

# Community-Led Development Programme Impact Evaluation

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# Mihi and Acknowledgement



**Our grateful thanks are extended to all who participated in this evaluation, from the four case study communities across Aotearoa, and within Hāpai Hapori and other organisations.**

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Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

We would also like to acknowledge and extend condolences for the passing of Pam Armstrong, who was a respected, loved and deeply influential leader in the Whananaaki community.

# Content

2	Aknowledgements
5	Executive Summary
8	Introduction
10	Approach

## **Part 1 | Overview of findings**

11	Development and evolutuon of aspirations
13	Creating transformation
16	Ongoing Impacts
19	Community wellbeing
21	Realisation of aspirations
23	Factors influencing community outcomes
26	Reflections and future directions for CLDP activity
29	Conclusions

## **Part 2 | Community case studies**

### **31 Fab Feathy**

31	Background to the Featherston CLDP
32	Supporting transformational change
36	Sustaining outcomes and impact
37	Impacts on wellbeing of the community
38	Realisation of aspirations
38	Conclusion

### **39 Tatau Pounamu**

39	Background to the Tatau Pounamu CLDP
40	Identifying aspirations
40	Supporting transformational change
43	Sustained impact and benefits
44	Enhancing wellbeing of the community and hapū
45	Conclusion



# Content

46	<b>South Alive</b>
46	Background to South Alive CLDP
48	Identifying Aspirations
50	Outcomes and Impacts
52	Sustaining realised aspirations
54	<b>Whananāki</b>
54	Background to Whananāki CLDP
54	Identifying aspirations
56	Supporting transformational change
58	Sustained impact and benefits
58	Enhancing wellbeing of the community and hapū
59	Realising aspirations
60	Conclusion

## Part 3 | Appendices

62	Appendix 1: Evaluation approach
63	Appendix 2: Arotakenga Hāpai Hapori
64	Appendix 3: Participating CLDP communities
65	Appendix 4: Updated Community-led Development Programme Impact-Focused Theory of Change



# Executive summary

## Development and evolution of aspirations

The development of aspirations through community engagement has been a central aspect of CLDP partnerships. While fledgling communities found this process transformative, established groups benefited by formalising their aspirations into strategic visions.

Regardless of their starting point, partnerships amplified existing momentum for change and fostered a collective vision emphasising themes such as cultural connectedness, pride, collaboration, identity preservation, empowerment, diversity, and self-determination.

## Creating transformation

The development of aspirations through community engagement has been a central aspect of CLDP partnerships. While fledgling communities found this process transformative, established groups benefited by formalising their aspirations into strategic visions.

Regardless of their starting point, partnerships amplified existing momentum for change and fostered a collective vision emphasising themes such as cultural connectedness, pride, collaboration, identity preservation, empowerment, diversity, and self-determination.

## Ongoing impacts

Partnerships are demonstrating lasting impacts within their communities, albeit in varying scales and forms. Common trends include shifts in collaborative dynamics, relationship building, social and psychological empowerment, and improved infrastructure. While it is early to gauge long-term sustainability, CLD efforts persist in some capacity, and there is potential to support programme continuity through social enterprise development support and more proactive brokering and networking to involve a broader range of stakeholders in collaborative efforts. Additionally, there is a need to assist communities in building an evidence base for change to showcase their impact to partners and funders.

## Community wellbeing

Across diverse communities, the CLDP demonstrated positive impacts on community wellbeing. The programme strengthened social cohesion by bringing communities together to work towards common goals, strengthening relationships, promoting inclusivity, and amplifying voices; these led to increased comfort in seeking support and building social capital across communities.

Community resilience was enhanced by fostering adaptive capacity and collaborative problem-solving, evident in agile responses to challenges such as COVID-19 lockdowns. Some partnerships contributed to improving access to resources and services.

## Realisation of aspirations

The realisation of aspirations through CLD is an ongoing journey, characterised by continuous adaptation to evolving community needs. Patterns emerge across the achievement of aspirations for the four case study communities, despite their diverse contexts and starting points.

Relational aspirations have generally been met, and while some tangible achievements are evident, larger infrastructure goals may require more time. Nevertheless, progress has been initiated through consultation, planning, and smaller-scale projects, providing a groundwork for future endeavours.

## Key factors influencing community outcomes

Success factors include physical hubs for CLD, mana whenua involvement, operational staffing, and a staged approach for momentum building.

Challenges include building understanding of CLD, navigating conflicts within partnerships and with stakeholders, and achieving ambitious sustainable change within the partnership period.



Key insights reveal the importance of operational funding, skilled facilitator resources, and a clear transition plan from the outset for sustained impact.

### **Reflections and potential future directions for CLDP activity**

Experiences of the case study communities highlight several reflections and potential future directions. However, we note that these are based on four case studies and are not based on a broad analysis across the entire CLDP programme of work.

#### ***Cross case reflections***

- Investing in both established and emerging CLD initiatives yields varied impacts, with new partnerships generating novel social changes and infrastructure, while established groups also leverage existing skills and relationships.
- Expanding the scope of transformation beyond the neighbourhood level within the partnership period presents challenges, with observed changes mainly aligning with outcomes rather than broader impacts. Achieving desired impacts may require longer-term investments.

#### ***Recommendations for change***

Based on the experiences of case study partnerships, Hāpai Hapori could enhance community capability and ongoing impact of partnership activities by:

- Providing guidance in social enterprise development to avoid common pitfalls and enhance long-term sustainability.
- Enhancing meaningful mana whenua engagement through strategic support for those without leadership representation or direct links by facilitating broader relationship cultivation.
- Supporting communities to align work with mana whenua aspirations when capacity for engagement is limited. This could include alignment with five-year plans and long-term strategic priorities of hapū and iwi.
- Supporting the development of simple monitoring mechanisms to capture and track progress, aiding in storytelling of impact. This could include facilitating access to external developmental evaluation framework support to enable ongoing reflection and learning.

- Implementing proactive strategic planning from the outset for an empowering and well-planned transition and clarity of expectations.
- Facilitating ongoing cross-community learning opportunities post-partnership for sustained success by convening regular networking events, meeting or workshops where communities can share insights and best practice. Curate and make accessible resources for continuous learning.



Part 1 |

# Overview of findings

# Introduction

## This report

Hāpai Hapori, within the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) commissioned an impact evaluation of the Community-Led Development Programme (CLDP). Focused on four partnering communities transitioning from the programme, this report presents summative findings examining the CLDP's outcomes and impact, including transformations in community, sustainability, wellbeing enhancement, realisation of aspirations, enablers of success and challenges, and recommendations for future activities.

This report synthesises key insights drawing from interviews with partnering community leadership, members, advisors, and external stakeholders, alongside background document analysis. Additionally, annexes to this report features impact and outcome case studies providing detailed reflections on the CLDP's effects from the perspectives of participating communities.

This evaluation was undertaken by Dovetail, an independent evaluation consultancy.

## Background to the Community-Led Development Programme

### Community-led development

CLD aims to empower communities to address their challenges, prioritising community needs and perspectives. This approach fosters bottom-up, citizen-driven change through empowerment, mutual learning, and consensus practices. Five key principles, developed by Inspiring Communities, underpin CLD as applied by DIA:

- **Grow from shared local visions:** Develop a sense of purpose and connection through common understandings of desired change and a shared recognition that communities understand how to support positive change.
- **Build from strengths:** Leverage and develop the resources existing within communities.
- **Work with diverse people and sectors:** Create change through collaboration and working across multiple stakeholders.
- **Grow collaborative local leadership:** Support local people to take the lead and work together.
- **Learn by doing:** Begin with a clear shared plan/goals, work with the resources on-hand, and regularly reflect and adapt as needed to progress outcomes.



## Community-led development programme overview

The overarching intended goal for the CLDP is “strong, resilient communities, hapū and iwi achieving locally owned visions and goals.” The two key aims of the CLDP, set out in its purpose, are:

- The CLDP supports communities of place, as well as hapū and iwi, to achieve their collective vision using a community-led approach.
- The CLDP is a partnering approach by the Department to invest in communities, hapū and iwi through intensive advisory services and, where appropriate, the provision of funding to help New Zealand build strong communities.

The DIA CLDP offers a flexible model of funding that supports community goals and needs as they change and develop. The programme emphasises community and partnerships drawing on the CLD principles. The programme shifts the focus away from small grants for individual projects and/or organisations, to an approach where communities have access to flexible funding that contributes to overall community wellbeing. DIA offers expertise as needed to communities, with a programme focus of supporting new and emerging community development. The CLDP began in 2011 with five pilot communities, with piloting and evaluation undertaken to 2015.

Te Aka Taiwhenua Strategic Framework outlines DIA’s commitment towards Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The framework is underpinned by the following mātāpono that guide DIA’s work:

- **Whanaungatanga:** A relationship through shared experiences and working together which provides people with a sense of belonging.
- **Manaakitanga:** Hospitality, kindness, generosity, support, the process of showing respect, and care for others.
- **Kotahitanga:** Unity, togetherness, solidarity, collective actions.
- **He Tangata:** It is the people, it is the people, it is the people.

Te Tiriti has become more central as the programmes have progressed and with the exploration of hapū-led development.



# Approach

## Methods

The CLDP evaluation methodology was developed in collaboration with Hāpai Hapori. Using an impact case study approach, the evaluation focussed on assessing the impacts of the CLDP partnership by exploring the experiences of four diverse communities. Each of these communities had concluded their partnership in the last 1-2 years. This method comprehensively examines outcomes and impacts, considering tangible and intangible changes and community aspirations achieved. Further detail on the evaluation approach can be found in Appendix 1.

The selected case study communities represent diverse characteristics, including partnership duration, community initiatives, and demographic factors. Further details can be found in Appendix 2. In line with the CLDP's commitment to collaborating with Māori and diverse communities, the evaluation process embraced Kaupapa Māori principles and prioritised respectful and responsible engagement with their experiences and perspectives.

## Data collection and analysis

Reporting draws insights from data collected during two-day site visits to each case study community, involving observations of activities, interviews with community partners and members. Community advisors and key external stakeholders were also interviewed. In total, 46 individual and group interviews were conducted, capturing the perspectives of 41 community partners or members, 3 community advisors from Hāpai Hapori, and 2 external stakeholders. Data collection was supplemented by document analysis, including quarterly and results reports provided by Hāpai Hapori.

## Key evaluation questions

Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) provide the overarching questions for consideration of the findings, and the structure for reporting. Following feedback from Hāpai Hapori staff, the following KEQs guided the evaluation:

1. What were the initial aspirations of the community, hapū and iwi upon entering the CLDP partnership, and how did these aspirations evolve over time?
2. In what ways has participation in the CLDP partnership contributed to creating transformations in the community, hapū and iwi, including changes in community dynamics and ways of working within the communities?
3. To what extent can ongoing impacts be seen in the community, hapū and iwi as a result of taking part in the CLDP partnership?
4. To what extent has the wellbeing of the community, hapū and iwi been enhanced through taking part in the CLDP partnership?
5. To what extent has the community, hapū and iwi successfully realised their aspirations, and what factors influenced the outcomes?

# Development and evolution of aspirations

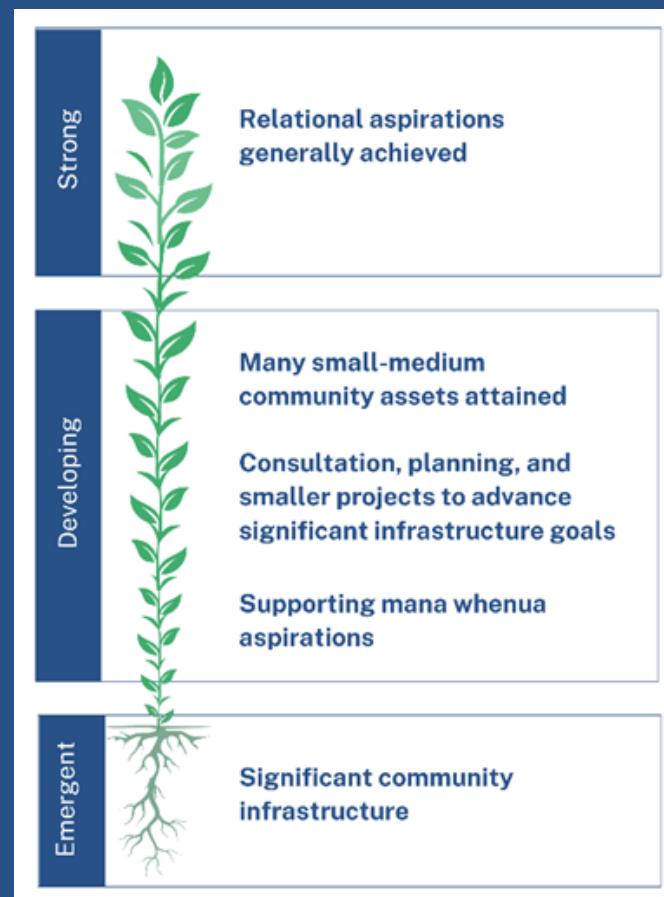
**KEQ1: What were the initial aspirations of the community, hapū and iwi upon entering the CLDP partnership, and how did these aspirations evolve over time?**

## Key insights

Community engagement processes shaped comprehensive aspirations, guiding CLDP partnership activities. This visioning activity was transformative for fledgling communities, while established communities built on existing momentum for change or formalised aspiration into a strategic vision.

Communities developed vision statements emphasising themes of cultural connectedness, pride, collaboration, and empowerment.

## Key changes across communities



## Development of community aspirations

All case study communities engaged in comprehensive collective visioning processes that guided CLDP partnership activity. Community engagement in developing visions and aspirations included hui and events, noticeboards, suggestion boxes and surveys to capture residents' ambitions for their community. Fledgling communities undertook this work in preparation for lodging an expression of interest in Hāpai Hapori.

CLD helped to formalise groups already established, and community visioning enabled them to develop a more strategic response to aspirations and needs. In all cases, the partnership was able to build on and magnify existing momentum for change. In the case of communities starting from the ground up, the opportunity to work together on aspiration was clearly transformative and the development of ambitious goals helped build excitement.

Visioning enabled people to share what was important to them and included exploration of community strengths and assets. This approach generated a great deal of ideas and impetus for change.

*They were amazing people that got [partnership] going... They really were inspirational. I could go to a meeting and put my ideas forward and that was there to run with if [the community] wanted them... They knew where they needed to go. (Community member)*

## Nature of aspirations

Communities developed vision statements, an image of the future they aspired to achieve collectively. Community aspiration sat under these visions as more specific goals. While aspirations varied among the case study communities, visions shared many similarities, emphasising themes of cultural connectedness, pride, caring, collaboration, preservation of identity, empowerment, vibrancy, diversity, and self-determination. They highlight the importance of leveraging community resources, knowledge, and relationships to address identified needs while preserving and enhancing the unique qualities of the community. In two CLD partnerships, the overarching community aspiration focused on a way of working rather than a work programme.

## Evolution of aspirations

While the overarching areas of aspiration remained consistent throughout the partnerships, there were shifts in prioritisation and how these translated into community projects over time. Activity tended to be guided by the energy or expertise of community members stepping up to lead at different times and in different situations. Either in paid or volunteer roles, they provided necessary expertise and leadership to support positive outcomes.

However, at times, areas of work had to be relinquished when those driving activities stepped back or away. Members of one community acknowledged the challenge of bridging the gap between ambitious aspirations outlined in the community plan and initiatives aligned with the community's capacity and resources. Tied to the ebbs and flows of energy and action within CLDP projects, these adaptations reflected the dynamic nature of community-led development initiatives.

