Case Study – Assets Rationalisation at Rainville

The Rainville Regional Council has a population of 65,000 over a diverse topography of coastal villages and rainforest hinterland with many small townships and villages borne out of its sugar and banana growing industries. The region has the highest asset base per capita in the state, largely because of many old and poorly functioning assets across the region.

The council is looking to rationalise some of the assets by selling or demolishing them. This would create a reduction in annual asset maintenance costs with these savings being re-directed into better maintenance of existing assets or establishment of new and much needed facilities. A program outlining a large number of possible assets to be rationalised over 5 years with a target of $400k savings to be achieved each year, has been developed and tested with councillors. However, Councillors genuinely want the community to give input to the proposed assets on the 'list' – there are 43 of them shortlisted so far.

The assets include

- Ten (10) abandoned buildings (e.g. old clubhouses),
- Twelve (12) underutilised facilities (e.g. tennis courts, Pipers Band Hall, Ski Club)
- Eight (8) playgrounds that are old, run down and in areas that are not frequently used
- Seven (7) properties used for commercial activities (dance studios)
- Six (6) toilet blocks constantly vandalised and in locations where there are other toilets at a short distance away

Council has also established a Community Reference Panel (CRP) as a platform for the purposes of engaging the public on many projects and issues relevant to Council, industry, and community. The CRP is made up of volunteers from across the region representing a diverse mix of ages, interests, experiences, education levels and cultural backgrounds. The CRP currently has 320 members and a random sample from this group have been selected to assist with this project.

The Council is seeking to engage with members of the CRP with the following goals:

- To ensure the CRP understand the background details, current scope and rationale for the project
- To develop a commonly agreed set of criteria to apply in considering which assets could be rationalised
- To explore the proposed list of assets for rationalisation and seek feedback on the first year's priorities
- To seek input on the proposed engagement approaches with user groups affected by the asset rationalisation and the wider public.

A series of at least three facilitated sessions is planned to achieve the above goals over the coming two months. Separate processes are in place to engage with the user groups.

Members of the Community Reference Panel – some of them!

1. **Silvio** – is a retired banana famer and now keen environmentalist. He currently coordinates a working group that is helping the state government with strategies for the eradication of Panama Disease that is a serious threat to the region's banana industry. He works with like-minded people on education programs for farmer and alternate farming practices that will be necessary for the eradication of Panama Disease. Silvio meets separately with Council officers and has a strong relationship with the Mayor.

2. **Raymond** – current cane farmer who joined the CRP to get some 'answers' out of Council. Raymond is concerned about how Council's budget is being spent. He is forthright and is well informed about Council's spending over the last 10 years. He is likely to be very supportive of the asset rationalisation project.

3. **Joshua** – a local young man just starting out in his insurance business. Joshua aspires of going onto Council one day and wants to better understand Council operations. Joshua's family have been long term residents in the region, his mother has been heavily involved with the Chamber of Commerce for many years.

4. **Annabelle** – is a mother of four school aged children, has high energy with a long list of passions and projects that she is working on. Annabelle is the President of the Multi-cultural Society and advocates strongly on matters relating to the CALD community. She has conflicted with Council and State over a dispute relating to her land that backs onto a significant river system in the area. Annabelle was concerned about chemical run offs from farming activities and its impact on the river system. The issue has settled down now but when Annabelle speaks, she holds the attention of the room.

5. **Gemma** – is a recent school leaver and keen to get into civic life. Gemma is a champion tennis player and played circuit tennis at a national level, so she is used to dealing with adults in an adult world. Gemma is leading a project to have more school leavers involved in civic life by getting involved in Advisory Groups Boards and Committees. Gemma is aware of the Asset Rationalisation project and is keen to have more youth involvement in the decision making.

6. **Barry** – is the president of the Chamber of Commerce and is a strong advocate for rationalising Council's facilities. He believes strongly that Council should be redirecting its maintenance budget on town centre beautification programs and improved tourist attractions. He has a negative outlook constantly criticising the Council for many recent decisions. Barry does not say too much in the meetings until the end and then makes a number of accusations about poor decisions in the past.

7. **Mavis** – is a local artist and volunteers frequently at the local Art Gallery and has a quirky sense of humour. Mavis is from South Africa and has good rapport with other CRP members. She has lived in Rainville for the last 15 years and has loads of ideas from her travels and experiences living in different countries. Mavis is appreciative that something is being done about these wasteful facilities.

8. **Kathy** – is an Aboriginal elder from the local group of Traditional Owners and is frequently called upon to give input on many of Council's consultations. She has a busy life with her extended family and several grandchildren. Kathy has strong concerns about the idea of reducing the community facilities and does not want any changes to the status quo. Kathy is constantly seeking to redirect the conversations to keeping assets and not to be rationalising them.

9. **Renaldo** – president of the local tourism body and owner of a large resort in the district. He loves playing the guitar and often serenades his guests around the resort restaurant. Renaldo moved to the district only 5 years ago and has experience in the tourism industry from his previous career moves. Renaldo is well respected amongst the CRP and is often called into discussions with council officers to consider new initiatives in the tourism sector. He is ambivalent about the asset rationalisation project.

10. **Tania** – retiree and past employee of Council. She is humble and confident now leading the committee who runs the annual Light Festival that brings tens of thousands of tourists to the district. Tania would like to see better facilities in the town and is sympathetic to the idea of getting rid of underutilised facilitates and grubby clubhouses that are nothing but a permanent beer tent!

11. **Sally** – retiree and lover of animals who coordinates the animal rescue program for the region. Sally was involved with the tennis association for many years but became disenchanted because of how it was being run by the same dominant few. She quietly stopped attending their meetings. Sally wants the region to prosper and wants to be part of something that is more 'positive'. She has mixed views about the asset rationalisation project, wanting progress but also not liking the idea of relocating groups to co-locate with other groups and share facilities.

