

Describe your community (this could include physical description, population, social and cultural demographics, core strengths and assets, key relationships, issues, challenges, successes and your journey to date).

Our people are our greatest strength, our desire for community and willingness to work together are our greatest assets.

Featherston is one of three small towns in South Wairarapa, located 64 km from Wellington, 13 km from Greytown and 17 km from Martinborough. It had a population of 2253 at the time of the last census in 2013.

The “Featherston Community” includes all those residing in the Featherston township and surrounding rural areas who consider themselves to be part of the Featherston Community (e.g. it includes community members who live on farms/properties just outside the “official” boundary but for whom Featherston is the community they connect and identify with). Featherston’s proximity to the Hutt Valley and Wellington combined with low cost housing and limited employment opportunities in town mean that a significant proportion of our population commutes out of town each day to work.

Since October 2016, the Fab Feathy Community-Led Development group (a group of local community champions) have been facilitating a process on behalf of the community to:

- identify the community's shared vision and goals
- establish a robust process for the community to work together towards these shared aspirations, and
- develop a plan that scopes out a potential way forward to realise the community’s shared vision and goals for Featherston.

An important part of this has been to provide a number of ways (suggestion boxes; community survey; community meetings) that have enabled the community to have input and participate in the process. We have been very pleased with the level of engagement from the community; for example, over 11 per cent of our adult population completed our community survey.

Fab Feathy has developed the Our Future Featherston plan out the feedback gathered from the community. The plan provides a summary of:

- key demographic statistics for Featherston
- the opportunities the community has had to provide feedback;
- the results of the activities to gather community feedback;
- community conversations about how the community works together and with stakeholders toward achieving community aspirations; and
- proposed next steps actions.

We have provided the Our Future Featherston plan as supporting documentation. We urge you to have a good read of the plan in your assessment of our application as it provides the background, context and detail of what the community has identified as important; our journey in developing the plan; and a framework for our next steps.

Throughout the development of the Our Future Featherston plan, the community overwhelmingly commented that Featherston is: a great place to live; has a great community filled with many diverse, interesting, talented, caring and community-minded people; and is bursting with potential.

A snapshot of Featherston

Featherston is served by a range of amenities, including a supermarket, a dairy, specialty shops, cafes and eateries, a weekly produce market, a library, primary schools, churches, health and welfare facilities, a pharmacy,

a fire brigade, a community centre, a service station, a sports stadium and grounds, parks, a miniature railway, and an outdoor swimming pool.

Featherston has great potential as a hub for cyclists wanting to ride the nearby Rimutaka cycle trail, and people keen to explore Wairarapa Moana, the spectacular coastlines of Cape Palliser and the Rimutaka and Aorangi forest Parks.

The town's military and rail histories are celebrated with two museums and a grand assortment of restored historic homes. The centrepiece of much community activity today is the recently restored 100-year-old ANAZC Hall.

Challenges faced by the Featherston today include:

- limited employment opportunities and activities for young and/or unemployed people;
- disconnection between the township and the nearby Wairarapa Moana, which needs restoration after decades of degradation, and could be key to growing local tourism and employment
- delay in getting ultrafast broadband which inhibits business investment and innovation;
- disrepair of some buildings in the main street which inhibits new businesses from thriving;
- lack of rental properties and affordable senior housing
- a sense of disconnection between local council and community
- poor train services in comparison to population and need

Our assets:

There is considerable talent and entrepreneurial drive within the community, and a willingness to work together to overcome these challenges. This is evidenced by a range of things:

- a tremendous amount of community groups already doing community led development in several areas, including Featherston's Own Charitable Trust, Wairarapa Moana Wetlands Restoration Project, The Featherston Community Centre, Boomerang Bags, Featherston mini railway, Featherston Book Town, and many more.
- Featherston hosted New Zealand's first annual Booktown festival in 2015, and has continued to host another two successful Book Town festivals.
- a rapid growth in confidence in Featherston, with many new businesses establishing in the township, a new youth hub in process, the range of activities and events hosted by community groups, and the growing appeal of Featherston to young families and retirees.
- efforts are underway to improve the health of Wairarapa Moana by the managing iwi authorities, landowners and volunteers.

What are the shared aspirations and hopes (vision) for your community?