# Creating transformation

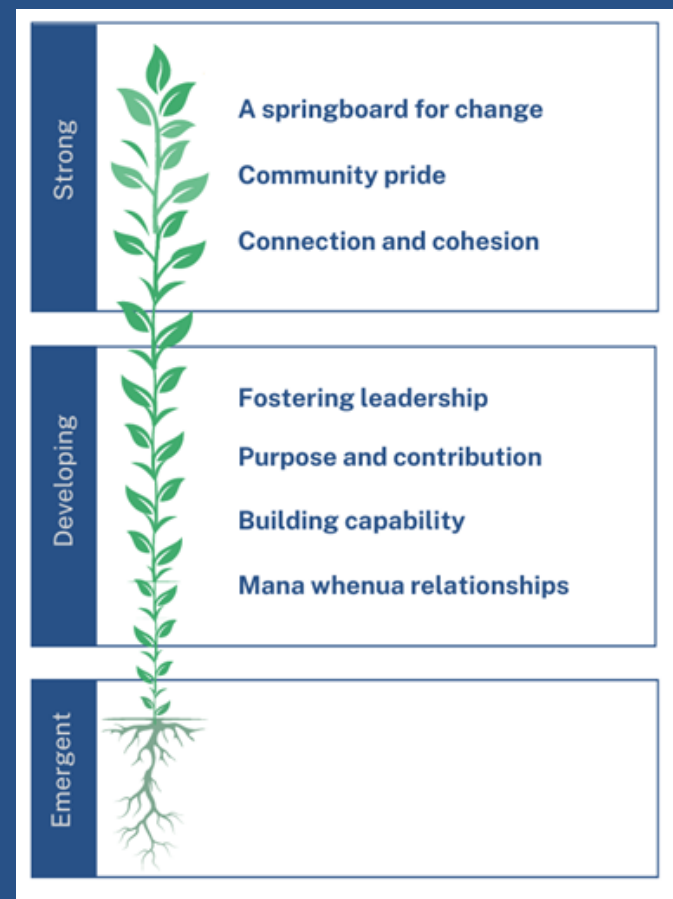
**KEQ 2: In what ways has participation in the CLDP partnership contributed to creating transformations in the community, hapū and iwi, including changes in community dynamics and ways of working within the communities?**

## Key insights

Communities experienced a broad range of changes. While physical assets are important and valued, the intangible impacts on how people interact and work together appear most transformative. Many changes are specific to local contexts and aspirations, however, there are clear common experiences:

- Engaging a broad range of voices and creating space and opportunity for those who are not the usual “movers and shakers” to step in to leadership roles and build their capability.
- Fostering connection and collaboration between individuals, groups and external entities that may not otherwise have worked together for a common goal.
- Increased pride, awareness and use of strengths and resources and celebration of the unique character of communities.

## Key changes across communities



Becoming a CLD partner empowered communities to initiate change and supported communities to revitalise or build upon existing momentum and projects. Across the case studies, partnerships provided a platform for community members to actively contribute time, expertise, knowledge, and resources, fostering a sense of agency in community enhancement. As a result, tangible outcomes have developed. They remain as legacies of the community's collaborative efforts and have been particularly helpful in generating buy-in and creating momentum in the CLD partnerships.

However, and perhaps more meaningfully, intangible outcomes have also developed, most notably the establishment and strengthening of relationships. These relationships, which persist even in the absence of funding, are transformative, as they sustain personal drive, interest, and attachment to the community and each other, ensuring continued commitment to the process of community development. Observed changes including more cohesive shifts in community perspectives, interactions, and collaborative strategies. Notably, these changes often reflect strengthened *bridging* social capital<sup>1</sup>— the cohesive connections that support collective action. Other changes, while emergent across cases, have extended beyond the immediate community, facilitating connections with external stakeholders, decision-makers and other CLDP communities. These provide resources and supports, and empower communities to access expertise and funding, and influence decision-making, and can be seen to represent *linking* social capital.<sup>2</sup>

The areas of transformation discussed in the sections that follow were themes that were present across all or most case study communities.

### Contribution and shared purpose

Each project has encouraged and enabled broad and active participation from community members. Partnerships cast their nets wide through consultation and open invitations for contribution, engaging a broad range of voices. Across communities, individuals shared how the CLDP fostered opportunities to contribute to a shared vision and experience personal value and fulfilment. A sense of shared purpose was fostered across individuals and groups

(existing and new). This collective view supported a more joined up way of working, reducing silos and duplication of effort, while tapping into diverse skill sets.

### Building capability and fostering leadership

Many partnerships created the enabling conditions for community members to have the opportunity to step up and lead change or own the developments they had been quietly creating. CLDP enabled capacity and capability building by fostering opportunities for community members to learn from one another, upskill and grow confidence. This work took place informally through interactions within working groups and alongside facilitators, and formally through workshops and training.

### Community pride and profile

Across all CLD partnerships, a sense of pride and confidence developed within the communities involved. While some projects achieved this through tangible changes like beautification initiatives, and revitalising neglected public spaces to create safe and inviting environments, pride extended beyond mere appearances. Partnerships celebrated local strengths and leadership, from community visioning work to events highlighting leaders and collective achievements. These events activated community engagement and instilled a deep sense of pride in residents, both for the physical transformations of their community and for their contributions to change.

*There's the visual appearance of it that helps with pride, but there's also some vibrancy and good stuff happening here, not the bad news stories.  
(Community leadership)*

Furthermore, the partnerships have elevated the profile of some communities, fostering recognition and a positive community image. Partnerships have also reshaped perceptions, both among residents and in the broader region. Examples include shifts away from a focus on deprivation, neglect or underinvestment, and unsafe conditions, towards narratives of vibrancy and progress.

<sup>1</sup> Putnam, RD. 1995. Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital. *Journal of Democracy* 6 (1), 65-78.

<sup>2</sup> Szreter, S. 2002. The state of social capital: Bringing back in power, politics, and history. *Theory and Society* 31, 573-621.



## Connection and cohesion

Through their initiatives, partnerships fostered inclusive environments and opportunities for residents to come together. Collaborative ways of working enhanced willingness to cooperate and support one another and cultivated meaningful and lasting connections and relationships. Some communities have developed inclusive spaces where individuals from diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives can interact and feel valued, respected, and welcomed.

Projects that collected, documented, and shared local histories and stories celebrated common ground in communities and fostered understanding of different experiences. As a result of this wide-ranging work, community members reported their communities were less fragmented, perceived differences as less significant, and they were collectively stronger.



# Ongoing impacts

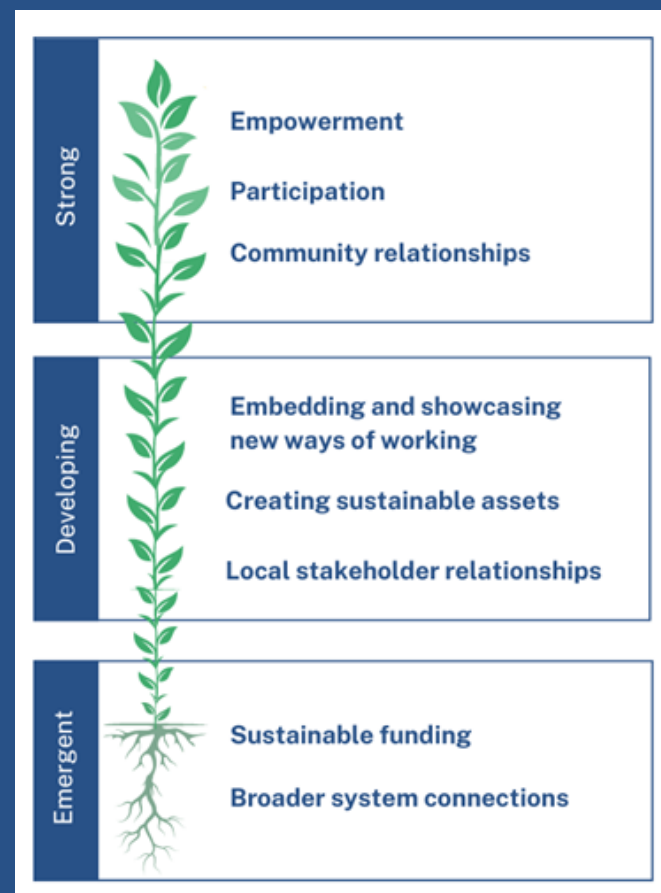
**KEQ 3: To what extent can ongoing impacts be seen in the community, hapū and iwi as a result of taking part in the CLDP partnership?**

## Key insights

While still in the early stages, partnerships are showing lasting impacts within their communities.

Although the scale and appearance of sustained impact differs among partnerships, common trends emerge. These include shifts in collaborative dynamics, relationships, social and psychological empowerment, and the availability of supporting infrastructure.

## Key changes across communities





With all partnerships having concluded within the past 12 months, it is still early to predict long-term impacts. All partnerships are now transitioning into new phases, which may involve restructuring, scaling down operations, adopting new funding approaches, or gradually phasing out formal activities. CLD undertakings are continuing in all, and most are committed to continuing their work as an entity in some capacity. Although sustained impacts vary across communities, common themes emerge, along with potential strategies to support programme continuity.

### Creating sustainable assets

CLDP support facilitated the development of various tangible assets aligned with specific community goals and needs. While relational goals often underpinned community vision and aspirations, physical assets are crucial tangible legacies for CLDP; they are seen to contribute to the overall wellbeing, identity, sustainability, and prosperity of communities. Future generations are expected to enjoy and benefit from spaces for gathering, connection, and recreation; and their potential to attract further community-led activities and events.

Other assets support key community services, with examples including dog parks, gardens/maara kai, nurseries, flora and fauna restoration, youth spaces, along with infrastructure such as housing, foodbanks, and community halls. Additionally, these assets serve as visible reminders of community achievements, helping to sustain momentum and energy for future action.

### Embedding new ways of working

Across the communities, new engagement approaches, collaborations and alliances have developed as a direct result of the CLD partnerships and are a framework for supporting future sustainability. As a result, work towards aspirations that may not have been achieved in the lifetime of the partnership are still progressing even in communities where the CLDP entity itself has disbanded. Several partners have embedded new collaborative, participatory, and community-driven approaches into the routine practices and culture of the community. For example, the platform established through one partnership for collaboration between mana whenua and the wider community is now a robust resource that will continue to deliver value. One stakeholder reflected on how the impacts of these new approaches extend well beyond the focal community:

*The community planning that happened in [community]... sparked a whole lot of conversations that we had in others about "look what these guys are doing". So, in terms of impacts, it's bigger than just that one community because it gave a tangible example... and the process and framework that they had held a lot of potential. And people across the country need good examples like that to spark "well if they can do that, we can do that too", or to talk to their Council about those kinds of things. (External stakeholder)*

### Enduring relationships

While initiatives and projects may come to an end, the relationships cultivated through CLD partnerships remain within the community, continuing to yield benefits. Community members highlighted how collaborative approaches and the exchange of ideas throughout the partnership had built trust and fostered deeper familiarity among residents, collectively strengthening social bonds and the sense of community.

These relationships were also functioning to enable ongoing access to support, resources, and expertise beyond the initial project phases, sustaining momentum towards community goals. However, it is worth noting that while relationships thrive within communities, broader systemic connections (referred to earlier as linking social capital), crucial for fostering long-term collaborative change, are still generally in early stages of development for newer CLD groups.

### Social and psychological empowerment

While the above aspects of community development focus on tangible outcomes and processes, enhanced confidence and pride represent important intangible dimensions of the changes within communities; these appear likely to contribute to the long-term sustainability of the partnerships' CLD efforts.

Across the case study communities, evidence suggests a notable shift towards: a sense of ownership, agency, and valuing of community accomplishments; an appreciation for local talents; and the development of capacity and confidence for self-advocacy and civic participation.

For instance, three communities have developed relationships with local councils, which in turn is increasing participation in processes such as consultations. This enhanced confidence and pride bolster the social capital of

the community, fortifying bonds among members and cultivating a shared identity and purpose through “having common goals to work on”.

### Levers to support programme continuity

Community experiences highlight the following areas for further development to support programme continuity.

#### **Financial sustainability has been a challenge**

Developing other funding relationships and securing long-term support has been challenging across all partnerships. While communities have built some capacity through new connections with external stakeholders and access to resources, they are yet to build significant sustainability into their initiatives. One community disbanded once the partnership ended without a clear view of how to continue to fund their work. One has transitioned into a charitable trust, signaling a strategic shift towards organisational sustainability through seeking funding. Another community secured funding to sustain two roles beyond the partnership but needs more certainty in the long-term.

Two CLD communities embedded social enterprises into their programmes of work to enhance the financial sustainability of their mahi. One of these communities commented that, while this work has had a number of social benefits for the community and “pays its way”, it will never be able to fund the broader activities of the organisation. This community observed that it is challenging to turn a profit in a retail environment, but it is even more challenging to do so in the context of an underserved community that looks to your organisation for accessible, barrier-free services.

#### **Opportunity for enhanced brokerage**

Some communities and stakeholders expressed a desire for more proactive brokering and networking, aiming to involve a broader range of stakeholders in collaborative efforts and secure investment in community initiatives for sustained post-partnership development. Suggestions included co-funding the CLDP with other entities from the outset and leveraging wider engagement.

Despite these needs, certain partnerships demonstrated successful relationship-building, notably with local government entities. In three out of four communities, partnerships effectively served as community advocates,

fostering dialogue and cooperation with local councils. Additionally, one partnership engaged with another government department, enhancing project synergies and broadening their support network.

#### **Building an evidence base for change**

While powerful stories of change and enduring impacts are present across case study communities, few were able to support these narratives with quantifiable/measurable data that speaks to the scale of impact of the partnership on key domains relevant to their aspirations. One community, who had been in operation for a significant time pre-partnership had been surveying residents annually to capture any changes in key outcome areas, and another implemented surveys and wānanga to capture community perspectives on impact. Having access to this evidence of positive change has been of significant value in demonstrating their impact to both current and potential partners and funders.

However, this approach was not present across other case study communities, perhaps due to a lack of capability and understanding of the value of collecting evidence and data. For example, one community worked alongside an evaluation partner during their partnership, with one area of intended work being to support them to consider and collect data to enable them to tell their stories of change and impact. However, the evaluator observed that their heads were so much in “the doing” that this was ultimately too difficult to grasp and initiate.

*I was disappointed with some of the evaluative work we were able to get out of [Partnership] because it wasn't able to tell a bigger story about CLD [because] their time and interest was in different places. (External stakeholder)*

# Community wellbeing

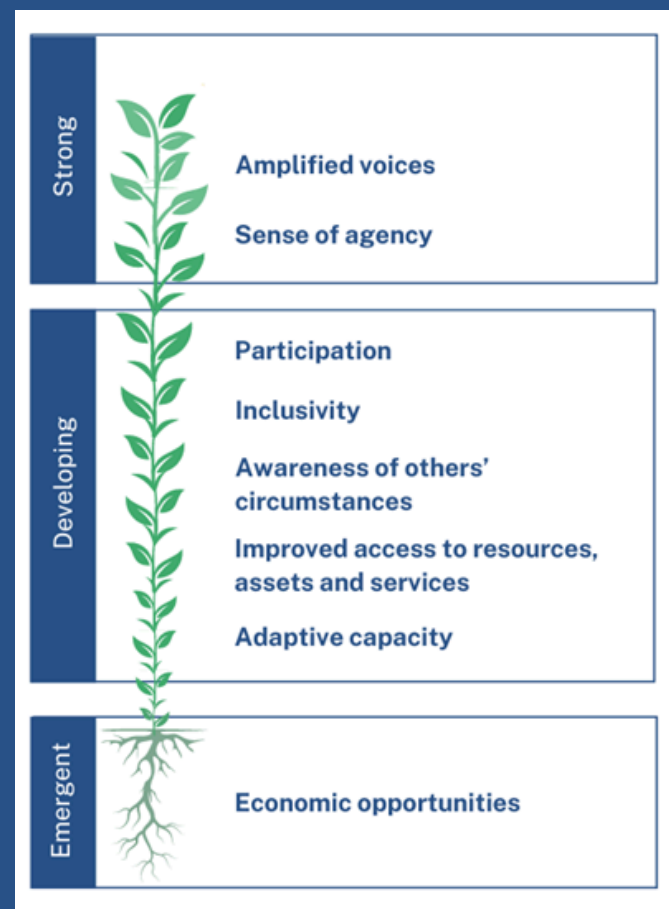
**KEQ4: To what extent has the wellbeing of the community, hapū and iwi been enhanced through taking part in the CLDP partnership?**

## Key insights

Across diverse communities, the CLDP demonstrated positive impacts on community wellbeing by strengthening relationships, fostering social cohesion, and building resilience through enhanced adaptive capacity and collective problem-solving.

Some partnerships contributed to improving access to resources and services, albeit to a lesser extent.

## Key changes across communities



## Social cohesion

Across the case study communities, the CLDP brought people together regularly to work towards common goals, and in doing so fostered social connections and solidarity. The programme's impact on relationships and community bonds was frequently emphasised when communities reflected on the effects of partnership activities on wellbeing. Examples of this impact include fostering respect, understanding, and appreciation for different backgrounds and perspectives; bridging across disconnected communities; and building awareness of and participation in communal activities.

Participants also described how the programme facilitated the development of deeper connections and a better understanding of others' circumstances. This, in turn, led to increased comfort and confidence in offering assistance or seeking support when needed. Additionally, inclusive engagement and collaborative ways of working fostered inclusivity and amplified voices, particularly for communities where iwi and hapū led partnerships.

Related to social cohesion, and as noted earlier, each community also showed progress in the development of bridging social capital by building connections and partnerships across communities; and linking social capital in building connections, momentum and change with local decision-makers.