12. **Anna** – has lived in the district for 8 years and was a former councillor in another council area. Anna attends the CRP with a large folder full of information, attends every Council meeting and briefing and frequently calls into question the processes that are being used in this planning process. Anna has serious questions about the legalities of the asset rationalisation project and wants to see the hard evidence to support the proposals.

13. **Ralph** – is part of a large Italian family who have the largest cane farm in the region and his eldest son is a local businessman running an equipment maintenance business. Ralph is a representative on the local canegrowers association and volunteered to get involved in the CRP as he has been instrumental in getting many sporting associations up and running. His family have donated significant funds and in-kind resources to help build facilities and playing fields in the region. He is not wanting to see the facilities with his blood, sweat and tears being demolished.

14. **Andy** – is mad keen on indoor bowling and regularly gets his fellow bowlers to compete in National Indoor Bowls competitions for people with a disability. Andy uses a wheelchair to aid mobility due to his paraplegia, the result of a boating accident 12 years ago. Andy has run for Mayor in the past and while getting a significant number of votes was unsuccessful. He has very strong views about the current Council and is mostly disagreeable however this recent project about asset rationalisation has got him thinking that perhaps the Council are finally doing something sensible.

Case study role play instructions – Rainville Asset Rationalisation

There will be two separate Skills Workshops where participants will be part of a role play. The first Skills Workshop will occur at the beginning of the second day in Session 3. The second Skills Workshop will occur towards the end of the second day in Session 4.

Each Skills Workshop will have two groups working simultaneously and within each group there will be two facilitators working together and an Observer – see details below.

Facilitators role – co-facilitating the session using one activity from the Plan. Work together and share the load.

Observers role – your main task is to identify and record what facilitation elements and skills you observe being used in the role play. Refer to previous sessions.

Participants role – invest in the character you have. Consider how you want to contribute to this session and what pitch you are making.

Skills session # 1:

The purpose of this session is to develop a set of criteria that will guide the prioritisation of the assets that should be divested in the first year. The outcome of the session is the agreed set of criteria. The list of assets has not yet been shared and so there is no need to choose any of the assets yet – that is the next session.

A plan for the facilitated event is outlined in the next page. Facilitators should use this is a guide for planning and running the specific activity to achieve the purpose as outlined. A blank frame is available for you to use if you need - see frames 7 and 8.

Skills session # 1 - Plan for Facilitated Event

Time	Content - the 'WHAT' and the 'WHY'	Process - the 'HOW'
9.00	**Welcome and Introduction** Warm - up Purpose and agenda Expectations/assumptions Ground rules - culture	Introduce selves with a story Ice breaker to introduce each other Present Purpose and Agenda Check expectations – paired conversation
9.15	**Body** Choosing prioritisation criteria	Outline the specific task to be completed Summarise the technical criteria that have been used so far Explore additional criteria that might be important – paired conversations Share with larger group Determine if agreement on all and discuss differences Ask group members to consider their views on criteria after learning more about the differences Dotmocracy voting on which if the new criteria should be incorporated
	Conclusion (OFF) Outcome - a summary Feedback - expectations and culture Future - Next steps	Summarise outcomes of what has been developed and what has been agreed Agree on next steps and who is responsible Confirm how this will be communicated Capture results on board or flip chart Thank you and acknowledgements

GROUP ONE

GROUP
TWO

What changes do we
need to make when
facilitating in the
virtual space?

Skills session # 2

The purpose of this session is to introduce the listed assets (43 of them) and then apply the agreed criteria to the list of assets and get to a further shortlist that helps achieve the $400k target. (Assume all of the data including descriptions, photos, the value and depreciation value of each asset is available to the participants in this session). Planning template is available to use in frames 11 and 12 and frames 13 and 14 are available for use in the role play.

Group 1 - Event Planning Template

Time	Content - the 'WHAT' and the 'WHY'	Process - the 'HOW'
	Introduction Warm - up Purpose and agenda Expectations/assumptions Ground rules - culture	
	Body Probable issues	
	Conclusion (OFF) Outcome - a summary Feedback - expectations and culture Future - Next steps	

Group 2 - Event Planning Template

Time	Content - the 'WHAT' and the 'WHY'	Process - the 'HOW'
	Introduction Warm - up Purpose and agenda Expectations/assumptions Ground rules - culture	
	Body Probable issues	
	Conclusion (OFF) Outcome - a summary Feedback - expectations and culture Future - Next steps	

GROUP
TWO

Methodologies

- World Café
- Open Space Technology
- ORID (objective, reflective, interpretive, decisional)
- SWOT
- Appreciative inquiry
- Deliberative democracy e.g. citizen's jury, participatory budgeting, deliberative polling
- Affinity mapping
- Fish bone analysis
- 35S for prioritising
- Appreciative inquiry

- Deep Democracy
- Action Learning
- Design thinking
- Improvisational theatre
- 21st Century Dialogue
- Do you use other ones?

**Group 1
Methodologies for
Dealing with
Conflict - What
methods would be
useful? Things to
consider in
facilitating in this
scenario?**

Group 2 Methodologies - for Dealing with large groups - What methods would be useful? Things to consider in facilitating in this scenario?

Group 3
Methodologies – for Town Hall Meeting – What methods would be useful? Things to consider in facilitating in this scenario?

Group 4
Methodologies – for
When we lose
control of the group
– What methods
would be useful?
Things to consider
in facilitating in this
scenario?

Share a 6 word story that reflects your learning from this course