



Alignment of Fire Service Strategy with Long Term Council Community Planning

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Abstract

New Zealand's emerging political environment has seen the governance role of central government provide economic and sustainability policy direction to Regional Councils and Local Councils as statements of future 10-year strategic directions in what is now termed Long Term Council Community Plans (LTCCP's).

These council plans direct outcomes for communities with key themes for the environment, safety, economic growth and sustainability as well as historical / cultural strategy development. Key to the Fire Service meeting community expectations is an alignment of our policy with that of the local councils LTCCP's.

This presentation will analyse the key policy statements that are emerging from community plans and where the Fire Service can invest and align our policy and practice for ensuring we are maintaining close and effective working relationships with our communities to meet their expectations of the modern fire service.

All fire service leaders recognise the importance of political neutrality whilst maintaining clear support and delivery for community outcomes. Sustainability for water supplies for communities, coupled to home sprinkler strategies is just one way that the Fire Service can provide opportunities for council planning and strategic managers to influence future council sustainability strategies.

We must demonstrate Fire Service policy delivery alignment through regular reporting of incident attendance statistics coupled to non-operational activity reports. These ensure our operational readiness and community risk management activities support fire service strategic alignment to Council LTCCP's.

Unless Fire Service leaders recognise that their organisational policy, strategy and practice **MUST** align to Council and Government future directions – a gap of failed expectation will evolve and be displayed in reduced trust and confidence by the public we serve.

Current and future local / central government policy and Fire Service strategy must be aligned to create the best possible community service delivery outcomes to meet evolving expectations from our communities.

Introduction

I recently caught up with some of our firefighters on station as I passed through my old stomping ground of Auckland. We happened to be talking about this AFAC conference and they asked about the paper I was presenting. The blank looks said it all when I told them of the title and as I recounted by thoughts I retranslated it to "making sure the stuff we are doing now and for the future is part of what the community expects us to do and vice versa.

So where did that come from. Well the journey to Tasmania for this conference has been paved with some key events. Prior to speaking to you hear today I attended the AFAC Executive Leadership Program hosted at the truly spectacular campus, which is the Australian Institute of Police Management in Manly, Sydney.

Having been nominated to attend this course by our CEO and National Commander Mike Hall, one of the pre-requisites for attending is to have signed off by the boss a Future Strategic Leadership Directions Paper. The paper I have defined has a key focus on governance and cross government and agency focus for the fire service and the community. To achieve Alignment of Fire Service Strategy with Long Term Council Community Plans, I have developed a model to apply alignment to strategies of both organisations. This process can be applied to any organisation that has a role with the community to determine whether or not it has an aligned focus of strategy direction.

Development of the Strategy

In July of 2006 the New Zealand Fire Service launched a national Home Sprinkler strategy to the country. Our Regions approach to the delivery of this strategy was to promote it direct to the community with association of the local councils. This achieved significant traction with councils who found alignment with their council strategy and the home sprinkler strategy.

This led me to define a strategy that I could utilise to complete my AFAC Executive Leadership Program. This has required the understanding of the current strategy of the Fire Service and that of three councils. The Horizons Regional, Palmerston North City and Manawatu District Councils will have a strategic alignment model applied to these strategies.

The issue I will lead, strategise and deliver to the New Zealand Fire Service has significant impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of the service delivery that can be expected from the Fire Service and local government within our communities. That is, that the benefit of a whole of government approach can best be portrayed in analysing and conceptualising the Fire Service role and strategies to meet our mission with those that are embedded in local government long term council community plans.

In defining a future directions strategy paper I have to ask and then demonstrate why this line of thinking is important to my organisation, why I should lead it and whether it is something that the local government strategists and councils will see as a benefit and responsibility to adopt.

In establishing a new vision for this future direction of organisational strategic leadership, I will require my proven skills in networking and partnership to be exercised. In recognising that the development of leading edge innovation of strategy for the fire service and local government will take a degree of risk for the fire service and agencies involved – I have sought support from the strategic analyst and policy writers of the Palmerston North City Council, Manawatu District Council and the CEO of the Horizons Regional Council.

