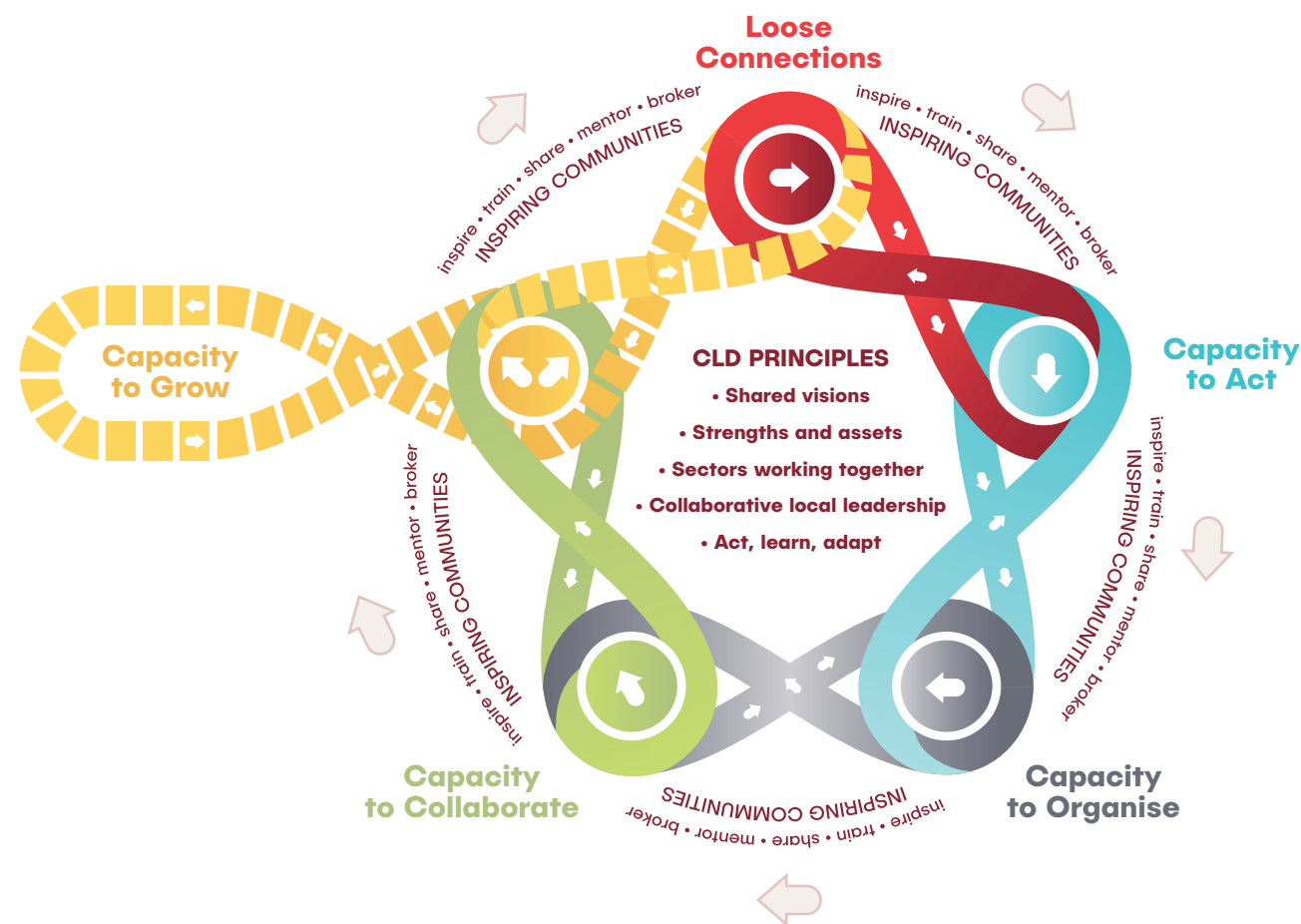


# OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Community-led development strengthens social connections so communities thrive.  
 Inspiring Communities works to inspire, share learning and build the capacity to create change.



This theory of change illustrates how sustainable change happens using a Community-led Development approach.

The starting point is the premise that all communities have the ability to thrive. So much shapes the vitality of a community, from economic to social factors. The relationships and trust between local people is vital to negotiating the complex challenges they face.

Citizens, individual or groups, respond to a crisis or address a local issue because they see possibilities for how things could be better. They harness loose connections and help grow a capacity to act, and in doing so form a shared vision.

Using community-led development (CLD) principles increases the ability of individuals and groups to realise the potential of their community. It involves identifying existing community strengths and connecting with other communities that have addressed similar issues. They begin to make plans and take action around the emerging vision.

Sometimes this throws up more challenges and complexities, but reflecting on these enables insight into how to sustain positive change. The process is seldom linear, there are ebbs and flows with related joys and frustrations. It takes time but future success is built from these foundations.

As momentum builds there is more activity - initiatives move from one-off actions to substantive organising, using skills and experience from outside their community. This extends the influence, bringing more people and organisations to the table, which requires developing more local leadership skills to ensure the shared vision remains on track.

This cumulative process tends to evolve from a focus on organising to a capacity to collaborate. The ability to engage with groups who have different views and approaches is critical to the transition and unlocks the capacity for diverse groups and sectors to work together. It is vital in this phase that the local leadership formed during the earlier phases continues to be central to the process.

Guiding the transition between these phases are the disciplines of measurement, reflection, learning and adaption. The change is dynamic, it acknowledges there is no perfect plan and understands that small steps contribute to larger transformational change.

This theory of change has evolved from what Inspiring Communities has learned from the collective wisdom in communities across New Zealand. Inspiring Communities inspires, trains, mentors, and brokers groups - transitioning around the theory of change - growing and sharing local wisdom - Local Wisdom<sup>2</sup>