## Adaptive capacity and collective problem solving

Thanks to the relational changes, collaborative processes and enhanced sense of agency facilitated by the CLDP, many community members feel that their community is now better equipped to adapt to changing circumstances and challenges, thereby enhancing collective resilience.

When faced with the significant disruptions caused by COVID-19 lockdowns, which occurred approximately 2-3 years into the partnership period, some community members and stakeholders noted how their community responded in agile ways. They highlighted how the relationships and systems developed during the partnership provided the foundation for swift responses to local challenges.

*There was a lot of contributions of food from all over which... came together within a week because already there had been a lot of relationships between agencies and groups, it was easy to quickly bring this up... the [foundation] had been laid. (Community advisor)*

## Improved access to resources, assets, and services

An emerging impact observed across several partnerships is the improved access to essential resources and services within the community. This encompasses the development, revitalisation, or establishment of key community assets directly contributing to wellbeing. Examples include the enhancement of foodbank infrastructure and an emergency response centre, marae development, and the expansion of housing services.

Partnerships have also served to enhance the visibility and utilisation of community assets and resources. Furthermore, in some cases the CLDP has facilitated economic opportunities by supporting initiatives focused on entrepreneurship, skill development, and job creation. These initiatives have empowered community members to develop new skills and pursue sustainable livelihoods.

# Realisation of aspirations

**KEQ 5: To what extent has the community, hapū and iwi successfully realised their aspirations, and what factors influenced the outcomes?**

## Key insights

Relational aspirations have generally been achieved, with significant shifts in how partnership communities engage and work together, fostering connection and community pride.

While tangible achievements are present, significant community infrastructure may take longer to realise. However, progress has been made through consultation, planning, and smaller-scale projects, laying a foundation for future action.

The realisation of aspirations through CLD is an ongoing journey rather than a fixed destination, continually adapting to the evolving needs and dynamics of the community. This process is characterised by continuous growth, learning, collaboration, and prioritising progress over a definitive end goal. The four case study communities represent diverse contexts and starting points upon entering CLDP partnerships. To some extent these factors have influenced the extent to which communities' aspirations were achieved and where they stood at the conclusion of the partnership period and change in the nature of DIA support. While these factors complicate drawing comprehensive conclusions across achievements, certain patterns emerge, as outlined below.

### **Relational aspirations have generally been achieved**

Over time, relationships, and other intangible aspects of community development, have undergone significant shifts within partnership communities. Substantial progress has been made in cultivating connections, establishing networks, and increasing awareness of the skills, strengths, and priorities of community members.

Community building represents a key advancement across partnerships, encompassing a wide range of changes, including facilitating connections between previously divided communities, and the development of community pride and shifts in perception. In two cases, successful implementation of engagement structures has also occurred between mana whenua and the wider community.

Community members express an enhanced sense of vibrancy, enjoyment, and belonging, reflecting the fostering of a supportive and inclusive environment. Collectively, these accomplishments provide a solid foundation for future action. However, communities noted that ongoing attention and maintenance will be essential to sustain these important gains.

### **The larger-scale asset-related aspirations often take longer to realise**

All communities involved in the CLD partnership contributed to tangible assets in some way, such as community bike tracks, dog parks and enhanced and protected natural environments. For longer standing organisations, asset development was focused on larger scale gathering spaces during the partnership period.

Fledgling communities started with more manageable-sized assets such as dog-parks and bike tracks. However, for these communities, certain ambitious aspirations, such as the development of significant community infrastructure, proved challenging to realise within the partnership's timeframe, available resources, human capital, and other scales of economy within communities.

Regardless of the size of assets being delivered, these were seen to be an important development for communities in the CLDP as they created spaces for communities to gather, connect and develop their own aspirations. They also supported CLD communities to garner support and buy-in from the communities as they demonstrated the tangible successes and benefits of the communities mahi. Additionally, smaller scale "nursery" projects served as initial steps, laying the groundwork towards realising these larger aspirations.

# Factors influencing community outcomes

**This section outlines key cross-case themes that both enhanced and challenged the achievement of community outcomes.**

## Key insights

Across case study communities, common enablers of success include physical hubs for CLD, involvement of mana whenua as equal partners, operational staffing, and a staged approach for momentum building.

Challenges included building and maintaining understanding of CLD, navigating conflicts and tensions within partnerships and with key stakeholders, and achieving ambitious sustainable change within the partnership period.

## Enablers of success

### A physical home for CLD in communities

Establishing a physical hub for CLD within communities proved very beneficial for two partners, facilitating a place-based approach and bolstering momentum by enhancing access to facilitator resources. One community integrated CLD operations into an existing entity's space, fostering synergies and collaborations between community organisations and local activities, and enabling chance connections with community members. Another community constructed dedicated premises for their team and initiatives, securing funding from a partnering organisation for this significant asset. This space promoted cohesion and fostered trust within the community, signalling tangible progress towards aspirations.

### Mana whenua involvement

The two partnerships driven by mana whenua underscores the significance and advantages of involving Māori, particularly within hapū-based communities. In these settings, engaging mana whenua as equal partners serves to redress imbalances, recognise their status as tangata whenua, and honour their stories and lived experiences as community members. Moreover, principles and values of tikanga Māori provide a robust framework for community engagement. Across communities, involving mana whenua is pivotal for dismantling barriers, building trust locally, and acknowledging historical trauma and the legacy of colonisation. This journey often involves confronting challenges and necessitates a commitment to learning and understanding.

For partnerships not led by mana whenua, engagement with local iwi was a challenge. One of these communities had developed strong engagement with mana whenua for a number of years, but this was dependent on a relationship with one individual within the local iwi. When this individual had to step back from their responsibilities due to health issues, the CLD group found that the local iwi were unable to continue engaging in the same capacity as before.

### Operational staffing and infrastructure to enable contribution

Partnerships facilitated community investment in paid positions aimed at supporting voluntary contributions of time and expertise, enhancing capacity and capability, and integrating CLD principles into community practices.

Skilled facilitator resources played a crucial role, bringing community insight and dedicating time and expertise to connect people, support coordination tasks essential for project initiation, and act as critical friends once underway. One community commented on how pivotal facilitator funding is to CLD work for these reasons, but noted that the current funding environment makes it difficult to secure operational funding, with many funders favouring programme and pilot funding over support for running costs.

### A staged approach for building momentum

Partnerships must navigate a delicate balance: maintaining visibility and momentum in their work without overshadowing or taking over community efforts. They serve as "cheerleaders," and "connectors" while also ensuring that progress is evident to help maintain momentum. Some communities found that a staged approach, beginning with hands-on activities that encourage involvement, served as a starting point for deeper engagement.

"Quick wins," including community events and tangible assets, were also seen to be crucial in the early stages of partnership to build visibility for the partnership, demonstrate progress, engaging community members and promoting the socialisation of CLD principles. For one of the longer standing communities, many of these quick wins have been addressed and so community interest and momentum is building around more systemic challenges such as housing quality and unaffordability and supporting small businesses to continue operating in the area.

## Challenges

### Socialising CLD within community

Some communities that were less established upon partnering with DIA encountered challenges when trying to build an understanding of CLD within their community, among key stakeholders (such as councils), and partnership leadership and staff. This lack of comprehension was perceived as a significant obstacle to progress.



Leaders often felt pressured to take action and were sometimes viewed primarily as funders rather than collaborators in the CLD process. Leadership turnover exacerbated the issue, as the departure of key advocates for CLD left gaps in understanding and commitment to its principles.

It was acknowledged that socialising CLD should commence well before partnerships form, with ongoing education being essential, as deeper understanding often arises through practical application.

*We did run a couple of things... about what community-led actually meant. But I think people didn't really get it until push came to shove and they had to put stuff into practice: when [partnership] were pushing back going "No, we're not doing it for you, we will support you to do it". (Community leadership)*

Communities highly valued the presence of experienced advisors with comprehensive CLD expertise to effectively guide them and bridge the gap between theory and practice. However, some stakeholders suggested that access to more formalised, ongoing training on CLD principles would have enhanced understanding, especially given the turnover of community members.

### Partnership period

For communities working from the ground up, the five-year partnership period proved to be a tight timeframe to realise the ambitious transformations envisioned by the CLDP. In many of the case study communities, this duration was deemed insufficient for fostering sustainable change. Moreover, achieving change that transcends the neighbourhood level presents a significant challenge within the confines of a five-year funding and support framework.

It is noteworthy that these communities encountered a significant setback with the onset of the Covid-19 outbreak during a critical phase of the partnership (1-2 years in), just as they were gaining traction and building momentum. While an extension or transition period was granted, it was perceived as inadequate in mitigating the impacts of these setbacks.

*It probably ticked all the boxes and did it reasonably well. But...The pity is with... a lifecycle of five years. You can set the wheels in motion, 'cos it takes two or three years just to get your feet off the ground. So, if you look at the model, five years is quite a tight timeframe. (Community member)*

### Leadership and key stakeholder challenges impeded progress

Communities facing conflicts in project leadership or with key stakeholders experienced a slowdown in momentum, diverting energy from core activities. Moreover, tensions, often evident in small communities, could cause harm to both individuals and the community's perception of the partnership. Attrition in leadership post-conflict resulted in the loss of valuable knowledge and efforts redirected towards rebuilding leadership capacity. Additionally, tensions with fundholders relating to roles and responsibilities or potential competing interests, hindered collaborative efforts for broader community benefit.

# Reflections and future directions for CLDP activity

**Drawing on the experiences of the four case study communities, we highlight the following reflections and potential future directions for CLDP activity both for the department and participating communities. However, we note that these are based on four case studies and are not based on broad analysis across the entire CLDP programme of work.**

## Cross case reflections

### **Investing in established communities and those growing CLD from the ground up produces very different scales of impact**

The communities who took part in this evaluation were all at different stages in their CLD journey. For some, the CLDP partnership was an opportunity to build something new from scratch, while for others, it was a chance to strengthen existing relationships, resources, and ways of working within their communities.

**Investing in new communities** has generated social changes and infrastructure that may never have existed without the partnership. While the outcomes for these communities are still evolving, they genuinely reflect the social outcomes generated by the partnership.

On the other hand, **investing in existing CLD groups** has leveraged the skills, relationships and infrastructure already present, enabling these communities to create significant impact and expand their reach. However, attributing

these larger-scale outcomes solely to the partnership would be misleading, as much of the infrastructure and ways of working were already in place.

### **Expanding the scope of transformation beyond the neighbourhood level may require longer-term investment**

Transformations currently occur primarily at the neighbourhood level, with limited translation to broader scales. Achieving significant change within a 5-7-year partnership period is challenging and may necessitate a longer-term investment. Reflecting on the updated Theory of Change (detailed on page 65), it is evident that the observed changes predominantly align with outcomes rather than impacts. To expand the scope of transformation beyond the neighbourhood level, a more extended partnership duration, or additional partners outside of Hāpai Hapori, may be essential.

## Recommendations for change

### **Provide guidance in social enterprise development to enhance sustainability**

Social enterprise present significant opportunities to sustain outcomes beyond the partnership period and are an aspiration of several case study communities. However, initiatives aimed at generating long-term income encountered challenges.

- Hāpai Hapori can provide access to expert guidance and resources in social enterprise development to enhance understanding of sustainable business models. This would help communities avoid potential pitfalls and increase their likelihood of achieving long-term success and sustainability.

### Enhancing mana whenua engagement through strategic support

As evidenced in two cases, mana whenua engagement adds great value and diverse communities benefit from their expertise and perspectives. However meaningful engagement has been challenging for communities without representation in CLDP leadership. Their difficulties in meeting consultation expectations and building momentum in engagement and relationship-building highlight the need for a strategic approach.

- Hāpai Hapori can provide support for communities to cultivate and maintain broader relationships with mana whenua, reducing reliance on individual connections.
- Implementing systems to document and share best practices for mana whenua engagement across communities could help to build collective knowledge for those communities with less experience or without mana whenua leadership.

### Align work with mana whenua aspirations when capacity for engagement is limited

Engagement takes time, and when mana whenua do not respond to partnership invitations it is often due to capacity constraints. To promote positive outcomes for Māori, Hāpai Hapori could consider the following approaches:

- Provide communities with clear guidance on how to align their work with mana whenua aspirations, particularly when there are no direct connections to iwi and hapū representation. This will help ensure that CLDP reflect mana whenua values and priorities.
- One approach to reduce the burden of direct engagement and support mana whenua priorities' integration in to CLDP initiatives could be to align certain community projects with the five-year plans and long-term strategic priorities of hapū and iwi.

### Implement proactive strategic planning for an empowering and well-planned transition

Advisors and communities highlighted the importance of a transparent and proactive approach to transition. To promote an empowering conclusion to the partnership phase, Hāpai Hapori could consider the following approaches:

- Initiate transition planning at the very start of a CLDP project. Include transition discussions as a regular agenda item to ensure ongoing focus and preparedness.
- Encourage communities and advisors to envision and plan for a post-partnership future from the partnership's inception, ensuring sustainability and continuity.
- Foster stronger relationships and partnerships with potential funders.
- Explore collaborative funding opportunities between DIA and other relevant entities during the partnership to ensure financial sustainability.

### Build community capability to capture and track impact

There is opportunity for Hāpai Hapori to collaborate with communities in the early stages of CLDP to identify areas aligned with their aspirations and establish methods to track these areas throughout the partnership.

- This process might include exploring the types of impact and process data that can be collected, as well as devising strategies for data collection.
- Hāpai Hapori could consider facilitating access to external support to develop a modest developmental evaluation framework where appropriate, to enable ongoing reflection and learning and tracking progress against aspirations.
- Hāpai Hapori may also wish to implement regular community surveys that include a subset of standard questions across all partnerships, to build a consistent picture of development and change over time.

This approach will build a consistent picture of development and change over time, empowering communities to effectively tell their stories of impact at the end of the partnership period.

## Facilitate ongoing cross-community learning opportunities for sustained success

The value gained from networking and learning through conferences and regular hui facilitated by Hāpai Hapori leadership was significant for some communities. To sustain these benefits post-partnership, Hāpai Hapori could consider the following strategies:

- Facilitate ongoing learning post-partnership through convening regular networking events, virtual meetings or workshops where communities can share insights, challenges, and best practices. These events will help maintain relationships and foster a collaborative environment where communities learn from each other's experiences
- Curate and make accessible resources such as webinars, case studies, and online materials could be curated and made accessible to support continuous learning. These resources will help communities stay informed and innovative.

# Conclusions

In the case studies explored through this review, the CLDP has fostered transformative change across diverse communities, hapū, iwi, and varied contexts. Through the development and evolution of aspirations, partnerships have amplified existing momentum for change and fostered collective visions emphasising cultural connectedness, collaboration, and empowerment.

While communities have gained valued assets that will endure beyond the conclusion of the partnership, the programme's impacts extend beyond tangible outcomes. Relationships have been built and strengthened and communities gained enhanced senses of pride, contribution, and shared purpose, and built the diversity and capability of leadership. Although the nature and extent of lasting impacts remains to be seen, the benefits such as relationship-building and community cohesion look well-placed to endure beyond the lifespans of programmes and funding through the creation of a platform for future collaborative work.

The case studies show that a sustained presence and ongoing impact is visible in three of the four communities, and to some extent in one, although this is less certain in the medium term. Regardless however, each have broadened the base of community leadership, and in many and varied ways left positive legacies that remain valued by the communities themselves. The experiences of the case study communities also offer important learning for ongoing communities in the CLDP.

Notably, upon reflection of the partnership's impacts on community wellbeing, resilience emerges as a prominent theme. The case study communities faced the unprecedented challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic approximately one to two years into the partnership, just as the initiatives were taking root or scaling up. During this critical period, the relationships, networks, and systems forged through partnership activities were put to the test, proving their worth by delivering tangible value.

Despite the considerable achievements of the CLDP, challenges persist, offering opportunities for further growth and development. These include enhanced support in developing sustainable funding models, particularly focusing on social enterprise initiatives, and fostering broader systemic connections to grow the resources available to communities. Enhancing the capability of communities to track progress towards aspiration and tell their stories of impact through monitoring mechanisms is a further potential area of development. Furthermore, approaches to enable meaningful mana whenua engagement and alignment with aspirations, in ways that are in line with available capacity is a further opportunity to strengthen the programme.

Each case study has shown CLDP to be an important catalyst for community connection and have helped enable positive change in both tangible and intangible ways. Looking ahead, the case study communities are now moving into new structures and phases of activity. Maintaining the relationships that have been built over the past five to seven years will be critical enablers to ensuring ongoing momentum.



