

## CASE STUDY

# Flexible Power: Leveraging Residential Batteries to Delay Costly Network Upgrades



## Overview

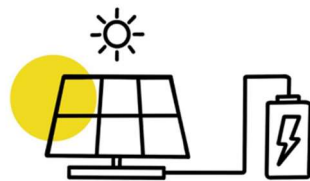
From the Rakaia to the Waimakariri, Bank's Peninsula to Arthur's Pass, Orion owns and operates the electricity distribution network providing power to central Waitaha Canterbury.

In 2022, Orion launched an innovation project to trial 'flexibility' solutions at peak times. The goal was to explore potential benefits in deferring or avoiding new capital costs, gain insights on how flexibility can be applied across its network and provide benefits to the end-consumer through lower fixed charges.

By late 2023, procurement for a trial was awarded to Ecotricity (Retailer and Flex provider), and Orion moved to the Implementation phase of the project. This required the development of a system that integrated with Orion internal systems to exchange data and send instructions to the Flex provider.

This 'Lincoln Flex' trial is the first time Orion has implemented such a system and only the second in New Zealand (as known at time of publication). The objective was to implement flexibility capabilities and learn through hands-on experience to guide future needs.

The project was implemented by a small core project team, starting with a Minimum Viable Product (MVP), then expanding as requirements were reviewed and updated. This implementation needed a strong Business Analyst, who could also take on other responsibilities, and be flexible and agile.



## Approach

Due to internal resource constraints, Orion engaged a Business Analyst from Millpond to support the project team in facilitating the required tasks.

Millpond contributed to the project by applying:

**Collaboration** – Working closely with the Project Manager and project team, Millpond:

1. Reviewed and translated the commercial agreement between the Flexibility Provider and Orion to clarify business requirements and prioritise tasks
2. Facilitated discussions with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to understand constraints and requirements from diverse stakeholders
3. Leveraged other Electricity Distribution Businesses' (EDB) implementation specifications relating to implementation of a similar solution, as a foundation for drafting high-level scenarios
4. Defined and refined user stories to align with project priorities and objectives
5. Identified implementation constraints and priorities to support the planning and release process

**Flexibility** – Millpond demonstrated versatility by taking on the core BA role, while also managing responsibilities as the Technical PM for the Agile development team and acting as Test Manager throughout the project lifecycle.

**Future Focused** – To ensure long-term value, Millpond led the development of comprehensive documentation, including Go Live Checklists and User Reference Guides to provide continuity and support for Orion beyond project completion.



*"Millpond demonstrated flexibility by expanding from a core BA role to contribute a broader range of skills. The contract terms were straightforward, and communication about hours was clear and effective."*

*Isabelle Le Quellec - Orion Project Manager*

## Results



**Coordinated Engagement:** A comprehensive, collaborative implementation involving multiple teams.



**Clear Communication:** Clear specifications and focused engagements ensured the project's success.



**Future Proofed:** Comprehensive documentation makes the project easy to restart for any future enhancements.

## Summary

Through its flexibility and adaptability to take on multiple responsibilities, in the absence of a full project team, Millpond contributed to the successful delivery of an innovative flexibility trial for Orion.

To support Orion beyond the initial phase of engagement, Millpond ensured the development of clear and comprehensive documentation to guide users and future project teams.

By collaborating with Orion, Millpond played a role in enabling the trial, which provided an opportunity to apply a 'learn by doing' approach with a small, skilled and agile project team. This trial has positioned Orion to confidently explore and implement future enhancements.



When asked how to summarise their Millpond experience, Isabelle Le Quellec, Orion Project Manager said:

*"Millpond brought a diverse skill set, combining technical expertise with strong communication and collaboration skills. Their positive approach was a valuable asset to the project."*