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# SHAPING THE FUTURE

Enabling Community-led Change.  
Kia whakamana i te whakawhanake ā-hapori.

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# FOREWORD

from Inspiring Communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic is an extraordinary challenge that has required extraordinary solutions. Harvesting and documenting the extraordinary, to distill what we now know possible, lies at the heart of this report.

Thanks to Covid, we have a new reference point for what can be achieved when we all work together – in our communities and as a nation. One of the major lessons from Covid is just how much place matters. We all live in a place and every place has unique strengths, assets, contexts and wisdom. When we build on these, transformative change becomes possible. Understanding and activating all the resources in our places is key to enhancing social, economic, cultural and environmental wellbeing.

Inspiring Communities<sup>1</sup> proudly flies the flag of community-led development; but we understand for some the ‘led’ part is misunderstood.

Community-led development does not mean that local residents or community organisations are sole decision makers. Rather it recognises that successful solutions cannot be parachuted in from the outside. Success is framed within a collective lens – a local systems approach – where everyone has something to contribute

to activate positive change (Te Whakawhanake ā-Hapori).

COVID-19 has taught us many things. High up on the list is that when it was required, people ran from their silos, stepped up, focused on shared purpose and got ‘#@it’ done. Power was shared because it was the right and necessary thing to do. We all understand a crisis enables this – the opportunity now is to embed these changes in the way we work all the time. Using what we’ve learned can help us solve other complex challenges which have spent too long mired in top down mindsets and inflexible responses.

Shaping the Future is rooted in the experiences, insight and wisdom generously offered by those we interviewed. It also draws on the knowledge and understanding that sits within the Inspiring Communities team. Our expertise comes from many years of working with and alongside communities, and in navigating all layers of the system.

“To make a difference, we need to be up for change, including changing ourselves, no matter where we sit.”

Mā te huruhuru,  
ka rere te manu.

*Adorn the bird with  
feathers so it can fly.*



**Te Whakawhanake ā-Hapori**  
Weaving our connections and contributions

<sup>1</sup> For more about Inspiring Communities see page 20

We proudly use this to interpret and provide context to this report.

As you read Shaping the Future, we ask that you both reflect and take action to realise the potential of community-led action, local resilience and nationwide revitalisation. We are all part of the system; we all have spheres of influence and can all be part of solutions. To make a difference, we need to be up for change, including changing ourselves, no matter where we sit. We also need to be up for working collectively, leaving no one behind. While much of the innovation and action discussed here predates COVID-19, we now need to do more – because when our communities are resilient, Aotearoa is a better place for everyone to live.

*Nō reira ruku  
mai, whāia te  
mātauranga hei  
oranga mō  
tātou katoa.*



Community food distribution,  
Tāneatua.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Aotearoa's success in eliminating COVID-19 is remarkable, matched by only a few other countries in the world. It required not only effective leadership and fast action by central government, but also the co-ordinated effort of thousands of local people around the country.**

Working together, individuals, whānau, hapū, iwi, NGOs, councils, agencies and businesses ensured the hauora (health and wellbeing) of their communities. Clear messaging and expectations, a strong sense of shared purpose, empowering people to work differently and adequate resourcing were key central government enablers of these locally-led responses.

Drawing on the assets and strengths already in place, including strong leadership, trusted relationships and diverse connections, local responses were incredibly successful. Tino rangatiratanga saw hapū and iwi take a leading role. United with a shared vision, communities came together quickly and organised solutions that were generous, holistic and mobilised resources to enable an effective local systems response.

As a result, there's a new respect for – and confidence within – local communities, hapū and iwi, who've shown how effectively they can respond. There's now an opportunity to

carry forward the things that worked well during the crisis: high trust funding, use of technology, better co-ordination and mobilisation of local resources, and nimble, flexible responses. Embedding these ways of working into 'business as usual' will result in more effective responses to ongoing challenges – as well as future crises.

Community resilience will be key to facing these challenges. We now know that how well we look after our most vulnerable impacts on the safety and wellbeing of all, and we have a new appreciation of the value of spending time with our whānau, connecting with our communities, enjoying our local places and supporting our local businesses.

We have a once in a lifetime opportunity to 'build back better' in many different spheres. To do this we need to leverage and embed key system shifts brought to light through the rāhui, by taking the following actions:

## TAKING ACTION

- 
**Decentralise.** Devolve funding and power to hapū and local communities. Involve hapū and communities in design and local decision-making processes alongside iwi, councils, business, and other key stakeholders. Support tino rangatiratanga and local self-determination.
- 
**Recognise and respect difference.** A variety of responses will be needed to serve and support diverse parts of local communities and enable equity. One size solutions do not fit all, and imposing them can undermine local initiatives and marginalise those outside the mainstream.
- 
**Value people and relationships.** People, connections and trust make things happen. Build social infrastructure through networks, brokering and weaving roles. Relationship comes before partnership.
- 
**Embed collaboration.** Look for further opportunities to work with others, especially across silos. Partnering makes better use of local resources, shares risk and encourages innovation and learning.
- 
**Build local economic resilience and redefine shovel ready.** Fund locally-led enterprise and action. Support processes and capability building that connects and builds more integrated social and economic capacity.
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**Tolerate more risk.** Complex challenges require creative responses to see what works. Mandate innovation and learning and provide flexible funding that allows for change and adaptation.

For more about Inspiring Communities see page 20

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Ka nui te mihi ki a koutou katoa i tautoko i ngā kōrero nei. Tēnā koutou mō tō koutou kaha me tō koutou manawanui ki te āwhina i tēnei kaupapa hirahira.**

Inspiring Communities would like to thank the many people who so generously gave their time to ensure that what they did, observed and reflected on will endure and contribute to shaping the future. Inspiring Communities' kaupapa is sharing and learning from each other. As an organisation we feel privileged to be working with so many insightful and inspirational people.

