

# Rangatahi Initiative:

*A Process Evaluation*

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## Executive summary

### How the Rangatahi Initiative works

Wesley Community Action is the host organisation for the Rangatahi Initiative. It works in “hard to reach” whānau and communities with a range of initiatives that focus on improving both physical and emotional/mental health outcomes.

The Rangatahi Initiative has been operating in some form for approximately six years and has employed two Kaimahi (one man, one woman) for the past two years.

The Initiative operates as a partnership between Wesley and the community. Wesley offers the foundation of supportive infrastructure, professional supervision and support, robust governance and financial processes, while the Kaimahi have the credibility and leadership to work effectively from within.

Currently, both the Kaimahi are part of the community they serve, which is largely but not exclusively Black Power. Most taura are Māori but many are disconnected from their hapū/iwi and have formed a new whānau within Black Power. Rangatahi Initiative Kaimahi also work with other hard to reach communities and individuals.

The Rangatahi Initiative can be seen as being made up of six approaches.

#### 1. Crisis management

Kaimahi help resolve urgent issues with the immediate aim of reducing the risks to taura and others. They operate on-call and may be involved in defusing volatile situations at risk to their own personal safety.

#### 2. Practical help and building links

Kaimahi work with the taura to resolve issues relating to everyday life, such as housing, finances and health. They also help arrange educational courses and sports activities, with the objective of increasing taura’s self-esteem, fitness, health, knowledge, social connectedness and skills.

#### 3. Empowerment approaches

This aims to encourage taura to see how they could address issues themselves, with the intention that, over time, the taura and their whānau would become more empowered and independent.

#### 4. Modelling

The Kaimahi are from the community they are working with and in their own lives they model the values, approaches and attitudes of the Rangatahi Initiative. Somewhat differently from most community development workers, they make their private lives an integral part of the work they do.

#### 5. Strategic work

This includes conferences and presentations that put forward the interests and social needs of the taura and their whānau, to ultimately help them be accepted as part of “normal” society.

## 6. Specific projects

The Rangatahi Initiative runs various ongoing specific projects, including leadership development and Mana Wahine courses.

Many of these six approaches interrelate and it is likely that Kaimahi will be following more than one approach simultaneously in any given situation. The six approaches lead to higher level outcomes, including breaking down barriers and stereotypes and helping whānau become more empowered and independent and/or interdependent. This in turn leads to better social and economic outcomes for the taura and whānau, such as improved health, better educational engagement, improved housing and less involvement with the benefit and justice systems.

## Other observations

The main objectives of this evaluation are to:

- document the way the Rangatahi Initiative works
- analyse learnings related to the key components of the Rangatahi Initiative
- capture and share information to aid future developments.

The Kaimahi expressed positive views on the support they receive from the supervisor and director of the Initiative.

It is important for the Rangatahi Initiative to have a dedicated leadership role. This role would be able to concentrate on providing an appropriate balance between the flexibility in the way the Kaimahi operate and offering clear accountability in terms of business processes and practice frameworks.

Kaimahi have noticed a number of positive changes among taura and whānau as a result of the Rangatahi Initiative. These have included:

- taura voluntarily making changes to improve their own wellbeing
- reduced drinking and associated problem behaviours
- evidence of a change in values and attitude in relation to the importance of family.

In turn, taura valued the support offered by Kaimahi, mentioning role modelling, motivation and practical help. They have seen the positive impact of whānau coming together and working to achieve better health and wellbeing in the community.

## Introduction

The Rangatahi Initiative is provided through Wesley Community Action. It aims to improve health and wellbeing for “hard to reach” whānau and communities through a range of initiatives that focus on improving both physical and emotional/mental health outcomes.

The Rangatahi Initiative has been operating in some form for approximately six years. The Initiative originally came about in response to the need for advocacy that came from within hard to reach communities rather than from community workers attempting to work with those groups. One of the key aspects of the Initiative is that the workers come from the communities that the Initiative seeks to assist.

Originally there was just one staff member working for the Initiative and the work done was largely reactive. However, over time, there has been an increased focus on addressing the needs of the whānau in a more proactive way.

The Initiative has had two staff members, (one man, one woman) for approximately two years. A more detailed description of the Rangatahi Initiative is given later in this document.