I have gained key support assistance from the central government, Department of Internal Affairs – Local/Central Government Interface Team. This is key to aligning the philosophy and strategy that is driven down from central government to local authorities and subsequently is sought to align with the strategies of the Fire Service in each location.

The outcome will be identification of key governance issues that are operationalised to communities with Fire Service strategy aligned to council planned service delivery roles in support of the local authority plans.

In reverse the local authorities will gain and be able to recognise the alignment of Fire Service strategy to local authority long term community planning delivery needs.

In summary I will use the same approach that Major General Flawith defines the 2nd Division of the Australian Army’s role for service delivery through the three steps of;

Purpose – *define what you want to do,*

Method – *define how you will go about it,*

End State – *determine what the outcome will look like .*

Innovation and Initiative

My future directions paper is a precursor to the work to be done for the policy paper requirement of this course. It is innovative and fresh for the Fire Service and local government to be approaching this issue as in the words of Barbara MacLennan, Relationships Manager - Local Government and Community Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs in a recent e-mail, “*I think it's leading edge, and that there is not a huge amount of directly related NZ experience available in writing.*”

There are some areas of research that I have identified from the Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement (Canada) and also the University of Melbourne Centre for Public Policy – Partnerships Conference (25-27 September 2006).

Further research for my policy paper will define Fire Service public policy and strategic planning alignment with local authority and local service delivery agencies. But at this time it appears that I have found a key area of community policy and practice which specifically is uncharted.

A key aspect for assertion from this future directions paper will be analysis and evaluation of the Department of Internal Affairs roles, responsibilities, powers and accountabilities of local government as defined by the Local Government Act 2002, the Local Electoral Act 2001, and the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002.

In New Zealand, there is central government and local government (involving both regional and territorial authorities). These are defined as local authorities, being;

- 12 regional councils
- 73 territorial authorities (district and city councils), including four unitary authorities

By defining what is Local Government I will be able to benchmark the policy strategy requirements through to the three specific council types (Regional, City and District) that I will use to case study my policy paper to determine strategic alignment issues that can meet alignment of Fire Service strategic planning needs.

The strategic alignment issues are fraught with balancing of many issues for the agencies concerned. Some are global, a few are national, and many others are local. Either they affect only particular localities or they affect different localities differently, or the populations of different localities might legitimately have differing views on what ought to be planned for or what the outcome of planning and strategic alignment should be.

Experimentation and Controversy

In analysing the areas of organisational risk through a SWOT analysis a number of key issues are presented. These are noted in detail in Appendix 1 - SWOT analysis of Leadership needs for this future directions paper.

My evaluation of the SWOT analysis shows areas of leadership risk. This demonstrates to me the key areas that my style of leadership and strategic leadership approach will need to achieve for successful implementation of the strategy,

In particular my assertion for resource and capability needs from the Fire Service will be tested in a small way through co-operative evaluation on a small scale of a Regional, City and District Council strategic alignment practice. This will risk manage the strategic alignment principles locally before providing a national approach.

Initial resource considerations will be that of my time and the impact upon my role and normal duties. As the resource needs to support this strategy evolve, I could see the adjustment up or down of the refocused current application of resource requirement.

I will lead the Fire Service resource alignment of current planning and delivery to move to a planned execution of this strategy. I will ensure incremental planning steps are made to align Council strategic resource application needs through careful consideration and strategic planning alignment through the Sense-making Model of Strategic Alignment that I have adapted and developed.

Key areas of awareness for the intersection of the Fire Service with the community and external political environment are;

- Enhance our understanding of local government and community strategy alignment.
- Assist the Fire Service to develop greater clarity on our roles and strategic directions for the efficient and effective community collaboration and service delivery.

