

13 April 2022

H M Whiting

fyi-request-18948-fa1eb5a4@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Sir / Madam

Local Government Official Information & Meetings Act 1987 Request:

We refer to your email of 22nd March 2022, which includes requests for information under the Local Government Official Information & Meetings Act 1987. Your particular requests and responses are set out below:

Request summary:

A pdf copy of the submissions made by Isthmus Group for the RFP Contract 2545 City Hub Professional Services – Urban Design.

Response:

Copy PDF copy of submissions made by Isthmus Group for the RFP Contract 2545 City Hub Professional Services – Urban Design attached. Certain information has been redacted for reasons of commercial sensitivity.

If you are not satisfied with our response, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review our decision. The Ombudsman can be contacted at PO Box 10 152, Wellington 6143, or Freephone 0800 802 602, or at <http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz>

Yours faithfully



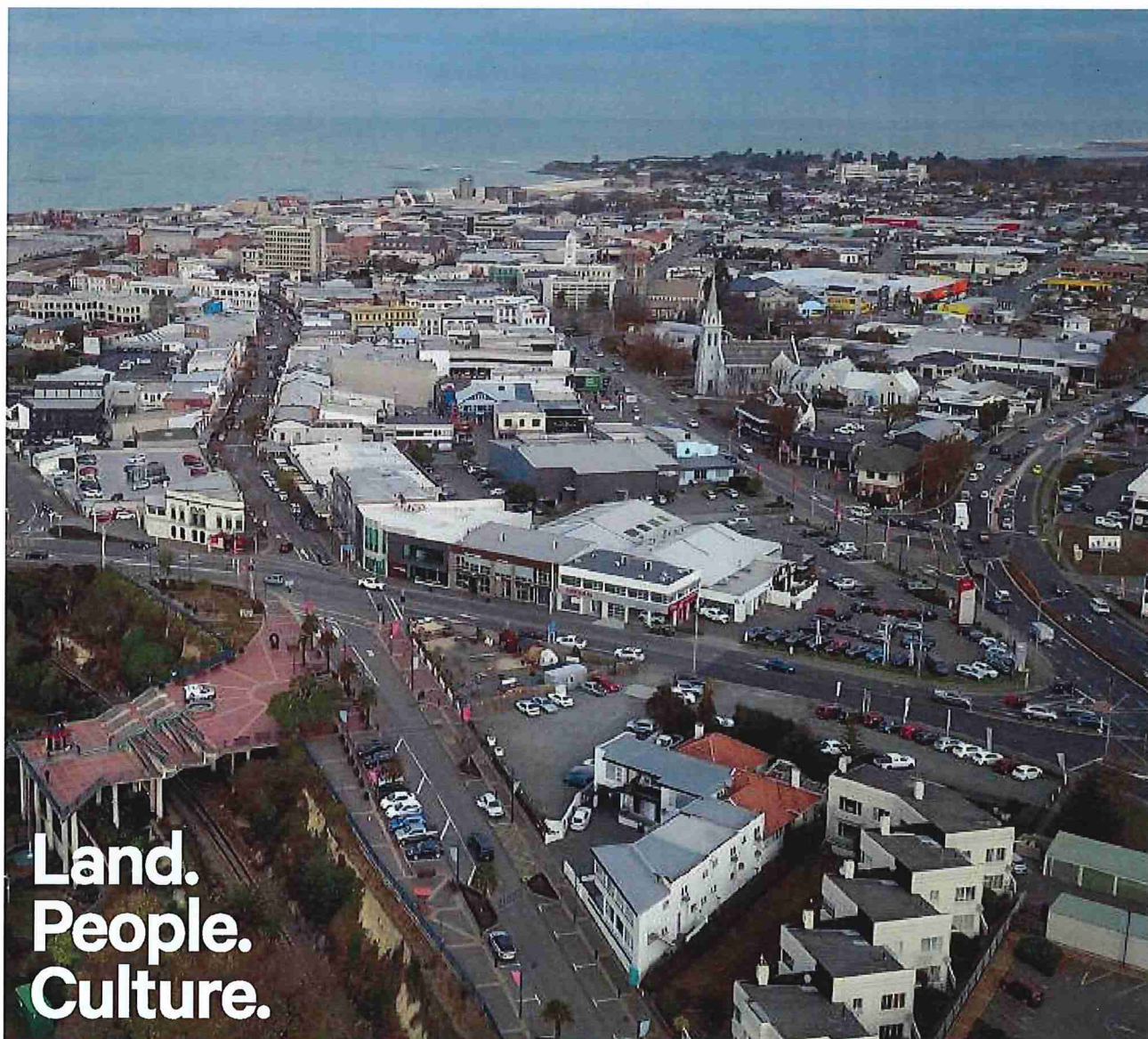
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Timaru District Council. Urban Master Plan. Proposal.

09 September
2021

Isthmus.



Land.
People.
Culture.