Part 2 |

# Community case studies

# Fab Feathy

**This case study draws on interviews with 17 Featherston community members including five steering group members/facilitators conducted in April 2024 along with analysis of background documentation.**

## Background to Featherston CLDP

Featherston (Pae Tū Mōkai) is a town in the South Wairarapa District. Featherston boasts a population of 2,780 residents and is experiencing steady growth, marked by an approximately 11% increase in population over the past two census periods, from 2013 to 2023. The town's geographical location positions it as a commuter hub, with a significant portion of its working population commuting to nearby Wellington or Masterton for employment opportunities.

Featherston is celebrated for its rich historical heritage and picturesque landscapes. Notably, it enjoys close proximity to Wairarapa Moana, the third-largest lake in Aotearoa, surrounded by extensive wetlands of ecological importance and holding cultural significance for mana whenua. However, Featherston grapples with socio-economic challenges. It is identified as more deprived compared to neighbouring towns within the district. Moreover, the influx of newcomers to Featherston has brought about cultural shifts within the community. With rising demand for housing, there is increasing pressure on house prices, making affordability a pressing issue for both existing residents and newcomers alike.

Unlike neighbouring towns such as Martinborough and Greytown, which are undergoing extensive gentrification and tourism development, Featherston has largely been excluded from these trends. This exclusion has fostered a sense of underinvestment and institutional neglect among some residents, leading to calls for revitalisation efforts and inclusive development and investment.

## The Featherston CLDP partnership

Featherston's 2018 CLD partnership emerged from discussions at a Wairarapa Community Networks gathering, where the Hāpai Hapori lead advisor introduced the program. Initial interest was expressed by key community figures and over the following 12 months this group engaged with the community to gauge interest in applying for the CLD program and to gather input on desired community developments. Funding for this consultation was provided by the local Primary Health Organisation.

## Identifying aspirations

The successful community visioning process, supported by Inspiring Communities, culminated in the creation of the Future Featherston Community Plan [2017] with the vision: “To fully realise the potential we can see Featherston is bursting with, while retaining and enhancing what makes our town and community distinctive and great”. The plan outlines aspirations across five key areas: nurturing community, becoming a destination town for visitors, preserving the natural environment, enhancing infrastructure to support creators and businesses, and ensuring Featherston is a great 'liveable' town. Under these aspirations, there are 15 themes addressing various community needs and goals.

Following the completion of the plan, the partnership was established, and staff members were recruited to support initiatives. However, despite the enthusiasm for change, there were challenges. There was a decline in community energy and changes in leadership post-plan development, and the process of employing facilitators and achieving momentum took time over this transitional period.



## Evolution of aspirations

The aspirations articulated in the community plan remained constant over the course of the partnership; however, the themes and associated projects shifted and changed, guided by community priorities and energy. Some projects outlined in the plan were ambitious and beyond the capacity of the partnership and the community to achieve on their own. Over the course of the partnership there was therefore a process of reframing some of these areas of work into more achievable initiatives. In 2022 as it reached the end of partnership, Fab Feathy surveyed the community to test the relevance of these aspirations and “refresh understanding of what is working well and what should come next” to provide direction for the remainder of work.

## Supporting transformational change

Fab Feathy, guided by the community plan and CLD principles, has empowered the community to initiate and drive change. They have actively facilitated and supported community-led ideas and initiatives, enabling projects to move from conceptualisation to implementation and potentially scale and become more sustainable. This approach has garnered widespread agreement across interviewees that Fab Feathy has led to many positive changes for the Featherston community. According to one community member:

*We've got such a better community for having had Fab Feathy. There is no doubt about that... if we go back seven or eight years ago, this was a fragmented community. It was unhappy people... the business sector was struggling. So little things, like the things that Fab Feathy were able to introduce. They turned it around. (Community member)*

This section outlines the primary areas of transformative change resulting from Fab Feathy's CLD efforts in Featherston.

## Enabling contribution

Fab Feathy has become a catalyst for empowering community members to actively engage in their community's development. Rather than taking a leading role, Fab Feathy has positioned itself as a supporter and champion, empowering individuals to initiate change. Community members have

highlighted the importance of having an accessible entity to approach when seeking to contribute, connect with like-minded individuals, and receive assistance in turning ideas into action.

Furthermore, the community's visioning process, coupled with facilitator support, has fostered a collaborative problem-solving approach. This method encouraged individuals to come together, discuss challenges, and find collective solutions. By leveraging each other's interests, skills, and strengths community members have developed a sense of shared responsibility and capability. Additionally, there is a growing confidence within the community to take initiative and explore new ideas, reflecting an evolving mindset towards innovation and community-driven initiatives.

*And people are encouraged to give things a go, I think. Like if you've got something that you're thinking “Oh, let's try and do that,” there's sort of a confidence to go for something. (Community member)*

## Fostering leadership

Fab Feathy enabled community members to contribute and helped foster a new generation of leaders within the community. While there was not a shortage of leaders in Featherston, as is often the case in small communities they were often the same people stepping up, being shoulder tapped and initiating projects, and were often overstretched. Fab Feathy cast their net wide beyond the “movers and shakers” or “loud voices”, extending invitations for people to lead projects, regardless of their background or experience. In doing so, they created opportunities for individuals to showcase their leadership potential and space for new perspectives and ways of doing things.

*It really brought out the champions of the community, including allowing those that had not yet been seen as community leaders, to step forward. (Community SG member)*

*The two people who I would say would lead [project name] are both new community members, who have got an incredible amount of skills, that will benefit this community for a long time. But they have to be given the opportunity to get involved in something... and from the very beginning, even though they were new. (Community SG member)*



## Connection and cohesion

Fab Feathy's impact on fostering connections within the Featherston community was widely acknowledged by residents, often being the first aspect highlighted when discussing the changes brought about by the partnership. Through its initiatives, Fab Feathy facilitated increased opportunities for interaction and collaboration among individuals, groups, and community projects. The partnership's success in bringing together diverse members of the community has been noted by residents, who credit Fab Feathy with fostering connections that might not have otherwise occurred.

*It's made Featherston a better community, helping bring people together who usually wouldn't really talk to each other. (Community member)*

### Facilitators fostered connections

The facilitators played a crucial role in fostering connections and ensuring the success of collaborative efforts within the community. Leveraging their interpersonal skills and deep community knowledge, they facilitated introductions, communication, and provided essential support, thereby enhancing community cohesion. By offering assistance with knowledge gaps and specific tasks, they alleviated the burden on volunteers and ensured the sustainability of projects. Additionally, facilitators helped maintain momentum and held the community "accountable", particularly in the early stages of projects, preventing them from faltering.

The collaborative environment cultivated by Fab Feathy allowed community members to better understand each other's activities, leading to increased collaboration and a shared sense of purpose across groups. This approach also helped reduce siloed working, fragmentation, and duplicated effort. Furthermore, Fab Feathy's inclusive approach engaged a diverse cross-section of the community, while its partnerships with key entities such as schools further strengthened engagement.

*There are lots of good people in Feathy that want to do lots of different things and they [Fab Feathy] pulled them together... and helped them navigate as a group through different things... There were lots of good things about that. (Community member)*

### Events enhanced connection, engagement and project support

Community members highlighted the positive impact events for Featherston, which brought people together and fostered connection, engagement and celebrated and utilised local strengths and assets. While some events were already established and revitalised by Fab Feathy and others working together, others were initiated through the partnership. First Fridays, a recurring event mentioned by many, breathed new life into an underutilised public space, the Squiracle, with monthly festivals featuring art, music, and more. Similarly, the Matariki festival gained prominence, drawing people from afar to celebrate the occasion in Featherston. Whilst Fab Feathy was instrumental in the Matariki Festival of 2020, in following years they took a side-line role and the community ran these successfully by themselves with minimal support required. The impact of events on community cohesion and participation appears to have been profound. For example, a newcomer to Featherston shared their experience of the Matariki event:

*We had a fabulous community hangi that over 100 people turned up to eat, but also to help dig the pit and light the fire and get the food out and so on. Lots of opportunity for the whole community to come together and contribute what they can. (Community member)*

Events provided avenues for sharing experiences and offering support. Feed and Fund, ran in collaboration with the Community Centre, expedited connection-building and collaboration by offering a platform to showcase initiatives to a wider audience. This garnered interest and facilitated offers of assistance, enhancing project success and sustainability. The steering group perceived Feed and Fund as optimising CLP facilitation by fostering connection, highlighting strengths, and bolstering community energy.

### Building community capability and skills

Fab Feathy clearly played a role in upskilling community members and enhancing their capabilities. This capacity-building effort encompassed various aspects, combining formal workshops with personalised, hands-on support from facilitators in a wide range of areas including project planning, system setup, meeting facilitation, and navigating online platforms, empowering community members to take charge of their initiatives.

In the final phase of the partnership, Fab Feathy organised a series of well-attended workshops conducted by local experts and external trainers

covering a range of topics such as governance, fundraising strategies, and effective communication through social media. These workshops aimed to equip community members with practical skills and knowledge to continue to sustain and lead out new community development initiatives. The emphasis was on both imparting new skills and building confidence among community members. As one steering group member expressed:

*We were keen to put as many skills into community [as possible].. so that the loss of Fab Feathy isn't too much ... I mean they [skills] were always there, I think it's always been about confidence in this community but everyone's always had the skills. It's just people thinking their voices aren't as relevant. (Steering group member)*

### **Pride and confidence**

Fab Feathy's impact extends to influencing how community members perceive their community and their role in its ongoing enhancement, with a palpable sense of growing confidence and pride. For many, this transformation has been about recognising and celebrating the positive aspects of Featherston's history and culture, despite challenges facing the region and past traumatic events.

*I think it was about trying to draw on the positive that came out of that. Like it's always been quite an amazing community. But I think it was about building, finding those treasures and really drawing those together, really pinpointing where they were. It's like whanaungatanga. That's how I would put it. Building that whanaungatanga and the manaakitanga. And that was already there but bringing it even more together. (Community member)*

Initiatives like Feed and Fund have played a role in fostering pride by highlighting strengths, assets, and champions. Tangible assets, such as the community garden, dog park, and bike track contribute visual enhancements while evoking a sense of community pride and achievement. One community member noted how the dog park has become a symbol of placemaking, located strategically in the heart of town and serving as a visible testament to the community's proactive spirit. A further example highlighted is a noticeable shift in the community's tourism profile and sense of identity more generally, with residents embracing their town's unique identity and diverse offerings.

*There's just like a lot more confidence in groups and confident people doing stuff. (Community member)*

### **Trust in government and community advocacy**

Community members have highlighted the importance of feeling heard and valued by both Fab Feathy and government entities, emphasising the positive impact on community confidence. The partnership was seen to have provided a platform for recognition and validation, fostering a sense of self-esteem, and belonging within Featherston. Some community members felt that the approachable and knowledgeable DIA representatives have played a role in building trust between the community and government institutions. Their accessibility and support were seen to have facilitated connections and encouraged community members to engage more actively with funding opportunities and processes.

*I think it's been really good for the community to feel seen and loved. (Community member)*

While relationships with the local council have historically been complex, Fab Feathy were seen to have gradually fostered a more positive and supportive dynamic. By advocating for community needs and serving as a constant voice for Featherston, the partnership looks to have increased the town's visibility in the eyes of local authorities and encouraged community engagement in council consultations and activities. Facilitators have acted as conduits, facilitating the flow of information between the council and residents. Despite ongoing challenges, such as the presence of derelict buildings on the main street, this collaborative approach has strengthened the relationship between the Featherston community and local government, fostering cooperation and mutual understanding.

**Table 1: Fab Feathy CLDP Projects and Outcomes**

The following table presents a range of Fab Feathy supported initiatives and their board outcomes and is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

Aspiration area	Activities / Projects	Outcomes
Nurturing community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Fridays</li> <li>• Feed and Fun</li> <li>• Dogs in togs event</li> <li>• Community Garden</li> <li>• Food and firewood deliveries to whanau during Covid-19 outbreak</li> <li>• Matariki event</li> <li>• Capability development (facilitator support and workshops)</li> </ul>	<p>Opportunities for community members to gather and utilise public space.</p> <p>Community gathering showcasing local initiatives and distributing community koha</p> <p>Community fun and gathering utilising key amenity</p> <p>Gathering, sharing knowledge, biodiversity and beautification</p> <p>Meeting material needs of vulnerable residents</p> <p>Community gathering, celebrating mātauranga Māori</p> <p>Upskilling of community leaders to lead sustainable CLD initiatives</p>
Valuing and protecting the natural environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for now Pae Tu Mokai o Taurira nursery</li> <li>• Bucks Road Campsite planting and upgrade support</li> <li>• Donalds Creek Science Table</li> </ul>	<p>Restoration of the wetland ecosystem, celebrating mātauranga Māori</p> <p>Restoration of natural environment and preservation of important community amenity</p> <p>A space for local school children to continue their monitoring of the waterways</p>
Being a destination town for visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BookTown support</li> <li>• Wai Wheels car show</li> </ul>	<p>Support for ongoing well attended events enhancing the unique character and profile of Featherston</p>
Amenities, services and infrastructure to be a liveable town and support creators, innovators, and businesses to invest in Featherston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Windy Wheels bike and skills track at Featherston School</li> <li>• Moana trail feasibility study</li> <li>• Ā Mua resource centre support</li> <li>• Foodbank investment in containers and refrigeration</li> <li>• Dog park development</li> </ul>	<p>Asset for school and wider community use, providing access to bikes and to act as a “nursery” for eventual Moana Trail</p> <p>Scoping study to enable another more resourced organisation to lead implementation of trail to increase access to Wairarapa Moana and connect this important site to Featherston</p> <p>Supporting resource recovery and redistribution</p> <p>Increased capacity to meet community need</p> <p>Development of under-utilised public space into community asset</p>

## Sustaining outcomes and impact

With Fab Feathy concluding in February 2024, many community members felt the longer-term impacts of the partnership remain to be seen. Some expressed concerns about the potential loss of momentum and initiatives losing steam without Fab Feathy's support. Additionally, there were apprehensions about individuals in other CLD-related roles becoming overwhelmed.

*People have been upskilled through Fab Feathy, so there's hope that it will continue and be sustainable. But the risk is that without the support, things will slowly go "oh it would be nice to happen, but no ones' really got time and it's too hard." (Community Member)*

However, another perspective was that it was a natural progression, viewing Fab Feathy's departure as an opportunity for the community to step up and sustain the progress made. They believed the partnership had fulfilled its mission of empowering the community to take charge of its development.

*Fab Feathy were only set up to set everyone else up and get things going so that they can find a way to be sustainable. That's what their mission was, and I think they did a really good job of it. (Community Member)*

## An embedded way of working

Many community members acknowledge that CLDP principles and approaches have become deeply rooted within the community. Relationships formed during the partnership persist through shared goals and ongoing collaboration. This collective effort instils a sense of belonging and purpose among individuals involved in community projects and validates their contributions.

*Well, it has made Feathy a lot nicer, it has actually. There's still groups carrying on that they helped facilitate, like there's a number of garden groups ... the knitting groups and the meet up, all those kind of things. (Community member)*

One example is the events that are continuing to "bubble up" in the community such as the Friday Night Food Truck events, some of which are not connected to Fab Feathy. Community members talked about the powerful role modelling that took place during Fab Feathy's tenure, and how community members saw others taking on leadership roles and identified this as a possibility for themselves.

*I think people seeing that normal people can run events like that, has given a little bit of confidence that maybe we could run an event... (Community member)*

## Community centre as a hub of CLD

Despite Fab Feathy's exit, its legacy is present in the invigorated Community Centre, now regarded as a nexus for community development. The Fab Feathy facilitators were based at the community centre, and a new manager who worked in close collaboration with the outgoing facilitator has injected fresh energy into the Centre, embodying Fab Feathy's collaborative spirit. Despite the partnership's conclusion, the Community Centre remains a site of innovation and connection. One example of this is its current role as a fundholder for a dozen community initiatives. Reflecting on the Community Centre's transformation, a community member noted:

*This Community Centre is thriving... [and] it's a shame that Fab Feathy is no longer here. However, it's left this legacy of a thriving Community Centre, connection with Council, community development... And that's awesome. (Community member)*

The place-based nature of Fab Feathy appears to have enhanced the visibility of the Community Centre, extending its reach to a wider segment of the community. People now see it as an accessible practical resource to support community action. However, there is a concern that assuming the responsibility for CLD for Featherston may place an unsustainable workload on the centre manager.

