



COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT  
EVALUATION  
RESEARCH

# Final Report

An investment in evaluation

**Community Waitakere**

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Community Waitakere has a vision for a sustainable Waitakere with thriving, connected communities.

Community Waitakere is a community development organisation committed to achieving strong, dynamic, sustainable community and voluntary sectors in Waitakere. Community Waitakere strengthens the links between community groups, organisations, businesses, government and individuals by promoting and modelling collaboration and partnering, enhancing networking and communication, developing projects and helping to foster collective visions of positive change in Waitakere.

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## Summary

The following report presents a summarisation of the development research and evaluation project “Evaluation for More Effective Community Development”. This project was initiated by Community Waitakere in 2012 and completed in 2013. Community Waitakere received funding for this project from the Lottery Grants Board.

This report is intended to provide an overview of this research project, highlighting outputs and significant milestones.

Having completed this process Community Waitakere’s intention is to continue to draw value from this work, producing on going evaluation of Community Waitakere’s own work and offering leadership and support to others within the community development space.

This project was completed in 4 stages. This report details the outputs from each stage and a brief discussion.

## Overview of stages

- **Stage 1:** Foundational investigation, including;
  - best practice examples of successful community development evaluation methodologies,
  - social wellbeing measures (explicitly referenced),
  - case studies of evaluation frameworks of community development organisations,
  - an evaluation framework for Community Waitakere’s future work (inclusive of qualitative and quantitative measures).
  
- **Stage 2:** Retrospective impact analysis of Community Waitakere’s work
  - 7 case studies of Community Waitakere’s historical work.
  
- **Stage 3:** Strengths, aspirations, needs and opportunities analysis of community development work in Waitakere.
  - An in-depth investigation of the perspectives within the community sector of Waitakere.
  
- **Stage 4:** Reporting/ Presentation of findings
  - An opportunity to share what we have learnt.

## **Back ground.** The evaluation conversation.

Community Waitakere engaged with this project as a response to an emergent conversation about the need within the community sector to evaluate and report on the work that occurs within this sector.

Evaluation is different than other forms of research in that it is utilisation focused.<sup>i</sup> In its simplest form it is about understanding the effect and impact of a programme, service, or indeed a whole organisation.<sup>ii</sup> Whilst it is acknowledged by most organisations that regular evaluation is vital and indeed best-practice, in the community development sector evaluation is often seen as resource intensive, complex (e.g. difficult to measure the impact of our work) and a bit daunting.

Many hard-working community development organisations have only a very a limited knowledge of best-practice evaluation measurement and even less time to learn about it. This research project therefore provides a beginning attempt to ameliorate this gap in both knowledge and capacity. It is about highlighting evaluation best-practice, evaluating our own practice at Community Waitakere and sharing our learnings with others in our sector. Through this research process we aspired to enhance our own practice and provide information so others may enhance theirs too.

Evaluation does cost; this includes both time and labour and, more broadly the costs incurred by an organisation obtaining a certain level of capability. Rather than be seen as a liability however, evaluation should be seen as an investment; an investment in on-going improvement.

Evaluation has the potential to improve the impact and effectiveness of the work that occurs within the community sector. Amongst other things it improves clarity on issues of need, an understanding of impacts resulting from specific interventions, the information necessary for programme adjustment, and provides a causal link between inputs and resulting outcomes.

This research project, as an investment in Community Waitakere, has resulted in practice improvement across a number of domains. Internally the organisation has increased capability in evaluation and has begun the process of implementing an on-going evaluation framework to guide and report on its own work programmes. The findings from this project will also allow for a continued discussion on where Community Waitakere may further support the work of the community sector.

Externally Community Waitakere has been able to offer the wider community sector a number of benefits resulting from this project; including practical tools of evaluation and learnings that may support the mahi of this sector.

While this project has direct benefit to Community Waitakere, ensuring that our work is effectively achieving its outcome objectives, ultimately, our hope is that this research will provide a foundation for more effective community-driven community-development work in Waitakere and that this work will be evaluated in a more robust way in the future.

## Stage 1: Foundational investigation.

### *Outputs:*

- 1. Literature review of community development evaluation methods and methodologies**
- 2. Social wellbeing measures (explicitly referenced)**
- 3. Case studies of evaluation frameworks of community development organisations**
- 4. An evaluation framework for Community Waitakere inclusive of qualitative and quantitative measures**

### *Discussion:*

- 1. Literature review of community development evaluation methods and methodologies**

The literature review provided a solid foundation for subsequent research (within this project), and provides an available resource that describes many contemporary approaches to community development evaluation. Utilising peer reviewed material the literature review is a robust and validated source of evaluation knowledge for the community sector. The many methodologies described within this document will have abundant utility for those wishing to peruse their own community development evaluation.

- 2. Social wellbeing indicators/measures (all explicitly referenced)**

This document brings together a collection of social and community well-being indicators. These indicators are intended as a resource for community development organisations, as they design and develop evaluation within their programmes and services. The indicators have been chosen based on their ability to capture important factors in community health and well-being.

- 3. Case studies of evaluation frameworks of community development organisations**

This document is a collection of five case studies of organisations and programmes that are doing evaluation. The case studies were written in a way that highlights methodologies, methods and tools. These case studies are not necessarily best practice, and were not chosen on that basis. They collectively represent a variety of evaluation activity that is both formal and informal. They were chosen for the learning that community development organisations may gain from understanding their approach to evaluation.