The political context that needs to be attributed to the strategy are the Government priorities most relevant to the New Zealand Fire Service Commission:

- “Families – young and old”, with close alignment to the sub theme - “safe communities”
and
- “economic transformation” with close alignment to the sub themes - “world class infrastructure” and “environmental sustainability”

The Local Government priorities most relevant to the New Zealand Fire Service Commission are:

- “safe communities”
and
- “economic sustainability”
and
- “historic and cultural sustainability”
and
- “environmental sustainability”

The Fire Service Strategic Direction for 2007-2012 set by the Fire Service Commission has adopted five strategic priority areas to focus the business of the Fire Service on:

- Priority area one - Improve community fire outcomes
- Priority area two - Foster integration of urban and rural service delivery
- Priority area three - Contribute to enhanced community security
- Priority area four - Improve service performance accountability, and resource management
- Priority area five - Develop and protect our people and promote internal stakeholder partnerships

Major areas of focus for the delivery of strategic alignment will include:

- Identifying and planning for our information, research and analysis needs over the next five years (particularly around local government) to meet the strategic alignment workshop needs.
- Implementing a process for evaluating local government long term planning viz Fire Service planning doctrine.
- Developing collaborative strategies to enhance public participation and understanding of local government planning and delivery needs aligned to Fire Service planning and delivery support.
- Continuing to maintain and update council and fire service planning and information communication channels (website, public documents).
- Matching the strategic alignment introduction to an appropriate time line. This is the balancing act between timing of local government long-term strategy review and alignment with Fire Service timing of strategic business planning and review. The best outcome I will seek will be the alignment of Fire Service strategy analysis and development timing based around the cycle that is inclusive for local authorities.

My key leadership issue for the delivery of the strategic alignment will be the “Mobilising of Stakeholders” (Heifetz, 1994). In the same way that Heifetz describes the collaborative approach achieving the mobilising of stakeholders through the king and collaborators approach to rallying

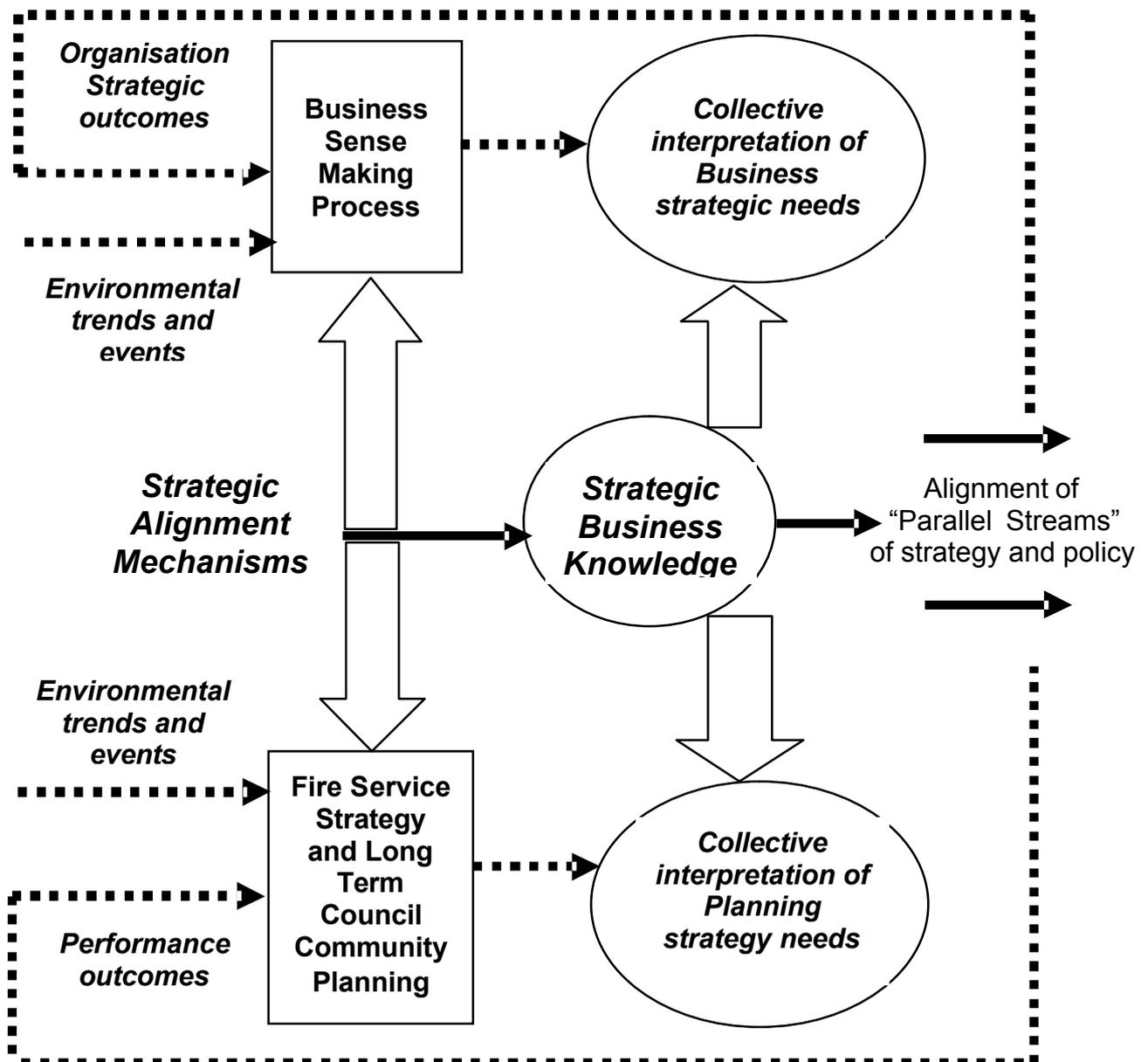
support for an issue, I will use relationship and partnership strengths already achieved and developed to win the hearts and minds of key agency heads with support of their key staff. External partner agencies will see and hear the perspective of an alignment of strategy model from their staff who lead and direct the strategic needs of their organisation.

