LOADING RUAPEHU

Ruapehu Digital
Enablement Plan

CONTENTS

FOREWORD FROM THE MAYOR

The Ruapehu District is one of New Zealand's most beautiful, adventurous and exciting areas. It is where adventure begins. However, the adventure, quality of life and economic capacity of the District has not reached its full potential due to the lack of connectivity. Our community has told us that this is not good enough and we agree. This Digital Enablement Plan is well supported by the community.

The Ruapehu is a predominantly rural District, with significant tracts of agriculture, forestry, conservation, defence estates and a growing tourism industry. The District covers a large land area (673,019ha) much of which is remote and difficult to access.

The District has been in a state of population decline for the past few decades. We have a Usual Resident Population (URP) of 11,844 people (2013 Census). Recent trends show steady increases in the population in winter and increasingly over the summer months. 2014 saw a peak population of approximately 21,960 people. Although this number of people is not in the District every day, there are a number of days each year when this figure is reached.

Tourism is the District's fastest growing industry. Visitor numbers continue to climb, with a 35% growth between 2004 and 2014. The largest increase is in summer visitors (December-February), with between 70-80% growth in the last ten years. The mountain alone attracts large numbers of visitors, with over 70,000 walking the Tongariro Crossing (1,500 per day over summer) and over 350,000 (a population similar to Christchurch) on the ski fields each winter. The Whanganui River also sees many visitors using the jet boats, kayaking, canoes and taking other river trips. Additionally, as the quantity, quality and availability of Ruapehu's mountain biking and walking trails develop, summer numbers will continue to grow. Ruapehu also hosts a large number of holiday homes which are occupied on weekends over both summer and winter months. Over 60% of the houses in National Park and Ohakune (and over 30% of the entire District) are holiday homes. The people owning and visiting these homes are not counted in the resident population but make up a temporary potential increase of 7,000 people to the population.

With 641 business units, the primary sector contained the largest number of business units (36%) in 2014. The sector has experienced the largest decline over the past decade. Despite this, primary industries contribute 21.1% to the District's GDP; this is well above the national average of 7.4%. Ruapehu is in the Manawatu/Whanganui Region which produces $9.1billion of GDP and has a GDP per capita of $39,442.

Ruapehu District is part of the Whanganui-Manawatu Regional Growth Strategy. This Strategy cannot be achieved or serve our community without improvements in internet and mobile coverage. Connectivity has been identified as a weakness of the District in the Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025 and Growth Strategy. Through the Economic Development Strategy, Council is committed to advancing the communication opportunities available in the district. The Ruapehu is currently behind the rest of New Zealand with an average connection speed of 5.4mbps. New Zealand's average connection speed is 7mbps, but is reaching speeds of over 100mbps; nearby places such as Taupo & Wanganui are at over 30mbps. Ruapehu speeds do not

enable our communities and businesses to engage with the opportunities the internet presents and to reach their potential.

This Digital Enablement Plan sits under the Economic Development Strategy and will assist the Ruapehu to make the most of the technology improvements our District will experience. The focus of this plan is not solely on getting people connected to the internet. It incorporates social, economic, cultural and digital ability considerations to assist in the digital enablement and empowerment of our residents.

The Loading Ruapehu Digital Enablement Plan focusses on three key elements; Community, Business and Leadership. Each section of the plan has specifically targeted projects that have been derived from engagement with the people who live, work and play in the target sector. These projects will be delivered over the next 3 years to assist our communities and businesses in maximising the power of the internet. This plan is uniquely Ruapehu focussed and incorporates the unique characteristics of our individual communities in order to create projects that are meaningful to the people and sustainable in the long term.

