

Whanganui Digital Leaders Forum Strategy

DIGITAL WHANGANUI



Background

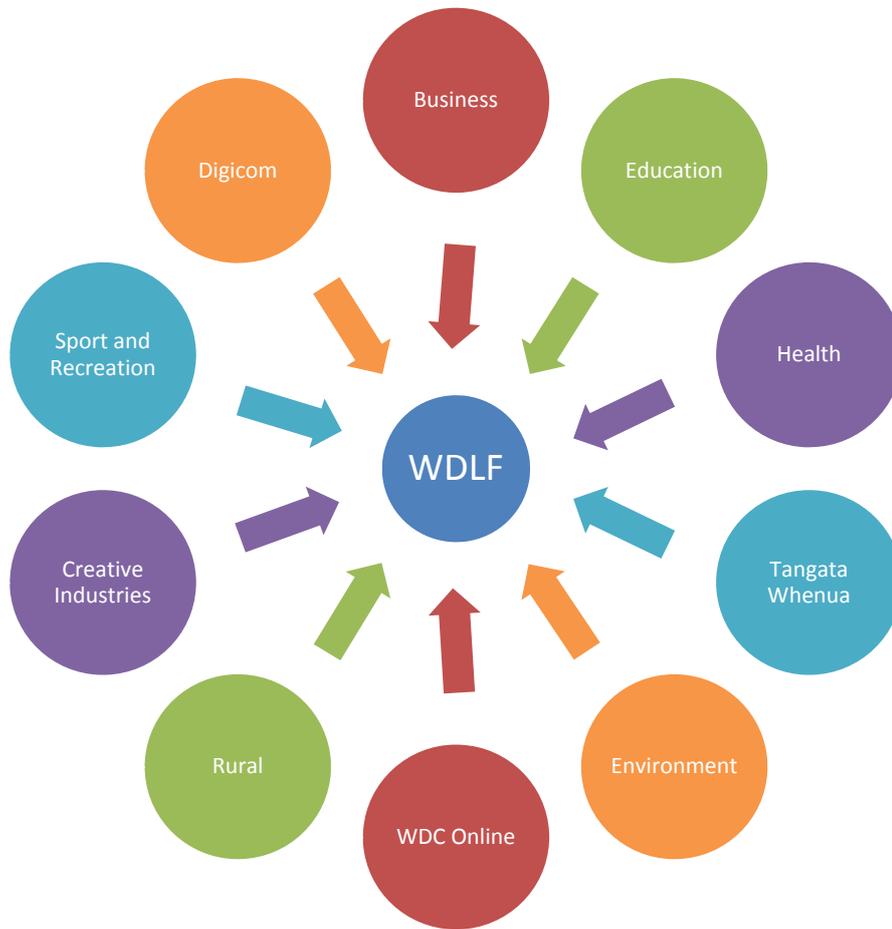
Access to broadband and the Internet is fast becoming a necessity of everyday life much like electricity was a century ago. As broadband deploys widely through our district it is imperative that Whanganui maintains its proactive leadership, to ensure a productive digital future for all. Effective uptake of broadband has the ability to fundamentally restructure our community's economy and social fabric in a positive way.

Today, broadband offers every community the opportunity to move from the periphery to the centre, in economic terms. It creates new kinds of companies and even whole new industries. It enables small companies to be global exporters – including the export of skills and knowledge which were never before transportable across time zones or national borders. It can ensure that schools in remote regions and inner cities have access to the latest information tools and reference sources. It can link rural healthcare providers to leading medical centres and local law enforcement to national information grids. Individuals and businesses can go global in search of low-cost, quality vendors, and Web-based tools can increase community involvement. By boosting the economic and social well-being of communities, broadband can reduce the incentives for young people to move away in search of opportunity and a better quality of life. Paradoxically, it can play a key role in giving communities a sustainable future in our ever-more-connected world.

Whanganui saw the opportunity that access to fast, affordable broadband could bring and worked to ensure the district was connected to Ultra Fast Broadband (UFB) early. Having successfully lobbied for early connection, the Whanganui District Council (WDC) worked with Crown Fibre Holdings to establish the Whanganui Digital Leaders Forum (WDLF), with the aim of maximising the potential benefits of UFB. WDC had already successfully established a number of digital inclusion programmes within the community, including Computers in Homes, where Whanganui is a national leader in terms of graduates, the Computer Clubhouse (associated with MIT in Boston) and the Aotearoa Peoples Network Kaharoa in the district's libraries using the Edge global benchmarking system.