Comparative Analysis

Providing leadership on this issue will transcend the local and international barriers of research. It would appear that the alignment of strategy as discussed by De Feo and Janssen (2001) and in particular the model of strategic alignment Centre for Corporate Strategy (1997) are the elements and framework for my future work on ensuring efficiencies and effectiveness come from the alignment of Fire Service Strategy with that of Long Term Council Community Planning.

Further comparative analysis will come from applying the Sense-making Model of Strategic Alignment Process sourced from the Making Sense of Strategic Alignment: An interpretive view of problems and practices, Journal of Information Technology (2002).

A Sense-Making model of Strategic Alignment Processes



In reviewing the work undertaken in Canada at the Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement by Mark Cabaj, he deals with collaboration issues to drive up programs to deliver service in the community with efficiencies and effectiveness as outcomes.

The Centre for Public Policy at the University of Melbourne recently held a conference in September 2006, which had at the heart of its theme "*deepening the academic and policy debate about the impact and value of efforts to join up different public services and related initiatives to strengthen communities*".

Whilst this conference explored the best practice currently demonstrated in Australasia through some 100 papers, none were specifically focussed on the efficiencies and effectiveness gained from alignment of policy for local government and service related agencies. They were indeed focussed on a project collaboration framework of activity to support strategic initiatives, alliances and partnerships to create beneficial community outcomes.

Evaluation

My future directions paper leadership will demonstrate successful application when the following issues are evaluated. Alignment of Fire Service strategic planning and Long Term Council Community Planning will be achieved when

- *Strategic Sufficiency*, meaning that we have consciously planned to exploit our internal strengths, compensate our existing weaknesses, and achieve organisational and community strategic fit.
- *Strategic Comprehensiveness and Comprehensibility*, meaning that our alignment of strategy covers all the strategic planning opportunities and it makes sufficient sense so personnel can operationalise the service delivery need.
- *Solid Strategic Joints*, meaning that we have identified and agreed upon coordination steps with Fire Service and Council strategic planning so all manner of support and complicit assertion and contributions are needed for the strategic plan implementation.
- *Strategic Traceability*, meaning that goals, objectives, and strategies are transparent and visible to all in the agencies involved. The question of assurance of co-operation will be answered through leadership of the respective agencies ensuring organisational alignment and resource commitment through a Memorandum of Understanding. All involved will then understand the contributory roles relative to the Fire Service strategic or Long Term Council Community Plan strategies. Traceability refers to the future measurability of the strategy and the tracking, performance feedback and correction/re-planning cycle that will need to follow in the interests of accountability.

