



Taking a community-led approach to addressing our country's challenges and opportunities can improve the lives of New Zealanders. Our communities have knowledge, strengths and assets that they can collectively build on to improve our lives. It's who we are – our remote location and small population coupled with our kiwi 'no. 8 wire' approach contribute to our strong social connections and our ability to find solutions. We need to do more to foster and support communities.

Traditional government-led ways of addressing social, economic and environmental issues will not alone generate the changes needed to address persistent and increasing disadvantage. We need to be more innovative and inclusive in our approach, and support communities to generate the positive change and sustainable wellbeing for all New Zealanders.

Community-led development is a way of working together in a place to create and achieve locally owned visions and goals.

At Inspiring Communities, we believe that incorporating a community-led approach into policy will help improve equality and overcome complex issues such as regional disparities, environmental decline, employment, earnings, education, health and crime. Valuing the local community perspectives, and helping support and engage them to determine the change they are seeking can accelerate effective change.

We call on all political party leaders to commit to...

- including community-led approaches in social, economic, and environmental policy
- adopting the five core principles of community-led development, and
- funding to enable these community-led approaches.

Government needs to be prepared to put local solutions advocated by local communities more at the centre. This means supporting communities to decide what solutions will work best for them, and sharing power and decision making.

Inspiring Communities calls on the incoming government to adopt the five core principles of community-led development: ¹

- 1. Shared local visions drive action and change.**
- 2. Use existing strengths and assets.**
- 3. Many people, groups and sectors working together.**
- 4. Build diverse and collaborative local leadership.**
- 5. Adaptive planning and action informed by outcomes.**

¹ Detailed explanation see Appendix One

These principles can guide public policy and service provision approaches so that the focus widens from a group of experts 'doing to' citizens, to including those people and groups directly experiencing the issues in the process.



A community-led development approach shifts from narrow, linear definitions of the causes of poor outcomes, to understanding the complex environment of dynamic and inter-related factors that contribute to these outcomes. Addressing complexity is best done using an adaptive rather than 'cookie cutter' approach. Our experience suggests integrating a community-led approach alongside other policy levers increases the likelihood of practical sustainable solutions over conventional Wellington driven policy approaches alone.

Inspiring Communities calls on all political party leaders to commit to creating a policy environment and provide adequate funding that enables the community-led development approach. This means government acting as a partner, enabler and co-host, rather than prescribing from the top.

Here's why:

- **A community-led approach is more effective because...** it leverages the knowledge of local experience and relationships to understand how systems can be improved. This ensures tailored approaches that build on the unique issues and assets in each community. It allows individuals and communities to gain insights into their needs and how to best address them.
- **A community-led approach is more efficient because...** it taps into a range of other resources in the community, so actual level of investment (through time, capability and finances) can be greater than the spending by government alone.
- **A community-led approach is more enduring because...** it provides sustainability beyond initial investment period, by engaging the support of local leaders and organisations, and often other funding sources. It also creates a broader constituency of support, trust based relationships and cultivates local ownership and long term commitment to change.

- **A community-led approach generates a wider range of benefits because...** it is not just about individual success or narrowly defined issues. It is collaborative, with the people and communities requiring the change being active in all the stages, including co-designing solutions. This in turn grows social capital and community resilience.



Community-led change is a journey – it takes time, skill and trust. But it also represents the potential to generate greater impact and higher return on investment in economic, environmental and social issues.

We call on all political parties to be brave and trust communities to understand what will work for them.

Community-led development is a building block to greater citizen participation and the more inclusive society New Zealanders value. For more information visit: www.inspiringcommunities.org.nz

Community-led Development *principles*

Community-led Development is working together to create and achieve locally-owned visions and goals. It's a place-based development approach that's built around five core practice principles.

5 principles ...

1 Shared local visions drive action and change.

- Building visions and priorities with those who live, work, care, play, and invest in that place – the principle of ahi kaa¹.
- Tailor-making solutions from the 'ground up' and reflecting local aspirations, needs and conditions.
- Growing a shared sense of optimism and collective caring for people, place and the future ahead.