*The good thing about Fab Feathy being at the Community Centre is people knew they were here so whether they know it's still around or not, they will still come here and ask and [centre manager] and they will be able to help them out I reckon. (Community member)*

## Physical assets are an important, tangible legacy

Physical assets and infrastructure, such as, the Windy Wheels cycle track and community garden stand as tangible legacies of the community's collaborative efforts supported by Fab Feathy. These assets serve as visible reminders of the positive changes brought about by the partnership and are frequently cited by community members when discussing its sustained impacts. While the Featherston partnership primarily focused on facilitator resources, the significance of physical assets is notable. Some community members expressed that the lack of tangible structures may have affected certain residents' perception of the partnership's impact. However, these assets are valued for fostering a sense of community ownership and have the potential to attract additional activities and events while enhancing the overall wellbeing and enjoyment of community members, the Foodbank chiller infrastructure being one such example:

*And those investments... these are ongoing things that don't have an end of life as such. Foodbanks will always be a requirement. So, the assets that we were able to procure enable us to keep that operation ticking over for perpetuity.*  
(Community member)

For instance, the bike track both provides a physical amenity and serves as the first phase in a series of ambitious projects involving other community organisations, such as a bike repair hub in partnership with Ā Mua and ongoing events. There is also aspiration of eventual connection to wider Wairarapa cycling infrastructure, including the proposed Moana Trail. A community member that led this project described it as a “nursery” for broader aspirations for cycling in Featherston. Additionally, the track infrastructure funded through Fab Feathy is designed to be low maintenance to prevent it from becoming a financial burden on the school or community. Looking ahead, community members stressed the importance of sustaining annual events to commemorate achievements and showcase ongoing initiatives. These events were seen to be important as platforms for recognition, fostering community pride and maintaining momentum.

## Impacts on wellbeing of the community

Community wellbeing, as defined by the interviewed community members, is fundamentally rooted in relationships, connectivity, and a sense of belonging. It encompasses having a robust support network to lean on in times of need, thereby mitigating feelings of isolation and ensuring that nobody feels unsupported. Moreover, it involves avenues for active participation and contribution within the community fabric. The initiatives facilitated by Fab Feathy, which fostered cohesion, pride, and a sense of belonging, were consistently associated with the overall wellbeing of both individuals and the community at large.

*Relationships are so important for community health and individual wellbeing.*  
(Community member)

The residents unanimously attested that the collaborative efforts spearheaded by Fab Feathy have significantly enhanced wellbeing in Featherston. They particularly underscored Fab Feathy's support for essential community institutions such as the Foodbank and Community Centre, which serve as vital pillars for nurturing individual and collective wellbeing. Support for karakia mornings led by health centre staff was a further example highlighted. Many residents highlighted Fab Feathy's role, especially during the challenging periods of Covid-19 lockdowns, in forging connections with vulnerable or isolated members of the community who may have otherwise gone unnoticed or underserved. Noteworthy efforts during the pandemic included upgrading the Foodbank's infrastructure to enhance its capacity, orchestrating the delivery of food parcels, actively reaching out to individuals to extend assistance, and providing and distributing firewood during winter months.

*We got seven loads of firewood delivered to seven of our families in one day - incredible. And that's what I mean about that community, they just looked after themselves. Well, they didn't look after themselves, everyone looked after each other.* (Community member)

Community members articulated how Featherston has evolved into a more resilient community over time, attributing this resilience to strengthened connections and an amplified awareness of each other's needs and

circumstances. They recounted forging enduring friendships through projects and how residents have transitioned into becoming "familiar faces" within the community landscape.

## Realisation of aspirations

Fab Feathy's partnership has clearly supported good progress towards some aspiration areas. For example, building community is clearly well realised and good progress also looks to have been made in valuing and protecting the natural environment through collaboration with and support of several local groups. However other aspirations, such as having the amenities and infrastructure to be a liveable town are significant and complex goals, and community members reflected that they were difficult to achieve with the timeframe, resources, and expertise available.

In reflecting on achievement of aspirations, residents noted shifts in energy and action over the partnership period, with high energy and expectations of what partnership with Hāpai Hapori might achieve for Featherston in the early phases of work. For some this was followed by frustration when barriers were encountered, and progress did not meet expectations. However, there was frequent reflection that even when initial goals were not met, there were lots of positive "spinoffs" and "self-seeded initiatives" because of those early conversations and energy. When asked to reflect on the communities' achievement of their aspirations, one community member used a numerical scale:

*I would say eight [out of ten]. It's quite realistic to the conditions [of what's achievable]. I think they gave it a really good go and achieved a lot of things and other things are still petering along slowly, but I think they'll get there. Yeah, it's pretty good. (Community member)*

A range of factors were seen to have influenced Featherston's achievement of aspirations. Success factors include facilitator resource with the right mix of abilities, soft skills, and commitment to community-led development, and events were valuable at delivering 'quick wins' and building momentum. Furthermore, Fab Feathy's partnership with the Community Centre enabled much valuable skills-sharing and a physical home for CLD in Featherston

which is continuing to bear fruit. Challenges have included the time it took for CLD to be socialised within the community, and therefore a lack of clarity among some community members about Fab Feathy's role. Shifts in community energy during the partnership period and the disruption brought by the Covid-19 pandemic were also seen to have impacted the community reaching its aspirations.

## Conclusion

Fab Feathy's inclusive approach reached and engaged a diverse cross-section of the community and fostered a sense of belonging and community pride. While Fab Feathy as an entity has come to an end, there is little doubt that a clear legacy remains in the tangible outcomes of its initiatives, and in the lasting connections and sense of community it cultivated within Featherston. Fab Feathy has also contributed to a thriving Community Centre that is continuing to nurture CLD approaches and initiatives. The challenge will be how the community maintains the clear sense of momentum that was achieved into the future.

# Tatau Pounamu

This summary has been prepared after hui with partnering organisations and community members of the Tatau Pounamu Collective in April 2024, along with analysis of key documentation and an earlier hui with the Community Advisor.

## Background to Tatau Pounamu CLDP

Eastside Rotorua is situated in Rotorua and covers an area from the Waiohewa Stream to the Puarenga Stream, including Mokoia Island. Eastside is rich in cultural, spiritual, and historical traditions, with ngā hapū Ngāti Uenukukōpako, Ngāti Te-Roro-te Rangi, Ngāti Tuteniu, Ngāti Hurungaterangi and Ngāti Hinemihi residing within the area.

The whakapapa of Tatau Pounamu Collective extends back to 2012, when the Mokoia Community Association began supporting community-led initiatives. For example, one of the first initiatives was the development of the Aspen Place maara kai (community garden), inspired by a resident of Korotere (West Ōwhata), which TPC describes as “one of Eastside’s most vulnerable communities.”

In early 2017, Tatau Pounamu Collective and Hāpai Hapori began discussing a community led development project (CLDP); the invitation to talk was extended by the Collective and the CLDP Agreement was signed on 14 July 2017.

Initially known as the Eastside Community Collective, Tatau Pounamu Collective changed its name to reflect the Tatau Pounamu approach (see Figure 1 below), which the community collective developed. The Community vision is: Te Oranga Nui Rāwhiti Mai: to make Eastside Rotorua a safe place where every tamaiti (child) reaches their potential.

Figure 1: The Tatau Pounamu Approach



The Tatau Pounamu approach is community led and guided by mana whenua mātauranga (knowledge). The name gifted by a local kaumatua, ‘Tatau Pounamu’ is a metaphor for a safe place. Translated, it reflects a greenstone door, which historically was a place of security for those injured during battle or seeking protection.

## Identifying aspirations

### The project

The Tatau Pounamu Collective comprises hapū, local people and organisations who work together to achieve their shared vision of a child-friendly Eastside. Oranga or wellbeing is the starting point for the Tatau Pounamu approach, depicted in Figure 1 above. The dual hulls of the waka represent the wellbeing of te taiao, the environment, and hunga-ao, the people. The waka is also guided by ngā hau e whā, the four winds, reflecting the four pou or values of whakapapa, whanaungatanga, manaakitanga and wairuatanga. As TPC's website puts it, "The hera (sails) represent the many ways the Tatau Pounamu Strategy is put into action by individuals and groups supporting each other and working together to create change", and "when the Pou are reflected in actions, the waka sails fast".

### A strategic approach developed to support community aspirations

Although there was activity in the community prior to CLDP, the partnership enabled a more strategic and proactive response to develop. Initially, the community's response to various challenges was somewhat fragmented, reacting spontaneously as issues arose without a long-term vision. The turning point came with the introduction of CLDP and the ability to engage in comprehensive collaborative processes, where community members, including local hapū, could align their efforts. This shift not only broadened the scope of participation but also began to steer the community towards more structured and collective planning.

Within the CLDP it was possible to "tease out" what was important, and evolve the aspirations to better reflect the community and the why. From the discussions grew the key vision to 'make Eastside Rotorua a safe place where every tamaiti (child) reaches their potential.' This is focused around two key areas:

- Hunga Ao (wellness) - recognising the community's strengths and assets and building on them to promote wellbeing and social sustainability for our whanau and community, thereby resulting in positive outcomes for our tamariki.

- Taiao (environment) - protecting and enhancing the local natural features with a coordinated, collaborative and sustainable approach as kaitiaki (guardians) of the environment.

*The key thread in all of this was around a safe place, particularly for tamariki, [and] that's when that really strengthened, that key kind of vision. And then they really started teasing out how to make that happen, how do we approach this and that's when Tatau Pounamu took shape. (Collective leadership)*

### Involving mana whenua supported the partnership approach

Mana whenua have a significant, visible role throughout the Tatau Pounamu CLDP. Hapū involvement has been critical to the establishment and ongoing activity of the Collective. As rangatira, hapū members act as leaders in the space, while all the time maintaining their tino rangatiratanga. As mana whenua, they carry knowledge and experiences which they have generously shared to help create a vision for the Eastside community. Community members shared how hapū helped the Tatau Pounamu Collective to find a common ground and build on the natural strengths within the community. There is wide acknowledgement amongst Collective members and partnering organisations (e.g., council, schools) that with the support of mana whenua, there has been improved connection across networks and groups.

*Mana whenua is across everything [TPC] does. And the relationship space that was huge, creating that platform for mana whenua and the wider community to work together on shared aspirations. (Community leadership)*

### Supporting transformational change

The CLD partnership has been critical in supporting the Tatau Pounamu Collective to activate transformative change through collective action and community collaboration. The Tatau Pounamu approach demonstrates that collective work can yield greater outcomes and it capitalises on every opportunity to strengthen community ties, ensuring that local voices are amplified. At a localised level, the Tatau Pounamu approach has enabled individuals to actively contribute to their community's wellbeing. For example, a resident's concern in Scott Ave was promptly addressed through the Collective network, leading to swift action from council representatives to enhance local facilities.



Through the partnership the Tatau Pounamu Collective have bolstered its online presence and community communication, creating robust digital engagement through social media and newsletters, and improving administrative competencies which support their operations and outreach. Through these efforts, the Collective not only showcases community achievements but also maintains a transparent and ongoing dialogue with its members and stakeholders.

The CLD partnership supported the Eastside community by providing access to consistent resource which supported opportunities for hapū, local Council, Schools, residents, and other organisations to continue building the Tatau Pounamu approach. Community members shared that these partnerships and relationships helped to engage a broad range of voices and “work truly as a community”.

The Tatau Pounamu Collective were able to invest in multiple paid contract positions, including the current Piripiri role. This role has been a significant resource and asset. Having a Piripiri role has helped to embed the Tatau Pounamu approach. The strong relationships that the Piripiri has made with different community representatives and residents have been key to facilitating efforts within the Eastside community.

*One of the many ways that the partnership with DIA was really helpful is the consistent resourcing over multiple years [that] gave us capacity to be able to develop really good systems like induction material, [that explains] this is what a Tatau Pounamu way of working looks like. (Community leadership)*

The CLD partnership provided opportunities for the Collective to improve trust and connection among individuals and organisations in the community. It has also helped to reinvigorate areas of interest like maara kai and supported the development of whānau within the community to lead and participate in locally designed initiatives. With the advice and support of the Tatau Pounamu Collective, Eastside locals have been able to talk to matters that concern them, such as the removal of local parks, footpath and pedestrian placement.

*I think because of this [partnership] voices that wouldn't normally be at the table are at the table and are contributed and heard. They may not be physically there but you can see it coming through and that's a large part because of the people resource. They have been out listening and those voices [are] brought forward. (Community member)*

With the ongoing support from CLD advisors and funding, the partnership has led to many community activities and events that have promoted wellbeing and social sustainability for community and taiao, including:

**Table 2: Examples of Tatau Pounamu Collaborative Projects and Outcomes**

Project area	Activities	Outcomes	
Taiao kaitiakitanga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hannah’s Bay, Waikawau Restoration Project</li> <li>Eastside kura connecting students to taiao</li> </ul>	Beautiful space created for local Eastside and wider community to visit including rongoā maara kai Returned native life (e.g., native fish, birdlife)	Building a resilient ecosystem Increased awareness of taiao and roles as kaitiaki Reconnecting tamariki, rangatahi to te taiao Creation of outside learning spaces
Restoration of Community Maara Kai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neighbourhood-led maara kai</li> </ul>	Whakapapa of area and traditional practices Feeding whānau	Common space for whānau to come together Facebook pages set up for Scott Ave and Aspen Place
Park activations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rangatahi and community kaitiakitanga</li> </ul>	Community feeling safer Examples of rangatahi taking ownership and caring for these spaces e.g., no tagging	Pride developing Eastside events e.g., Xmas in the park
Eastside spring cleans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community clean up days</li> </ul>	Community are getting involved and feel positive about their contribution Neighbourhood relationships are developing and there is more cohesion	Whānau are learning about waste minimisation and have been able to decluttered homes
Taiao Rēhia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Afterschool activities in neighbourhood parks</li> </ul>	Fun activities for rangatahi Chance for whānau to gather, enjoy a kai and company of their neighbours	Rangatahi and whānau feel valued
Te Manawa ō Owhatiura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building child friendly streets</li> </ul>	Lower driver speeds Streets feel safer	People walking and biking more
Power Pole Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tamariki designed artwork on power poles</li> </ul>	Pride and sense of belonging enhanced	Unique identity of Eastside being developed
#LOVEEASTSIDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social media campaign</li> </ul>	Community engagement enhanced	Community shared what they love about Eastside

## Sustained impact and benefits

### The Tatau Pounamu approach supports collaborative sustainable development

The Tatau Pounamu approach developed through the CLD partnership serves as a fundamental framework for achieving sustainability. Central to the approach is growing community champions, collaborative decision-making and building relationships and partnerships based on the Tatau Pounamu Collective's vision and pou.

As shared by the community, one of the most significant ongoing impacts of the partnership is relational. While specific initiatives may start and end, the relationships forged through this partnership continue to yield benefits. The platform established through the Tatau Pounamu Collective for collaboration between mana whenua and the wider community offers a robust structure for future engagement. The groundwork laid for these relationships ensure that there is a lasting framework to convene, pursue shared goals and also pave the way for future collaborative effort.

The Eastside Wellness Plan exemplifies a collaborative effort, involving local hapū, Rotorua Lakes Council, and various local and national agencies such as Waka Kotahi and Te Papa Atawhai (Department of Conservation). This initiative began in 2019 and underwent public consultation in 2020. It was officially adopted by the Council in July 2021. It serves as both a pathway and a framework aimed at guiding the aspirations and enhancing the wellness of the community. It addresses various aspects of community life including land use, housing, health, education, environmental sustainability, and recreational opportunities.

The Piripoho Service, is also a wellbeing initiative that took shape through the collaborative efforts of the Tatau Pounamu Collective, Mokoia Community Association and Ōwhata Medical Centre, with support of Lakes District Health Board. Leadership and ownership of the Piripoho Service have recently transitioned to Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Pikiao, which now owns the Ōwhata Medical Centre, ensuring the continuation and localisation of care. The Piripoho model was developed to provide community nursing service that incorporated navigator and whānau support to empower whānau. It is aimed at building trusting relationships and facilitating access to broader services

that can be challenging for the Eastside to reach. The model of care addresses immediate health needs and helps families to navigate and connect with necessary services.

### Ongoing collaboration with local government

By securing an agreement through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Tatau Pounamu Collective, mana whenua and Council, there is now a foundation for working in partnership. This plan is seen as an important mechanism to ensure that Eastside locals have a say in shaping what happens in their community and ensuring that growth aligns with the community's values and needs.

The Tatau Pounamu Collective has played a critical role in enabling the Council to effectively leverage its relationships with the community, enhancing community cohesion across the city. The approach has supported council engagement with Eastside community, during their long-term planning workshops. Council members share how they aim to replicate the successful community engagement model of Tatau Pounamu across different city sectors to better understand and advocate for community needs.