1. Overview.

Isthmus

We are Isthmus, our kaupapa deepens the relationships between land, people and culture. We believe in building relationships that endure—measuring our success in terms of positive effects on community, environment and economy. We proudly work closely with our clients, partners, and stakeholders in an open, collaborative process and believe that good design begins with looking and listening and being able to engage positively. The key to the success of our projects is a collaborative approach to the design process, collaboration with our clients, within our team, with our partners, with the wider design community, with mana whenua, stakeholders and the local community. This collaborative approach is underpinned by strong working relationships forged through shared previous success. Isthmus is managed as a group of projects, rather than in discipline silos. This enables us to draw from the whole studio—which ensures the best combination of skills, experience and expertise for each project. Isthmus as ‘one studio’ of 80 people can draw on expertise in architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, graphic design, design planning and collaboration, GIS and visualisation capability.

Isthmus Tūkanga

Regenerating Aotearoa by connecting land, people and culture is our kaupapa. Our tikanga are markers that help us navigate, test and correct our course—so we can always do what is right for the group. By committing to Isthmus tūkanga we are unified as a studio, designing for mauri to exist through Land People Culture. This fosters a sense of belonging, a studio culture reflected both inside and outside. It helps us live our values and evolve as a uniquely Aotearoa design practice.

- We are a group
- We partner locally
- We acknowledge the Treaty
- We are generous and we care
- We are continually learning
- We leave the land and water healthier

In November 2020, the Isthmus Ōtautahi studio led by Helen and Nik, organised a two day hikoī wānanga with Te Wera King (Upoko of Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua) to journey immersively through the landscape of Aoraki- Ki Uta ki Tai. This was part of the Isthmus annual wānanga with eight teams of ten across Aotearoa spending time with te ao māori collaborators to engage with mātauranga māori and the whenua. This demonstrates our commitment to deepening our learning and practice for treaty-based partnerships.

Approach

Our approach to your urban master plan draws on our ability to deftly navigate a project partnership process, engage communities in placemaking conversations, and guide cost effective and uniquely place-sourced solutions by demonstrating what is possible. Three interrelated threads run through our approach: build on local, make progress visible, and benchmark evidence. This Isthmus–Gap Filler team holds an unparalleled track record in the unique process you are embarking on. We have led some of the most successful innovating streets projects in the country together, and we have led regenerative and collaborative urban master planning projects together. The proposed team has been carefully considered to meet what we believe are your core requirements. Because this contract is for a reasonable duration (18 months + 18 months) you will require a team of skilled individuals able to build a strong working relationship with the Council project team—almost like a secondment role. This is a flexible role, one which will be determined by the evolving scope of an iterative master planning process. This works best if the team are close by and know Timaru well.

1. Overview.

Gap Filler

Emerging in the immediate post-quake period in Christchurch, Gap Filler brought vibrancy to vacant sites and derelict spaces. Introducing creativity into public space attracted and inspired others to share their ideas—a creative cultural movement was born with a range of new aligned placemaking organisations, festivals, urban farms, street art collectives and more all working to bolster the central city. Ten years on and Gap Filler have worked with every sector in the city, and been responsible for many hundreds of installations, events and people putting their creative energies into the central city. This creative placemaking movement has been a primary and unifying means of shifting the identity of a conservative Garden City to ‘a city where anything is possible’ (Christchurch City Council Strategic Framework, 2018). And the total cost has been a fraction of the cost of any urban infrastructure project. A wave of accolades landed on Christchurch, with features of the city and this placemaking movement in *Lonely Planet*, the *Guardian*, *New York Times* and *TIME Magazine’s Greatest Places of 2021*.

Local

The challenge and the innovation of this project go hand in hand, and it will require a certain ‘navigator mindset’ to embrace the process in a way that is both innovative and practical. We know how to support the Council and build community capability and ownership in the process. This is more cost effective but ultimately also more sustainable and viable long term. To help connect as quickly as possible with Timaru and its communities we have local landscape architect Kirsten Wilson who understands the challenges businesses owners face. Kirsten worked with Gap Filler on the ‘Pallet Pavilion’ and ‘Commons’ projects, working closely with volunteers and suppliers to bring these community projects to life. We have also made provision to include specialist local expertise representing both local resident and project based knowledge if you think this will be useful. Jillian Frater and Mary Clay are both planners with Avanzar alongside traffic and transportation engineer Antoni Facey. Collectively they bring rich local insights and connections but also specialist skills essential to resolving some of the challenges that will be faced in this innovative project.

Tactical

City improvements typically take a long time; problems need to be identified, ideas developed, public consulted, negotiations undertaken—before any detailed design, procurement, and implementation can take place. Often when all this has happened the idea has shifted and the solution is no longer fit for purpose. Temporary, low cost interventions—tactical urbanism—allow design changes to be tested, and adapted in real time, rapidly exposing what works and what doesn’t. Small interventions using simple tools—such as cones, planters, and paint—challenge users to rethink how they see and use space, contributing to the larger goal of creating safe, liveable streets for people. Ideas can be tried in a way that is simply not possible if undertaking a permanent public works project. With tactical urbanism we will test projects on the ground with real users rather than focusing on desktop studies, opinion and speculation. We will build projects around motivated individuals. With clear communication and branded project materials we create an environment and provide the support needed to try ‘safe to fail’ ideas. We can verify what works and what doesn’t through continuous feedback loops with real users and your team. Tactical urbanism enables the testing