A number of community champions came together to form Fab Feathy in October 2016. The Fab Feathy group has facilitated a community engagement process to identify the Featherston community's aspirations. A survey asking community members 'what do you want for future Featherston?' was completed by over 11 per cent of our adult population. Fab Feathy also collected 450 ideas and suggestions for projects or changes the community wanted to progress in town. There was a lot of agreement on key areas and some inspired individual ideas. The community also got together to discuss processes for working together and with others.

Our community vision is to fully realise the potential we can see Featherston is bursting with while retaining and enhancing what makes our town and community distinctive and great.

Five community aspirations, built from 15 focus areas of interest, were developed out of the all the community feedback. Our community aspirations are that:

- 'Community' in Featherston is nurtured; we have fun together, we are connected, resilient and self-sustaining.
- Featherston is a destination town known for: its artisans; being a vibrant hub of creativity; being connected

to beautiful natural surroundings.

- Featherston values and takes care to conserve, protect, restore and revitalise our natural environment.
- Featherston has the infrastructure needed to support creators, innovators and businesses to invest here.
- Featherston has the amenities, services and infrastructure to be a great 'liveable' town from cradle to grave.

The 15 focus areas are outlined in detail in the Our Future Featherston plan, which we have submitted as a supporting document for this application. The community has proposed actions to start on for each aspiration.

Why is working together towards these goals important for your community now?

The community has identified a lot of will, resources, skills, knowledge, expertise and resources in Featherston, and believe that, if brought together and harnessed, much more could be achieved and at a faster rate.

Featherston has a strong tradition of community members stepping up and working together to make things they want happen in town. There is already much community-led development activity happening right now which builds on past successes and projects (refer to the Our Future Featherston Plan for examples). There is a lot of agreement in town about what we ultimately want, and a lot of desire to work together to achieve more and to sustain our achievements. We have some very talented, skilled, community-minded people in town willing to give their time and talents towards community-led initiatives.

There is a lot of rapid change happening in Featherston bringing both opportunities and challenges. The community wants to capitalise on opportunities but not at the expense of what makes this community great. This is why the "vision" that sits above our aspirations is to realise the potential we can see here while working to retain what we love about this place and our community.

We recognise the importance of talking about what we want for our town and about what we can do to shape our future – and not to let change happen to and/or without us. There is a lot of desire to be broadly pulling in the same direction.

There is a potential amalgamation of the three Wairarapa territorial local authorities on the horizon. Discussing and working together on shared community goals will better position the community to articulate and advocate for what it wants in Featherston during and after the transition, should the amalgamation go ahead.

There is frustration with outsiders voicing and holding negative perceptions about Featherston and its community. There is a lot of desire in town to make changes that will alter the way outsiders perceive our town.

Community-led development will continue to happen in Featherston without the impetus of a partnership with the Department of Internal Affairs. With the right resourcing, however, the community can better harness its collective assets and strengths and make significant progress towards its goals. We have the will in town to make change; we need to strike while the iron is hot. This is why Fab Feathy has been facilitating a process on behalf of the community to make an application to the Community-Led Development Programme. Being selected to partner with DIA through the Programme is an opportunity for Featherston to access the support it needs to consolidate and continue to build community-wide resilience; it is an opportunity to accelerate positive change and set the community up for success over the long-term.

Describe the people/groups, including tangata whenua and different members of your community who support this vision and how they have been involved so far?

Please refer to the Our Future Featherston Plan for information about how community members were involved in creating our community vision and aspirations.

The level of community participation in the process and the consistency of the results with similar processes over the years give us confidence that there is broad support for the visions and aspirations outlined in the Plan.

The Plan was completed at the beginning of August 2017. Our Mayor, local Councillors and Community Board members were provided with a preview ahead of a public release of the Plan mid-August. Fab Feathy will attend a Community Board meeting to officially present the Plan at the earliest opportunity. Vivian Napier, Mayor of the South Wairarapa District, has written a letter of support which we have provided as supporting documentation.

Members of Fab Feathy who have existing relationships with local Māori leaders have discussed with them what this process has been working to achieve. Important next steps are to seek a hui with representatives from local iwi (Ngāti Kahungunu and Rangitāne) about the results of this mahi and where connections and opportunities for collaboration might be going forward – in addition to what is already happening. It is important to note our local iwi are already collaborating/supporting/involved with community initiatives in Featherston (such as the Wairarapa Whanau Trust's youth centre on Boundary Road, the Community Wetlands Restoration Project and through providing social/health/cultural services at Featherston School).

