



Waikato Regional Council: Web mapping upgrade

Project Summary

To provide a recommendation on server-based software to support web-based GIS, services and data.

Customer Background

The Waikato Regional Council (WRC) provides governance of the natural resources of the Waikato region on behalf of local communities. Their responsibilities include transport, biosecurity, natural resource consenting, asset management, flood control, and other areas of regional governance.

Since nearly all the Council's functions include a spatial dimension, effective management of geospatial data is vital. The Spatial Information Programme (SI Programme), managed by Gill Lawrence, was created as its own programme in 2011 to cater for this requirement.

In establishing the programme, Gill was also charged with overseeing the development of a Spatial Information Strategy and a roadmap for the Council's web mapping strategy in preparation for their upcoming ten-year plan.

As part of this process, the SI Programme was resourced to upgrade the Council's software for web-based GIS, services and data, and was tasked with making a recommendation to senior management on the most appropriate software solution.

The Challenge

To make the best software choice for diverse web mapping users during a critical planning phase.

Gill identified several factors that needed to inform the SI Programme's decision on its web mapping upgrade.

1. A clear understanding of the needs of staff across the organisation, because 'we realised a number of staff weren't satisfied with our internal browser'. Most significantly, their dissatisfaction was often contradictory. For instance, an internal survey reported 'some people saying there was way too much information on our internal maps, while others reported there was not enough'.
2. A solution that was compatible with and supportive of the WRC's long-term strategic goals.
3. A review of the best software currently available on the market. 'We were very aware that there are a lot of changes happening in the market and wanted to make the most of our current and continuing investment'.
4. 'We needed to understand the ongoing implications of our decision in terms of training, administration, and data management'.
5. Objective and reliable information on which to make a sound recommendation to senior management, presented in an accessible and useful format.

Gill chose Vicinity Solutions to assist with this project because 'they had experience working with councils, and of several different geographic information systems'.

“A number of staff weren't satisfied with our internal browser”

Gill Lawrence,
Manager of Spatial Information Programme

“We wanted to make the most of our current and continuing investment”

Gill Lawrence,
Manager of Spatial Information Programme

Project Solution

A review of four product bundles, including the staffing and resource implications of each.

Staff Engagement and Consultation

Transforming goals into functionality.

Bryan Clarke and Shelley Sutcliffe of Vicinity Solutions began their analysis by canvassing staff at all levels of the Council. This allowed them to clarify the Council's strategic goals, as well as investigate the views of web mapping users across the organisation.

Once this information was collected and collated, they synthesised a prioritised list of goals with web mapping functionality using Priority Matrix.

Their role as impartial outsiders proved to be highly beneficial in this process. As Gill comments, 'it was very useful, having reviewed the conflicting results of our previous staff survey, to have people who were neither staff members nor vendors come in and talk with staff right across the organization.'

As an additional step to ensure objectivity, Vicinity Solutions also engaged another geospatial consultancy, GBS, to assist and cross-check their work. As Bryan explains, 'we wanted to make sure our process was robust, objective, and 100% transparent.'

This careful and far-reaching approach delivered the critical information needed to inform their final recommendation to the WRC, and also engaged key staff in the process.

“They made clear we needed to decide if we wanted to be a coding shop or not. That was particularly valuable”

Gill Lawrence,
Manager of Spatial Information Programme

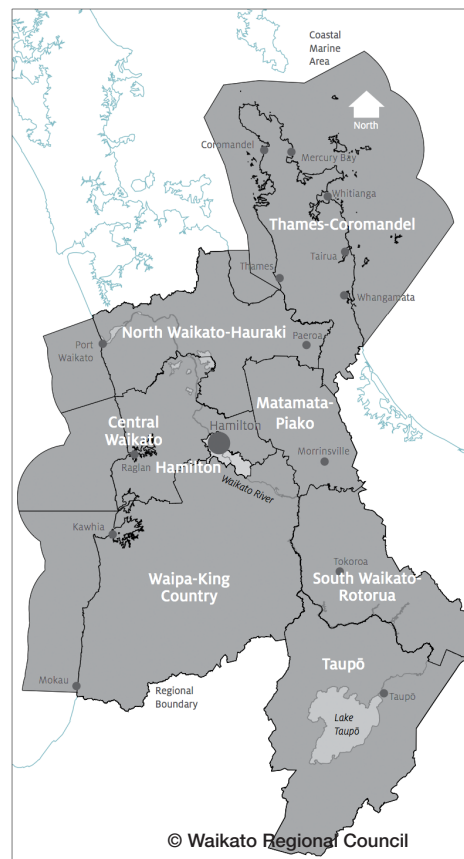
Market Research

Four possible solutions, tailored to different WRC scenarios.

Having identified and prioritised the goals and requirements of the WRC and conducted up-to-date market research, Vicinity Solutions realised that no single software solution would suffice. In Bryan's words, 'none of the solutions in scope would deliver on all of the requirements, so we adapted the approach by creating product bundles that would deliver the results'.

They gave the Council four different product bundle options because the final decision involved much more than an assessment of technology. Each option had unique implications for staffing and resource allocation, and thus a final recommendation fell outside of Vicinity Solutions' purview.

Their presentation of multiple options was not a problem from the WRC's perspective, however. As Gill explains, although 'they didn't provide a single solution, they made clear that we needed to decide if we wanted to be a properly resourced coding shop or not. That was particularly valuable'.



Report and Recommendations

Valuable information, constructive formats.

Vicinity Solutions created a detailed report of their findings that will be used by the Spatial Information Programme in making their final decision.

At Gill's request, Vicinity Solutions also took additional steps, such as in-person presentations, to make their findings more tangible and actionable. As Gill explains, 'their presentation to senior management was really useful, and included visual representations that made the implications of their findings clear and concrete.'

With the Spatial Information team, it was fabulous to have the discussion about the findings and tease out the implications of the four different options rather than just reading the report without Vicinity giving more context to what was written'.

Business Benefit

A clear pathway to making the best decision.

While the WRC has not yet implemented their software upgrade, they are confident they now have the necessary information to make a good choice. As Gill puts it, 'this is a highly useful report that will allow us to make a well-informed decision'.

She was also happy with the process of working with Vicinity Solutions, commenting that, 'they were very good at keeping in touch and letting me know how they were going against milestones. Overall, they were responsive and good to work with'.

“This is a highly useful report that will allow us to make a well-informed decision”

Gill Lawrence,
Manager of Spatial Information Programme

About Vicinity Solutions

Experienced, agile, effective.

Managing the massive amounts of geotechnical data produced by new technologies is a major challenge for 21st century organisations that rely on geographic information.

Vicinity Solutions is a geospatial consulting firm that takes the complexity out of this task for its clients.

Their extensive experience, broad knowledge of the major GIS platforms, policy and training advice, and well-tested problem-solving skills enable them to transform your data into a valuable and easy-to-use resource.

Visit the Vicinity Solutions website today to find out more about how they can help you make the most of your geographic data.



Contact



Vicinity Solutions
PO Box 31086
Christchurch 8444
New Zealand



Ph +64 (3) 341 6844
enquiries@vicinitysolutions.co.nz

vicinitysolutions.co.nz

© Vicinity Solutions 2013