**Christina Howard, Megan Courtney, Denise Bijoux and Rachel Roberts.**

Inspiring Communities Shaping the Future Publication team - July 2020.



Lockdown Teddy Bear Hunt, Aotearoa.

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# 1.0 | SETTING THE SCENE

**In the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, effective leadership and fast action by government was matched by people and communities across Aotearoa. Both local and nationally-led responses mattered – he waka eke noa, we were in this together.**

Amidst massive disruption the impossible became possible, with amazing examples of community-led organising<sup>2</sup> and action seen right across the country.

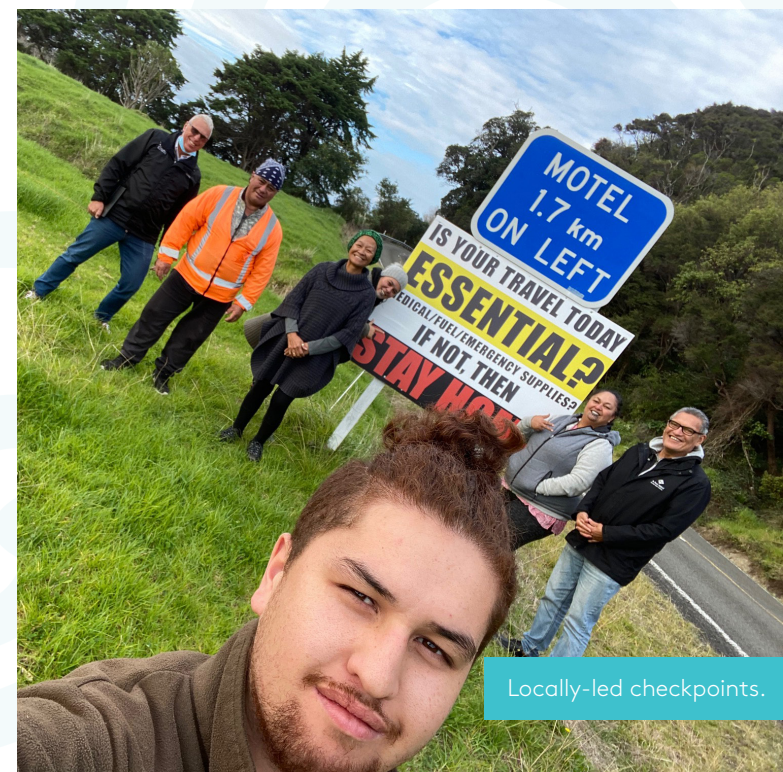
Over May and June 2020, the Inspiring Communities team spoke with nearly 70 people<sup>3</sup> -from locals leading kai resiliency, to economic development and enterprise champions, to hapū leaders, community activists, NGOs and central and local government officials. While not exhaustive, collectively they covered a wide range of sectors, interests, perspectives and places. Their insights help paint a comprehensive picture, not just of local experiences but of hopes and aspirations for the future.

**Our aim was to find out as much as possible about local rāhui (lock-down) experiences, and to capture:**

- some of the new ways of thinking and working in community that emerged.
- key aspects (mindsets, relationships, policies and practices) that we want and need to hold on to rather than fall back into business as usual.
- systems change that will enable greater community resilience to face future challenges and better enable local wellbeing.

From these conversations<sup>4</sup>, it was clear that collaborative, locally-led action was a key factor that ensured the hauora (health and wellbeing) of the population during the rāhui.

The success of our health response means we can now face the coming global economic recession from a position of strength. A continued focus on community resilience in Aotearoa is vital.



Locally-led checkpoints.

**The opportunity now is to further support locally-led community action, harnessing the power and potential that was activated during the rāhui to contribute to the social, environmental, cultural and economic revitalisation and reimagination of our country.**

<sup>2</sup> Community-led and locally-led are interchangeable terms used throughout the report. Both reflect collaborative local planning and action approaches built from local contexts, needs and aspirations.

<sup>3</sup> See page 18 for our report contributors.

<sup>4</sup> Conversations were held over phone and Zoom, with contributors also invited to participate in two 'sense making' zui to help shape key themes and system shifts noted later in this report.

## 2.0 | HOW COMMUNITIES RESPONDED

**Aotearoa's community response was framed and informed by national level expectations and directives, including:**

- **Leadership from the top** – clear, regular, direct messaging from government set the tone for ways of being and working: Be kind, Our team of 5 million, Unite Against COVID-19. This set an expectation for everyone (across all sectors) about how things would be done here in Aotearoa.
- **A strong sense of shared purpose** nationally – there was a real understanding that the whole country was in this together, that everyone mattered, and we all needed to look after each other, especially our most vulnerable. Shared values were activated and promoted – kotahitanga (solidarity, unity), manaakitanga (kindness, generosity, caring for everyone) and whanaungatanga (the importance of relationships and connection).
- **Empowerment of people to work differently and 'do what it takes'** – based on best information at the time to act quickly, and develop, pivot, improve as they

went along, working on trust. As well as government agencies, this empowered way of working was also evident in many local councils, hapū/iwi, businesses, NGOs and other groups.

- **Resourcing** was available, at the level needed to do what was required – in fast and simplified ways, with high trust. As well as funding from government and philanthropy, new community resources were accessed and existing resources shared (from whānau, businesses and others).

## INSIGHT

**Atawhai Tibble normally works at the Social Wellbeing Agency but was seconded to the central government COVID-19 Response team for the lock-down period. He was part of Manaaki – a team whose purpose was to triage iwi issues.**

“The worst time to form relationship is during a pandemic. Having been around a while, with deep connections in and amongst whānau, iwi and hapū, NGOs and government agencies I knew this immediately. We also knew whānau, hapū and iwi would be integral in response, they would activate and get stuff done. It's our tikanga, it is who we are.

Manaaki was set up because a lot of iwi were concerned with how government would behave. They felt they wouldn't be heard, and many weren't happy. Tino Rangatiratanga came into play. Iwi wanted their place at the table. Manaaki was breaking down the barriers to enable iwi to do what they needed.