I personally thank all those who have contributed to this plan and assure you that your views have been heard. For all of these reasons I fully support Loading Ruapehu.
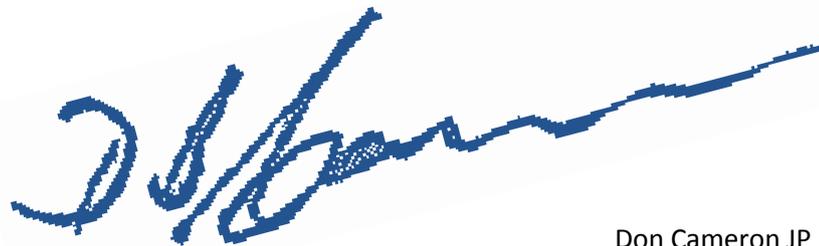
Don Cameron JP

MAYOR

CONSULTATION

Consultation with our communities involved two community wide surveys, multiple open forum community meetings and direct consultation with Iwi representatives. This consultation sought to gain an understanding of the districts internet situation, challenges, levels of satisfaction and the desires of our people. We also asked about the ways in which the Ruapehu District Council can support the community to engage with and be enhanced by the internet. The findings from the consultation process have guided the support Council aims to provide in order to address the issues identified below.

Key Findings from Communities

- People are not aware of the connection options and how to go about obtaining these options.
- Our community is not reaching their potential due to poor internet connectivity, particularly school children and those with limited computer skills.
- There is a strong demand for the benefits of fast, affordable and reliable internet.
- People see the importance of the internet for maximising the potential of tourism.
- Communities are willing to contribute to improvements in their areas.
- Local Maori attribute better digital connection possibilities to improving whakapapa awareness and research.

Key Findings from Businesses

- Low speeds are inhibiting effective business operation.
- Low speeds are inhibiting the potential of businesses and farms to grow and innovate.
- Many farmers have not upskilled due to a lack of internet capacity that requires them to do so.
- Businesses are not fully aware of the wide range of internet application options available to them.
- Public Wi-Fi is a must have for the district's tourism potential.
- Local Maori leaders have identified that the internet has significant potential for the employability of tangata whenua.

VISION

To be a digitally engaged and enhanced district.

OBJECTIVES

To deliver targeted internet engagement support to all Ruapehu Communities.

To deliver targeted internet engagement support to all Ruapehu Businesses.

To actively seek, advocate for and enable digital improvements for the district.

LOADING COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY GOAL:

All communities in the Ruapehu have access to support that will enable them to gain access to and experience the benefits of the internet.

The Ruapehu District is home to multiple distinct urban and rural communities. Our population concentrations are around Taumarunui, National Park, Ohakune, Raetihi and Waiouru. The district has a usually resident population of 11,844 residents and can reach daily winter peaks of over 22,000.

Most of our residents are working age adults. These people work predominantly full time and in the primary sector, education and public administration. The winter influx results in a rise in tourism related occupations specifically within the ski field, accommodation and food and beverage professions.

The Ruapehu as a whole has a high deprivation index with a score of 1069. One of the variables determining deprivation levels is home internet access. Improving the connectivity and use of the internet for Ruapehu residents is critical to improving the deprivation situation in the district.