How will the community, tangata whenua and different groups participate and contribute to create change?

The Featherston community recognises that to fully achieve our vision and aspirations it will take many community members, groups and tangata whenua working together with external stakeholders, partners and experts over the long term. Please refer to the Our Future Featherston Plan which outlines some next steps and a proposed framework for working together, developed as a result of community conversations.

We propose to tackle multiple actions at once, as opposed to tackling one project at a time. Taking a multiple actions approach creates many and varied opportunities for people in the community to get involved, follow their interests and contribute. Taking a multiple actions approach means we can make progress on a number of fronts at the same time. We anticipate that this approach will keep people engaged and involved and enable us to continually build momentum as we go.

The community has identified that having a paid coordinator (supported by a central steering/governance group) to have an overview of the plan/multi-actions is critical to keeping community engagement and momentum. A key role for the coordinator and governance group will be to facilitate communications and connections across the community and groups undertaking specific actions; including hosting a community meeting every three months to discuss progress.

The intention is for actions groups to form around specific projects or focus areas. Action groups will coordinate effort, resources and people towards achieving specific projects (and then dissolve when the "action" is completed). In this way, community members will have opportunities to take on and develop confidence/capability in leadership roles. The next step for the wider community is to decide which specific "actions" they want to be involved with; decisions to be facilitated through the planned three-monthly community meetings.

Community members are currently working on two tools - stakeholder mapping and a "skills and interests" register - to support the planning and accessing community-based resources on specific projects.

What resources does your community already have that could be used?

Our Future Featherston Plan describes what we want to achieve, what we want to do to achieve it, and how we want to work together and with others to achieve it.

Our people, for example:

A well connected community that is passionate about creating positive change in Featherston.

Many, many leaders who make things happen in the community and who have great networks of people who support them to make great things happen. Three recent examples: Meals on Wheels; Boomerang Bags; Featherston First Friday.

Talented people who are willing to use their skills – for example, poster designs for the Fab Feathy community engagement were done by two talented locals for free.

A community board keen to work with the community.

Generous and supportive local business owners who sponsor community activities.

A large retired community willing to share their time and knowledge to benefit community-led projects. We are in the process of developing a 'Skills and Interests Register' to better target requests for support on projects.

People in town with experience of collaborating with stakeholders on significant community-led projects e.g. Alan Maxwell from the Wairarapa Whanau Trust.

Established communication channels, for example:

Lists/databases of organisations in town to get the word out to people.

Fab Feathy database of individuals.

A couple of active Facebook groups used by many people in town and a good way to get the word out.

A free community newspaper.

A project webpage.

School newsletters.

Online community events calendar.

Supportive stakeholders, community groups and facilities, for example:

Stakeholders wanting us to succeed and willing to work with the community. We have begun mapping who is doing what in Featherston to help identify opportunities for collaboration and partnerships.

Community Network meetings.

Local schools.

Boundary Road Youth Centre (Wairarapa Whanau Trust)

Active service groups, e.g. Lions and Lionesses.

Featherston's Own Charitable Trust which runs an Op Shop with proceeds supporting community activities in Featherston.

Featherston Community Centre Charitable Trust which is a hub for community and social activities.

Sports grounds with gymnastic hall, outside swimming pool, a Rugby Club, football/soccer club, swimming club, athletics, hockey, and more. A great and varied sports community with many passionate parents putting in volunteer time, maintenance and fundraising.

Many local and community minded churches who also double as exercise venues and provide activities for small kids and parents.

Community marae – Te Waka iti (community-based marae, originally set-up in the 1970s as a satellite to the James K Baxter marae at Jerusalem)

Community events which bring people together – and bring visitors, for example:

Featherston Book Town.

First Friday.

Christmas parade and market.

Natural Resources, for example:

Wairarapa Moana

Rivers & bush reserves

Cycle and walking trails

What planning has been done?

Our Future Featherston Plan outlines new processes to bring people together and accelerate progress.

The plan has been developed based on the feedback gathered from the community, and sets out our intentions and processes to work together and with others.

We have the support of an experienced backbone organisation

Fab Feathy is not a legal entity. Should we be invited to form a partnership with DIA, Wairarapa REAP have agreed to partner with our community in this journey as a “backbone” organisation to hold any funds and be employer of any staff.