9.30am we got the issues – by the afternoon they had been dealt with. It worked because Manaaki officials had relationships. I observed that where officials had no relationships into local places they were very transactional. But this changed over the period, stronger relationships developed,

trust took over, and people in places, in local and central government just pulled together to make things happen.

So many good ways of working emerged (from this). For example, iwi said, give us the data then we will tell you what we need. They knew their place, who needs food, who had health issues, these were identified and mapped, they ran whānau surveys and then came back – this is what we need. It was a strengths-based way of working. Kindness, economic, meeting social. Like the iwi business selling fish at subsidised rates to feed their whānau. We must work more locally. It would great to see Manaaki endure.”

**Example of data available on [Manaakipromise.co.nz](https://manaakipromise.co.nz)**



**NZ Supermarkets - Point based**

This layer shows New Zealand Supermarkets (Countdown, New World, Pak'nSave, FreshChoice)...

On the ground, it was community-led responses and action that ensured people and whānau had what they needed to get through the rāhui and stop the spread of COVID-19.

**At neighbourhood level, people informally self-organised in their streets, suburbs and towns to share and provide:**

- social contact, emotional support and fun activities that helped keep spirits up.

- practical support such as grocery shopping and picking up prescription medicines (especially helpful for the elderly, medically vulnerable and those parenting alone).
- resources, time, ideas and money to support local and nation-wide efforts.



A neighbour's note during the rāhui.

## INSIGHT

**Emma (EJ) is a solo mum, neighbourhood activator, and part of Community Taranaki.**

"What was great was the friendship I grew with my next-door neighbour. As a solo mum, having accessible support right next door was probably what got me through lock down. Whānau on the other side of town couldn't do for me what my neighbour did because she was right there. I didn't really know her that well, but I do now.

The box of supplies I received because I was registered with Tui Ora (who worked in partnership with Tu Tama Wahine and iwi) was amazing and had products I couldn't have afforded, like natural cleaning supplies, gloves, sanitary pads, toilet paper and much more. It gave me a huge sense of being connected and supported - that others were doing this for me and my family without having been asked to. What was tricky is that not everyone in my street got a box - so I distributed half of what I had to others because I could and it felt right. We know who needs help because we are connected...

I also put a note on Facebook and asked mums with kids to contact me if there was stuff they needed help with. One person connected with me - she was a solo māmā, new to town, with a troubled background and had health issues. I took stuff from my pantry and gave it to her - not that I had a lot, but I knew I had to share what I had."



At local level, organisations (hapū, iwi, marae, rūnanga; sporting, cultural and religious groups; community and voluntary organisations; health, social service and Whānau Ora providers; government agency branches, local councils, emergency response groups; economic development agencies, businesses, and more) **self-organised to create collaborative, holistic responses, as illustrated in the examples below:**

- safety - hapū checkpoints, re-housing people when home was dangerous.
- health - hygiene packs, Covid testing, other health needs.
- food - cooked meal and food parcel deliveries, food rescue and distribution of surplus food, grocery shopping services.
- shelter and warmth - getting un-housed people into accommodation (with wrap-around supports where needed), firewood, heaters and warm clothes.
- communication technology - cell phones, data, modems, devices to enable connection and education.
- information - translated if needed and shared via social media, at checkpoints and elsewhere.
- employment and business support - redeploying staff to essential services, advice on accessing wage subsidies, creating pre-purchase voucher systems for cafes.

- arts, cultural, recreational and spiritual support - online choirs, fitness challenges, live performance, karakia and marae outreach.

**“What I have seen is our whānau, hapū and iwi coming forward, taking responsibility for our elders, for our mokopuna, for all our whānau. And that’s what we want...to rebuild the faith that we can do things for ourselves. And that’s what I want to come out of COVID – I don’t want to keep thinking to myself – somebody else has got to do this for us.”**

Dame Tariana Turia, Marae, TVNZ, 3 June 2020.

**The Protect our Whakapapa initiative emerged from the grass-roots in Ōtepoti, Dunedin. They use tūpuna wisdom and creatively provide COVID-19 safety messages, resources and connections for whānau right across Aotearoa.**

## INSIGHT

**Responding to COVID-19 in Wharekahika (Hicks Bay), started weeks before lock-down, as logging exports stopped leading to a surge of unemployment around the East Coast.**

Knowing that whanau would need support with food and other essentials, Ani Pahuru-Huriwai, Trustee of Te Aroha Kanarahi Trust, and Executive Director at Tairawhiti REAP turned to her networks. She approached funders, Gizzy Kai rescue for food and her trusted kaimahi helped coordinate the ordering, dispatch and delivery of kai/care packs.

“By the end we (including our Te Araroa whanau) were supplying 200 households weekly. Two people calling homes to identify needs, 10 volunteers doing deliveries – including driving 2 hours to reach whanau in remote places.”

Other work was also needed to protect the community. Tourists were still coming prior to lock-down, as a result, a hapu roadside checkpoint was set up (spearheaded by Tina Ngata and Ani, and with the support of the local hapu Te Whanau a Tuwhakairiora). The goal was “to keep the virus out, and our whakapapa safe.” Good communication was essential, with the checkpoint team connecting daily with others around the Coast, as well as police, central government, and others.

The checkpoint team was also able to pass on information to locals, and the authorities who wouldn’t have heard it otherwise. For example, Te Aroha Kanarahi Trust organised a mobile health unit to go to the top of the Tairawhiti region, “200 people were tested for COVID-19 because of the education at the checkpoints in Wharekahika and Te Araroa.”

Things are slowly returning to ‘normal’ round the Coast. “During the lock-down we had a doctor here every day, now we are back to limited services. We had four police officers, now we have one.”

The Wharekahika community are now working to increase their resilience. A food sovereignty plan is being developed; Māori warden training has been completed. And most importantly, a big Whanau Day, and koha was been offered to volunteers who gave their time and other resources - a recognition that without them the response would not have been possible.



