

Benefits to taking a community-led approach to economic and social policy

Our economic and social policies are intended to improve the lives of New Zealanders

Traditional social and economic policies are failing to generate the changes needed to address persistent and increasing disadvantage facing many people and the communities they live in. This is unacceptable in a country as rich in human and natural resources as Aotearoa New Zealand.

At Inspiring Communities, we believe that incorporating a community-led approach into economic and social policies will help overcome the complex issues and inequality we are currently facing, such as regional disparities, employment, earnings, education, health and crime. Valuing and engaging the local community perspectives, and helping support and engage them in determining the change they are seeking are essential to accelerate effective change.

Taking a community-led approach can improve our return on investment

Putting the community at the centre of the change process can improve the return on investment because it is more effective, efficient and enduring, and it achieves a wider range of benefits than traditional policy approaches alone.

- ***A community-led approach is more effective because...*** it leverages the knowledge of local experience and relationships to understand how the system 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 and cultivates local ownership and commitment to change.
- ***A community-led approach generates a wider range of benefits because...*** it is not just about individual success. It is collaborative, with the people and communities requiring the change being active in all the stages, including designing solutions, and building their capability in the process. This means benefits are wider than individual success, as we grow capability and deepen the community resilience.

Community-led change is hard – it takes time, skill and trust. But it also represents the potential to generate greater impact and higher return on investment in economic and social policy. Authentic and inclusive community engagement is part of the solution in moving from managing problems to achieving shared aspirations for our future.