The Ruapehu District is 11% less connected than the rest of the Manawatu/Whanganui region and 18.2% behind the rest of the country (see chart 1)[1]. The digital divide is negatively affecting the economic, educational, social, cultural and political participation of Ruapehu residents. Improving access to the internet is a crucial to education, employment and social participation opportunities.
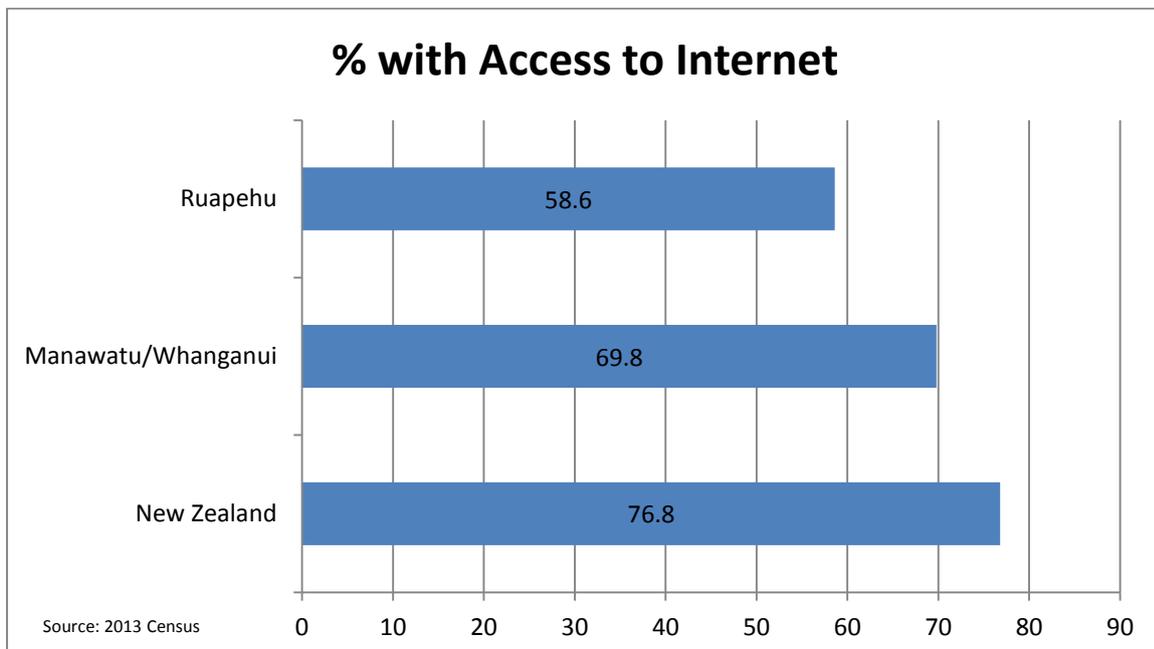
% with Access to Internet

Region	%
Ruapehu	58.6
Manawatu/Whanganui	69.8
New Zealand	76.8

Source: 2013 Census

Chart 1: Percentage of people with access to internet nationally, regionally, and locally

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[1] Statistics New Zealand (2013). *2013 Census QuickStats about a place: Ruapehu District Phone Fax and Internet*. Retrieved from http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-about-a-place.aspx?request_value=14188&tabname=Phone,fax,andInternet

However, connectivity alone does not solve the divide. Many isolated and lower socio-economic communities who lack access to the internet are generally less skilled and digitally knowledgeable than they could be.[2] Further, a digital divide between Maori and non-Maori is identified across the country.[3] This is particularly relevant to the Ruapehu as over 40% of our community are of Maori decent. Maori communities have much to gain in the digital space. Connecting tangata whenua to whanau and resources for researching whakapapa, Te Reo and other educational resources not only assists in shrinking the digital divide but also strengthen Te Reo and Te Ao Maori.

Research from the New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs identified that in order for communities to adopt and gain the benefits of new technologies the strategies for support need to be about more than getting physically connected.[4] Specific social, economic, political, cultural and cognitive considerations need to be addressed and provided for when developing digital enablement projects. The research suggests that the community needs to be supported through education and resources that assist them in getting connected, engaging effectively and safely to enjoy the internet. The support that each of the communities in the Ruapehu receives needs to be carefully designed and delivered in order to meaningfully and sustainably enable our people to connect and engage with the opportunities of high speed internet.

Through the consultation process some key themes were identified by the community including;

- Limited knowledge about connection options available to them.
- Communities are not reaching their social, economic and educational potential.
- There is a wide range in internet knowledge and skills, especially between children and parents.
- The demand for the internet is high but communities are dissatisfied with current speeds.
- Communities are willing to contribute to improving their internet.
- The public see WiFi as important for our towns.
- Our communities want to participate in the digital world and gain its benefits.
- Tangata whenua are not reaching their individual and collective potential.

These issues are echoing the sentiments of other rural based communities in New Zealand as identified in the research.

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[2] Greenbrook-Held, J., Morrison, P. (2011). The domestic divide: Access to the Internet in New Zealand. *New Zealand Geographer,* 67 (1) , 25–38.
[3] Greenbrook-Held, J., Morrison, P. (2011). The domestic divide: Access to the Internet in New Zealand. New Zealand Geographer, 67 (1) , 25–38.
[4] Department of Internal Affairs. (2013). *Community Access to Digital Technologies: A Literature Review.* Wellington, New Zealand: Department of Internal Affairs.