Wharekahika checkpoint.

## 3.0 | WHAT WORKED?

The ten-week rāhui period<sup>5</sup> saw a wide mix of creativity, collaboration, manaakitanga and innovative support. Everybody mattered. While it played out differently for different people and places, it was an experience the whole national shared in.

From our diverse contributor stories and experiences some prominent features emerged:

- **Tino Rangatiratanga.** Acutely aware of the impact of previous uruta rewharewha (epidemics), Māori leadership was swift and effective. Responses were led by hapū, iwi, marae and Māori providers. Drawing on values of whanaungatanga, manaakitanga and aroha they used their funding, resources and relationships to ensure that the hauora (health and wellbeing) of whānau was protected. Strong advocacy to government was also a feature of Māori responses, on issues such as tangihanga and testing to ensure that vulnerable communities were COVID-19 free.
- **Shared Vision.** There was an urgent need to provide basic supports (food, medicines, shelter, connection) so that everyone, especially the most vulnerable

community members, could cope. With the purpose clear and agendas aligned, people moved quickly to action.

- **Speed.** Some community-led responses began in the weeks prior to the lock-down announcements when collapsing export markets led to early job losses. Both formal and informal local networks were activated and adapted throughout the rāhui, developing co-ordinated support and service responses - from neighbourhood Facebook pages, to new service provider collaboratives, to community food recovery and redistribution initiatives.
- **Strong local leadership.** People stepped up and acted without waiting for directives from above. Leadership came from many different parts of the community, and didn't rely on roles or titles, but more on who was willing to roll their sleeves up and get things done. Civil Defence responses (activated

through local councils) seemed to work best where they valued and worked with the grass-roots groups and networks already operating in place.

- **Local system (whole of place) response.** People and organisations came together across sectors and silos to work collectively to meet local needs. There was an immediate recognition that no one organisation or sector could meet all the needs alone – the response required identification of all community resources, and co-ordination to deploy them efficiently, quickly and effectively.
- **Diversity.** Collaborative responses looked different in each community. They included hapū, marae, NGOs, ethnic community groups, businesses, local and central government agencies, churches,



Community care packages, Eastern Bay of Plenty.



Wesley Community Action, Pantry Team, Cannons Creek.



Wharekahika checkpoint.

<sup>5</sup> The directive for Level 3 lock-down was issued on March 23rd, with New Zealand returning to Level 1 again on June 9th 2020.

temples and mosques (and many more) depending on the resources and leadership present in the community. In many places, equity issues were addressed by alternative solutions to meet the needs of those not well served by the mainstream response (Māori, Pasifika, ethnic communities, older adults etc).

- **Holistic support and sharing information.** Many locally-led responses provided a wide range of supports through a single point of contact, as organisations were working collaboratively in real time, often enabled by daily meetings. This was assisted by local data and information sharing, which in turn helped everyone understand emerging issues, facilitating quick responses. With only some organisations designated as essential services, and a need to limit contact and movement, support had to be well co-ordinated and adapt quickly at the local level.
- **Stronger relationships.** Uniting to fight COVID-19 impacted positively on local relationships. There was no room (or time!) for egos, personality clashes or patch protection, and previous differences were put to one side. Many people also noted a greater appreciation of others as they saw more of them in their home

situations (via zoom meetings) – people were understood and valued beyond their ‘work’ roles.

- **Generosity.** In addition to front-line essential workers, at all levels and across all sectors, many people went above and beyond. Often working 60-80 hour weeks, part-timers worked full time, full time staff took on additional roles, and volunteers worked full time – often invisibly. As well as time, resources were also provided generously. Zero barrier access was a feature of many local responses e.g. food parcels were given without having to prove that they were needed. This was a key feature of Māori and Pasifika-led responses in particular, based on the principle of “aroha mai, aroha atu” - an implicit understanding that people would use what they needed and share what they didn’t.

## PRE-COVID FACTORS THAT BOOSTED THE SPEED AND EFFECTIVENESS OF LOCALLY-LED RESPONSES:

- ④ Depth and breadth of relationships and collaborative experience – trust and shared local knowledge of who was best to do what ensured help got to where it was most needed.
- ④ Knowledge about strengths and resources (people and capacity) already in the community that could be connected and/or activated quickly.
- ④ Access to online technology – enabled whānau, organisations and agencies to connect and services to be delivered in different ways.
- ④ Previous crisis response experience – typically connections and organising ‘know how’ was higher in these communities.
- ④ Local autonomy and self-reliance – particularly in rural and isolated communities where services are minimal, people activated their own networks and resources to get things done.

## 4.0 | REFLECTIONS ON THE RĀHUI WHAT MATTERS?

**Over the rāhui we learnt a lot about what really matters. Those without access to food, shelter, safe homes, health care and the ability to connect with others had the hardest time and faced the most difficult challenges.**

But there was also a new, shared understanding in Aotearoa that how well we look after our most vulnerable impacts on the safety and wellbeing of all. This has always been true, but the nature of this pandemic made it undeniable.

For those whose essential needs were met, the rāhui had many positive aspects. It highlighted the importance and value of spending time with our whānau and community. Messages to physically, but not socially, distance were heeded, with many new local connections and relationships made. Travel restrictions saw people walk, cycle and explore their neighbourhoods often for the first time, enabling a greater appreciation of te taiao (the natural world). Many people spoke about “falling in love” with their place.

**Other things that were observed by our contributors during their COVID-19 rāhui experiences were:**

- the pace and busy-ness of 21st century life and how it has been impinging on whānau and community time.
- the value of connection to place and the taonga that exists in every neighbourhood – and a desire to spend more time living, working and playing locally.
- the impact of our modern lifestyles on the planet – and how quickly nature moved into the spaces we had left, including a rare and hungry Kārearea (NZ falcon) seen hunting in Wellington’s CBD.
- the time, money and productivity benefits from working at home (for some).
- the barriers to home-based work and study for others (e.g. poor rural internet infrastructure; not having skills, access to devices, or a quiet space to concentrate).
- the jobs, services and activities which were really essential – who was doing them, and how those roles are usually (under) valued.
- the importance of local food resilience and security for everyone.
- that many of us can have good lives while spending less, when pressures and opportunities to consume are reduced.
- business closures threatening the vitality of neighbourhoods and creating a new group of people needing support to deal with uncertainty and financial stress.

