



NATIONAL PROJECT

SPRINT PLANNING APPROACH

PROJECT DETAILS

Project cost:

\$5,000 budget + staff time

Location:

Northland

Waikato

Hauraki

Canterbury

Southland

Parties:

Site teams

Invited experts

Stakeholder organisations

Project purpose:

To develop FY18-23 strategic plans for our catchments using an investment-driven business planning approach.

Project timeframe:

2017 & 2018



This is an overview of the ‘SPRINT Planning’ approach Living Water utilised in 2017 and 2018 to develop strategic plans for each of the five demonstration catchments. A different approach was used for this mid-programme planning phase in order for staff to free their thinking from business-as-usual DOC and Fonterra planning processes and to see if an investment-driven business planning approach could be usefully applied to landscape scale sustainability partnerships and programmes.

BACKGROUND

Living Water is mandated to try new ways of doing things. This applies not just to on-the-ground land and water management solutions, but also to how we approach our work. When deciding on how to undertake the development of FY18-23 strategic plans for our five catchments, we were looking for an innovative or different approach to use so we could de-couple from standard DOC and Fonterra planning processes. Google SPRINT (www.gv.com/sprint) was chosen as an approach not used before by DOC or Fonterra. SPRINT was developed by Google Ventures, the venture capital arm of the company, as a five-day process for answering critical business questions through design, prototyping, and testing ideas with customers. It is a ‘greatest hits’ of business strategy, innovation, behaviour science, and design thinking packaged into a tested process for teams to use. Teams working together in a SPRINT can shortcut the endless debate cycle and compress months of planning time into a single week. SPRINT was tested by Google over 100 times in order to perfect the process, and is typically used for product development, strategy development, business investment decisions and customer-focused improvement initiatives.

We believed that SPRINT could suit our mid-programme strategic planning requirements as the Living Water Partnership had already confirmed a vision and purpose, completed baseline research, and started thinking of a range of solutions. The next step was needing to clarify priorities and investment profiles via a customer/stakeholder lens, which SPRINT tools seemed to be geared towards doing.



AT A GLANCE

Resources:

- Independent facilitator
- Teams
- Experts to interview
- Venue and catering

Timeframe:

SPRINT was used for Waituna, Ararira-LII and Wairua catchments between March-May 2017 and for the Waikato Peat Lakes and Pukorokoro-Miranda in January-March 2018.

Process:

- SPRINT has a set five day process and tools (www.gv.com/sprint).
- Living Water adapted this process to add an additional testing phase between days 3 and 4 due to the multi-stakeholder nature of land and water management and our desire to have partners that creates alignment, collaboration, scale and diversity in our final project mix. The total timeframe therefore varied between catchments from 4-6 weeks.
- Living Water also adapted the SPRINT process and tools for the different catchments based on lessons learnt from previous catchments.

Outcomes / results:

- FY18-23 Strategic Plans completed for all catchments and being used to prioritise annual investment to achieve desired impacts.
- Anecdotal evidence of increased stakeholder engagement in Living Water and increased Living Water staff buy-in to strategic plans.

Lessons learnt:

What worked well?

- Utilising a process many weren't familiar with created some intrigue for the experts and testers, anecdotally increasing their responsiveness and engagement.
- Expert interviews, 'how might we fail' process, testing phase, time for individual thinking.
- Working as a team in a venue away from the normal office environment.
- Bringing the stakeholder/customer view into the planning process.

What didn't work well?

- SPRINT is principally designed for products, services, and business strategies which are solely 'owned' by the organisation doing the development. Living Water does not solely own the land and water management challenges it is trying to find solutions for, so stakeholder testing needed to be built into the process. That step extended the timeframe so much that it was no longer really a 'sprint'.
- Not having a pre-decided goal to focus the sprint on.
- Some tools like 'crazy 8s' didn't provide participants with the opportunity to collaborate like they wanted, so there was a feeling that ideas were lost.

Suggested Improvements:

- SPRINT had some useful new tools and techniques, but as a set structured process may not have been the most suitable approach considering the lack of goal clarity that still existed at the sites. We had to adapt the process so much, that it was no longer really 'a sprint'.
- Know 'the goal' or 'product idea' first and then use SPRINT.
- SPRINT required quite a different mind-set than other more traditional approaches, so participants need to be prepared for this. Good to establish a 'trust environment' within the team before doing a process like this – maybe an emotional 'sign up' commitment to participate fully and go with the process. Could brief participants better on how the process will run and the opportunity for idea-generation.
- Engage an experienced SPRINT facilitator.



- Managers need to free their staff completely from business-as-usual work to participate in SPRINT. Some participants could only partially participate due to other commitments.
- Utilise experts more fully and potentially bring them in earlier in the process.
- Useful technique for a team to 'swarm' around one challenge/piece of the puzzle so you can generate a wider set of solutions

FIND OUT MORE:

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