COMMUNITY ENABLEMENT PROJECTS				
PROJECT	**EXPLANATION**	**EST. START TIME**	**DELIVERY**	**ADDRESSES**
Loading Ruapehu Information Hub	An online and in print resource that: • Consolidates the different connection options available to both rural and urban residents. • Consolidates a range of internet use information resources such as safety, skills, speed tests, research, education and other assistance resources.	December 2015	Ruapehu District Council Website In print in Council offices	• Improving knowledge and skills • Assistance in reaching the potential of the internet • Access to resources specific to Ruapehu communities
Connectivity Options Workshops/Wananga	Workshops run in interested communities (particularly rural communities, iwi for their marae, and places with fibre) about the different internet connection options available to them. This will be run by a independent third party and any necessary advisors.	2016	On request from interested communities Facilitated by independent third parties.	• Improve options knowledge • Assistance in connecting to options applicable to the Ruapehu
Public Free WiFi	Public free Wi-Fi provided to the main streets of Taumarunui, Ohakune and Raetihi with the potential to extend to other communities	December 2015	Funded by Ruapehu District Council and other interested funding sources.	• Tourism strengthening • Social media presence improvements
Assist in School Digital Hub Establishment	Assist communities in the preliminary stages of establishing their local UFB connected school as a digital hub. Assistance will include an information pack containing Ministry of Education guidance and agreement forms and relevant Council requirements, arranging workshops with a neutral facilitator and Ministry of Education representatives.	2016	Arranged by Ruapehu District Council. Facilitated by an independent party and Ministry of Education representative.	• Assistance in connecting to a community specific option
Maori Digital Enablement Workshops/Wananga	Workshops to enhance local Maori knowledge of resources for researching whakapapa, learning Te Reo, general upskilling and increased awareness and involvement in culture, community and citizenship.	2016	Arranged by Ruapehu District Maori Council, Council, Iwi and facilitated by an independent party.	• Improve potential of local Maori • Enable access to Maori resources • Improving access to digital benefits for local Maori • Addressing digital divide

LOADING BUSINESS

BUSINESS GOAL:

All Ruapehu businesses are enhanced through improved engagement with the internet

The Ruapehu economy is dominated by four sectors; the primary, business service, retail trades & services and tourism. All of these businesses rely heavily on fast and reliable internet services to operate effectively and develop.

Just over 75% of all businesses registered in the District belonged to three sectors: the primary sector (36%), the business services sector (25%) and the retail trade and services sector (15%). As a composite sector, tourism includes employment from within each sector of the local economy. If tourism was counted as a separate sector, it would be ranked third in the District, in terms of employment with 555 (11%) full time employees. Tourism is the district's fastest growing sector with a significant increase of 43,000 visitor nights between 2013 and 2014, up 11.4%. Most Ruapehu businesses are Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's).

The Regional Growth Strategy 2015 has identified four areas of opportunity for the Ruapehu. The expansion of manuka honey, fresh vegetables, beef, lamb and dairy production for export and the increase of tourism assets and visitors have been identified as key opportunities for the district. The futures of these industries are dependent on world class internet services.

Undoubtedly the internet has changed the operation and productivity of business. However, being connected to the internet is just the beginning. Making good use of the internet is crucial to the future productivity, revenue and longevity of businesses. One New Zealand study has identified that SME's who utilise the internet extensively grow revenues twice as fast and are four years ahead than those in the same sector that use it minimally.[5] Websites, online sales, online booking, farm management systems, staff using the internet and online accounting services produce substantial economic benefits for the individual business, local economy and national economy (see chart 2).[5]

However, poor connectivity has caused discouraged business people and farmers from investing and upskilling in business technologies. Therefore, many business owners and farmers need education about what internet services can do to save time, make money and connect with their customers. They also need guidance on the internet services providers available in their area and how to obtain the best service possible.

Economic development is of high priority to the Ruapehu District Council and communities. Multiple investment opportunities have been identified in the Regional Growth Study. The promotion of business opportunities in the Ruapehu is an important part of engaging with and encouraging investment in the district. The global promotion and digital accessibility of the district is central to the success of these opportunities and our economic development.