Many people, households and communities are contemplating a more permanent shift towards hyperlocal living. This looks like working from home more, increased involvement in local activities and spending more money with local businesses (where possible) – recognising the importance of strengthening local economies to offset the impact of the global recession and building local resilience. Many called for local and

central government investment and purchasing approaches (e.g. social procurement) to create more local jobs through small local business and enterprise development. This has huge potential for broader placed-based systems change impact.



A Kārearea sits amongst the buildings in the Wellington CBD. Photo: Pete McCombe.

## 5.0 | WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO CARRY FORWARD?

**The arrival of COVID-19 has disrupted systems at all levels, together with the long-held economic, political, and social paradigms underlying them.**

In many cases, this is a positive thing, as these systems and paradigms were socially and environmentally destructive.

**Carrying forward some of the new practices, mindsets and factors that emerged during the crisis will help us embed this positive change:**

- **Respect for the ability of hapū, iwi and local communities to deliver.** The COVID-19 experience has opened the door for more respectful relationship between central government, local government, hapū, iwi and local communities, with fewer top-down, one size fits all solutions being centrally created and imposed.

Locally-led responses to the rāhui were fast, tailored to local circumstances, and based on deep knowledge of community relationships, needs and assets. Local and central government agencies

saw and recognised the power of collaborative locally-led action.

This success has also created a mindset shift amongst local people and leadership. There is new confidence and growing readiness to step into partnership with central and local government to address pressing community crises such as climate change and poverty. Focus is on revitalising or reimagining the future, rather than just recovery.

- **Enhanced mobilisation and co-ordination of locally-led planning and resources.** Local responses showed how effective collaborative action can be. There is willingness to continue to build relationships and work together more closely at both local and national levels.

Similarly, there's more intention for different sectors and organisations in communities to listen to each other, look for aligned aspirations and contributions, understand how to work and take action together. For this to convert into productive



A seasonal circles gathering, New Plymouth .

collaboration, resourcing for convening, relationship-building and community sector and hapū/iwi participation will be needed.

**Community Taranaki's circles process brings together citizens to listen, share and learn from each other. It allows people to take time to explore world views, and dig deeper to understand how to create communities people wish to live in.**

- **Nimble, flexible responses.** Many new approaches emerged as people and organisations pivoted quickly to meet community need over the rāhui. These approaches often worked better than the old ways of doing things (e.g. online health consultations, Work & Income phone appointments, support delivered directly to people at home).

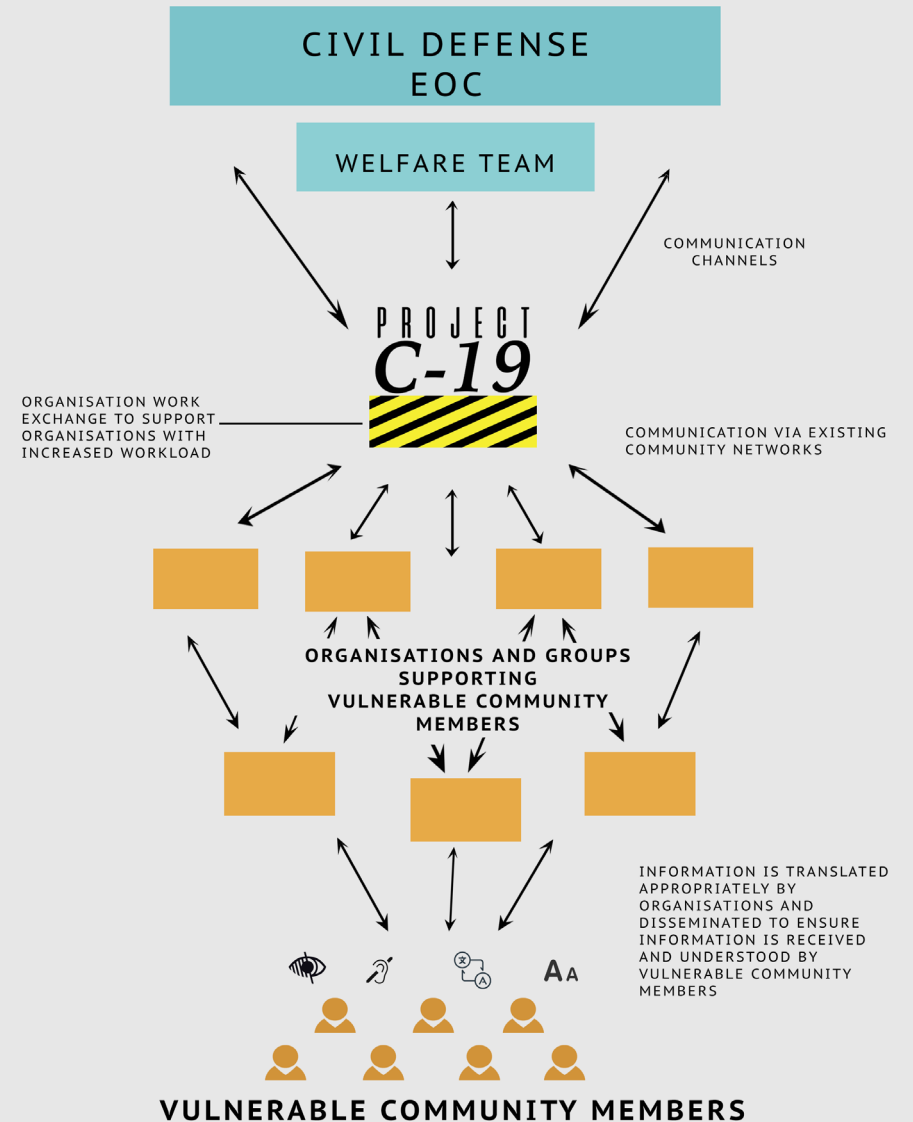
better for many people’s productivity (less time travelling, parking and so on). The ease of meeting enables greater frequency - enhancing relationships and collaboration. Some people had even found that the structure and etiquette required on a Zoom call helped increase the quality of interaction and focus of meetings.