## Key terms used in this document

Kaimahi	A Rangatahi Initiative worker(s)
Tauira	A person(s) in the Rangatahi Initiative target group
Hard to reach	<p>A term often used to describe marginalised communities and communities that are less likely to access mainstream services. Many of these communities may be connected with gangs and could include children, friends, partners and whānau of gang members. In general the term “hard to reach” is viewed from a mainstream perspective. These groups will generally have a lower socio-economic status and may be wary, distrustful and unwilling to engage with most mainstream services (such as education, health, employment).</p> <p>In some contexts, “hard to reach” is used more generally to include those who are under-represented as users of social services. This would include older people living alone, some separatist religious groups, and minority groups that face barriers to using social services (such as refugees and migrants). This definition of the term is <b>not</b> used in this document.</p>

Rangatahi	<p>Rangatahi is a word that is often used to refer to youth and/or the younger generation. Its use comes from the proverb “Ka pū te rūhā, ka hao te rangatahi”; literally, “when the net lies in a heap, a [new] net goes fishing”.<sup>1</sup> This refers to younger people taking over from older people.</p> <p>This reference is relevant because the Rangatahi Initiative works with youth and young adults and seeks to develop their leadership potential. However, the Rangatahi Initiative target group is wider than just youth.</p>
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## Objectives of this evaluation

The main objectives of this evaluation are to:

- document the way the Rangatahi Initiative works and the approach taken to achieve improved outcomes
- capture learnings related to the key components of the Rangatahi Initiative, and understand how these components work well and contribute towards outcomes, and/or how they could work better
- capture and share information so that it can inform future developments of the Rangatahi Initiative and similar community initiatives with hard to reach communities.

## Approach to the evaluation

This evaluation has included:

- interviews with staff in organisations that deal with the Rangatahi Initiative, including representatives from the Police; the Consultancy, Advocacy and Research Trust (CART); CYF; Wellhealth PHO and Te Puni Kōkiri
- interviews with Wesley staff and other stakeholders
- eleven interviews with taurira
- workshops with Rangatahi and Wesley staff.

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<sup>1</sup> Hirini Moko Mead & Neil Grove, *Nghā Pēpeha a ngā Tīpuna*, Victoria University Press 2001.

## **Rangatahi Initiative target group**

The Rangatahi Initiative provides support for hard to reach, marginalised communities to design solutions to meet their own communities' needs.

Currently, both the Kaimahi within the Rangatahi Initiative are connected to the Black Power community. This, and the geographic location of the Rangatahi Initiative, means that the majority of taura are connected with that community. However, Kaimahi also work with other marginalised communities and individuals.

The Wesley and staff view is that it is important for the Rangatahi Initiative to not be exclusive: it is not necessary for someone to be connected to any particular group to have access to the assistance offered. In addition, it appears that funders are involved because they know that the Rangatahi Initiative supports hard to reach communities that find it difficult to get support in any other way.

## **Common assumptions about hard to reach communities**

As noted above, the Rangatahi Initiative primarily targets members of hard to reach communities, with the support and oversight of Wesley Community Action.

Most taura of the Initiative are Māori and it has often been suggested that these taura and their whānau should go back to their iwi and their marae to get support.

However, for many Black Power members and their whānau, hapū/iwi cannot feasibly provide support. In particular, taura have often left home areas, or discontinued contacts with their hapū/iwi, because their iwi and their traditional home is no longer a comfortable place for them; the hapū/iwi has for many been a source of abuse (physical and/or psychological). In addition some have committed crimes and have subsequently been rejected by their iwi.

For many taura, Black Power is now their whānau and their source of support. Taura have in general left their home and formed a new family within Black Power. It is not unusual to hear comments like “Black Power is my whānau” or “Black Power was his Mum and Dad”, or as one taura succinctly put it: “this is my marae and I’m on it”.

## **How the Rangatahi Initiative works**

The Rangatahi Initiative can be seen as being made up of six approaches:

- crisis management
- practical help and building links
- empowerment approaches
- modelling
- strategic work
- specific projects.