Whanganui is New Zealand's first Smart21 Intelligent Community and one of 126 communities worldwide to reach this benchmark since 1999. The Intelligent Community Forum (ICF) is an international think tank that studies and promotes the best practices of the world's Intelligent Communities as they adapt to the demands and seize the opportunities presented by information and communications technology (ICT). ICF works collaboratively to help communities build prosperous broadband economies, solve social problems and enrich local cultures.

The WDLF has terms of reference and is made up of digital leaders across ten sector groups:



Strategic Context

The WDC developed the Wanganui Broadband and Digital Strategies in 2010, in consultation with the community. The Wanganui Digital Strategy set out a clear vision, outcomes and goals for the district: *“Wanganui is a leader in the digital world. We are a well-connected, socially inclusive, prosperous and sustainable community.”* The Wanganui Digital Strategy identified that an affordable, open access, fibre network was essential to achieve the vision of being a leader in the digital world. This was a significant piece of work to complete and as a result the Council also developed the Wanganui Broadband Strategy with the vision: *“To ensure extensive, future-proofed, open access, ultra-fast broadband infrastructure is available throughout Wanganui District as soon as possible, in order to seize the associated economic, educational and social benefits for Wanganui District.”*

WDLF examined international best practice for developing a broadband economy and found the Intelligent Communities Forum (ICF). ICF has five indicators, which WDLF has adopted.

Broadband connectivity: WDC and the WDLF have expressed a clear vision and strategy and are working towards 100% connectivity to ultra-fast, open access and affordable broadband networks. They continue to lobby for national and international infrastructure to complete our global connections and for an equitable approach to connecting all of the community, irrespective of geography or income.

A knowledge workforce: Intelligent communities exhibit the determination and demonstrated ability to develop a workforce qualified to perform knowledge work from the factory floor to the research lab. Wanganui is starting to analyse the gaps in understanding and provision of education in the community. One of the keys for this indicator is to develop strong links with UCOL and Massey University, business and the Council. This is known globally as the innovation triangle (industry/education/government) and research shows that this is almost a ‘cookie cutter’ solution to driving economic prosperity. This solution sounds simple; however, in reality it requires strong leadership, deep trust and collaboration as well as courage and time.

Innovation: For business, broadband is to innovation what fertiliser is to crops. Intelligent communities work to build the local innovation capacity of new and existing companies, because this represents all of the job growth in modern economies. Intelligent communities also invest in e-government programmes that reduce costs, while delivering services on an anywhere, anytime basis that digitally savvy citizens expect.

Digital Inclusion: As broadband deploys within a community and services come more and more online, there is a serious risk that those on the periphery of the economy and society, who do not have access to digital technology or broadband, will be even further excluded. Intelligent communities provide skills training, work towards ensuring multiple layers of access and promote a compelling vision of the benefits that a broadband economy can bring to all lives.

Marketing and advocacy: Globalisation means communities must work harder than ever to communicate their advantages as great places to live, work and build growth businesses. Effective marketing shares this story with the world, while advocacy builds a new vision of the community from within.



Success factors: As well as these five indicators, the WDLF has adopted three success factors:

Collaboration: No one person or organisation can achieve Intelligent Community status alone. It requires a deep understanding of what needs to be done and strong collaboration between business, education and local government.

Leadership: According to the Intelligent Communities Forum, no community has succeeded in becoming an Intelligent Community without strong leadership. Leadership can be political, from city officials and from the community. In Whanganui's case we have all of these and this contributes to the drive behind the vision. The Mayor's leadership as Chair of WDLF adds value.

Sustainability: Sustainability is about creating a virtuous cycle where, eventually, growth businesses recognise not only the benefits of being based in Whanganui but also the value of contributing to programmes that promote an intelligent community.



