

Nos Aruba 2025

Shortlisted for Best International Project
at the Institute of Business Consulting Awards 2009

NOS ARUBA 2025 - PROJECT OVERVIEW

To develop a National Integrated Strategic Plan [NISP] for Sustainable Development of Aruba with full stakeholder participation; supported by a sustainable participative planning process to further develop this NISP every four years.

Project commissioned by the Government of Aruba, Department of Economic Affairs, Commerce and Industry [DEZHI]. Funding provided by Fondo Desaroyo Aruba [FDA], established by The Netherlands and Aruba “to advance and stimulate the self sufficiency of Aruba”, under the “Quality of Government” programme to optimise government operations and transparency.

Project delivered by Wikima Partners (Aruba) Limited [WPAL], a Simplexity Partners international joint venture company established for this project.

ENGAGEMENT

Aruba has previously prepared many development plans, but none have been strategic in nature, nor integrated different sectors of government or fully engaged the country’s citizens.

The project's aim has been to develop a National Integrated Strategic Plan [NISP] for sustainable development of the island, and to put in place a sustainable management process for this plan. Sustainability is at the heart of this project.

The Director of DEZHI understood that this should be a truly participative process to develop a NISP that comes from the people, rather than generating a plan based on traditional strategic analysis and then getting buy-in from key stakeholders. This reflects a significant culture change in the relationship between government and the governed.

We demonstrated that in order for Aruba to change it is critical to obtain deep commitment from a critical mass of people to change their own behaviours: rational acceptance is not sufficient. Without this deep commitment the NISP will only be a written document, rather than a plan that will be acted on to achieve a sustainable future.



Based in Aruba with workshops in Holland and USA, and coaching support from the UK this was a truly international project focused on the sustainable social, political and macroeconomic development of an autonomous Aruba.

Our team comprised of experienced specialists in large-scale change leadership & culture change, leadership coaching, mass participation and strategic planning; committed individuals who blended techniques and expertise to create a unique approach for the people of Aruba. This international team, drawn from the UK, USA, The Netherlands and Indonesia, was carefully selected to complement the client's leadership team.

STAKEHOLDERS AND CHANGE

Stakeholders comprise: the government, parliament, government departments, private sector organisations including tourism organisations and potential investors in Aruba, NGOs, and the people of Aruba, including students studying abroad in Holland and the USA.

WPAL's approach was designed to embed learning within Aruba so that the integrated strategic planning process is sustainable.

The project needed a core of individuals representing senior stakeholders to guide the NISP process consistently with principles of participation, transparency, and sustainability. This group required strong leaders to ensure that all participants had the freedom to explore new ideas and behaviours.

To develop a client project management team we used a three day Appreciative Inquiry workshop to build alignment and commitment to the approach. We designed workshops to allow participants to draw their own learning before exploring the process used. Through this action learning we established a clear expectations exchange and designed a simple but powerful project plan that has been used consistently to explain the Nos Aruba 2025 project to all stakeholders.

We achieved rapid mobilisation of project teams to build awareness of the task and establish critical credibility. We built motivation to participate by designing each phase for widely celebrated early success. Further, we engaged in ways that addressed rational, emotional and political needs of each stakeholder in an open and honest way.

We focused on shared learning, experience and practice to enhance knowledge, skills & capacity, and subsequently on coaching to ensure sustainable practices & processes; cycles of learning that cascaded down through the core client team to all stakeholders.

A key outcome of the project was the genuine collaboration of all stakeholders and the future ability of the client to learn and replicate these skills. WPAL combined Appreciative Inquiry with somatic coaching in embodied leadership



techniques to enable the core client team to have confidence in leading a cultural change programme of this scale.

WPAL taught project teams processes for making decisions regarding competing government interests, and scenario planning to enable them to stretch thinking and make decisions in uncertainty. Scenario planning training was so successful it led to the introduction of decision making to the Aruban school curriculum.

Teaching was supported by a body of distilled knowledge and documentation, followed with mentoring that allowed individuals to test new skills in an Aruban context and acquire insight into their own development. Consultant involvement was adjusted at each stage of client learning to enable them to take control and renew the planning process.

The project was also about mass-mobilisation and consultation of Aruban citizens. Engagement here involved expectation exchanges with key stakeholders, mass participation events, press coverage, advertising and a dedicated social networking website. Workshops with political and community leaders provided broad political and social sponsorship for the NISP process, which continues through a change of government.

Workshop form varied to reflect Aruban values and best engage participants. Notable successes included singing civil servants and the use of poetry and storytelling to explain scenario planning to large groups. WPAL also engaged with Aruban students overseas to encourage their continued involvement in Aruban development and prevent brain-drain.

Nos Aruba 2025 established twelve independent Commissions to develop aspects of an overall vision of sustainable development and to create a clear plan and road map for the achievement of their aspirations. In turn these commissions engaged key stakeholders and encouraged mass participation in the process, building a critical mass of people taking accountability for their own actions. With a common unifying vision these Commissions work to ensure alignment and integration of all plans.

The approved key performance indicator required Nos Aruba 2025 to reach at least 50% of the population, a figure well surpassed.

PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE

The consulting project was a fixed price contract over two years with the first joint deliverable being a full project plan that was designed to maximise value and leverage of available funding and resources. Payment was due on results not effort.