## **Crisis management**

Crisis management happens when the Kaimahi are involved in urgent issues where the emphasis is to address the immediate problem and to mitigate any risks to the people themselves, other parties or the public. Crisis management includes issues such as domestic violence or when a member of the community is being sought by Police. This work can occur at odd hours of the day or night, requiring Kaimahi to operate in a call-out capacity where there can be potentially significant risks to their personal safety. Kaimahi may be involved in defusing volatile situations and this can involve liaising with agencies such as the Police and CYF.

## **Practical help and building links**

Some of the practical help offered to taura is similar to the help Kaimahi provide under crisis management, but usually in less urgent circumstances. In particular Kaimahi may work with the taura to resolve pressing issues (such as in relation to housing, finances and health). This may mean liaising with government agencies and other service providers.

Other practical support provided includes help to arrange courses and activities; these often include educational and sports activities. Sports activities have, to date, included netball, softball and rugby league. Courses have included (or are planned to include) the following topics:

- driver's licence
- carving
- budgeting
- people skills
- first aid
- health issues
- using computers
- Te Reo.

In this work, the key role of the Kaimahi is to:

- provide moral support
- help widen taura's connections to people and groups outside their own community
- model supportive behaviour.

This kind of work can also involve a great deal of organisation and logistical skills. The objectives of this work are to increase taura's self-esteem, fitness, health, knowledge, social connectedness and skills.

## **Empowerment approaches**

Empowerment approaches have developed over the course of the Rangatahi Initiative. Initially when providing practical support, or when attending a crisis, Kaimahi would encourage taura to see how they could address the issues (or some of the issues) themselves. It was intended that, over time, the taura and their whānau would be more empowered and in some situations more independent.



Over time, the empowerment processes have developed to include a very conscious approach of encouraging whānau to see what is required or to set their own goals; the whānau would be then encouraged to work towards those goals. This latter approach is consistent with Whānau ora<sup>2</sup> plans, where a whānau identifies goals and sets up plans in order to achieve them.

In developing these plans, the Rangatahi Initiative worker operates as a facilitator or coach.

In the short term the objectives of the empowerment approach are to meet the immediate or medium-term needs of the whānau. However, in the longer term the objective is to empower and upskill the whānau. The Kaimahi reported that many taura and their whānau have been told repeatedly (including by staff in government agencies) that they do not have the ability or capacity to do anything differently and that “you’ll never change”. The intention of the empowerment approach is to focus on the resilience, capacity and strengths that already exist within the whānau, and to emphasise what they can do well already, without intense intervention from service providers. This approach encourages taura and whānau to set their own goals and develop their own strategies or plans for how they will achieve those goals. This will lead ultimately to greater independence and self-esteem.

### **Modelling**

This work involves the Kaimahi modelling values, approaches and attitudes to their community. It is this aspect which makes the Rangatahi Initiative quite different from many other community services. As noted earlier, the Kaimahi themselves need to be highly credible and have leadership qualities within the community they serve. Their role tends to be based on having a shared life experience with the taura they are working with. In particular, most people interviewed saw it as necessary for the Kaimahi to be from the hard to reach community that they are working with. This means that the Kaimahi make their own private lives an integral part of the work that they do; they model pro-social and pro-whānau behaviour in situations that might otherwise result in conflict or other negative consequences.

Typically, in other forms of community development work, the community worker would mentor their clients in an explicit and considered approach. It would be rare for them to use their own private lives in the manner that Rangatahi Kaimahi do. Furthermore, community workers’ roles are often defined by the context of the work they do; conversely, the work undertaken through the Rangatahi Initiative tends to be defined more by the personal lives of the Kaimahi.

### **Strategic work**

This includes conferences and presentations that put forward the interests and social needs of the taura communities and their whānau. The objectives of this strategic work are to break down stereotypes and barriers and ultimately help the whānau to be accepted as a part of “normal” society (discussed below).

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<sup>2</sup> Whānau ora is a government initiative to provide services and opportunities to whānau and families across New Zealand. It seeks to empower whānau and families as a whole, rather than separately focusing on individual family members and their problems. ([www.tpk.govt.nz/en/in-print/our-publications/fact-sheets/whanau-ora-factsheet/page/1](http://www.tpk.govt.nz/en/in-print/our-publications/fact-sheets/whanau-ora-factsheet/page/1) )

## Specific projects

There are a number of specific projects that the Rangatahi Initiative runs on an ongoing basis, including the following.