- 4. An evaluation framework for Community Waitakere inclusive of qualitative and quantitative measures**

This framework is designed primary to be an “in-house” document to support the on-going evaluation of Community Waitakere’s work. As an outcome based framework its purpose is to provide a structured approach to evaluating the outcomes of specific areas of work. In conjunction with social wellbeing indicators it allows for worked to be accesses in multiple ways and at multiple points of the development process. It is intended to be a “living document” that allows for robust evaluation and in responsive to changing contexts.

## Stage 2: Retrospective impact analysis of Community Waitakere's work

### *Outputs:*

- 1. Retrospective impact analysis: 7 Case Studies from 7 community development initiatives.**  
**Subtitled; *Looking back to move forward***

### *Discussion:*

This document is comprised of 7 case-studies pertaining to 7 specific key initiatives from the past 10 years of Community Waitakere's history.

They were not chosen because they were specifically successful, or because they represent examples of best community development practice. They were chosen because they are significant milestones in the history of Community Waitakere and because each contains potential learning for both the organisation and for the wider community sector.

The intention of this case studies approach was not to present definite "facts", nor to suggest that there are no alternative ways of positioning the impact of these various pieces of work. Rather it was to "unpack" these initiatives in order to identify the learning that had been generated from being involved in this mahi.

Through engaging with this process Community Waitakere now has a firmer understanding of what has supported and/or been of challenge within their historical endeavours. This retrospection lays the foundation for continued improvement within Community Waitakere's work. It is also available for the community sector for subsequent analysis and learning.

## Stage 3: Strengths, aspirations, needs and opportunities analysis of community development work in Waitakere.

### *Outputs:*

- 1. A community development assessment of strengths, aspirations, needs and opportunities of the community sector of Waitakere.**  
**Subtitled; *Framing our sector***

### *Discussion*

This stage of the research process investigated the strengths, aspirations, needs and opportunities of the community sector within Waitakere (in the three western Local Board areas).

Communities are dynamic and consistently evolving, and there have recently been many changes to Waitakere's, social, economic, and political environment, not least being the Auckland Regional Governance transition.

It was timely therefore to (re)explore with the community what currently supports their work, what barriers impede their progress, and where they aspire to further engage.

A substantial representation of the community sector within Waitakere provided input into this assessment. Analysis of this information occurred in two main stages, as a thematic grouping and subsequently as meta-analysis of the strengths, aspirations, needs and opportunities.

This collection of knowledge and perspective provides a rich source of information from those who operate within the community sector of Waitakere.

Community Waitakere will further utilise this information as it continues to assess how its own activities can better support the work of the sector. This information is also available to the wider community sector as a resource that they may utilise. It is also hoped that this repository of the collective voice of the sector will evoke continued discussion and innovative solutions to the enhancement of Waitakere's social wellbeing.



## Stage 4: Reporting/ Presentation of findings

### Outputs:

	Presentations	Date
1	Research from stage 1 including a workshop on outcomes based evaluation – public presentation	11 <sup>th</sup> September 2012
2	ANGOA Research Forum – Overview & stage 1 findings – public presentation	15 <sup>th</sup> November 2012
3	All 3 stages – methods and findings presentation – public presentation	29 <sup>th</sup> April 2013
4	Stage 3 findings presentation to internal staff	15 <sup>th</sup> May 2013
5	Short overview of project and intense Stage 3 findings and method including facilitated discussion of application – public presentation	16 <sup>th</sup> May 2013
6	All 3 stages – methods and findings presentation to Community Waitakere Trust Board	TBC
7	Short overview of project and intense Stage 3 findings and method and discussion of application with Community Development Team, Auckland Council	20 <sup>th</sup> June 2013

	Published findings	Available
1	Stages 1-3 reports	<a href="http://www.communitywaitakere.org.nz/ourwork/community-development/research-project">http://www.communitywaitakere.org.nz/ourwork/community-development/research-project</a>
2	Stages 1-3 reports	<a href="http://www.communityresearch.org.nz/">http://www.communityresearch.org.nz/</a>
3	Stages 1-3 reports	Limited number of “hard copy” available at presentations, in Waitakere Community Resource Centre and Community Waitakere offices
4	Stages 1-3 reports	Distribution to all participants electronically
5	Stages 1-3 reports	Distribution through various e-lists and e-noticeboards

### Discussion

Research and evaluation has a number of potential audiences. As already discussed Community Waitakere intends to utilise the learnings and finding from this project in order to inform their own work. This will occur across a number of organisational domains, including board level discussions, strategic visioning, and day-to-day project development. The above detailed presentations serve to facilitate this.

Distributing learnings and findings to the wider community sector is in keeping with Community Waitakere’s commitment to strengthening the activities of the community sector. The availability of this project, in its entirety, allows for various organisations to draw from, and utilise for their own purposes, the information gathered from this project.

It is hoped that other organisations will gain much value from this resource, and will continue to capitalise on this investment in evaluation.

## References

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<sup>i</sup> Casswell, S. (2003). Evaluation Research. In C. Davidson & M. Tolich (Eds.). *Social science research in New Zealand* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). (pp.229-239). Auckland: Pearson Education.

<sup>ii</sup> Community Waitakere. (2012). *Community development evaluation research: Literature review of evaluation methods & methodologies*. Retrieved [www.communitywaitakere.org.nz/images/research1.pdf](http://www.communitywaitakere.org.nz/images/research1.pdf)