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[5] Glass, H., Davies, P., Hefter, E., Blick, G. (2014). *The value of internet services to New Zealand businesses.* Auckland, New Zealand: Spaere Research Group
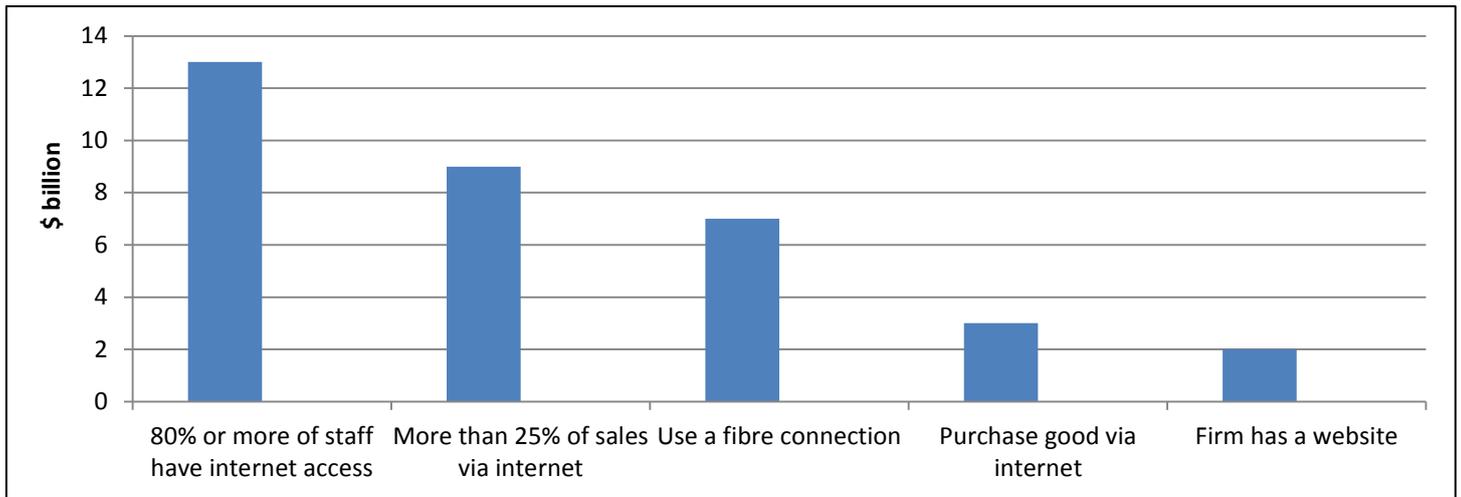
Chart 2: Potential national increase in value of from low using firms increasing their Internet use (Sapere Analysis[5])

The businesses of Ruapehu expressed the following themes:

- Low speeds are inhibiting effective operation of business
- Low speeds are inhibiting potential for business growth and development
- A lack of knowledge of internet services applicable to businesses
- Many farmers do not have digital skills due to poor connectivity limiting access and requirement
- Public WiFi is a must have
- Encouraging global interest in the Ruapehu economy through online engagement is important for economic development
- Aiding business investment through world class internet services is also important for economic development

These are all important issues that are reflected in the research and across New Zealand.

BUSINESS ENABLEMENT PROJECTS

PROJECT	EXPLANATION	EST START TIME	DELIVERY	ADDRESSES
Loading Ruapehu Information Hub	A section in the online and in print resource that: • Consolidates the different connection options available to both rural and urban businesses. • Consolidates the online resources, apps and programmes specifically for improving business and farming operation. • Consolidates a range of internet use information resources such as safety, skills, speed tests, research, education and other assistance resources	December 2015	Ruapehu District Council Website	• Improving options knowledge • Improving knowledge and skills • Assist in reaching potential of internet • Provide access to resources specific to businesses and farming
Internet for your Business and Farm Workshops	Workshops run in interested communities about: • The different internet connection options available to them. This will be run by an independent third party and any necessary advisors. • Guidance on choosing and making the most of internet service providers • Business specific skills improvement workshops	2016	On request from interested community. Facilitated by independent third parties.	• Improving options knowledge • Improving knowledge and skills • Assist in reaching potential of internet • Alternative to online resources
Business Attraction Initiatives	• Website translation to Mandarin, Spanish and Maori • Improving online marketing	2016	Ruapehu District Council Visit Ruapehu	• Improving global access to our District • Attracting overseas investment

LOADING LEADERSHIP

LEADERSHIP GOAL:

For Council, with the support of major organisations, to advocate for and support improved internet services to the district.