- The **Leadership Development Course** – members of the Black Power and Mongrel Mob communities meet and take part in joint activities such as diving and horse riding. The objectives of this programme are to help young taura reconsider their values and to increase their self-esteem. As part of this, during the activities, taura work with those from an opposing gang and put aside gang issues. As one taura put it: “it’s not about that”.
- **Mana Wahine** – This is an educational and empowerment project teaching practical life skills such as budgeting, parenting and cooking for women taura. This allows taura to experience activities that are non-threatening, useful and practical. The activities are designed to encourage positive and supportive relationships. The topics of the various courses taught in Mana Wahine are selected by the wahine themselves. In addition to educational courses, wahine are encouraged to try new activities. The programme operates under drug- and alcohol-free kaupapa. The overall objectives of Mana Wahine are to increase self-esteem and teach practical skills.

## How the six approaches work together

### Overall rationale of the Rangatahi Initiative

Figure 1 shows the overall rationale of the Rangatahi Initiative. The diagram starts (at the bottom) with the infrastructure (tangible and intangible) that needs to be in place in order for the initiative to operate. This includes the make-up of a host organisation, in this case Wesley (Box 1), and the make-up of the Rangatahi Kaimahi (Box 2).

The further stages of the diagram show firstly the work that is done (Boxes 3 through to 8). Many of the six approaches interrelate. While it is helpful to separate out the six different approaches, at any particular time Rangatahi Kaimahi may be following more than one approach simultaneously. For example, while providing practical help they may also be trying to empower the whānau to see how they can set their own goals and achieve them. The Kaimahi may also be modelling different values, approaches and attitudes while they are doing this.