1. Overview.

of ideas in public space in real time. It is a way to involve communities, gauge feedback and see what works and what doesn't before investing significant time, energy, resource and capital in long-term changes. Tactical urbanism empowers communities—because it is temporary—people do not need to decide if future planned works will work—they can see what works, and become invested in the solutions. Continuous participation through Social Pinpoint, or similar, will gather knowledge to evolve and adapt interventions in a sustainable manner and help create unique spaces and projects for Timaru. Social media will help communicate change, and foster interest in new ways to use and experience the city. Through continuous participation we can incorporate rich local knowledge, skills and aspirations, and express local stories and narratives. With tactical urbanism and placemaking being a key part of the methodology for developing the Urban Master Plan, and with you choosing to take an enabling approach overall, we intend to establish a strategic framework to attract, support and enable the community to initiate and lead many of the tactical urbanism and placemaking projects.

Innovation

The innovation of this project is the evolving nature of the master planning process. Our role is to help Timaru District Council build a master plan vision with project partners and the community, creating a solid evidence base for change. Part of the challenge and the opportunity is to embrace the iterative nature of the project, and to allow for tactical trials in the streetscape and public realm to authentically influence the investment programme.

Isthmus has developed 'Te Kāpehu' Impact compass for measuring sustainable and regenerative impact across all design phases of projects. It is a graphic tool that offers a snapshot of holistic outcomes, and enables design conversations that robustly and authentically test the brief during the establishment phase of the project. It can also be developed as a project specific tool for 'pulse-takes'. We can gauge the experiential responses to tactical interventions and post this data alongside the tactical master plan.

What we think will work for you

1. A practical approach that bridges the gap and addresses the tensions between pedestrian and car oriented environments. This approach meets the community where they are at and amplifies the positives of people and place. Utilising the energy that already exists to gain momentum and initiate change, and allowing the 'experience' to change mindsets.
2. Evidence base—understanding what youth need in Timaru vs. city-based and wider district perspectives
3. Role of Venture Timaru in guiding innovative ideas to elevate the profile of Timaru as a desirable destination
4. Address the 'elephant in the room' where tensions arising from the Showgrounds development sucking life away from the town centre may in fact create reasons to reinvent how the city functions and what it offers
5. Learning from innovative business ideas and private development that has been successful. e.g. re-purposing inner city buildings for residential.

2. Project experience.

To develop the Timaru urban master plan that will underpin your City Hub Strategy we are drawing on recent and relevant project experience: the city centre strategy for New Plymouth; eight Northland Township Plans; Innovating Streets projects across the country, an innovative concept we developed called the Tactical Master Plan; the 2040 vision for Tāmaki's Employment Precinct; the recently completed city centre master plan for Invercargill that we realised together with creative placemakers Gap Filler; and Gap Filler's body of tactical work in Christchurch.

The 18-month project for New Plymouth had Isthmus and council staff working as one team to co-create a strategy that holds significant ambition for the city centre whilst responding to key day to day community issues such as parking and street trees, maintaining a strong commercial sensibility, and appreciation of funding constraints. Fundamental to the strategy is the managed consolidation of retail and commercial office space in a revitalised pedestrian friendly city centre core and backfilling of the fringe area with a new residential community of scale. This change is to be facilitated by new enabling planning policy, leveraging of council owned sites for exemplar development, business support

initiatives and the introduction of new levels of public realm amenity specifically targeted at natural assets such as the Huatoki Stream and the Coast Walkway). It is expected that in implementing the strategy the city centre will by 2050 attract an additional 3,000 residents as well as more visitors who will stay longer. This shift will in turn drive new independent business opportunities and improve the city centre's ability to adapt to changes in the traditional ways in which we shop, work and spend our leisure time and future environmental priorities. The strategy identifies a package of public realm 'early wins' to be delivered as low-cost tactical projects achievable within the current funding envelope as a way of establishing proof of concept ahead of preparing funding business cases. Prepared during the pandemic the team adopted creative ways of working with face-to-face meetings and focus groups interspersed with 'virtual' web-based sessions typically utilising an online interactive pinboard.

The process is the true innovation of the Northland Township Plans that provide a values-based framework to unlock multiple projects with a range of delivery partners over a ten year programme. The kaupapa framework, mauri evaluation measures, and place-based co-design process with each township has created an

understanding of what meaningful impact looks like for these communities, including an invitation for visitors to stop, stay and spend. For the visitor to truly appreciate and value the journey through the Northland Townships via the Twin Coast Discovery Route, they must be invited into a deeper experience and relationships with people and place. To understand this ourselves, we took an immersive and relationship-building approach as a design team. A three day hikoiwānanga immersed the team in the Northland journey from a landscape and cultural perspective, guided and narrated by our locally based collaborators.

The Wellington Tactical Master Plan provided a framework for innovative change by supporting the work of many different groups advocating for a more people friendly city. It offered a systematic approach to tactical urbanism enabling a catalyst for change. Through interrogating existing and potential amenity the tactical master plan could provide more space for people, create better connections, and improve the central city experience. This tactical master plan is focused around four key moves that provide the framework for smaller detailed ideas to take place as tactical explorations: define the tactical zone, redefine priorities, make space, and continuous participation.