Vision

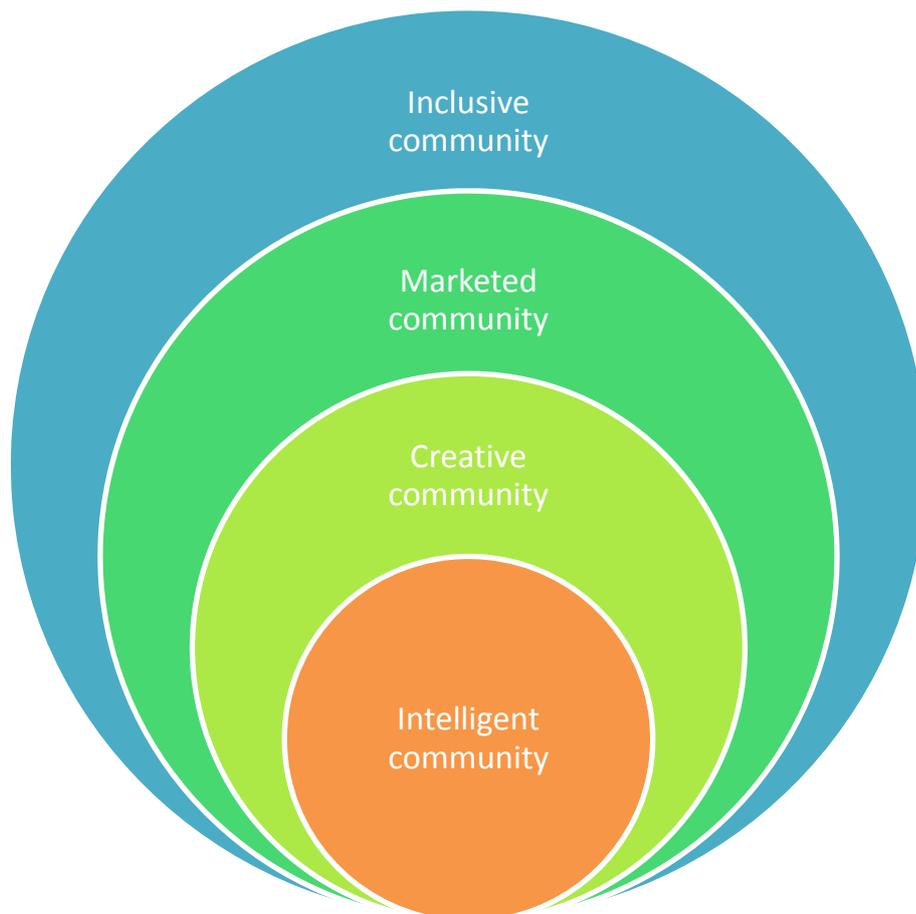
100%Connected

Objective

Whanganui leads the way in the digital world.

Goals

1. To be an intelligent community
2. To grow a vibrant and creative community that embraces opportunities presented by technology and knowledge
3. To effectively market Whanganui as a digital leader
4. To ensure access for all



Implementation



Intelligent Community

- Develop applications for Smart21 and Top 7
- Analysis of applications - especially Top 7
- International judge for Top 7 applications



Broadband - 100% connected

- UFB; RBI; Wireless; Wifi
- Retail services
- Equipment; skills; desire



Knowledge Workforce

- Collaborate with business, education and health providers and government
- Share and promote best practice and creative opportunities
- Advocate for professional development across all sectors



Digital Inclusion - 100% accessibility

- Digicom - connection, stuff, know-how, engagement
- Continue to develop access and digital literacy throughout the community



Innovation

- Examine what innovation is taking place
- Develop relationship with the BCC, tertiary and businesses
- Examine opportunities for coffee house innovation



Marketing and advocacy

- Develop a communications and marketing plan
- Set the scene and tell the story so far
- Lobby and advocate for the community

Measures

Intelligent Community

- Intelligent Communities Applications made
- Intelligent Communities applications successful
- Analysis of applications and resulting set of recommendations
- Understanding of Top 7 application through judging process applied to WDLF

Broadband connectivity

- Whanganui's connectivity gaps (broadband infrastructure, services, equipment, knowledge and engagement) mapped and consistently decreasing

Knowledge workforce

- Demonstrable links established and strengthened between education, business and government

Digital inclusion

- Digicom strategy

Innovation

- Stocktake of Whanganui's innovative ecosystem completed
- Relationships with key stakeholders strengthened

Marketing and advocacy

- Communications and marketing plans developed and adopted by WDLF
- WDC website developed
- Social media use
- Digital webpages developed
- Submissions to Government and other key agencies advocating for Whanganui

Sector Groups:

Each sector group to develop a broad strategy that includes:

- Vision
- Goals
- Objectives
- Projects
- Communication and Marketing Plan
- Measures