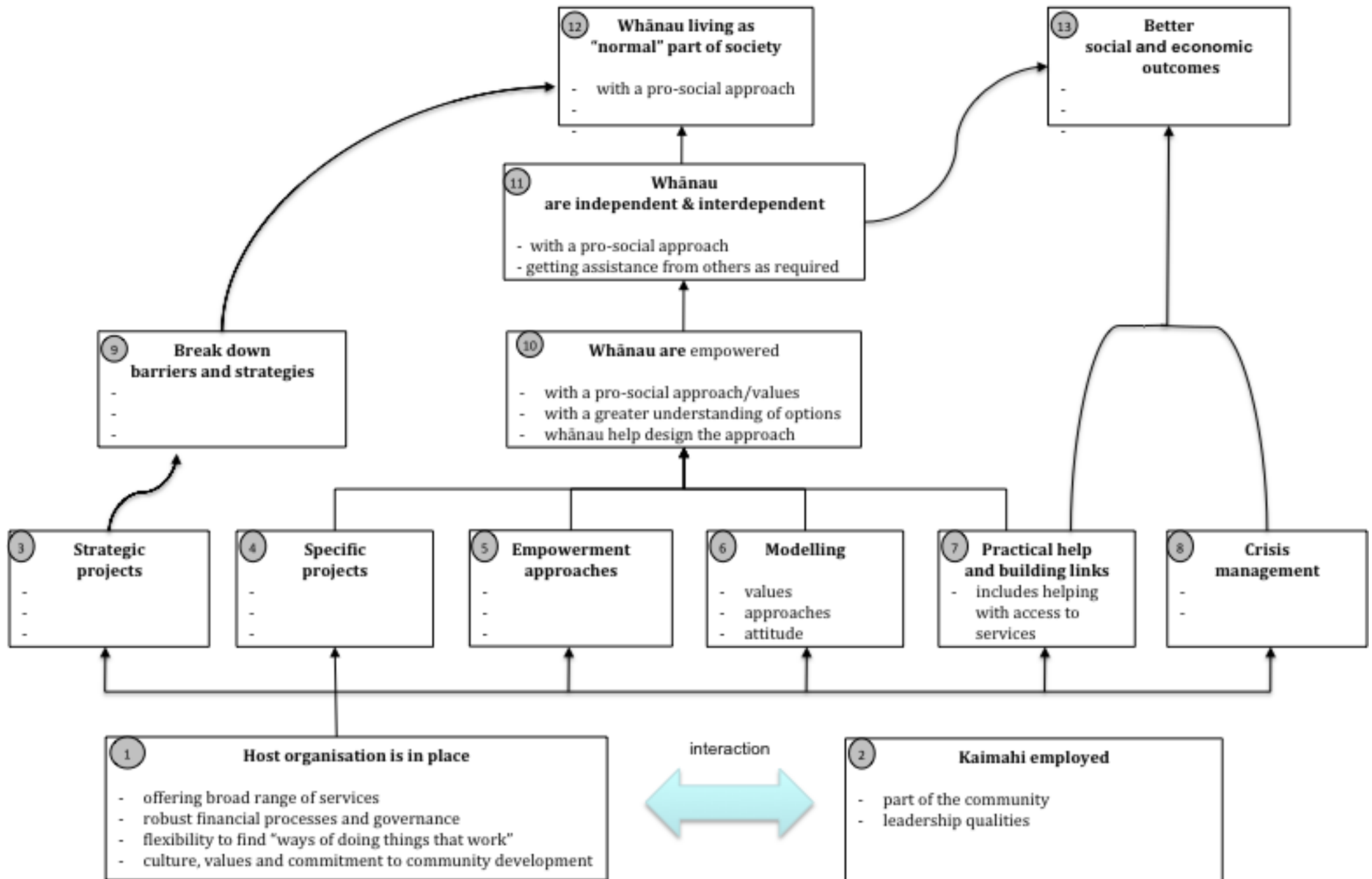
### High level outcomes

Figure 1 shows how the various approaches lead towards higher level outcomes.

First, strategic approaches are focused on breaking down barriers and stereotypes, and the intention is that this will ultimately help whānau to live as a more normal part of society. Note that “living as a normal part of society” in this context includes:

- being able to go to the beach as a group without attracting undue attention from the Police
- having the kids well fed
- being part of parent-teacher interviews without fear that their presence will have bad repercussions for the children
- having the dream of owning their own home (being financially secure/stable).

**Figure 1: Rangatahi Initiative Logic Diagram**



As can be seen in the diagram, many of the Rangatahi Initiative's approaches are intended to lead towards whānau being more empowered and ultimately independent and/or interdependent. If whānau are more empowered, they are more likely to set their own goals and work towards achieving them. In some situations this will lead to whānau being more independent; however, in other situations it will lead to the whānau being "interdependent" – they will be independent to a point and then seek help from others when they need it. This independence and interdependence will hopefully lead to high level outcomes of whānau living as a normal part of society in a pro-social way, and to better social and economic outcomes.

Note that better social and economic outcomes can also be achieved to some extent directly from the practical help and crisis management that is provided as part of the Rangatahi Initiative. Better social outcomes would include:

- improved health, both physical and emotional/mental
- higher educational achievement and engagement
- improved housing
- less reliance on the state (benefit income)
- less involvement with the justice system.

## Structure of the Rangatahi Initiative

The Rangatahi Initiative operates as a partnership between the host organisation (Wesley Community Action) and the community that it serves. Wesley offers supportive infrastructure, professional supervision and support, robust governance and financial processes to underpin the Rangatahi Initiative, while the Kaimahi, who are part of the community, have the credibility and leadership to work effectively from within.

### Host organisation

A critical aspect of the Rangatahi Initiative is that the host organisation, has credibility within the wider community and operates in an accountable manner.

Wesley is an organisation that has offered a very broad range of social services for many years. In terms of its services and its focus, Wesley is generally seen as having a commitment to community development. The Rangatahi Initiative is just part of Wesley's range of work, and because of this there is probably minimal risk that Wesley will be seen as a "gang organisation". This neutral identification is important when applying for funding and seeking support and cooperation from other organisations or agencies.

As a large organisation, Wesley also has robust governance and financial processes. This is important, as funding organisations and agencies (government, philanthropic or otherwise) can be assured that any funding is well managed and well spent. For example, the funding for this evaluation was provided through the Lottery Grants Board and as part of the application for funding Wesley provided information on its financial processes.