- **High trust funding.** High trust models of funding (from central and local government, business and philanthropy) enabled community responses. The value of this can’t be overstated. COVID-19 highlighted that money can be moved at speed to where it’s most needed, with minimal red tape - when there is an urgent crisis and political will. Many see this as setting a precedent for the future, reducing the funding burden and enabling more effective local responses. They also noted that the trust went both ways during the rāhui - for example organisations spent money on purchasing additional food resources, trusting that they would be reimbursed by government (as promised).

There is a real desire for this more nimble, responsive approach to continue at all levels - from government service provision, to more flexible contracting and funding arrangements that enable experimentation, adaptive action and learning, and local places taking the lead to look out for each other.

- **Use of technology and online communication platforms.** Most people said they intended to use technology more to work differently in the future. While it will never fully replace in-person connection, many people noted that meeting by video conference is better for the environment, enables wider potential reach of participants or clients, and is

## ‘NETWORK OF NETWORKS’ PROJECT C-19 COMMUNICATION CHANNELS



# 6.0

## WHAT NEXT? BUILDING LOCAL RESILIENCE

**“Never have I seen a better opportunity for the role of community, and the role of tino rangatiratanga and self-determination in communities.”**

We’re entering a new era – Aotearoa New Zealand and the world have been changed by COVID-19. We have a once in a lifetime opportunity to ‘build back better’ in many different spheres, with an ability to leverage and embed key system shifts brought to light through the rāhui.

While in some places optimism around these shifts remains alive, many people are concerned that old ways of working have quickly crept back in.

Building local resilience means honestly talking about power: Who’s got it, who hasn’t and naming what’s being done differently to share it.

Alongside power, the shifts noted next summarise the key interconnected change needed across and within local and central systems to build community resilience.

### Shifts

#### DECENTRALISE

Devolve funding and power to hapū and local communities. Involve them in design and local decision-making processes alongside iwi, councils, business, and other key stakeholders. Support tino rangatiratanga and local self-determination.

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**“We need the central system also aligned to the local – who is serving who?”**

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**“The strength of Māori and iwi community responses over lock-down highlighted capability and reinforced the need for systems with more autonomous Māori leadership and decision making.”**

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### How...

- Design locally responsive systems now for the next crisis.

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**“By week one there should be a koha pot that’s not tagged to food parcels, just a pot that can be tapped for the resources that are needed e.g. recompense for volunteers (petrol etc) as this was a big cost in rural areas.”**

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- Understand the difference between regional agencies and structures and those at local community and district levels. Don’t just devolve funding and decision making to regional levels as this can simply replicate bureaucracy. Instead, decentralise to district and local levels because this is where understandings of context are most nuanced and where local relationships are held.
- Involve community and hapū/iwi partners in the design of local Caring for Communities workstreams (social recovery response) and resource them to be active partners.
- Make central government data more readily available and build capability for hapū, iwi and communities so they can use it to make their own decisions.
- Grow local and central government capacity to more effectively partner with hapū and local communities.
- Redesign government commissioning processes for social services.

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**“What would a ‘bottom up’ commissioning process look like? Can we design services and contracts based on what is already working on the ground?”**

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Community response, Tāneatua.

## Shifts

### RECOGNISE AND RESPECT DIFFERENCE

A variety of responses will be needed to serve and support diverse parts of local communities and enable equity. One size solutions do not fit all and imposing them can undermine local initiatives and marginalise those outside the mainstream.

### VALUE PEOPLE AND RELATIONSHIPS

People, connections and trust make things happen. Build social infrastructure, through networks, brokering and weaving roles. Relationship comes before partnership.

**“Value relationships, because those who are close see what nobody else sees.”**

## How...

- Planning processes need time for more authentic, ongoing engagement that recognises the expertise held in different parts of communities – e.g. disability, low income, Māori, Pasifika and other ethnicities.

**“Go to where people are and actively ensure that diverse voices are included.”**

- Build understanding within central government about the existence and complexity of community systems and the organic nature of support that works best.

**“Recognise that diversity isn’t duplication – it’s what prevents people falling through the cracks of mainstream responses.”**

- Support and invest in the groups and networks that looked after communities during the rāhui. This capacity building investment is an insurance policy for future challenges and crises.
- Provide ongoing funding support for local networks, brokering and co-ordination roles, and community and economic backbone functions – not just front-line service provision and projects.
- Create secondments or similar opportunities for central and local government staff to work with local community and Māori organisations, to build understanding of how things operate on the ground and see the solutions that communities have designed for themselves.
- Build direct relationships and quality engagement between Wellington-based staff of central government agencies and local community networks and agencies (don’t just rely on regional offices for this).
- Invest in more spaces and processes that enable locals from different perspectives to connect and support each other to act.





Community collaboration, Morningside.

## Shifts

### EMBED COLLABORATION

Look for further opportunities to work with others, especially across silos. Partnering makes better use of local resources, shares risk and encourages innovation and learning.

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**“During times of crisis, the National Emergency Management Agency fills a co-ordinating role. But under normal circumstances there is no agency responsible for co-ordinating funding and support for diverse whole of community agendas. How could this gap be most effectively filled?”**

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## How...

- Require greater cross-sectoral working and community collaboration from regional and local leadership of government agencies. Build systems and structures which incentivise collaboration, provide capacity for them to do so, and mentoring to enable this as a new way of working.