A key aspect to the outcome of this paper will be the development of strategic alignment model for analysis and the operational understanding of the process by developing a model based on the partnering continuum, the AFAC Capabilities chart and the adapted Western Fire Region Relationship Continuum(kerry Stewart 2007)

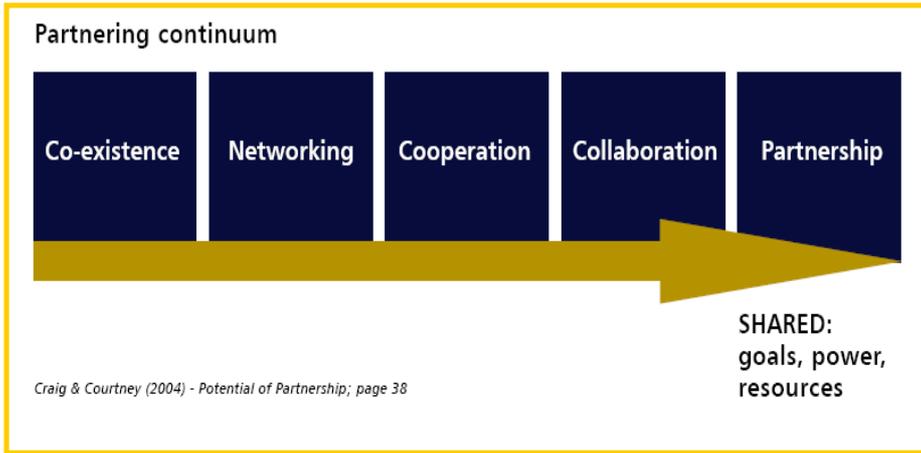
Finally to enhance the evaluation of this Future Strategic Leadership Directions paper I note the following key actions to be applied from *Implementing a Strategy Successfully* (De Foe and Janssen, 2001). The key actions in the strategic planning and implementation cycle: Establishing a vision, agree on a mission, develop key strategies, develop strategic goals, establish values, communicate company policy, provide top management leadership, deploy goals, measure progress with key performance indicators, review progress.

Finally in the words of Peter Drucker writer, management consultant and university professor and to keep a future directions leadership focus for me;

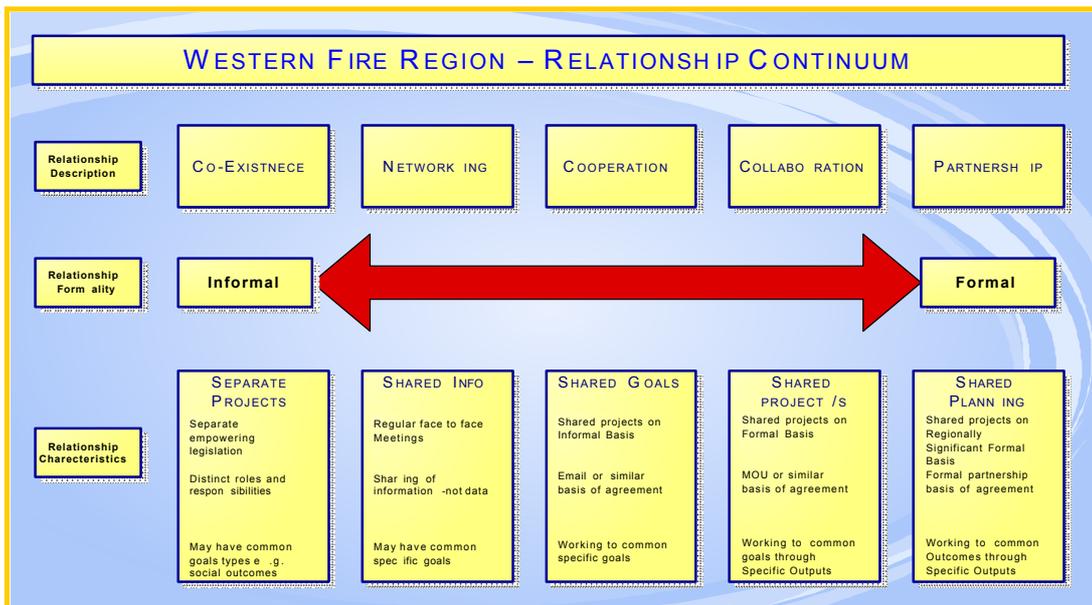
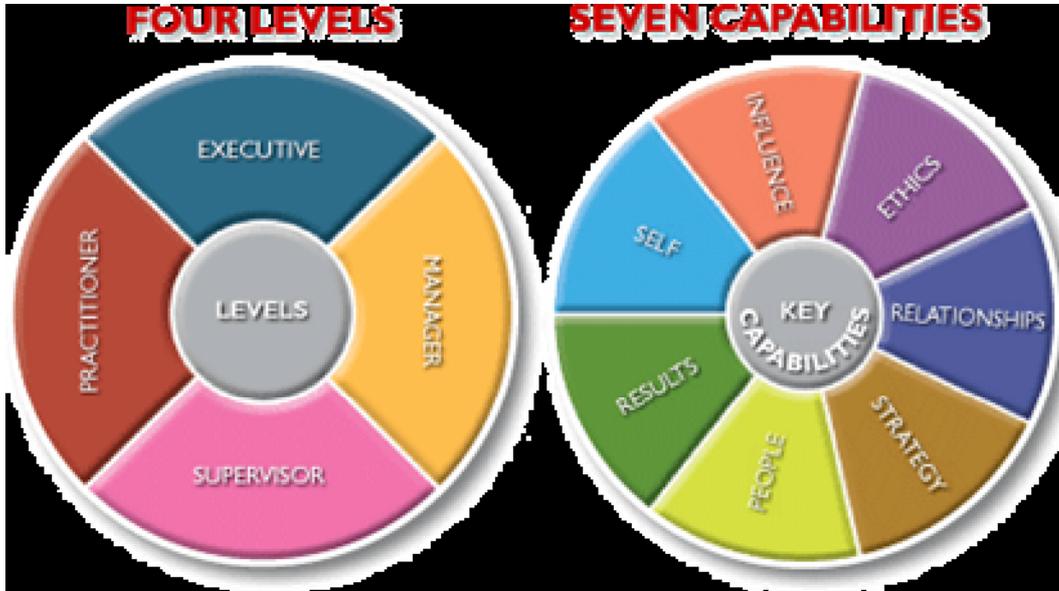
"Do first things first, and second things not at all."