2. Project experience. Tāmaki 7.

Client

Tāmaki Regeneration Company (TRC)
in collaboration with Auckland Unlimited
(AUL)

Location

Auckland

Dates

2020–21

Relevance

The Tāmaki Employment Precinct (TEP) Master Plan is focussed on an area with an already existing business community in a brownfield context. There was no blank slate to start from and a deep appreciation for what existed and an empathy with the community was critical to successful outcomes that are of its place. Complexities with fragmented land ownership, limitations of existing infrastructure and balancing the interests of multiple stakeholders required a strategy to be subjected to 'ground truthing' and iterative testing to arrive at the best outcome. In that sense the TEP master plan, not unlike the Timaru City Hub master plan, is more an enabling plan focussed on unlocking new initiatives that promote a diverse and resilient business and resident community. For the TEP, ways of introducing residential living into a business only precinct were developed and seen as critical to supporting a more diverse community that promotes living and working within walkable catchments. The ability for businesses to come together, share ideas, problem solve and support one another was lacking and many of the concrete actions that were agreed facilitated the ability to do that more easily, including setting up a community hub that created a heart for the precinct. The site for the hub demonstrated how

it could be activated in parts with tactical start -up initiatives and over time have the ability to grow in scale with more permanent facilities. Much of the above parallels with the Timaru City Hub urban design approach sought, is as much about process as desired outcomes.

Description of scope

The TEP is a diverse employment zone within a wider area of regeneration that integrates residential intensification and builds on an earlier and separately commissioned Tāmaki Employment Precinct Strategy. Specifically, the TEP takes this strategy and builds a proposition around the creation of a connected and walkable innovative employment precinct, closely tied to the neighbouring Tāmaki residential communities, adjacent open space amenity (Maungarei and estuary) and town centres of Glen Innes and Panmure, where people can live, work and play. The master plan approach was founded on a deep immersion of place and its people that offered several insights – expressed as "opportunity statements" that were aligned with 3 key outcomes - Gather, Grow and Generate. A key aspect to the immersion phase was stakeholder engagement. This included: Mana Whenua, property owners, strategic partners and the business community. Engagement has

taken different forms and included: workshops, virtual pin ups (during COVID 2020 using Miro board) scenario testing, hiko and hui, and design meetings. Presentations to steering groups, local boards and executive leadership teams were regularly undertaken.

In addition, we embedded key Isthmus personal in the clients (TRC) office space one day a week for design sprints through the develop and delivery phases of the master plan document that were focussed on showing how the selected suite of concrete actions (projects) can be executed to collectively deliver on the master plan vision.

Initiatives

For the project we developed an outcome measuring tool, referred to as the impact dial and predicated on the concepts of; Gather, Grow and Generate for community wellbeing. This was seen as unique and illustrated how sustainability can be seen in a more holistic way that included; social, economic and environmental health. The relevance of each concrete action (project) was demonstrated using the impact dial.

2.

Project experience.

Invercargill City Centre.

Client

Invercargill City Council

Location

Invercargill

Dates

2020–ongoing stages to deliver

Relevance

This is a city centre master plan that builds on a 30 year strategy, addressing both public realm assets and private development interfaces. Catalysed by private investment in a series of central city development projects, and a Council-led investment in a programme of central city streetscape upgrade improvements to match that investment. We took a holistic approach to inform a uniquely place-based solution that re-imagines the city as a place for both locals and visitors, with urban play, multimodal movement and future inner city living. There was a focus on council owned land and managed assets including public transport and active modes. Building energy and heat in the city 'heart' by listening first, and delivering on what we heard will draw people back. We used activation as a tool to reconnect city and community, reviving the central city heart. By helping secure Innovating Streets funding we were able to use tactical interventions and trials. The master plan can be used to unify and guide other workstreams including strategic catalyst projects identified in the LTP such as destination play, civic and destination anchors within the central city. We used a collaborative master planning approach involving the formation of a Project Working Group (council, mana whenua, technical and

community stakeholders). We used focus group workshops specifically for activation and to engage youth. We provided Isthmus representation at governance level (David Irwin— Isthmus founder) operating at a high level providing inputs into the Central City Governance Group.

Description of scope

Nik, Helen, and Ryan (Gap Filler) started in 2020, developing a master plan that not only sets a course to deliver a re-energised central city, but one also built on a solid Land, People, Culture foundation which looks to re-link the city (notionally, and in time physically) to its rich history and the incredible landscape it sits within; the city's historic reason for being, and the reason many people live or visit here. The project aims to develop an Invercargill for Invercargill. It builds on its existing orientation (back to the wind and face to the sun) to develop a new look and feel that builds on Invercargill's robust and stoic personality. Strong and independent without too much fuss. Through that process we demonstrated our value and grew the client's trust, delivering a future-focused yet achievable master plan using a collaborative process, smoothing the way for easy adoption by council. As a result Isthmus were appointed directly to lead the design and delivery of the first streetscape project: City

Streets—Stage 01, teaming locally with engineers, heritage and other specialists to bind the team to the place.

