



# A multi-agency strategy for long-term sustainability

## Client background

Three closely related government agencies in New Zealand, which work together to deliver interdependent objectives, were tasked by Ministers to present real options for their long-term sustainable resourcing and capability requirements – as a single ‘community’.

## Client challenge

The three agencies needed to address the issue of long-term sustainability in the face of a fast-changing environment and challenging cost pressures. There was a range of objectives the agencies could pursue. The agencies needed to understand where to prioritise resources against these. They also needed to look at the whole ‘community’ of the three agencies, rather than a separate examination of the individual agencies.

The clients also had other challenges: the value that the three agencies provided was not well understood by external stakeholders; the three agencies were not accustomed to working closely together, and; there was limited understanding of what each of the other agencies do.

The three agencies did not want someone to ‘tell them the answers’. They wanted someone to help build their capacity to generate their own answers.

## How Catalyze helped

Catalyze worked together with the three agencies by:

- *Providing a framework.* Catalyze reframed the work from a traditional ‘review’ process in order find cost-savings, to a forward-looking strategy for long-term sustainability.

Catalyze helped the three agencies to:

- Develop a unified strategy
- Deploy resources to their high-value areas
- Address issues of long-term sustainability

- *Bringing a proven methodology (Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis Portfolio Prioritisation) and a robust process.*
  - Using a zero-based approach to address the client's problems. Catalyze asked the agencies – 'from nothing (a base of zero), what would you create going forward?'
  - Building an integrated, outcome-focused 'model' of the spectrum of possible futures of the three agencies. The model included all areas of outputs/effects from the agencies work and a range of possible levels of outcomes for each area, from 'nothing' to much greater effect than currently delivered.
  - Helping the agencies and stakeholders clearly articulate the value they deliver.
  - Bringing together a range of senior internal and external stakeholders to prioritise the model, to maximise the value-for-money and clearly identify trade-offs needed to meet constraints.
- *Applying a number of bespoke tools.*
  - Using a number of Catalyze tools that were then tailored for the particular challenge of the three agencies. The tools showed the three agencies where they needed to invest for the future, as well as where lower-value areas were to trade off.
  - The tools showed complex data about cost-modelling and financial implications in simple to understand views. These views were displayed live in stakeholder workshops, and alternatives modelled on-the-spot.

The Catalyze processes brought people together. Decision-making is a social process – a large number of external stakeholders were brought together to share knowledge and perspectives in ways they had never done before. The stakeholders and three agencies had conversations that would not otherwise occur. This proved powerful in helping people come to grips with the very complex issues. The tools enabled the social processes that unlocked the knowledge.

## Enabling Effective Decisions

The three agencies are now facing the future together, rather than separately. They have shared understanding of the priority areas to invest energy and resources for long-term sustainability and where to not invest. Since the engagement and work with Catalyze:

- The agencies received a significant funding boost in the tens of millions of dollars. This funding boost will go towards the priority areas identified through the process and agreed by Cabinet.
- The three agencies are working more effectively together. They understand each other better, and are capitalising on the opportunities for collaboration and greater synergies. Stronger relationships have been built.
- External stakeholders now have a significantly better understanding of the value the three agencies deliver.

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Catalyze is a strategy consultancy, helping clients to prioritise and make robust sustainable decisions. We believe the best results are delivered through effective decision-making that engages people and aligns organisations. We have an established track record of enabling our clients to achieve results, whether it's improved shareholder value, a better planet or both.

Catalyze was founded in 2001 in conjunction with the London School of Economics and Political Science, applying techniques built on robust and validated decision theory. We support global clients from offices in the UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand.