviewed and refined with monitoring and reporting framework which will advise most effective strategies in the future
- 100 hip replacements or two heart transplants?
- Recognising diversity?



The Reality Check

- Policy Purists vs Finance

“We should work out what we need and want and have to do and then see how far we get through the list with the money we have...”

VS

“We should do things when its best to borrow and bits of things to spread costs and things that are subsidised and things that attract DCP revenue and if we do it by user fee or board targeted rate it could happen sooner or in that community but not that one because of growth.. etc etc ”

But at least we had the discussion!!



The Reality Check

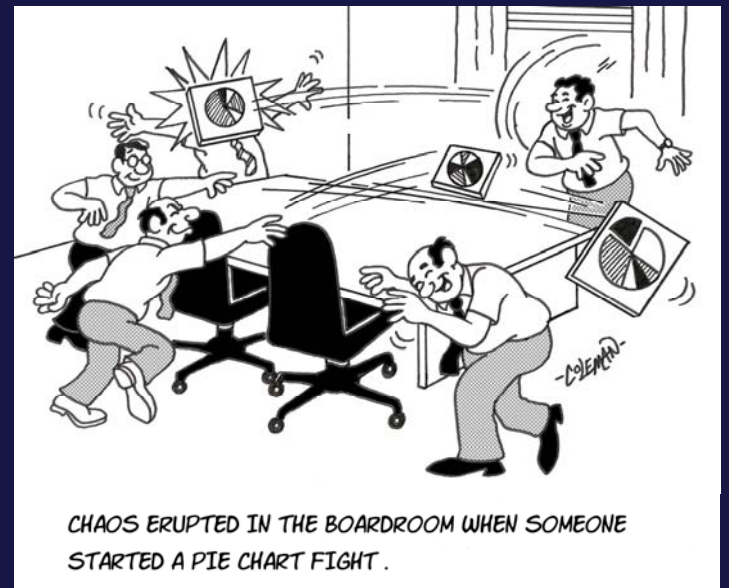
- Policy Purists vs Politicians

“In this 2009-2019 Ten Year Plan, a number of services that some people may consider discretionary and projects have been retained while others have been removed, reduced or deferred. In making these decisions, the Council has factored in community views and preferences on priorities and in cases, has made value-based judgments on what is considered important.” TCDC Ten year Plan Vol 1 Introduction Pg 19



The Reality Check

- Policy Purists vs Politicians
 - Officer advice vs governance decisions
 - Pet projects
 - Interest groups and voters
 - Other factors we'd missed
 - Value-based judgements



The Reality Check

- An evolutionary process in shifting to a customer driven approach
- The 'community benefit factor' and the prioritisation process forced a requirement for a greater clarity of rationale in decision making
- Providing good consistent evidence about community priority and benefit was persuasive and did significantly influence Council Planning even if we didn't win every battle



What did the elected members think?

- Probably not thoroughly understood but underpinned the information they received
- Highlighted where relevant at key decision making points
- Basis for conversation and more in-depth consideration around 'bigger' issues
- Conflict over local projects not being prioritised highly enough –trouble taking a 'district wide' approach at times



Thanks for listening

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