Initiatives

We have spent time guiding the process and assisting Council toward other like-minded specialists who can help. We have been running regular design sprints in Invercargill, which has allowed us to be together, connected and local. As we have all worked through periods of lockdown, this close connection between designers, project managers, client and stakeholders has allowed us to continue working at the pace required to deliver. While working at pace, we're creating space for Waihōpai Rūnaka to have meaningful input throughout all stages. This involvement is critical and the project (and therefore the city) is to be all the richer for their presence and contributions.

3.

Project understanding.

Whilst the emphasis is on streetscape amenity and public realm, we understand that the urban master plan itself will holistically address all of the elements, overlaps and interdependencies that contribute to a thriving, vibrant city for people and build investment confidence for economic prosperity. The first phase of the project will set the scene for this—and creates the opportunity to develop a ‘return brief’ that sets the interlinked objectives and metrics for the master plan—from landuse and built form to natural assets and activation.

Establishing a goal drive framework at the outset to inform the purpose of tactical interventions and the metrics that are required to substantiate the master plan outcomes is critical. This requires some boldness around the public realm where it guides and enables private investment and inner city living. Place-based solutions will draw on the natural, cultural, social and economic characteristics of Timaru, and the foundation for this is an authentic partnership with Arowhenua Rūnaka at both governance and project levels.

Ultimately we see the solution for Timaru will require innovation and practicality in equal measures to bridge the gaps and tensions

in community perceptions about how to achieve the City Hub vision. We are aware that some of these tensions stem from the Showgrounds development, but this also presents an opportunity to reinvent the city as a destination. Another example is full pedestrianisation of Stafford Street vs. providing for parking. This is where an innovating streets approach is useful—people can experience small and incremental change and the positive or negative affects it may have.

Our job is to help amplify the positive and empower the community—connecting and unifying people around the aroha they have for their place. This is authentic placemaking, understanding that this master plan needs to enable and unlock other new initiatives, often led by other partners and sectors. It is effectively a road map to move forward with boldness and wise investment in public realm projects as a catalyst.

We need to use a dynamic, iterative and agile process that involves trials and tests, quick evaluation, and constant progress towards a long-term solution. The ability to generate quick on-the-ground momentum and the feeling that change is happening and bigger change is possible—and to test key ideas quickly and inexpensively.

Critical success factors

1. Working in true partnership with Mana whenua to establish holistic outcomes and place-based vision. Both at Governance level as part of the iterative project process
2. Holistic nature of the strategy requiring an integrated understanding of all aspects of urban renewal that attract people to the city centre for live, work and play.
3. Goal driven—with targets and metrics
4. Boldness around the private realm where it guides and enables private investment and inner city living
5. A road map and programme—practical solutions for moving forward- translating to real outcomes, and wise investment of LTP funding in public realm projects

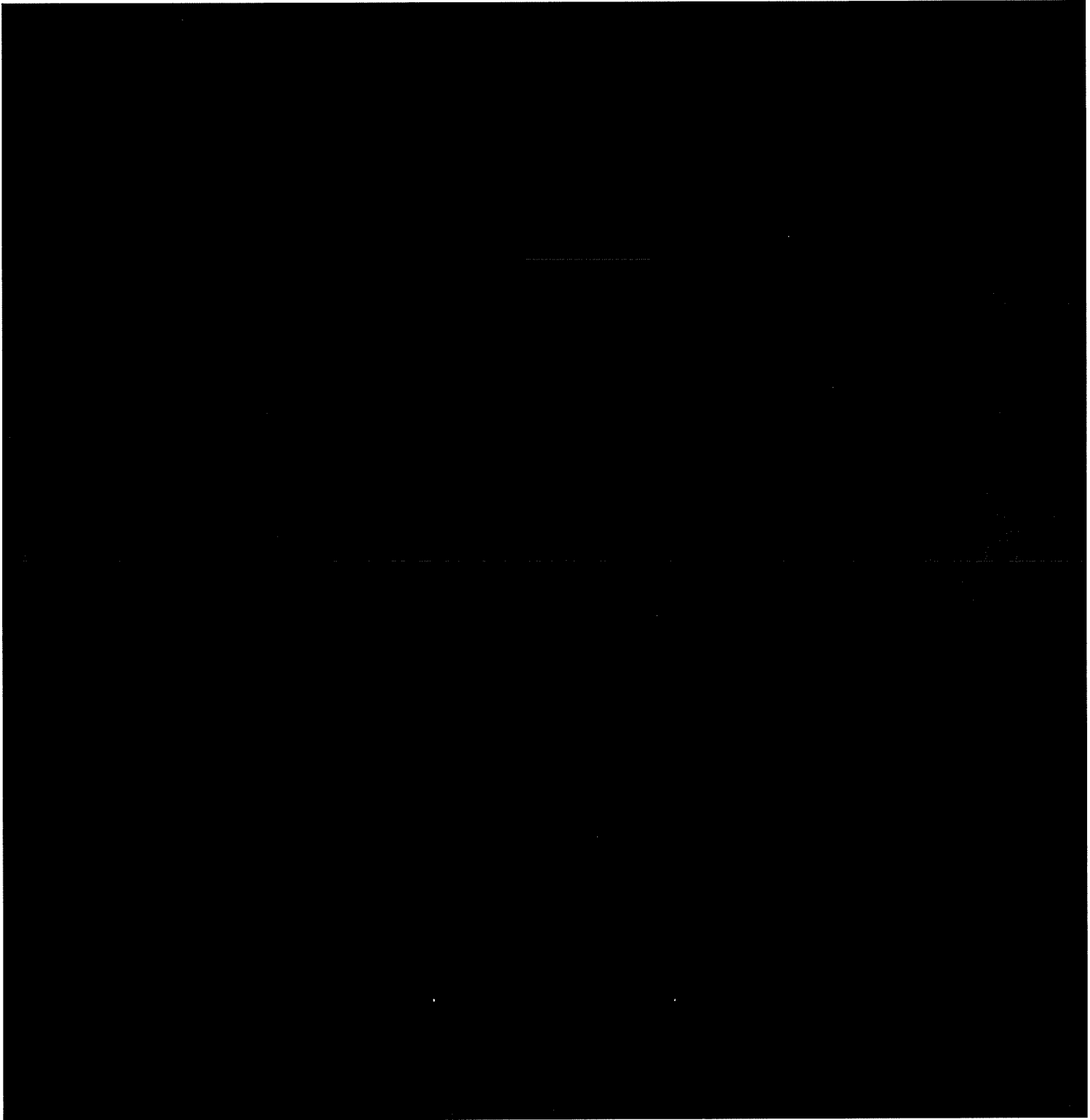
3.