We have asked REAP because they have experience in this “backbone” organisation type of relationship and have sound financial and employment practices; they have supported the development of the Our Future Featherston Plan; and our key contact at REAP is a passionate and community-minded Featherston resident who has been involved in the development of the Plan.

We should note that the Featherston community has a strong preference for funds to be held within the community. That said, we are not aware of any organisation in town that has a similar level of expertise as REAP or is geared up to act in this role at this present time. REAP is committed to working with DIA and the governance group (see below) to build capacity within the community as this initiative progresses. This may mean supporting the governance group to work towards setting up an independent entity or supporting a local group to build capacity and capability to take on the role of backbone organisation.

We consider it important that the backbone organisation is perceived as “neutral” or independent from any group in Featherston as this would support continued community engagement. Also we consider that it is not appropriate for the District Council to take on this role.

Local governance to maintain local decision-making authority

The Featherston community will retain decision-making authority through a local governance group. In the establishment phase, the intention is that the Governance Group would be made up of the community members who have been directly involved in the Fab Feathy Community-Led Development group (which includes representation from the Featherston Community Board, South Wairarapa Community Network, the Featherston Community Centre, and Wairarapa Whānau Trust).

The intention is for the Governance Group to co-opt up to three further members from the community. We would be looking for people with strong legal, financial and/or governance experience. We are confident that there are members in our community who fit this profile and would be willing to join the group. We would seek

to co-opt iwi representation on to this group. A representative from REAP (as fund holder) would also attend this group as an ex-officio member.

Key roles for the governance group will be to:

- * manage relationships/agreements with our backbone organisation (REAP) and with our community-led development partner/s (DIA, and any future partners)
- * set and oversee the work priorities of any employee/s, e.g. the coordinator/s will report to the governance group
- * to ensure annual planning takes place in consultation with the wider-community which, in turn, directs the effort of the employee/s
- * oversee, monitor and report on progress towards achieving the aspirations identified by the community
- * be accountable to the community to ensure maximum value is gained from the partnership
- * be champions for the practice of the principles of community-led development
- * ensure legal obligations are met

Partnership – initial thoughts on what we want:

A five-year funding commitment along with a dedicated DIA advisor who would work alongside the governance group and the community.

Flexibility to move at a pace that works for the community.

Support to broker connections with people/groups/organisations who have expertise and/or who could support the community to achieve its aspirations, especially where we do not have the expertise within the community.

Support for local coordination. Wages and associated operational costs to set up and have 1 FTE (40 hours per week) community-led development coordinator/s for length of the partnership - five years. We want the flexibility to be able to make decisions about how that 1 FTE resource is used, e.g. we want the flexibility to be able to employ one coordinator full-time or two coordinators part-time. Our intention is to rent an office for the coordinator/s base at the community centre. We have a draft budget for the costs of coordination. We have discussed a person specification and position description, KPIs, and could put this to paper quickly.

Co-funding investment in community-led development initiatives that are wanted by the community and that will support us to achieve our aspirations.

Advice and support to identify and access sources of funding for community-led development initiatives.

How will you measure progress towards achieving your community aspirations and help the community learn as you go?

The Our Future Featherston Plan provides a blueprint for actions that will move us towards achieving our aspirations over the short, medium and long-term. The approach outlined in the Plan is to:

- start with straight-forward actions
- together review/discuss what is going well, what isn't and why, at quarterly community meetings
- adapt our practices based on what we learn
- continually build towards more complex projects.

We have some ambitious goals; part of sustaining momentum will be ensuring that our community recognise how actions make a contribution towards achievement of the community's aspirations.

Part of the Coordinator's role will be to support action groups with planning projects. This would include facilitating a discussion about how a proposed action will move us towards achieving community aspirations and how will we know if we have achieved what we set out to; what will we see that might indicate success. e.g., for actions focused on cycle tourism, increased numbers of cyclists using town facilities, increased positive recommendations about Featherston on tourism consumer websites, etc.

Collecting baseline data/information at the outset, as well as, identifying at the outset what might indicate success, will help us collect evidence as we monitor progress and report back at quarterly meetings. Notes will be taken at community meetings, ensuring key points from the discussion are recorded and made publically available to be used as a community resource for future action planning and monitoring progress towards our aspirations.