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**“Work together with others in your area to plan initiatives and co-ordinate funding applications, rather than competing against each other for the same funding pools.”**

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- Set up cross-departmental projects with local communities to solve specific local problems (e.g. drivers licensing, getting teens back to school). Put investment into facilitation and brokering to build shared pathways and to force shared accountability for making change.

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**“Incentivise collaboration by providing good and realistic funding that rewards truly collaborative approaches. Be willing to pay for relationships, time and process as much as outcomes.”**

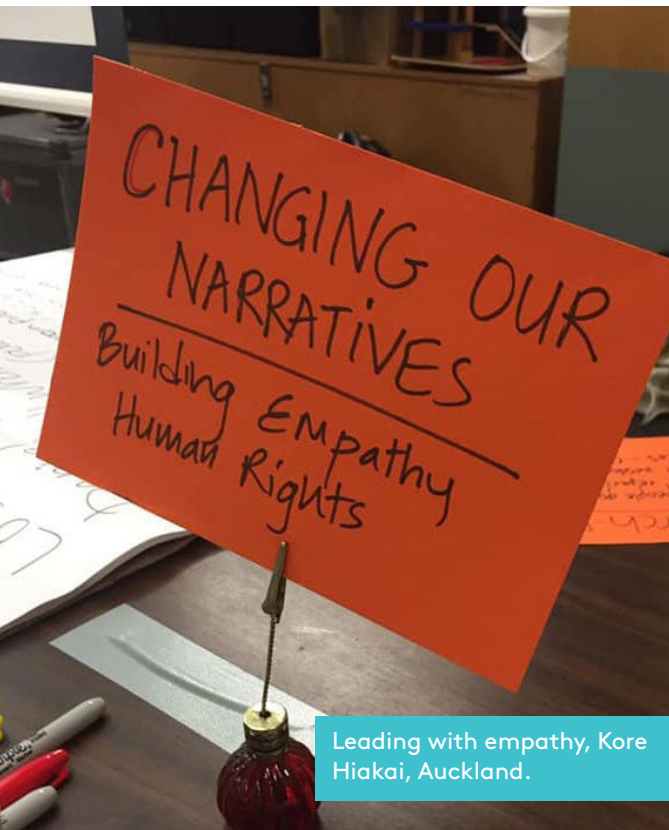
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- Move away from contestable funding as this undermines the relationships that communities need to collaborate effectively.
- Invite local people to be part of debriefing and post-rāhui reviews.

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**“Government and Councils have had to act in ways that don’t come naturally and they did a good job. But they need to understand what it was like from a community organisation perspective—the people who were actually collecting and dropping off the shopping.”**

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Leading with empathy, Kore Hiakai, Auckland.

## Shifts

### BUILD LOCAL ECONOMIC RESILIENCE AND REDEFINE SHOVEL READY

Fund locally-led enterprise and action. Support processes and capability building that connects and builds more integrated social and economic capacity.

“Why can’t a shovel ready project be called a youth worker?”

### TOLERATE MORE RISK

Complex challenges require creative responses to see what works. Mandate innovation and learning. Provide flexible funding and parameters that allow change and adaptation.

“Look at what happened when they were flexible and responsive, and nothing went wrong! A lot of rule breaking happened, and nothing went wrong, and many things went right.”

## How...

- Take a more considered approach to the next tranche of government investment in job creation – focus on supporting local businesses and community economic development aspirations.

“We need a Grassroots PGF fund that enables different and broader parts of the community to get involved in local resilience conversations and be part of action taking too.”

- Use social procurement to create local jobs and increase local prosperity – the community benefits by employing local residents and retaining rate payer dollars in the local economy.
- Make it easier to establish and develop social, community and whānau led enterprises. Reduce current barriers, provide more support and small-scale, start-up funding and ongoing resourcing and support for non-traditional businesses and business owners.

- Continue to mandate and empower local agency staff to act flexibly and responsively.

“We saw MSD case managers operating from empathy rather than punitive spaces – document that and make more of it. Capture the examples of those who were confident to operate in values-based ways, used discretion – a taste of what could be. Bring that forward outside of crisis conditions.”

- Develop funding success measures collaboratively, not just for accountability but to support learning, adaptation and iteration.
- Create more locally held small-scale grant funds with minimal red tape and faster decision making to allow communities to be more responsive and kick-start or test new initiatives aimed at building local resilience.

# CONCLUSION

**Mā te huruhuru, ka rere te manu.**

***Adorn the bird with feathers so it can fly.***

We offer this report as one of the many feathers needed for all places and people in Aotearoa to fly. We all need to be part of the change if we want the gains and learnings from our collective rāhui experience to stick. We have proven that new ways of being, seeing and working together are possible under crisis. The challenge now is to take them with us as we shape our futures together.

We've faced the storm paddling together, and now we are sharing our lessons and aspirations. Place is a critical organising vehicle. As Shaping the Future shows, local people, hapū, iwi and organisations working together at local levels can make a real difference—especially when power and resources are more equitably shared and local autonomy is enabled. As a result, there's now increased willingness for different sectors and organisations to listen to each other, look for aligned aspirations and contributions, and work out how to lead and act together. Aotearoa's Covid response highlighted the capability of local communities, hapū and iwi to rapidly self-organise and deliver, with respectful, higher

trust-based relationships with central and local government agencies developed. Refocused public and community funding sectors that lead with both learning and enabling paradigms, within a Treaty honouring Aotearoa, is the future we need.

The system shifts and learnings identified in this report require urgent attention by central and local government authorities. It's essential that key recommendations are built into current Public Service Reform planning, Covid recovery initiatives and ongoing government policy and programme delivery. Shaping the Future insights back up strong calls by the local government sector for a greater focus on localism. As emphasised in this report however, success relies on local government leading alongside many others in their place and adapting their BAU to reflect the systems shifts required. Building this into Long Term Plans and work programmes will also help embed collaborative practice and approaches. Over the coming weeks and months, we'll be sharing more from the rich learnings gathered for this report,

placing a lens over issues and sector responses, profiling more local stories, and offering practical ideas and insights to inform the journey ahead. We won't let this crisis go to waste.

