



Building Collaborative Working Relationships.

Community-led development (CLD) strengthens the vitality of communities by activating and weaving the contribution of everyone connected to a place/whenua. Use these resources to grow the diversity of people involved in your planning and decisions about your place and to weave new kinds of relationships and connections.

Get clear on your 'Why'

In any community engagement, we need to first be clear on our purpose. Your “why” purpose will drive **what you want to ask.**

Do you want to learn more about this community’s history, hopes and dreams? Or do you want to engage to inform, consult, involve, collaborate or share power? Be clear about what the terms of engagement are for any **public participation process**, what you may need to do differently and how. Always be open to what you don’t know or didn’t think to ask too.

Who do we need to engage with?

Recognise at least two kinds of community expertise:

- **Context Experts** – people with lived experience of a situation, for example, children and youth, whānau, or residents from a neighbourhood. They know from first-hand experience about the opportunities, issues and challenges in their place. Make sure their insights, voices and participation are actively included in local engagement, decision-making and action-taking processes, and you will come up with solutions that are much more likely to last and work.
- **Content Experts** – professionals, staff from community organisations, service providers and leaders with formal power. They have knowledge, tools and resources that can help address opportunities and issues in and with local communities – especially if they understand how to work respectfully as enablers of community-led initiatives.
- Consider **other kinds of expertise** that are valuable in community innovation too.

Tāngata whenua are key context experts. Relationship building between tāngata whenua and tāngata Tiriti (all others who have come here) organisations, groups and communities is a core component of CLD in Aotearoa. This resource provides three different tools to support communities in developing relationships with **Tāngata Whenua**. This **article** provides a great introduction to some important values, concepts and processes in Māori society to be aware of in this work.

“Who” questions can arise at any stage of your work:

- Who should really be involved, and how?
- How are we supporting the aspirations of local whanau, hapū and iwi?
- How are local residents engaged?
- Who has the lived experience of the issues we want to work on?
- Are they engaged in the decisions and action?
- Who else might support our community-led change efforts and how and when to bring them in?

“It helps to let go of your biases about who might help and any ‘them and us’ thinking. Try to keep an open mind and heart to the many people, groups and sectors who want to grow strong communities.”

Check out our [stakeholder mapping tool](#) to help you unpack your “who” priorities and possibilities.

How do we engage creatively and effectively?

Community engagement processes need to be tailored for each context, culture and community. Processes can range from fun community activities enabling brief informal conversations/connections to facilitating structured [community hui](#) to long term relationship development, for example with [tāngata whenua](#).

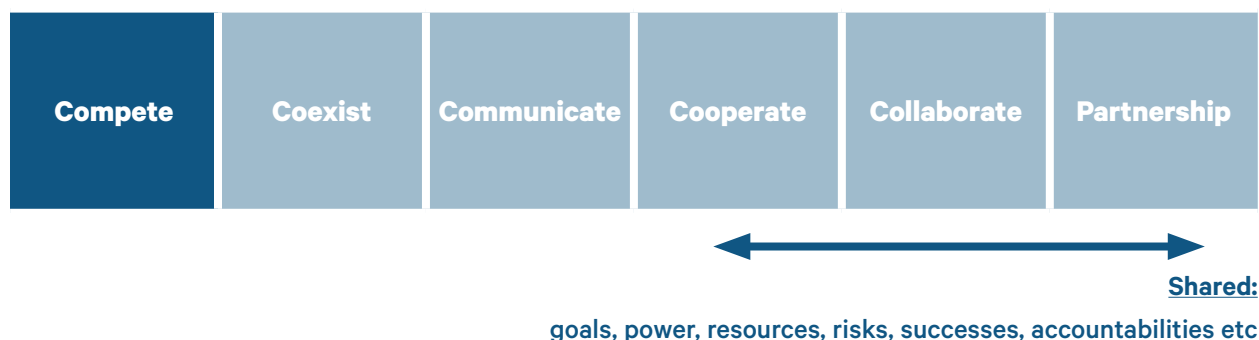
If you are looking for more tools for community engagement, check out [Liberating Structures](#) and the [Art of Hosting](#) for great facilitation resources, [Co-Creative’s tools and methodologies](#) for collaborative innovation and Tamarack’s extensive library on [Community Engagement](#).

What kind of working together?

Mā whero, mā pango, ka oti te mahi – by red and by black the work will be completed

We need different kinds of relationships to achieve different aspirations in communities. The [Working Together Continuum](#) helps identify the different kinds of purposeful relationships you might have or could grow. Are you aiming to simply share information so you know what each other is doing? Do you want to cooperate around work on a specific issue or project? Are you aiming to collaborate around a bigger shared vision?