Project understanding.

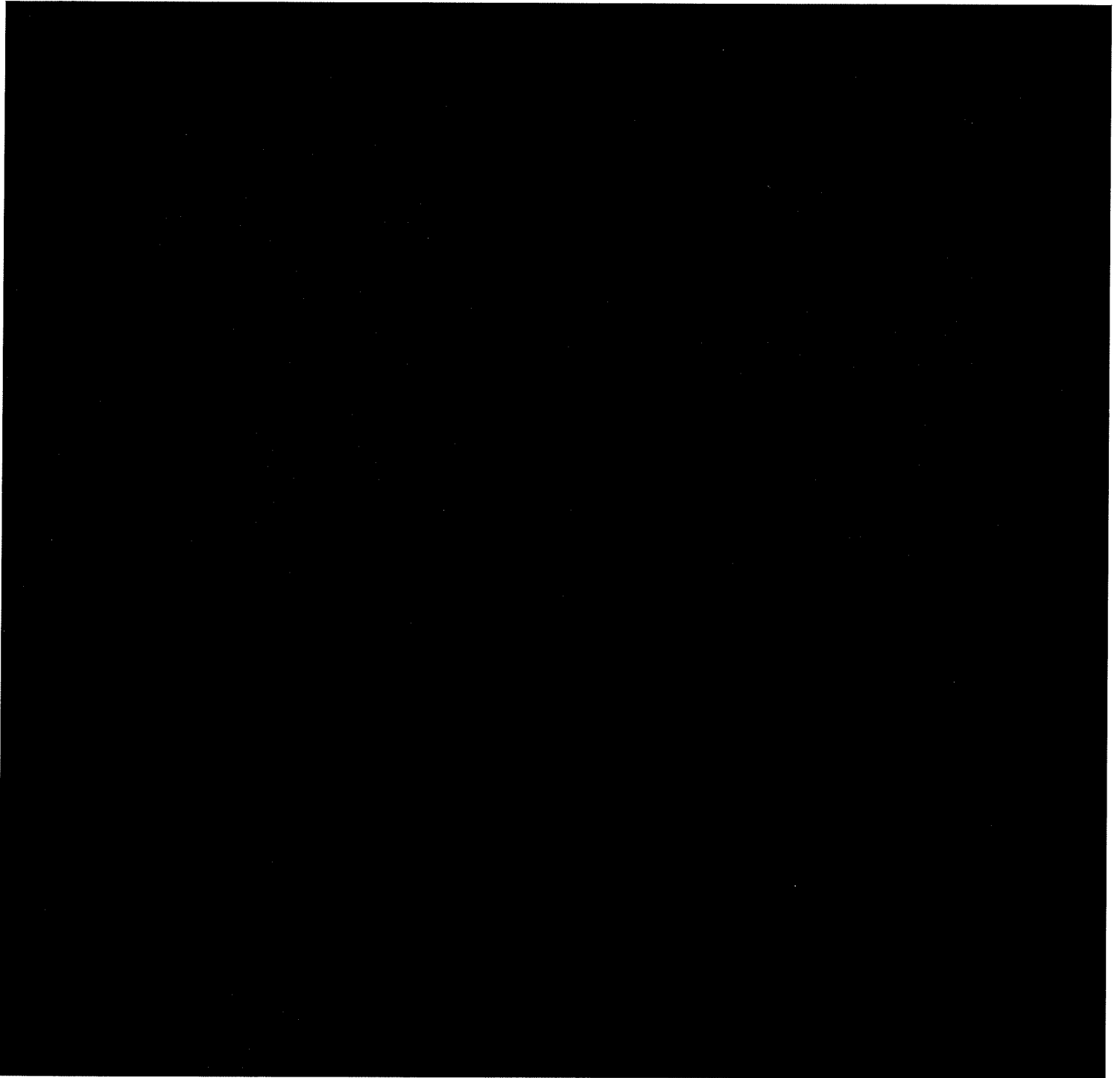
The following is gleaned from the RFP as well as research of related documents. However it is important to note that we expect the project understanding to evolve with access to deeper and wider conversations should we be the successful respondent. At this point in time, we consider the following as key to what Timaru District Council are seeking from the project:

1. That we are not starting from scratch and understand that valuable work has already been undertaken, through existing reports, studies, plans, feedback and strategies for the area. We will synthesize this information show how it all comes together and draw out the themes to build upon.
2. Work out the 'need behind the need'. Ensure a process that starts with a discover phase that is evidence based and gathers learning from; engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, workshops and sharing platforms for knowledge and ideas, site visits and national/international best practice case studies
3. Understanding that a master plan in this instance is more about enabling and unlocking that will drive new initiatives using a dynamic, iterative and agile process based on trails and testing before repeating and progressively works towards a long term permanent solution.
4. Find where the barriers exist—whether physical, social, cost or legislation
5. Develop a clear vision that can evolve, but importantly one that engenders a collective ownership and championing from within—its users, owners and occupiers.
6. Have a holistic approach to sustainability through a wellbeing lens—appreciate that the wellbeing of people is inseparable from social, economic and environment wellbeing.
7. Have a heart—consolidate and double down on a hub of community
8. Understand what factors impact or influence the city hub, both positively and negatively from the wider area/region. i.e. Showgrounds development, carparking heritage/character buildings upgrades etc.
9. Using learnings from a discover phase to articulate a series of 'opportunity statements' against which outcomes can be aligned and concrete actions (projects), whether tactical or longer term can be measured.
10. Acknowledge that some concrete actions may not be physical or tangible in nature, i.e. policy, guidance, technology or expertise
11. Ensure a local first approach, build on good and deepen roots with existing community. This will contribute to belonging, making city hub special and leveraging that reputation to promote something unique and attractive to the outside that in turn will invite investment and further strengthen the city hub.
12. Develop a suite of building typologies (i.e. inner city living, more diverse local workspaces and live/work combinations) that demonstrate how private and public land holding can be redeveloped that interface and are in support of public realm/ street upgrades and is in keeping with the city hub strategy.
13. Set out a delivery time frame and sequence of how the various projects of the master plan can be executed. This would address land ownership/acquisition, identify parties involved, the nature of their involvement and set out a next steps approach to secure funding or alignment with funding cycles.

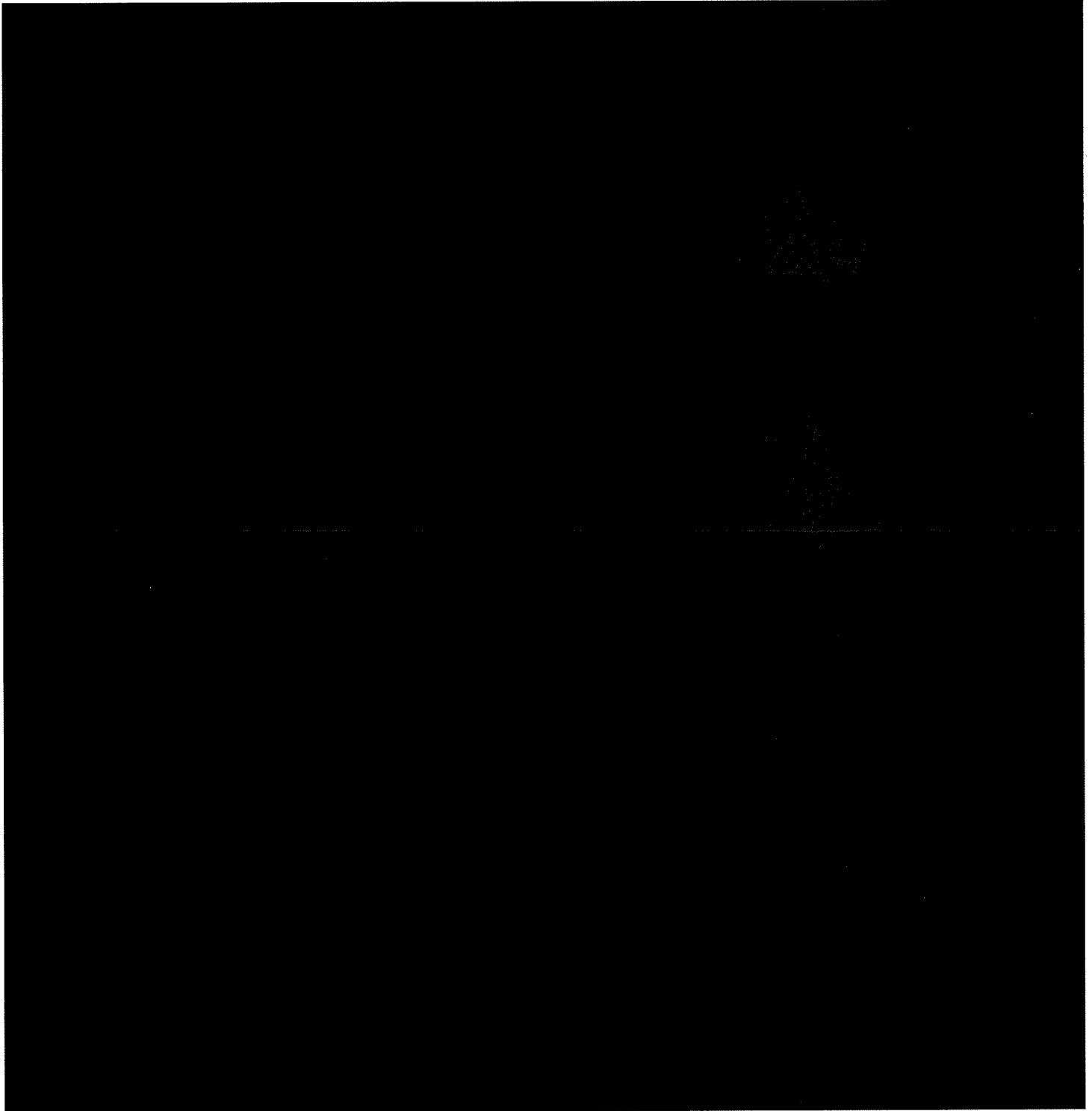
4. Proposed personnel.