2 Using existing strengths and assets.

- Acknowledging everyone has a contribution to make – with attention to involve groups often ignored.
- Valuing local people as 'experts' in their place.
- Proactively engaging local voices and ideas.
- Building action plans built on existing community strengths, assets and resources.
- Encouraging and supporting local people with energy to do things, and connecting them up with others who can help.

3 Many people, groups and sectors working together.

- Involving all those who have a stake in creating visions and aspirations, plans and activities and working/doing together.
- Fostering new connections between diverse people, organisations and sectors to unlock resources and enable new thinking.
- Creating strong local relationships and linkages – at street/ neighbourhood level, between local groups, agencies, businesses and also with organisations based outside the local area.

4 Building diverse and collaborative local leadership.

- Intentionally strengthening, growing and joining up local leadership.
- Recognising and celebrating local leadership and achievements.
- Making change visible and communicating progress within communities.

5 Working adaptively, learning informs planning and action.

- Holding an intentional vision/goal with a flexible 'doing' framework.
- Not waiting for the 'perfect' plan or 'complete' analysis – they don't exist.
- Being prepared to take action, acknowledging uncertainty and adapting as things progress.
- Proactively sharing experiences, learnings, and results within and across communities.
- Understanding that ongoing small steps collectively contribute to larger transformational change.
- Making links and encouraging systems changes (policy, funding, practice etc) for lasting impact within communities.

¹Ahi Kaa is a fundamental traditional Māori cultural concept meaning 'site of burning fires'. In contemporary times, Ahi Kaa is used to refer to people who uphold a particular purpose within the community. That is, they are the 'keepers of the home fires' be that at home, on the marae or within a particular organisation or movement.

Leaders of change

Randwick Park is a leader of change. Recently claiming the title of New Zealand's Community of the Year, it's been through some considerable development during the past eight years.

The residents of Randwick Park – a community of over 5,000 people, mainly young – and many of whom live below the poverty line – didn't like what they were seeing within their community. A couple of negative events became the catalyst of change. With the support of the Manurewa Local Board the community came together to fight for things that could make Randwick Park better, such as co-designing and co-developing.

What was once an empty park is now a flourishing community hub with a community centre – Manu Tukutuku. There's a skatepark, basketball, tennis, volleyball, netball courts, playing fields and a sports and neighbourhood centre. The Sports and Community Sports Trust has been formed from locals and they have employed locals to run the centre and host programmes that the community are involved in designing.

Situated in the Manurewa suburb of South Auckland, Randwick Park is an excellent example of using community-led development principles to achieve positive outcomes.

As a solo parent I feel comfortable letting (my son) go to the shops. When I was younger there was no way my parents would let me walk to the shops by myself – it was too dangerous. – Tony Rakitch

Shared local visions driving action and change – The Randwick Park residents came together with a shared vision, they asked questions, and by asking questions they found out about Council funding available to develop the park with strong support from the Local Board, together they co-designed and co-developed the park.

Using existing strengths and assets – Because they knew their own community and the kids in it, they were able to identify and build on their existing strengths to drive engagement, solutions and new initiatives.

Many people, groups and sectors working together – Randwick Park is an example of learning by doing. They drove action and learnt along the way, and when they didn't have the answers they invited local services and the local Council to share their own knowledge. Together and across many people and groups they collaborated – making so much more possible than if any one group was working alone.



“When we don't have answers that's when we invite local services to come in and help us. And all together we've achieved an amazing dream.”



“It's about community coming up with their own solutions.”

Randwick Park also has a strong focus on entrepreneurship and is developing some of Auckland's best practice in community-led economic development.

I think Randwick Park is heading in the right direction... Local leadership, good advocacy, public investment, a relatively affordable place for first home-buyers. These are good foundations for a better future. – Walz Brown

Randwick Park is now one of the Department of Internal Affairs Community-led Development programme communities. They are exploring what it means to work collectively between the different organisations which is set to open up more opportunities.

This community's resourcefulness demonstrates how areas with complex social and economic challenges can transform into thriving communities when its residents are supported to take the opportunity and responsibility to lead their own development.

<https://www.randwickpark.co.nz>

This is just one case study of a place using Community-led Development approaches effectively. For more stories about communities leading change please visit www.inspiringcommunities.org.nz