There are many different types of working together (partnering) arrangements. Increasing levels of interaction and commitment are required the further along the right- hand side of the continuum you go. The partnership box isn’t ‘nirvana’. You can work in more than one continuum box at a time and aspire to move to a different box over time. What matters most is knowing where you are on the continuum and what kind of working relationship best suits your purpose and need for coming together – knowing that things can also change over time.



What are the key ingredients?

Compete

- Actively competing against each other for resources, partners, and public attention

Co-Exist

- Know about each other but don’t need to come together
- No direct relationships with other agencies

Communicate

- Information sharing and networking is the basis of relationships
- No formal collective agreement on visions, tasks etc.
- Knowing and understanding who’s doing what the focus

Co-operate

- Acknowledgement of common issues/interests/agendas
- May involve helping another organisation(s) to achieve their project/task etc.
- No fixed-term long-term relationship implied

Collaborate

- Trust and respectful relationships implicit
- Involves sharing of resources, decisions, risk etc. to achieve shared vision/goal
- Is based on negotiated and agreed actions

Partnership/Integration

- Emotional/spiritual awareness of each other e.g. involves hearts, minds, passions, shared values and principles = relational and contractual obligations
- Sharing – visions, power, risks and rewards, resources, decision making, accountability etc.
- Integration of selected programmes, planning and funding, often creating a new entity in the process

Shaping Working Together Agreements

Adapted from “The Potential of Partnership”: Craig and Courtney 2004; pages 38 – 39.

As relationships develop and informal engagement moves into more significant community engagement and/or working together arrangements, it's important to make sure that the expectations on and of all parties are clear. An explicit conversation about how different parties will engage or work together can help clarify:

- Shared purpose/expectations – What do you each hope to achieve?
- Key values/principles – What's deeply important to each party about how you work together?
- Roles and responsibilities – What will each party offer and be responsible for?
- Processes and structures for managing the relationship – How will decisions be made and effective communication be supported? Who has the power to decide what?
- Specific engagement and action plans – Who will do what next?
- Monitoring and review – How will we check in with each other and notice progress on outcomes and how our relationship commitments are working?

Depending on the kind of relationship, your shared understanding can be expressed through a simple verbal commitment or a more formal written agreement.

You can use the **Working Together Continuum** worksheet below to map out what kind of working together arrangements you or your organisation are currently involved in and others you may need to in the future. What does this raise about how you might work or change where you put your efforts and resources?

Reviewing how relationships are going

In CLD the best way to know how relationships are going is to intentionally and openly ask. If you have discussed expectations at the beginning, or set up a working together agreement, then this can provide an ideal basis for review. When inviting feedback and encouraging constructive dialogue we need to be prepared to honestly and openly listen, reflect, clarify and identify potential changes that could be made. Be sure as well to let those involved know how their input has been acted on. This strengthens trust and respectful relationships for the future.

Here's a great **Partnership Health Check Tool** if you want to dig deeper into assessing, monitoring and maximising the ongoing effectiveness of any working together arrangement, with a great checklist at the end.

Here's an in-depth resource on **creating partnerships that work**. The **Treaty Resource Centre** has some great resources on our history in Aotearoa and what has and hasn't worked in terms of the "working arrangement" for our nation, te Tiriti o Waitangi. This **Community Engagement Planning Canvas** is another way to bring together your planning around your "why", "who", "how" and "how will you know it's all working?"

What more can working together make possible?

We have seen so many stories of what more we can achieve together when we weave connections and contributions of diverse people and sectors. When we want to have an even bigger impact on systems and policies to improve outcomes on big issues like poverty, homelessness, decolonisation, environmental impact, **Collective Impact** offers a useful framework for a collaborative approach. The Collective Impact framework contains five core conditions including the development of a common agenda; using shared measurement to understand progress; building on mutually reinforcing activities; engaging in continuous communications and providing a backbone to move the work forward.

Using the Working Together Continuum Tool.

1. Think about ONE of the key connections/networks you're involved in now – mark them on the continuum.
2. Make a few notes about the qualities of that connection now.
3. Consider your sense of the community's vision & goals and where on this continuum you sense the connection could be advanced to... the **next**.
4. Compare the now, the next... make notes about what you need in order to take next steps.

	Coexistence	Communication	Co-operation	Collaboration	Partnership/ Integration
My Work Now					
My Work Next					

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