The Ruapehu District Council is committed to being proactive in seeking the best possible access to internet services through advocacy and facilitation. The Growing Ruapehu Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025 and this DEP demonstrate Council's commitment.

The community made it clear that it expects Council to have an active role in internet delivery and support. Council is committed to being involved in ways that satisfy and support the community without being over involved in the market and household realms.

One role Council has is in enabling and empowering our community through facilitation and education. This can be achieved through organising workshops on internet skills for home and businesses, arranging workshops around connection options and providing information on our website.

Another role we have is in leading and encouraging other organisations to be involved in the digital enablement and development of the district. Research has identified a powerful role for industry leaders to champion and encourage others in their industry and communities to take up and use the internet for their business[6]. Council is both a leader to champion uptake, and can also identify organisations in other sectors to also take on this role. As part of this leadership role not only are we committed to assisting the digital enablement of our communities, but also within our own organisation. There are many opportunities for Council to become more digitally engaged both internally and in services to our customers.

Furthermore, we recognise the unique position we are in to advocate for improvements to the district's services. We are able seek and act upon opportunities to lobby government and suppliers for internet infrastructure and service improvements.

Council is also committed to the pledges made in the Registration of Interest in July 2015. These included resource consent support, assistance with land identification for infrastructure, arranging Council asset access and use for necessary infrastructure improvements and working with supply companies to accelerate the improvements.

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[6] Glass, H., Davies, P., Hefter, E., Blick, G. (2014). *The value of internet services to New Zealand businesses.* Auckland, New Zealand: Spaere Research Group

LEADERSHIP ROLE				
ROLE	**EXPLANATION**	**EST. TIME PERIOD**	**DELIVERY**	**ADDRESSES**
Leadership and Communication	• Facilitate and encourage other organisations to participate in digital enablement • Maintain working relationships with all potential and existing enablement and supply organisations • Regularly update the community on progress & upcoming education opportunities • Seek opportunities for internal digital enablement such as wireless tech for civil defence purposes and website translations	September 2015	By Ruapehu District Council	• Sustainable and widespread delivery of digital enablement • Keeping communities engaged with improvements • Digitally enabling Council
Advocacy	• Actively seek opportunities to advocate for service improvements • Encourage and facilitate all internet providers, especially in rural areas • Encourage local businesses and organisations to participate in service improvements and delivery	September 2015	By Ruapehu District Council	• Ensuring the Ruapehu is not left behind • Ensuring digital divide is not exacerbated
Collaboration	• Actively participate in a regional digital leaders forum • Regionally share knowledge and ideas on digital leadership and to create economies of scale.	Ongoing since June 2015	Ruapehu District Council	• Consistent approach to digital enablement across the region • Ensuring the Ruapehu is not left behind • Ensuring digital divide is not exacerbated
ROI & DEP Commitments	• Deliver resource consent support • Assist with land identification for infrastructure • Arrange Council asset access and use for necessary infrastructure improvements	Upon success announcement*	By Ruapehu District Council	• ROI and DEP delivery

PROJECT SUMMARY

COMMUNITY	
PROJECT	**EST. START TIME**
Loading Ruapehu Info Hub	December 2015
Community Workshop Series	2016
School Digital Hub Facilitation	2016
Free Public WiFi	December 2015
Maori Digital Enablement Workshops/Wananga	2015

BUSINESS	
PROJECT	**EST. START TIME**
Loading Ruapehu Info Hub	December 2015
Business & Farming Workshop Series	2016
Business Attraction Initiatives	2016

LEADERSHIP	
ROLE	**EST. START TIME**
Leadership and Communication	September 2015
Advocacy	September 2015
Collaboration	Ongoing since June 2015
Deliver ROI and DEP commitments	ROI- Upon success announcement* DEP- September 2015

*- conditional on roll out