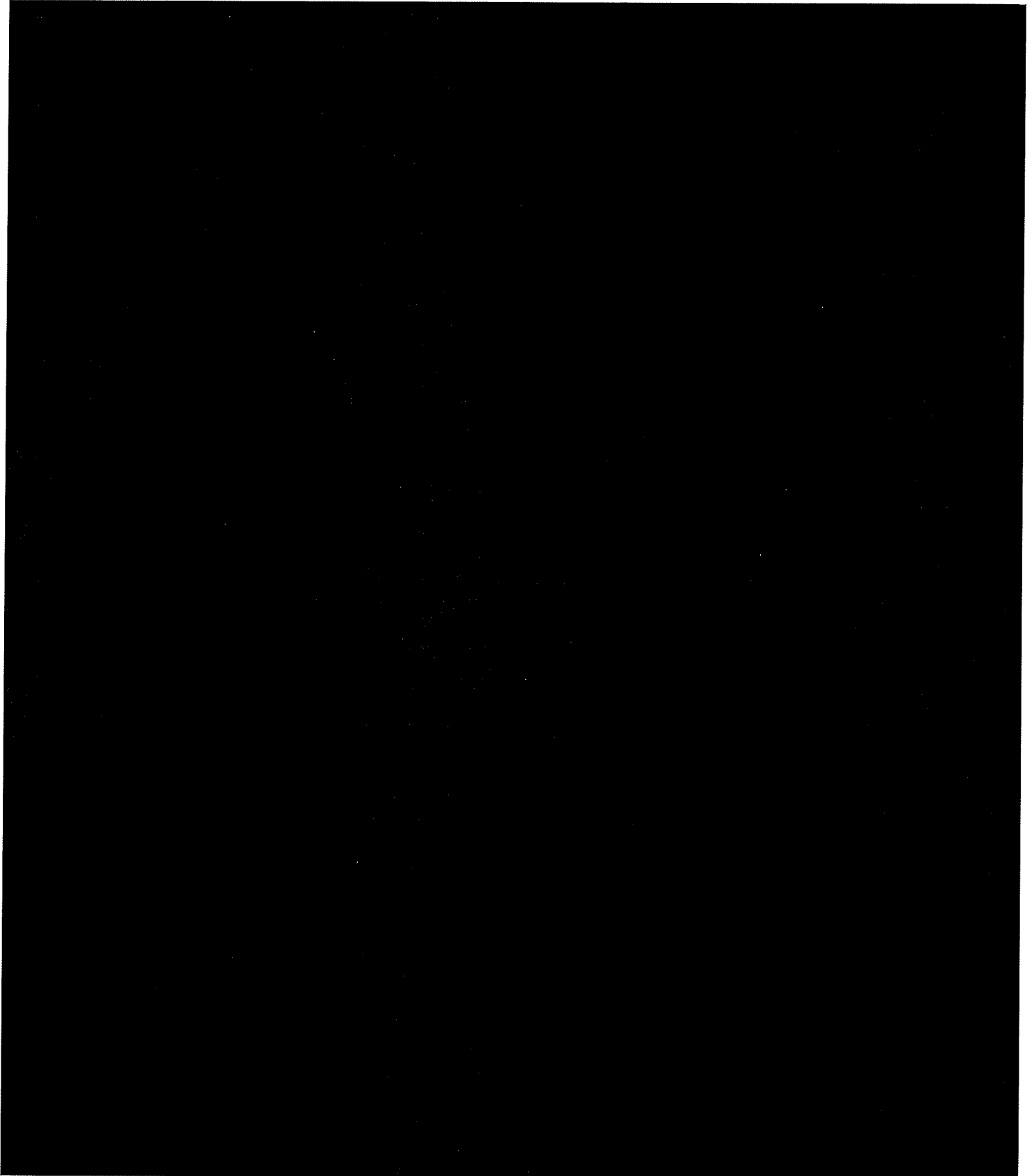
4. Proposed personnel.



5. Methodology and engagement.



5. Methodology stages 1, 2, 3.



5. Methodology stages 4, 5.