### Coordination is essential to engaging and responding to community

Despite the exiting of CLDP funding, the Collective have continued to employ the Piripiri role through alternative funding. This has enabled ongoing coordination and responses to emerging needs and challenges of community. This has supported a better understanding of CLD and the Tatau Pounamu approach, and it has also raised the profile of the Eastside community. This shift towards community-driven planning and feedback has underscored one of Tatau Pounamu's greatest achievements: fostering a sense of collaboration within communities.

*If I compare my work across the city, where we've got collaborations happening in terms of having quite a breadth of people involved and especially with hapū, Tatau Pounamu's enabled that to be as strong as what it is. If it wasn't there, a lot of this wouldn't happen. Things have really ramped up because of Tatau Pounamu's and hapū involvement. (Community Advisor)*



## Enhancing wellbeing of the community and hapū

From the perspective of the community the CLD partnership has contributed to the wellbeing of members. It has enhanced the sense of connection and belonging amongst Eastside locals.

There is an heightened awareness of communal activities, which has helped to foster positive engagement. The newly established Taihokohoko (community market) day is an example of this, with a great turnout of residents supporting each other and local businesses.

The true value of Tatau Pounamu can be difficult to explain, especially to those unfamiliar with the approach. While Tatau Pounamu operates on a macro scale, the collective's magic is deeply personal and human.

*Whether we are meeting each other in our homes, streets or around a table, the non-hierarchical structure provides a level playing field so people who have never worked within the Tatau pounamu way can know their voice and perspective is valued. That is the first and most vital step towards empowering people to take the lead, the very core of community lead development. (Community member)*

The Tatau Pounamu approach is localised and strength based. Starting from a place of orange it has championed local leadership and recognised the existing strengths and assets of the community. Initiatives like park activations, neighbourhood clean-up days, and providing safe spaces for tamariki and rangatahi to have fun, have fostered a sense of pride and inclusion. Social interactions through these events have resulted in new friendships and led to discussions on how to create a more cohesive community environment.

*It's community orientated and about strong connection. My kids never used to play with these other kids, never. but after those programmes, they've kind of gelled and it's really good and they've got a really good friendship from that. (Community member)*

## Realising aspirations

### Tatau Pounamu is a responsive approach that supports positive change

With the support of mana whenua, the TPC approach has been grounded in tikanga Māori principles through the four pou:

- Whakapapa – building a strong Eastside Rotorua committed to wellbeing
- Whanaungatanga – strong trusting relationships
- Wairuatanga – recognising all people's uniqueness, their identity, intelligence and spirituality
- Manaakitanga – encourage and enhance people's mana.

A constant theme of feedback from interviewees is that the Tatau Pounamu approach isn't that of a formal organisation, it is a way to bring all parts of a community together. There is no formal governance structure, instead members of the Eastside community can participate in the Collective, cohering towards the overarching vision of a safe community and nurturing the potential of tamariki.

*It's an approach rather than delivery of activity and services. While activity and services drop out of that, the key binding connectedness is around those pou and that aspiration of a safe place. And it comes and goes, like the koru, it comes in and out but overarching, that's kind of in terms of that aspiration vision what holds it together is that. (Tatau Pounamu Collective member)*

Although the trajectory of progress and change has fluctuated throughout the partnership, the pou ensure that all Tatau Pounamu Collective activities and responses maintain a connection to the original intent of the kaupapa. As shared by the Collective it is a way of working that enables them to respond to need, shift priorities and act quickly when needed.

*The Tatau Pounamu Collective is a completely open boundaried group of people who come together to think about and support what can happen and how it can happen. Whoever's [there] becomes that group and I think there's many strengths to the way we've gone, which is to say we are just who we are right now and the principles and the aspirations that underpin it. So it's responsive and adaptable according to what happens and it's not about who holds money or what we deliver in that kind of resourced based way, it's about that shared thinking and aspiration. (Tatau Pounamu Collective member)*

### The ability to experiment

Through the resource and support made available through the CLD partnership, the Tatau Pounamu Collective have been able to test and learn. This iterative approach has allowed experimentation, assessing what works and what doesn't. By embracing a culture of learning, the Collective have supported the engagement of local people, businesses, schools and other organisations to find unique responses, tailoring interventions to meet their specific needs and circumstances. It has encouraged active participation from community members, who are more likely to engage when they see that their input can lead to real adaptations and improvement.

*I think [the difference] was the ability to experiment. That whole approach of just allowing [and] giving community space to manage it, to conceive it and realise it in a way that seems worthwhile [to them]. (Community member)*

### Challenges post funding

Community members acknowledged that there is still considerable work needed to fully embed and strengthen the Tatau Pounamu approach and ensure the long-term viability of the projects. Even though their operational capacity has been reduced through other funding sources they have been able to continue the Piripiri and Pou Awhi roles. This is critical to realising the overall vision to make Eastside Rotorua a safe place where every tamaiti (child) reaches their potential.

The challenges of sustaining the Tatau Pounamu Collective have become more prominent in the current environment where local philanthropic organisations are experiencing reduced income and an increased number of grant applications. This creates significant uncertainty around continued access to resources and continuation of their work. However, the Collective will continue

to work strategically to secure the necessary support to sustain community initiatives.

*I think there's more to imbed, to support and strengthen this way of working. I always think do no harm and to me stepping back too quickly and letting it drop is harm and so that's why [we're] still here. (Tatau Pounamu Collective member)*

## Conclusion

The efforts to develop the Tatau Pounamu approach through the CLD partnership have profoundly influenced how the community thinks about the concept of community, at the neighbourhood level, and across the Eastside area. By creating spaces where neighbours, mana whenua, schools, local and central government, and businesses can collaborate, Tatau Pounamu is showing momentum. This collaborative environment has fostered a deeper understanding among community members and an enhanced willingness to cooperate and support one another. While the impact of these efforts may not always be immediately apparent, it becomes unmistakable when opportunities arise, revealing the strong undercurrents of community cohesion and resilience.

*Tatau Pounamu has a unique way of meeting you as you are and extending a hand to you. It is a gate way for many to find a path, a support crew. This helps people realise that they can and do deeply shape their neighbourhoods, and this I believe is the fundamental core of Tatau Pounamu's successes and will be their generational legacy. Tatau Pounamu plants trees in whose shade the current members shall never sit. (Community member)*

# South Alive

**This summary has been prepared after interviews with South Alive leadership and community volunteers and members in April 2024, along with analysis of key documentation and an interview with the Community Advisor.**

## Background to South Alive CLDP

Invercargill (Waihōpai) is New Zealand’s southernmost city, and the capital of Southland, with a 2023 population of 57,900. Although Invercargill is the only city in the region and the biggest urban centre, it is still much smaller than the major centres of New Zealand with a total area of 389.92 km<sup>2</sup>. It is possible to drive from any urban area of Invercargill to the city centre within 12 minutes.

Despite its small size relative to other New Zealand cities, Invercargill experiences clear geographic and cultural divides between the northern and southern areas of the city’s urban/suburban areas. This divide is referred to in common parlance as beginning “South of the tracks” or “South of Tay Street”. South Invercargill, with a population of approximately 18,000 people, has been defined as stretching from the south to west Invercargill City Council boundary, south of SH1/Tay Street.

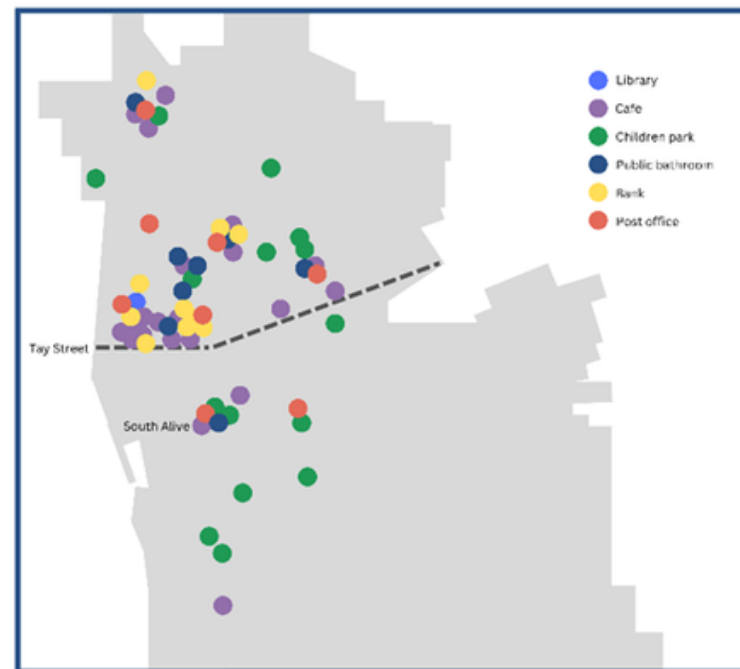
South Invercargill experiences high levels of deprivation in a number of different areas. For example, the community experiences many of the same housing issues that the broader region continues to struggle with. Invercargill has been recognised as having a particular problem with substandard, cold, and damp houses. Invercargill City Council housing strategy report found that the quality of housing arose as an area of widespread concern, especially given the age of the existing housing stock, with most built prior to minimum insulation standards, and given the southern climate.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Southland Community Housing Strategy Report. 2017. Invercargill City Council

*The housing here is more run down, you could drive past some houses and think ‘does someone live there?’ But they do. There is a huge amount of poverty in South Invercargill. (Community leadership)*

Access to infrastructure is a concern for residents of South Invercargill who report feeling under-served when compared with those who live north of the boundary. Publicly available data shows that South Invercargill houses only one public bathroom facility, two post offices (one of which is set to close in early 2025), no banks and three operational cafés.

Image 1: Rapid review of assets, google maps



*The Westpac Bank was the only bank in the South City shops and that closed when COVID hit, and it never reopened. Last week it was announced that the Post Office was going to be closing. (Community leadership)*

## About South Alive

Established in 2012, South Alive is a community-led, urban rejuvenation project operating in the South Invercargill area. The group formed as a result of the Invercargill City Council's (ICC) focus on urban regeneration at the time. The council established a small steering group and held the first public meeting in February 2012, where the community provided feedback on their hopes for the regeneration of the South Invercargill community. Ten months later, South Alive became an incorporated trust and gained charitable status in October the following year (2013).

Since its establishment, South Alive has developed into a well-recognised part of the South Invercargill community. The formalised governance structure includes thirteen board members, each selected for their representation of a certain aspect of the community. At the heart of the organisation is a multi-disciplinary volunteer network, the structure of which has developed over the last decade to ensure there are a variety of ways that community members can contribute. At present, South Alive has a register of over 100 community volunteers and a social media following of over 6,000 people.

As a community-led development organisation, South Alive prides itself on its community consultation processes and the work of its Volunteer Action Groups – who are responsible for their own idea generation, event planning, coordination, project development and delivery. Over the last decade, these groups have planned and delivered a range of projects, including planting out orchards and community gardens, developing Invercargill's first dog park, and creating the heritage trail.

The organisation has supported community advocacy and knowledge generation activities in commercial infrastructure, housing quality, and air pollution. There are also several activities facilitated and maintained through South Alive community groups such as local beautification initiatives, school holiday events, sustainability workshops and food security supports.

The South Alive team of board volunteers, formal volunteers and 2.5 FTE employees are based in the South Alive headquarters on Ness Street. This building also houses infrastructure that attracts community members across South Invercargill and beyond. This includes a café, a retail store which distributes local produce and displays local artists work, a commercial kitchen for hire, a basketball court, green space, and a community garden. The space also houses a range of meeting rooms which enable community volunteers and action groups to plan and lead projects and activities and are also available for business and communities to hire.

## CLD partnership with South Alive

South Alive became a Community Led Development Project Partner with the Department of Internal Affairs in 2019. By this time, South Alive had been operating for seven years and had established governance and organisational structures in place.

*We were quite well established before the DIA funding came along. (Community leadership)*

The DIA partnership was seen as an opportunity to promote and develop existing and new programmes and enable the South Alive team to focus their energy on working in the community, rather than seeking funding. The partnership was also seen as an opportunity to network with other community groups and leverage DIA connections, contacts, and knowledge. Of particular interest for South Alive was the advice and expertise that DIA could provide to enhance and strengthen Community Led Development Governance capability.

## Identifying Aspirations

This section discusses the ways in which the structure of South Alive has enabled communities to identify their own aspirations and how needs and aspirations have evolved over time.

### South Alive aspiration as community aspiration

South Alive, as an organisation, provides the infrastructure to enable communities to uncover, develop and deliver their own aspirations. The board, a selection of community members from different areas, deliver strategic oversight that is guided by ongoing formal and informal consultation processes. The board describes itself as having “an upside-down structure” and focuses on developing “strategy that is community-led”. Each board members’ own subject matter expertise and connections are leveraged to support a strategy that will serve the entire community.

*We’ve got thirteen Board Members and that’s quite a large Board. We’ve got people connected with church organisations, with housing, we’ve got a school principal and people involved in the health sector. They’re able to reflect back what they’re seeing and observing and that helps build a picture. (Community leadership)*

The South Alive team have two formal consultation streams, the annual survey which is sent to residents each year and a public meeting which provides an opportunity for residents to talk about developments they would like to see in their community. There are also a number of informal consultation tools used, for example setting up stands at local markets, attending education orientation weeks and keeping a record of ideas and requests from members of the public.

*At market days a couple of us will go round with the survey and you watch the Chair, she will just get everybody, she’s determined to get everybody’s say. We want to know, I mean it’s pretty arrogant to think that we know what the community wants if we haven’t asked them. (Community leadership)*

In addition to strong consultation processes, South Alive is able to understand and support community aspirations through its engine room of Volunteer Action Groups. These are comprised of local volunteers with a commitment to a particular area of interest. These groups self-form and operate under the umbrella of South Alive, which gives them access to funding and support to plan, promote and carry out activities and events.

*If the community want to do something, they often will say “Well can you just do this,” and we’ll go “No, we won’t do it, but we will help you do it.” We can start to connect them, or they may have already connected elsewhere and they’re looking for support. We go okay “let’s make you an Action Team and give you a bit of a budget [and support] so you can get going on these things. (Community leadership)*

To date, Volunteer Action Groups have formed around the following:

**Table 3: Examples of South Alive Projects and Outcomes** (next page)



Project area	Activities	Outcomes	
Beautification	Maintaining community gardens and general tidying and beautifying of local areas and assets so that spaces feel safe and inviting.	Increase use of public spaces as they feel more inviting and safer.	Engender pride in South Invercargill.
Fruit and Nut	Plan, deliver, and manage fruit and nut orchards that communities can care for and access.	Educate local communities about growing local produce. Contribute to local food security.	Make open spaces productive and useful. Opportunities to socialise and build community around mutual interests.
Sustainable Living	Focus on safe, sustainable housing and encourage creating healthy, energy efficient homes.	Support local residents to make their homes warmer and dryer. Education around sustainable practices.	Contribute to research about air quality and improve quality of air in residents homes.
Pay it Forward	Connect those who have something to offer with those that could do with some support, through food/essentials boxes, and knitted goods.	Provide food packages and knitted goods to those who need extra support.	Opportunities to socialise and build community around mutual interests.
Youth Action	Inspire and support young people in the community to have a voice and be active participants in their community.	Inspiring young leaders in the community. Actively involve young people in South Alive events, discussions, and vision.	Help the South Alive adults understand young people's wants and needs around their community involvement.
South City Transformation	Transforming the South City shopping centre into one that local residents are proud of, and which meets their needs.	Aesthetic and safety improvements to the local shopping area creating accessible and pleasant places for local people to do their shopping.	Engender pride in South Invercargill.
Arts	Provide the South Invercargill community (and beyond) with a space promoting local artistic and cultural activities.	Engender pride in South Invercargill. Fostering talent within local artist communities.	Opportunities to socialise and build community around mutual interests.
Dog Park	Establish and run a dog park and agility course facilities.	Created a space where dogs can safely socialise away from busy roads and residents.	Engender pride in South Invercargill and encouraged residents from elsewhere to visit. Rangatahi and whānau feel valued.
Events	Develop or assist events and projects which promote community identification and local pride.	Promote community identification and engender pride in South Invercargill.	Create safe events for local residents to socialise and connect.

These groups are formed by and comprised of members of the South Invercargill community. The community's desire for assets, resources and events can result in the formation of a new Action Group or be reflected in the types of initiatives that groups deliver. Therefore, looking at the patterns of Volunteer Action Groups provides a suitable proxy measure for understanding how the needs and aspirations of the community have changed over time.