Strategic Alignment - Operational Model development

Waitakere City Council Partnering Continuum



The AFAC Capabilities Framework Model



Appendix 1

SWOT analysis of Leadership needs for this future directions paper

In analysing the areas of organisational risk through a SWOT analysis, through which my style of leadership and strategic leadership approach will be required for successful implementation, I note the following issues;

Strengths

- Fire Service is a high community profile trust and confidence agency,
- Seen as an a-political organisation and a "safe pair of hands",
- Is a key player in the Regional Interagency Network of governance,
- Proven strategic planning framework to apply this future direction paper to.
- Outcome of the alignment of strategy for agencies involved will be the attainment of higher levels of efficiencies and effectiveness for the community economically and in practice.

Weaknesses

- Not previously ascertained or asserted public policy strategic alignment,
- Risky exposure of strategic planning issues that may not meet local government planning and delivery needs,
- Exposure of appropriate use or lack of networks and relationships between agencies for betterment of communities.
- Research ascertained thus far deals in collaboration and partnership as opposed to the need to align current/future strategic needs of agencies,
- Transportability of strategic planning alignment model to other agencies threatened by efficiencies and gains in effectiveness.

Opportunities

- Whole of government willingness to apply practice of strategic alignment for wider participation and community benefit,
- Department of Internal Affairs, Regional Council, City and District Council strategic alignment model able to be replicated across country to similar size and jurisdictional agencies,
- Further development and evolution of partnerships and networks through hierarchy of government and community service delivery agencies.
- Project not influenced by political elections or current political structures or agency requirements for affiliation.
- Enhancement of the network and relationships that I would lead and build towards the implementation and beyond as part of my leadership role.

Threats

- Seen as a flash in the pan strategy with no organisational outcome,
- Non agency buy in or participation in process,
- Failure to deliver alignment to the operational level of the agencies involved to benefit the community planning and delivery outcomes of the strategy,
- Local government and Fire Service disenfranchisement through inappropriate application of the strategic alignment model.
- Lack of leadership direction and focus for the implementation of the strategy through a partnered approach gained from strong relationships.

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