The contract was written to meet the highest standards of local and international governance and law, reviewed by all parties. Project scope was signed off by the Government of Aruba, funding and project milestones by FDA.



At each milestone WPAL and DEZHI submitted evidence of completion to trigger payment and the next stage. Consulting input was tightly managed within a heartbeat schedule of island visits.

Weekly progress review conference calls were held with the whole project management team (client and consultants) to address learning and engagement issues with critical stakeholders. These calls, combined with a helpline email address, enabled the team to remain close to the project, even when away from Aruba, and to rapidly anticipate and address any rational, emotional or political issue.

Milestones and key performance indicators were agreed from the outset of the project. Clear planning was supplemented by learning workshops after each milestone looking at progress towards NISP which resulted in refinements to the initial plan aimed at maintaining overall budget while accelerating learning by core project team in DEZHI and Commissions.

To date all milestones have been met on time and approved by both the Director of DEZHI and FDA. Broad consensus to reschedule the final milestone until after the September 2009 general election resulted in adjustment to completion date. The delivery of the NISP to parliament and the Governor (the official representative of Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands in Aruba) is scheduled for November 2009 and will be achieved on time.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

From first bid WPAL was completely transparent with the client as to what the group could deliver. When invited to tender WPAL respectfully declined as we felt that the requested programme would not achieve its aims, and that we could not meet two key criteria: 'vast knowledge of the Caribbean' and 'extensive experience working with Small Island Developing States'. However, we set out how we would approach a non-compliant bid to achieve the desired outcomes. As a result of this WPAL were asked to tender with full disclosure.

The project was conducted with full public exposure and thus demanded the highest standards of professional care, integrity and honesty. In our capacity as teachers, role models and coaches we supported people at all stages of their learning, enabling them to address the complex issues of sustainability whilst dealing with individual and cultural resistance to taking personal accountability for decisions that influence the future of Aruba. This required the building of confidential trust relationships that enabled stakeholders to explore and challenge existing patterns of thought and behaviour.

We believe that the experience of all engaged participants and audiences was thoroughly professional, and promoted the highest professional standards of consulting. The team was asked to lecture local MBA students on the approach to the project and this was covered by the local press.



SUSTAINABLE BENEFITS

As the final integration of the Commissions' plans and roadmaps is underway, people are already beginning to take action, ensuring that with continued celebration of success and learning the first NISP will be implemented. One clear example is how Nos Aruba 2025 has enabled Aruba to attract a groundbreaking aquaculture opportunity which is presently obtaining funding within Aruba and from overseas investors.

WPAL's remaining work is to provide additional coaching to support DEZHI in institutionalising the planning processes that have been learned and refined over the last two years so that the NISP can be renewed on a four yearly cycle.

CLIENT TESTIMONIAL

Wikima Partners Aruba Limited (WPAL), consultants to the project Nos Aruba 2025: National Integrated Strategic Plan (NISP), deserve to win this award for their strong guidance and good learning support for all those involved in generating a sustainable process for Aruba.

The NISP began five years ago, but was finally approved for financing in January 2007. The objectives of the NISP are to empower Aruba to achieve full potential by integrating social, cultural, economic, technological, and environmental developments; to stimulate Sustainable Development; to encourage coordination and dialogue between all stakeholders in the private and public sector, civil society and all citizens in Aruba in designing the vision; to institutionalize the strategic and integral planning process for Sustainable Development; and to finalize the NISP by 2009.

The Department of Economic Affairs, Commerce and Industry (DEZHI) prepared a Terms of Reference to hire a consultant to guide the process. An open international tender was held and three international companies, one local company and one local individual offered services. WPAL was chosen in January 2008 to execute the project because their approach suggested a participatory process with stakeholders through the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) methodology. They also offered training in strategic and scenario planning, which were prerequisites for the sustainability of the project. The work plan WPAL suggested emphasized intense training and guidance during the first months of the project, followed by reduced direct involvement and increased mentoring and coaching to support sustained learning.

The AI is divided into four phases: discovery, dream, design and destiny. During the discovery phase workshops were held for the Project Management Team (PMT), and several other individuals, to train them in AI, the questionnaire and scenario planning. Students and Arubans living in the Netherlands were engaged



with the AI questionnaire in 2008. At the end of the dream phase eleven topics for the commissions were selected.

During the design phase WPAL gave training on scenario planning and the commissions started to write plans according to the suggested framework. At the beginning of the destiny phase another commission was added and currently the twelve commissions are working on the writing of the commission plans.

The marketing campaign for Nos Aruba 2025 started in November 2008 and has now reached more than 50% of the population. In addition to the small amount of people who have participated in the several events, still we have reached a lot of people through the newspapers, TV, the website and the documentary of the NISP that aired during the last months. A drawing contest for a calendar for 2009 was held for the children and all primary schools were visited. All this helped us reach a lot of people.

Although the AI methodology is a new and different approach it has had a positive impact on the participatory process and on all those involved. Even political parties suggested a participatory process for the next years during the recent elections. I myself, and the PMT, have learned a lot from this project.

Maria Dijkhoff-Pita
Director, Department of Economic Affairs, Commerce and Industry
Government of Aruba

For further details please contact:

Martin Hazell

0207 099 8370

07802 882829

martin.hazell@simplexity.co.uk