For example, the Dog Park Volunteer Action Group was formed to create an off-leash area for dogs to socialise. The group aspired to develop the park with full perimeter fencing, rubbish facilities, rain covers and seating areas for pet owners, and they worked closely with council to secure the land and develop facilities. When the assets were ready for the community in 2013, the group disbanded, feeling that their job was done, but have recently reformed to consider upgrades to the park.

*There's always been ebbs and flows of focus and drive from the community. There was a group that was formed to work with Council to get the dog park established on Council land and then once it was established, it was kind of like well... it didn't need a group anymore, so it petered off. But now there's been this renewed interest in developing a kind of playground for dogs within it. (Community leadership)*

The Pay it Forward Action group is another example of community aspirations being mirrored through the formation and actions of a Volunteer Action Group. The team developed during the COVID-19 lockdowns to link those who wanted to lend a hand with those who needed support. The group produced pay it forward boxes of essential items to those who needed them in the community, using schools as a way to identify families.

*Pay it Forward was started by a former principal. She was a principal at the time of the secondary school and so she is connected with all the other principals in the other schools in our area and so we kind of identified that was through the school networks that need support and that's how we deliver our stuff. (Community leadership)*

The end of COVID-19 did not mean the end of this programme, which continues to provide essential boxes to those who need them and now includes a team of knitters producing hand knitted blankets, beanies, and singlets to families of newborns in need of support. This signals the ongoing need within the South

Invercargill community, as well as the drive from within the community to continue to contribute to and meet its own needs through this mahi.

## Outcomes and Impacts

The South Invercargill community have delivered on aspirations across a number of areas, resulting in positive outcomes and impacts within the community. This section highlights some of the broader impacts that South Invercargill's contribution to South Alive has had for the community.

### Pride

The core mission of South Alive is to “build a place to live and work that engenders pride” and so it follows that pride in the community of South Invercargill is an essential outcome that the organisation seeks to achieve. The team at South Alive have collected data through community surveys - averaging between 150 and 200 responses each year - which has shown an increase in the proportion of residents who feel proud to be a part of the South Invercargill community.

*Our whole vision is about building pride in South Invercargill. When we started, 35% of people felt a sense of pride in South Invercargill and now it sits in the late 80s, and 90s. (Community leadership)*

General beautification of the community has played an important role in changing the way that residents and the broader Invercargill community feel about South Invercargill. Planting out communal areas, providing adequate lighting to frequented facilities and generally keeping the community clean and tidy has contributed to the feeling that local areas are safe and vibrant places to be. The community also hosts events which attract thousands of attendees from across Invercargill, further contributing to the feeling that South Invercargill is a positive place to spend time.

*There's been a lot of work to beautify South Invercargill, but we also run a lot of community events and I think seeing cool things happening helps build that pride. There's still a bit of that stigma coming south of the tracks but it's not so much, North Invercargill people will come and eat at the café or shop and come to events. Perhaps ten years ago you wouldn't have had that.*  
(Community leadership)

It was clear, through speaking with members of the broader community, that while there is always more work to be done, residents are proud to be a part of the South Invercargill community and proud of their contributions to making it a better place to live and work.

*It's just making that difference and just wanting to improve things, tidy things up, making it a better place for people to live. And it is a lovely place to live.*  
(Community member)

*South City was not considered the place to be when we were growing up. It was the ruffraff area but over the years people have moved in and they've really tried to look after it. It's such a nice feeling [now], I like the community feel. People actually feel that they can come here.* (Community member)

## Purpose and contribution to the community

South Alive volunteers spoke about the sense of purpose they get from being part of, and giving back to, the community of South Invercargill. One volunteer explained that volunteering with South Alive gives her a reason to get out of bed in the morning and described her volunteer work as her anchor, providing her with a purpose and sense of value:

*We're the old farts but we're still really quite valuable. I think that's the thing that resonates is I feel valuable, I feel valued as a person and not just like a volunteer. I don't actually feel like a volunteer because my rewards are probably greater than any other job I've ever had, and this is the tail end of my life because I'm 73. So, it's just at the tail end of my life I've found something really good and worth putting my energy into.* (Community member)

Feeling valued for their unique contributions and particular skills is noted as a support factor for community members making impactful contributions to their community. Giving community members a number of ways that they can contribute and a number of areas they can work in has made the impacts of volunteering feel meaningful. One participant spoke about calling South Alive in 2020 after completing a degree in Museum and Heritage Practice, unsure of her next steps, but willing to volunteer her time and expertise in some way. Her skills were quickly put to use researching and developing a heritage trail that explores and tells South Invercargill local history:

*My biggest highlight was the first panel that we put up. The memorial itself was just kind of on a grassy patch of land and it was a little bit unkempt, but we did some work with the Council, they beautified the whole space. We had a soldier's story as part of the panel and his whose family was from South Invercargill and we invited them to the unveiling. It was just... when I came down and actually had a look at it, it was very like, I felt very proud. I was like oh... this is actually doing a really positive thing for the community.* (Community member)

## Social cohesion and connection

Another outcome of the South Alive kaupapa is providing the infrastructure for meaningful connections and relationships to form and be sustained in the community. Creating opportunities for residents to be together and make connections is central to the organisations' way of working. Inclusivity is at the heart of making this happen, which is why most events and activities offered through South Alive are free of charge.

*On Saturday, it was a festival, and everyone was happy. The sun was shining and there were people smiling everywhere. It didn't cost anything and there were free kids activities, there was a good turnout. It's really worth it when you see that kids are happy, and parents are connecting with other people.* (Community leadership)

*We've done heaps of different things like arts and crafts, and they have Lego, they do the active play as well. We've been to a couple of their like craft day things; they do free music and all sorts of cool stuff. I really enjoy it because I'm a solo mum and I'm on a low income, so I love the free activities and they're always good fun.* (Community member)

Opportunities to build connections between people and groups is also created through the volunteer groups that form and meet at the South Alive facilities. Having a space and shared values within volunteer groups has meant that volunteers have formed close relationships with each other, celebrating milestones like birthdays and wedding engagements together, and supporting each other with house moves and personal struggles.

*We had a group member, she wasn't well, but she said that made her week. She just loved coming here and that was only a few days before she passed away. That day, I said are you alright and she said no, not really, and I said you shouldn't have come in, but she just loved it so much. That was her week, and it was good for her. Good therapy, she had a good laugh, and she was enjoying the company. (Community member)*

## A place to belong

South Alive has two primary hubs that provide a physical space for people to gather: The Pantry and The Pod. The Pantry and The Pod were developed as a way to generate funding for South Alive and evolved out of the communities desire to have a space to meet and connect. Prior to the building of the Pantry and the Pod, it was felt that there was nowhere in South Invercargill that community members could gather and spend time without feeling that they had to spend money. The majority of Invercargill's cafés are concentrated North of Tay Street, along with the Invercargill library.

*There's no real free community spaces just to go, so yes that can be here. There's no expectation to buy anything. If they want to sit in The Pantry they can. We're happy people sit in there all day. (Community leadership)*

During the evaluation period, The Pantry café was buzzing with activity. The facilities are warm, well-lit, and inviting with modern amenities and spaces for people to gather or quietly enjoy a morning coffee. Outside, a basketball court was utilised by individuals of all ages throughout the day and children played with the activities laid out on the grass. Next door in The Pod, the meeting rooms were well-booked. Volunteer groups came and went during the day and in the evening the Sustainability Volunteer Action Group held a seminar on keeping homes warm and dry in the winter.

*The rooms are used for such a variety of stuff from sign language to knitting. We have a lady who's doing tap dancing lessons. We've got businesses that use it and patch workers who make their quilts and give them away to charities. It's just so well used. (Community leadership)*

A cornerstone of the setup of both The Pods and The Pantry has been creating inclusive spaces that are welcoming to everyone. The team have recognised the differing needs of the community and flexed to make sure that amenities can meet their needs. For example, the team offer mobility scooter group members a free coffee every Monday, which encourages members to come in on the café's quietest day so that they can relax without noise and "if they want to be here for three hours then they can be here for three hours."

Creating safe spaces where all members of the community want to spend time and connect with others comes down to having team members who care about the community and want every person who comes to South Alive to feel like a part of it. As one staff member put it: "Anybody could walk in here and feel welcomed, you're not judged at all."

*I come in here just about every day for coffees and just to meet people and talk. I used to go round all the different cafes around town trying them, but this is really just down the road and people talk to you, they don't ignore you. (Community member)*

*When I chose our chef, I chose her not for the cooking skills, but for her ability to interact with people. We are community space, that should be number one priority. (Community leadership)*

## Sustaining realised aspirations

There are a number of ways that South Alive have built sustainability into the ways they work, outside of traditional measures like funding. This section discusses the three cornerstones of South Alive's way of working with the community that will support aspirations to be identified and delivered on from now into the future.

## A sustainable volunteer structure

South Alive provides a variety of ways that members of the community can volunteer. Individuals can start or become a part of a Volunteer Action Group, or a volunteer group, they can volunteer in The Pantry or provide back office support. They can also join a register of volunteers that can be called on for one-off events to contribute in ways like directing traffic. This flexible approach is all about providing residents with a range of ways that they can give back to their community, and it works well because people can find ways to give back that interest them and fit in with their lives. This way of working has meant that South Alive has a large, diverse, and engaged network of volunteers – creating a sustainable foundation for aspirations to continue to be identified and worked toward.

*Sometimes we have to wait till it fits in with their schedule obviously, because a lot of people still work and that's the thing, everyone has to work a little bit harder these days to get ahead. With Volunteer Action Groups, there's a little bit of something for everyone and you can make it so that there is. We had an 80 year old say, "I'll go and paint that wall." I'm like "Okay, that would be great, thanks!"*  
(Community leadership)

## Community collaboration

South Alive partners with a number of different organisations in the community, including schools, community groups, and the city council. Maintaining positive relationships and partnerships built on mutual respect with these organisations has allowed South Alive to deliver on aspirations with high complexity. For example, delivery of the local dog park asset was heavily reliant on the strong relationship that South Alive hold with the local parks department. The team is also able to deliver large scale events such as the recent Children's Day event by drawing on local resources and relationships.

The role that South Alive plays in connecting important groups together and the quality of the relationships that have been built are key in delivering sustainable outcomes into the future.

*That children's day event was us pulling it all together, but we had about eight organisations that came along and each ran a different activity for the kids. We were able to run this free event for tamariki for a few thousand dollars and we had a few thousand people there, but we were able to do that because we used all these other organisations in our community.*  
(Community leadership)

## South Alive is South Invercargill

For South Alive, the reason that the community of South Invercargill continues to articulate and work toward its own aspirations is simple. South Alive is a part of South Invercargill.

*Council had tried lots of different initiatives to try and revitalise the area, but nothing really worked because it was the Council coming in and doing what they thought should happen.* (Community leadership)

*We're South Alive. We're Team South Alive and we work as a team.*  
(Community member)

# Whananāki

**This summary has been prepared after hui with members of Te Whana o Te Nanakia Charitable Trust, partnering organisations, hapū and community members in April 2024, along with analysis of key documentation and an earlier hui with the Community Advisor.**

## Background to Whananāki CLDP

Whananāki is situated on the east coast of Northland, around 35 minutes north-east of Whangarei. The area was reputedly named by Puhī, the captain of the Mātaatua waka. In te reo Māori Whananāki means "kicking", and the name arose because mosquitoes caused Puhī to sleep restlessly.<sup>4</sup>

Whananāki marae is located in Whananāki, near Opuawhanga. It belongs to the hapū of Te Whānau Whero and Ngāti Rehua, who affiliate to the iwi Ngāti Wai. The wharehau is named Whakapaumahara. Whananāki marae connects to the maunga Onekainga and to Te Wairahi River.

Te Wairahi Stream flows from the northwest into Whananāki Inlet, a wide tidal estuary which separates Whananāki from Whananāki South. A mangrove ecosystem in the estuary is home to many species of birds, fish and marine creatures. The longest footbridge in the Southern Hemisphere connects Whananāki North and Whananāki South.

Whananāki is a small community enjoyed by fewer than 1000 locals who frequently refer to it as "paradise on earth". The population more than triples in summer, with holidaymakers flocking to holiday in baches, cabins, lodges or one of the numerous beautiful campgrounds. Whananāki also lies on the Te Araroa hiking trail. The local school was opened in 1887 and is a coeducational full primary (years 1–8) school with a roll of around 30 students.

Historically, local residents make a distinction between the largely non-Māori community along the beach and estuary – referred to as 'the beach' (or 'the coast') – and the largely Māori community at Te Wairahi referred to as 'the valley'. Both areas are on the northern side of the estuary.

## Identifying aspirations

### The project

Whananāki was one of the first intake of communities into CLDP after the initial pilot phase, and was established in 2017. Whananāki's adoption of community-led development approaches, sitting alongside mātauranga Māori and an indigenous lens, firmly shaped their vision for a "culturally connected caring community."

### Engaging broadly to understand community context and develop aspirations

The opportunity to engage with CLDP was recognised early on as a way to put aside years of "us and them" and come together to ensure the environmental, economic, social and cultural wellbeing of Whananāki.

Pam Armstrong, a passionate community Rangatira, led the way and brought the community together to discuss CLDP and explore aspirations. Through several hui at Whakapaumahara marae and the community hall, people were encouraged to identify the strengths, knowledge and skills within the community. It was a strengths-based space that enabled people to start with the positive aspects of the community, no matter where they were living in Whananāki.

<sup>4</sup> <https://teara.govt.nz/en/whangarei-tribes/page-1>

*When I first heard about it, I was really keen to be involved because I understood it to be a group that wanted to do projects within the community and their focus would be on including the community and bringing the community together and those sort of things that are dear to my heart. (Community leadership)*

Reflecting on that time, kaumatua shared that the community was divided but through the hui and Pam's inspiration, people were in the room talking together for the first time. Through sharing experiences and knowledge of the community, people realised they all wanted the best for the community and that the perceived differences between them were not as significant.

*I feel like it could have been a lack of understanding of Māori but I think in the end, because we're in this beautiful place Whananāki, [where] everyone here just loves this place, the water, the moana, and that's something we see eye to eye [on]. And with [that] we can work together because we all have something in common. (Community leadership)*

The community hui was a safe space for community members to share moemoeā (dreams) and have robust conversations. Evaluation participants remembered hearing how locals had not been to the marae before, even though they had lived there their whole lives.

*We had a kōrero around that and it actually came out [they] did really want to come up here and join in, bring their kids [but thought] they might be told, no you can't do that. And it was quite interesting, cos we're not a whānau like that. Whoever comes to our marae, is welcome. I really felt sort of pouri when I heard that. (Kaumātua)*

From the kōrero a Path Plan was developed. Community-led development principles and mātauranga Māori were integrated to shape the vision and mission statements. The vision statement encompassed the purpose of the Whananāki CLD - **a culturally connected caring community**, while the mission statement **Te Hoe o te Waka – to paddle swiftly and in the right direction**, outlined the ways of working together.

Following the hui, the community lodged an expression of interest with the Department, at which point a Hāpai Hapori advisor became involved.

## Involving mana whenua supported the partnership approach

The intention behind the initial community engagement hui was to build and strengthen connections and relationships between mana whenua and the wider community. Hui were held at the marae and mana whenua guided the partnership using tikanga Māori principles, whakawhanaungatanga, manaakitanga, aroha and whakapono. Being able to meet in space that resonated with Māori offered an opportunity to stand in their mana motuhake and identify what they felt was important; their moemoeā for the community and themselves. It also provided an opportunity to share marae tikanga and kawa.

*I think it's about us too having the opportunity to sort of determine our own rangatiratanga, to be able to meet and greet and be in spaces that we feel comfortable in. (Community member)*

## Whananāki aspirations focus on a sustainable future

Working towards a sustainable future is critical for Whananāki and four key goals guide overall direction:

- Protecting the environment – biodiversity, clean water, mara kai, rongoā, flora and fauna, food forests, art walkways
- Economic development – social enterprise, ecotourism, training (in Wairahi many young people move away to find work, large unemployed base or retirees)
- Cultural connectedness – marae transformation, te reo me nga tikanga (many people had never been to marae, an invisible divide)
- Social outcomes – better access to health services, recreation activities, arts and workshops and social enterprise

## Staged development helped to realise aspirations

Throughout the course of the partnership, Whananāki CLD leadership have stayed true to the four areas of community aspirations noted above.

The approach to realising the community aspirations was encapsulated by Pam Armstrong in a presentation “start small think big”. Development of lofty aspirations help to build excitement and interest, and the Path planning enabled people to get involved and share what was important to them and Whananāki. Ideas were researched, tested, refined, trimmed back and then broken into smaller tasks and activities – a staged approach.