RELATIONSHIPS  
TINO RANGATIRATANGA FLEXIBLE  
EMPOWERING MANAAKITANGA POWER RESPONSIVE  
ADAPTIVE WHAKAWHANAUNGATANGA  
DECENTRALISED SHARING TRUST DIVERSITY  
HOLISTIC EQUITY ENABLING  
STRENGTHS-BASED COURAGE KOTAHITANGA  
RECIPROCITY INNOVATION KINDNESS

**“...Our response can be a response that's unique to Aotearoa. We cannot lose the opportunity that we have, we must not just survive – but thrive, and what will make us either succeed or fail will be the degree to which we involve everyone.”**

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern – Conversations during Covid-19, The Power of our Communities, Facebook Live, May 9 2020.

**Waiho i te toipoto,  
kaua i te toiroa.**

***Let us keep close  
together, not wide apart.***

**Ka mutu ngā kōrero mō  
tēnei wā. Ka tuku mihi  
anō kia koutou katoa i  
tautoko i ngā mahi nei.  
Kia koutou e pānuhia,  
tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou,  
tēnā tātou katoa.**

# ABOUT

## Inspiring Communities.

Inspiring Communities has championed New Zealand's growing community-led development (CLD) movement since 2008, currently engaging a network of 4000 people, groups and organisations. Our vision is for all communities to flourish, with a focus on enabling effective community-led change.

We work with communities, councils, government and agencies to support initiatives, projects, skills and policy that make local places even better to live, work, play and invest in. Our work crosses all sectors at local, national and international levels.

Alongside our public good activities, our consultancy arm *Powerdigm* provides services to help agencies and organisations navigate community innovation. We can support your work in this nuanced and specialist space.

[www.powerdigm.org.nz](http://www.powerdigm.org.nz)

Join the Inspiring Communities [database](#) to be kept up to date with community-led news and activity across the country, or via [Facebook](#) page or [LinkedIn](#), or email:

[exchange@inspiringcommunities.org.nz](mailto:exchange@inspiringcommunities.org.nz)



*Local wisdom<sup>2</sup>*

[www.inspiringcommunities.org.nz](http://www.inspiringcommunities.org.nz)



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 Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland  
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 Te Whanganui a Tara Wellington  
 Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland  
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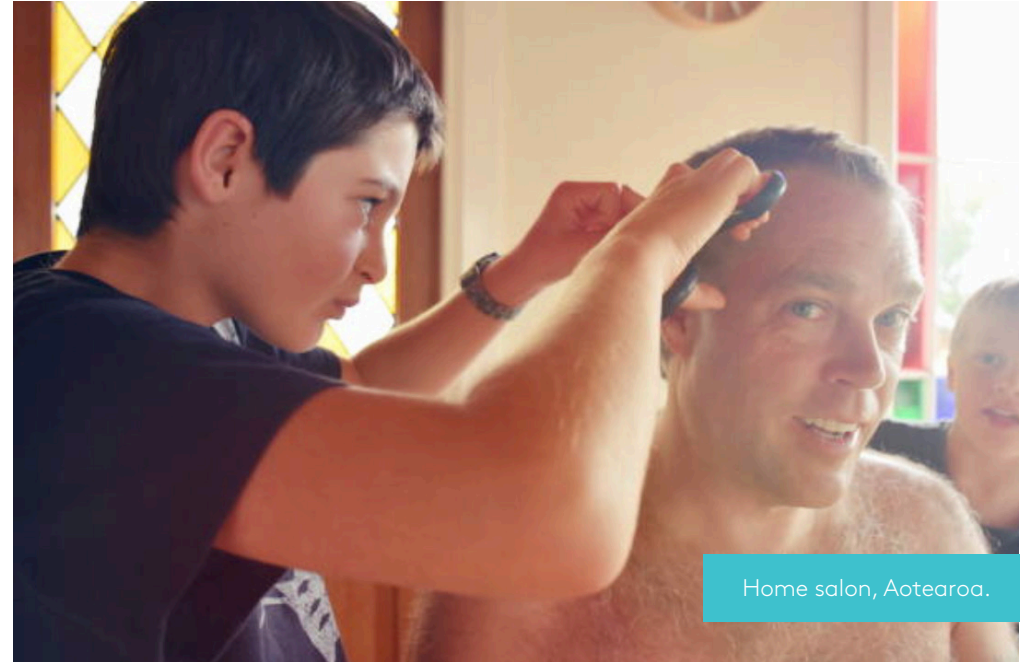
Ian Telfer  
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 Jenny Hobbs  
 Jenny Nand  
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 Jo Randerson  
 Jodie Robertson  
 Joni Tomsett  
 Judy Kumeroa  
 Karen Johns  
 Kena Duignan  
 Kerry Allan  
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 Ngahau & Debbie Davis  
 Nicola Patrick  
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 Penny Hulse  
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 Grey District

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Pete Howard  
Peter Galvin  
Philippa Holmes  
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Rebecca Williams  
Rouruina Emil'e-Brown  
Ryan Reynolds  
Sarah Brown  
Sue McCabe  
Sue Rei  
Susan Houston  
Tara Moala  
Tess Casey  
Tracey Shepherd  
Vanessa Sidney-Richmond  
Point Research team  
Inspiring Communities Board and Team

Kawitiri Westport  
Te Whanganui a Tara Wellington  
Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland  
Ōtepoti Dunedin  
Cromwell Central Otago  
Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland  
Ōtautahi Christchurch  
Westland District  
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Taita Lower Hutt  
Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland  
Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland  
Te Whanganui a Tara Wellington  
Featherston Wairarapa  
Palmerston North Manawatu  
Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland



Home salon, Aotearoa.



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