Another important aspect of the host organisation is that it must have the openness and flexibility to find ways of working effectively with hard to reach communities. Balanced with this flexibility is the need for robust financial and accountability processes to ensure sound practice and appropriate expenditure. The combination of these two factors allows the Kaimahi to work with the taura in a way that produces positive results.

## Rangatahi Kaimahi

The Rangatahi Kaimahi are critical to the functioning of the initiative. There was widespread agreement among interviewees that the Kaimahi need to be credible within the hard to reach community they are operating in, and most people spoken to thought that the Kaimahi needed to be part of that community. It was also seen as necessary for the Kaimahi to have leadership qualities within the community (as distinct from a leadership role).

The Kaimahi are highly motivated in their work. Both Kaimahi have, in the past, done very similar work on an unpaid basis and, in many respects, their work is simply a more structured version of what they would be doing if they were not employed by the Initiative.

## Competing needs and requirements of Wesley and the Kaimahi

There can be a tension between the host organisation needing to apply robust processes while also giving Kaimahi the flexibility they need to do their job. Kaimahi are working alongside relatives and friends in a way that would be quite unusual for most community workers (such as a Kaimahi providing assistance to a close relative as part of their work).

However, Wesley allows some flexibility, and relaxation of the traditional boundaries between work and personal life, so that the Kaimahi can provide the help and support where it is needed. Wesley management feel able to provide this flexibility given the high trust relationship between Kaimahi and management.

One of the funders of the Rangatahi Initiative recognised this tension as a challenge. In particular, for the Rangatahi Initiative to be effective there had to be the flexibility to allow the Kaimahi to work, as they needed to, within their communities. Offsetting that, they acknowledged the need for good processes. They provided funding to Wesley for the Rangatahi Initiative, in part because they saw Wesley as having the ability and commitment to manage these two opposing requirements.

## Team leader for the Rangatahi Initiative

Both Wesley management and Kaimahi acknowledge the need for and benefits that would arise from having a dedicated team leader for the Rangatahi Initiative (the current team leader also has much wider management responsibilities). A dedicated team leader would be able to concentrate on providing an appropriate balance between running an initiative that requires flexibility in the way the Kaimahi operate and offering clear accountability in terms of business processes and practice frameworks.

## Kaimahi's views on the support received as part of their work

The support provided to Kaimahi generally falls into four broad categories:

- supervision
- team leader support
- the Director's passion and commitment to make a difference and his readiness to "put his neck on the line"
- being part of an organisation and being treated as a professional.

From the Kaimahi's perspective, the support that they experience is dependent on the individuals who provide that support. Therefore, if the same structures were used with different staff the support that is experienced could be quite different.

Current experience of the support is as follows.

- **Supervision** – high levels of support due to the supervisor’s personality, experience, honesty and “bright ideas”.
- **Team leader** – the current team leader is “all about the service ... she has high expectations...she’s on to you about the service you are delivering – that’s good”.
- **The director** – “I haven’t come across someone as committed and passionate about making a difference [for our community]”.

Clearly, such support and commitment from Wesley senior management make the Kaimahi feel supported and encouraged.

### Risks to Kaimahi

Wesley is aware that there are risks in the work that the Kaimahi do. As the employer, Wesley is aware of its responsibility to minimise those risks.

The Kaimahi have considered the risks and respond to it by letting someone know if they are going into a potentially risky situation.

### Interactions with government agencies

Broadly, the Police are not compromised by having a relationship with the Rangatahi Kaimahi and taura. It was, however, acknowledged that there was a balance between having a good working relationship and being “too close”.

Within the Police, those who work relatively regularly with Rangatahi Initiative Kaimahi often have to explain to their colleagues why they have such a strong relationship with them.

Generally, front-line staff in other government agencies did not have difficulties working with the taura or the Rangatahi Initiative Kaimahi.

### Sources of funding

The source of funding is also an important consideration. Often, as is the case with Wesley and the Rangatahi Initiative, a host organisation is not in a position to fully fund an initiative. Therefore, funding needs to be obtained through either government or philanthropic sources; the Rangatahi Initiative is funded through both of these means.

### Noticing positive change

The Rangatahi Initiative, and more generally the work done by Wesley, operates under a strengths-based approach. In particular, Wesley focuses more on what is working rather than what is not. This approach contrasts with a deficit model (often associated with medical services) that focuses on what is not right with the individual or community.

Some observations from Kaimahi about positive changes that they have observed in the initiative are as follows.

- Noticing taura taking the initiative:
  - sports – they used to ring/confirm/pick up taura; the Kaimahi role is now more what a sports manager would do
  - deciding to have a smoke-free house (smoke outside)

- coming to the Wesley offices freely and forming wider relationships with other Wesley staff
- taking action to help their own personal circumstances such as enrolling in courses and being an at-home dad
- hosting other whānau as part of a respite for Christchurch members and modelling positive behaviours.
- Decrease in drinking:
  - noticed fewer occasions when taura are on a drinking session
  - a willingness to be involved in drug- and alcohol-free events.
- Evidence of a change in values (particularly values about the place of family):
  - when asked to come to an event, asking “can my missus come?”
  - saying “what is in it for my kids?”
  - seeking advice about how to handle school.

## How taura experience the Rangatahi Initiative

### Taura’s experience of the support

Ways taura experience the support offered by Kaimahi are set out below. These are consistent with Figure 1.

- **Role model**
  - “[Kaimahi] show a better path/future.”
  - “He’s changing our perspective, we don’t have to be a hard guy.”
  - “He role models the family man.”
  - “He says that it’s all good to go home and be with your family.”
- **Motivator**  
Kaimahi:
  - “are really good at celebrating success”
  - “keep us motivated
  - “don’t “pick on my faults”
  - “don’t force things”.
- **Practical help:**
  - helping with sports (fees, picking up, baby sitters)
  - accompanying taura to Court
  - liaising with agencies and acting as a mediator  
“[the Kaimahi] is a translator .... I can’t communicate with outside agencies – I have sookies”  
“[they are a] bridge to the rest of the world”  
“[they talk] in a way we understand”.
- **Courses and activities** that include:
  - driver’s licences (12-week course)
  - carving
  - budgeting
  - people skills
  - first aid
  - health issues
  - using computers (yet to come).

## Impacts

Tauira talked about the positive impact of whānau coming together and seeing the goals and aspirations that other families had. When referring to the work and activities that they had done with the Rangatahi Initiative, one tauira said that they had “never done anything like this before and [I’m] enjoying it”.

When discussing the positive outcomes of the Rangatahi Initiative, tauira often talked about the help that they had received in dealing with government agencies and the positive impact that this had – particularly in relation to Court and other justice issues (periodic detention issues were often mentioned).

Other perceived outcomes from the Rangatahi Initiative that were mentioned include:

- a greater attention to health and wellbeing for the tauira themselves and also for their whānau
- greater interest in spending time as a family
- less interest in being “the hard man”.

## Attributes of the ideal Kaimahi

Tauira see it as important that Kaimahi:

- are part of the community
- keep information confidential
- know how organisations/agencies work
- are motivational
- are good speakers
- work well with people
- can communicate and liaise with organisations: “he can talk to people that a lot of us can’t talk to”
- get involved and are proactive:
  - “fills your time with other stuff”
  - “there have been others [who have tried to help this community] but they haven’t been willing to give us their time”.

## Conclusion

This paper has described the Rangatahi Initiative run by Wesley Community Action. The Rangatahi Initiative works in hard to reach communities, with the aim of improving physical, emotional and social outcomes.

While the Rangatahi Initiative demonstrates a way to work alongside hard to reach communities, it is not necessarily the only way. In particular, this evaluation describes the underlying rationale and approach of the Rangatahi Initiative, but it is acknowledged that a different approach could work equally well in a different setting.

The Rangatahi Initiative operates as a partnership between Wesley as the host organisation and the community that it serves. It is generally felt that the Rangatahi Kaimahi need to be



part of the community they work in, and should have motivational, leadership and people skills. The Kaimahi value the support they receive from Wesley, but the appointment of a dedicated team leader could enhance the arrangement.

Kaimahi have already noticed positive change in their community in terms of taura taking greater initiative and placing more importance on the health and wellbeing of themselves and their whānau.

It may be possible to run similar initiatives in other organisations or in other parts of the country. However, the commitment and challenges involved, from both the host organisation and the workers, to be flexible and move out of their comfort zone, should not be taken lightly.