As shared by the community, some projects progressed very quickly while others took much more time. What is apparent to the CLD leadership roopu is that the community determined the pace of the projects and where energy and attention is directed. There were quick wins like solar installation in the Fire Emergency Services and Community Hall. These projects were significant milestones and created energy and vigour amongst the community.

As the community works towards reaching the outcomes, there are ebbs and flows as different areas become the focus and priority. However, the vision statement - a culturally connected, caring community – continues to anchor the CLD project work.

*We had some quite big kaupapa that were the main drivers for our CLD and I guess the fauna and flora were one of the main ones. I think at the beginning there was a clear position discussed or put in place that going forward it was always going to be about the people and the environment. From that came the big ideas and then from the big ideas we broke it down into CLD initiatives. (Community leadership)*

## Supporting transformational change

The CLDP partnership has been critical to supporting the Whananāki community as they “paddle” towards their aspirations. With the ongoing support from the CLDP advisor and funding, the partnership has led to many tangible changes in the community, including flora and fauna restoration, development of a native nursery, installations of solar panels and the erection of a Pou carving (see below in Table 4).

CLD activated the community by focusing on taiao activities of reestablishing mara kai, restoring waterways, weed eradication; and rangatahi projects of rongoā social enterprise and digital story telling.

*It was just nice to know that there was community there behind our whānau for that big event and they knew it was important to us and took that on board. And also we've had like two Matariki days since then that they've supported well and come along to and again help with cooking in the kitchen, having little kōrero about things, sharing their expertise in areas, it's really cool and sharing it out to the rest of the community to come along. (Rangatahi)*

Community members shared how the CLD projects helped them to reconnect with people and the environment after moving back to the area, while those who have had to move outside of the community can still stay connected. The projects have also provided a way for people to give back to a community they care very deeply about.

*My history with Whananāki is I lived here as a child in the '50s. I came back 20 years later as a solo mother. I lived here for 36 and then really, really sadly I had to shift to town and but I'm still very involved in the community [through CLD]. (Community leadership)*

The Native Nursery project is good example of different parts of the community consistently working together. Located on marae grounds, the nursery is now home to a community mara kai and orchard trees. It is seen as a valuable food source for everyone.

*[The mara kai] is producing kai for the marae for us, the people, for everyone in the community. Healthy kai, it's beautiful. Being able to live off our garden that's been one big bonus for us here. This is what the CLD has helped us do that. (Kaumatua)*

Given the nursery's location it has also encouraged community to become involved in the redevelopment of Whakapaumahara marae grounds. While CLD provided a small pūtea to support the work at the marae, what has been more significant is the number of people that have turned out to help throughout the restoration.

*The CLD gave money to support [work on the marae] but also they were just there to support us like hands on deck... they were just always reassuring, their awahi around that time for our whānau and at working bees, like they were present with kai for our working bees. (Marae Trustee)*



**Table 4: Examples of Whananāki CLDP Projects and Outcomes**

Project area	Activities	Outcomes
Flora and Fauna	Restoration of biodiversity in North and Whananāki South Road Coordination of animal and plant pest control Establish a Kiwi Zone with free Public Dog Kiwi aversion training Kiwi education day at local school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps to build a resilient eco system</li> <li>• Increased awareness of taiao and people are able to get involved and feel useful</li> <li>• Stronger sense of responsibility and ownership among the community as kaitiaki of the whenua</li> </ul>
Rangatahi	Youth Social Enterprise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After school and marae wānanga</li> <li>• Market research, test concepts, develop products, marketing and sales</li> <li>• Focus on rongoā products which ties into environment kawakawa balm</li> </ul> Digital story telling with an intergenerational focus Capturing stories from the elderly community, focusing on key features of the community like the footbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public viewing of the video in the hall built a sense of pride</li> <li>• Rangatahi have a sense of purpose and accomplishment</li> <li>• Technical skills - use of iMac and cameras</li> <li>• The digital story telling created excitement in the community and those involved felt affirmed and valued</li> </ul>
Pou installation	Contemporary carved Pou representing whakapapa and pūrakau of rohe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created a better understanding of the rohe</li> <li>• A physical symbol of a culturally connected and caring community</li> </ul>
Native nursery	Development of a native nursery offering employment and training opportunities. Development of mara kai, wetlands and waterway reclamation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land is productive and enjoyed by community</li> <li>• Pride of place and a healthy space to connect</li> <li>• Fish in the stream for first time in years</li> <li>• Staff employed, including rangatahi</li> </ul>
Solar panel installations	Solar panels installed at Whananāki emergency centre and beach hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More aware of sustainable energy and clean water issues</li> <li>• Long term financial gain</li> <li>• Warmer, comfortable spaces for community groups</li> </ul>

## Sustained impact and benefits

### Relational approaches are essential

There are some enduring impacts in the community from the CLD partnership, and some physical assets for all to share and experience: the Native Nursery, Community mara kai, and Marae transformation. Long lasting intangible outcomes are also significant, as are the established ways of working.

The collaborations and alliances developed through the CLD partnership serve as an essential framework for achieving sustainability. Central to this approach is the ability to navigate relationships and partnerships towards common goals, including those of the partners involved. It involves reaching out to potential collaborators where there is synergy, such as the Department of Conservation's Jobs for Nature initiative. Despite challenges arising from the busyness of people's lives, maintaining the momentum and keeping doors open remains crucial. Rather than giving up on projects that may have faced setbacks, the focus is on learning and adaptation within the broader context of the project's goals.

### There is an ongoing commitment to achieving community aspirations

Another critical aspect of the exiting of CLDP funding was setting up Te Whana o Nanaaki Charitable Trust, as a way to continue to develop strategies for sustainability and ensure financial accountability. Prior to this, Ngā Manga Pūriri had managed the CLD finances. This changeover marked a crucial step towards organisational sustainability and the need for CLD leadership to strategically position themselves. The CLD leadership roopu continues to meet regularly although smaller in number. It is a strong platform to respond to any emerging needs and challenges of community. Most roopu members wear "several pōtae" representing different parts of the community, including library committee, ratepayers associations, school board, civil defence and marae.

As a result of their deeper familiarity and understanding, CLD community members are now engaging in meaningful dialogue and facilitating robust conversations. Efforts persist to actively involve the wider community, recognising the connection between community engagement and project success. While participation levels may vary, with some initiatives drawing in

only a few individuals and others attracting larger groups, the emphasis remains on consistently extending invitations and providing opportunities for community engagement.

They are actively engaged in various community initiatives contributing to the Civil Defence plan, organising community events and participating in meetings, such as the Ratepayers gatherings, where they can discuss CLD practices and activities. Furthermore, they are currently strengthening the Whananāki CLD strategic plan, and engaging with the community. Central to this plan the continued development of the Community Hub and broader community outcomes.

The Community Hub which is at the stage of attracting funding to start building is one such project that will need the support of the wider community. The hub is seen as a platform for sharing the rich cultural heritage and stories of Whananāki. Additionally, creating spaces within the hub for rangatahi activities, conferences, food and refreshments and local art gallery will cater to the needs of community and visitors.

*Once that Hub is developed, we feel like we could do more little things like that. We could do little rangatahi days in the holidays, little activities that could just run for the morning and that would bring more of the community together and maintain these relationships that we're talking about, that we've I guess mended. It's now about maintaining that sense of community between people. (Community member)*

## Enhancing wellbeing of the community and hapū

From the perspective of the community the CLD partnership has contributed to the wellbeing of its members. It has fostered inclusivity and help to amplify voices, particularly those of Māori and hapū members.

Wellbeing creation for Te Whana o Nanaaki CLD is centred around principles of:

- **Kotahitanga** – collaborative ways of working that support synergistic outcomes for all



- **Rangatiratanga** - offering opportunities at an individual and collective level to participate in decision making and the right to exercise agency
- **Manaakitanga** - inclusive approach that supports people and expressions of mutual respect and reciprocity
- **Whanaungatanga** – through a relational approach finding connection and a sense of belonging
- **Kaitiakitanga** – protecting and nurturing people and the environment strengthening emotional, cultural, physical, and spiritual connections within the community.

As one community member shared, being part of CLD holds personal significance in ensuring that the community's diverse perspectives are heard and valued. The inclusive nature of the CLD Committee has been particularly notable, creating a space where everyone feels welcome and involved.

*I didn't grow up here but I came up here every holidays, all summer, camp a lot so it's cool that there's something like this that's going to pull those connections together; the community that are from here but also community that are actually living here. (Community member)*

## Realising aspirations

### Through shared understanding relationships have strengthened

The Whananāki CLD vision is a culturally connected caring community. Fundamental to this is improving knowledge amongst community members to support a better understanding of each other. Through CLD, the community have been able to target projects that have increased intergenerational understanding, tikanga Māori knowledge, and opportunities for different parts of the community to come together.

A significant change has been improved relationships between Māori and non-Māori – the valley and beach communities. While some divisions still persist, the community is now significantly more interconnected, and community members reflected that there is less division in the community as a direct result of the CLDP partnership. People who had never previously visited the marae began attending meetings held there, gradually eroding the barriers between different segments of the community. As the project progressed, it

became evident that for some attendees, it marked their inaugural experience setting foot on the marae grounds, despite having grown up in the vicinity.

*In 10 years we've made that step to come together, to join up our community, and to bring them on board with us, [to] get them involved with what's happening up here and for us too, to get ourselves involved [with] what's happening down there. So it's actually been a good thing for us and at this time it's working. (Kaumatua)*

*And I do think because of the CLD they really value the marae and points of view of whānau... And now they are quite respectful because of CLD achievements but also achievement of the hapū that has brought the marae to where it is today, from looking that way to looking this way. (Community member)*

### Authentic shared leadership has developed

Positive leadership has emerged from within the community, and as the partnership has progressed, individuals involved in multiple community groups have helped to bridge the gap and facilitate understanding and collaboration. The CLD coordinator role has been pivotal. Deeply rooted in Whananāki, with intimate knowledge of the community and extensive experience in community work, he has been able to build respect and trust from all sides. His leadership has played a crucial role in strengthening community connections and promoting the CLDP principles within Whananāki.

The CLD partnership aligned with expressions of sovereignty and self-determination for the community. It was a mana-enhancing process that supported the right of mana whenua to participate in decision making. Rangatira a hapū provided mindful advice and direction, ensuring that processes remained tika and pono. Kaumatua on the CLD leadership roopu have been able to settle challenges and provide reassurance to the hapū and community.



## Challenges post funding

The absence of a steady stream of funding has necessitated a re-evaluation of priorities and a more cautious approach to making commitments. Despite ongoing efforts to support existing community initiatives, there is a recognition of the need to scale back and refocus efforts in the face of limited resources. Moreover, succession planning and nurturing new leadership to sustain the initiative's legacy is important. The transition to a volunteer-based model has underscored the difficulties in accessing funds and resources, despite the wealth of knowledge and potential partnerships available within the group.

To overcome these challenges, community members spoke about the need for future opportunities to explore innovative fundraising ideas, aligning with various funding streams, and the development of community funding calendar. This is indicative of the group's resilience and determination to navigate the post-funding landscape.

## Conclusion

In the minds of community members who have been involved in CLD, it has built a stronger sense of community and provided “a bridge for people to come together”. The sense of collective benefit is evident and it appears that the initiatives have been or will be of benefit in the future to the community of Whananāki. A recurring theme in conversations across the community is a shared desire for the success of this kaupapa. There is a notable absence of pessimism or concerns about failure; instead, discussions continued to be focused on the progress and sustainability of initiatives like the nursery. Even in uncertain times, the focus remains on the advancement of the aspirations and vision - a culturally connected caring community.

*One of the common connections when listening to others right across the community is they want this kaupapa to be a success. There's not a negative word around failing as sorts, it's always what's happening with the nursery, do you think he's set, what's happening, what's kind of, are you hoping it's going to survive for the rest of the year. We will always be maintaining the bridge, I call it. We can't say we've successfully built a bridge, we will just keep mending it and maintaining it because the people will come and go. (Community leadership)*



# Part 3 | Appendices

# Appendix 1: Evaluation approach

## CLDP evaluation plan and framework

The CLDP evaluation plan and framework were developed in collaboration with Hāpai Hapori, informed by a design workshop in February 2024. Our approach focussed on assessing the impacts of the CLDP partnership by exploring the experiences of four diverse communities. Our methodology sits alongside the 'Arotakenga Hāpai Hapori,' the CLD Evaluation Framework detailed in Appendix 2.

## Impact case study approach

This evaluation applies an impact case study approach and explores four partner communities that concluded their partnership in the last 1-2 years. This method comprehensively examines the outcomes and impacts of interventions, focusing on their influence on individuals, groups, and the wider community. By exploring tangible and intangible changes and assessing the extent of community aspirations achieved, the findings can inform learning for other communities and shape the design of the CLDP program. **The case study communities** selected by Hāpai Hapori leadership represent diverse characteristics such as partnership duration, pre-existing community initiatives, mana whenua involvement, tangata whenua population, and geographic distribution.

In line with the CLDP's commitment to collaborating with Māori and diverse communities, the evaluation process embraced Kaupapa Māori principles and prioritised respectful and responsible engagement with their experiences and perspectives.

## Data collection and analysis

This evaluation report is informed by comprehensive 2-day site visits with communities including observation of partnership activities and assets, and interviews with community partners (steering/leadership groups and facilitators) and members. Hāpai Hapori community advisors working with each CLDP project and a small number of key external stakeholders that had worked closely with the case study communities and Hāpai Hapori were also interviewed. Interviews were conducted over April and May 2024 and ranged in duration from 2-hour hui with community leadership to brief 20-minute informal interviews with community members. One person provided written feedback. In total, 46 individual and group interviews were conducted over the course of this evaluation, capturing the perspectives of 41 community partners or members, 3 community advisors from Hāpai Hapori, and 2 external stakeholders. Data collection was supplemented by document analysis, including quarterly and results reports provided by Hāpai Hapori. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and/or detailed notes were taken. The evaluation team collectively discussed findings from data collection, which have informed this report. Information sheets and consent forms for signing were supplied to all participants.

Data collection was supplemented by **document analysis** for which Hāpai Hapori supplied the evaluation team with quarterly and results reports for participating communities. Other documentation was accessed online from community websites or supplied to the evaluation team by partner communities.

## Outcome and impact focused theory of change

An impact-focused Theory of Change for the CLDP program was developed through a collaborative process involving CLDP documentation, past evaluations, and a workshop with Hāpai Hapori. It aims to illuminate the program's intended outputs, outcomes, and impacts, serving as a roadmap for understanding the work of CLDP communities. The revised Theory of Change delineates the journey from resources to activities, outcomes, and ultimately, the desired impacts of the CLDP. See Appendix 4 for the updated Theory of Change.



## Appendix 2: Arotakenga Hāpai Hapori

‘Arotakenga Hāpai Hapori,’ the CLD Evaluation Framework was developed to support the evaluation efforts for the CLD programme. The framework details the project’s intended outcomes within the wider contextual environment of Te Tiriti ō Waitangi and the obligations that sit under that, and the wider social and ecological environment, Te Ao Tūroa. The framework sets out in detail overarching outcomes, questions, and measures.



The evaluation framework represents variables that contribute to a Thriving Community - beginning with Te Ao Tūroa.

The natural world and environment locate people to place and highlights the importance of our environment to wellbeing and vitality.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi, The Treaty of Waitangi and our collective (community) and organisational (DIA) values sets are what underpins partnerships and guides our processes.

Oranga Tangata - a Thriving Community is the collective vision shared by both DIA and communities - Working on the tangible to achieve the intangible (Community Partner, 2018).

Tukunga iho represent three shared outcomes of the CLDP and therefore are the main foci for the evaluation - we will measure our success against each of these outcomes and how they contribute to achieving the shared vision - Thriving Communities

## Appendix 3: Participating CLDP communities

Community details	Contract details	Community vision
Whananaaki – Northland	Contract Signed: 30/06/2017	A culturally connected caring community
Tatau Pounamu Collective – Rotorua	Contract Signed: 14/07/2017	Tatau Pounamu – a place where we can combine our respective relationships, knowledge, perspectives, and resources to meet the identified needs of our residents.
Fab Feathy-Featherston – Wairarapa	Contract Signed: 02/02/2018	To fully realise the potential of Featherston while retaining and enhancing what makes our town and community distinctive and great.
South Invercargill Urban Rejuvenation project – Invercargill	Contract Signed: 02/09/2019	A vibrant and diverse community that takes the lead in its own future.



# Appendix 4: Updated Community-led Development Programme Impact-Focused Theory of Change

## Theory of Change: Community Led Development Project

Vision: Strong, resilient communities, hapū and iwi achieving locally owned visions and goals

