

He mata whāriki, he matawhānui

Draft Report on the Future for Local Government

For more information please contact:

Megan Courtney

CLD Practice and Coordination Lead

Inspiring Communities

Email: megan.courtney@inspiringcommunities.org.nz

Phone: 027 6788622

Inspiring Communities Feedback

About the submitter

Inspiring Communities (IC) promotes and grows locally-led change because this achieves sustainable, effective solutions. Our vision is for all communities to flourish, that no community is left behind.

*We are a team of specialists in community-led development, working with communities, government and agencies to support local places to become even better places to live, work, and invest in. Since 2008 we have championed New Zealand's growing community-led development (CLD) movement, with a strong focus on building CLD capability and effective locally-led practice and change. We currently engage a network of 4,900 people, groups and organisations across Aotearoa, many of whom are based in local government. During 2022, 2653 people from across Aotearoa were part of IC training, mentoring, and learning events and programmes. We also hosted a "Locally-led Matters" **webinar** focused on strengthening local leadership and governance outcomes, with over 300 people viewing this recording.*

*Our Te Whakawhanake ā - Hapori ki Aotearoa CLD framework (see Appendix 1) has been developed from learning with and alongside communities in Aotearoa for the last 13 years. Inspiring Communities CLD principles and practices are nationally recognised, by agencies such as **DIA** and also **internationally**.*

While providing a range of public good funded activities and CLD support, Inspiring Communities also offers a range of services through our consultancy arm Powerdigm.

For more on Inspiring Communities see www.inspiringcommunities.org.nz

Our Feedback:

Inspiring Communities commends the Local Government Review Panel on its Draft Report. We support the five key transformative shifts that you have identified - strengthening local democracy, authentic relationships with hapū/iwi and Māori; a focus on wellbeing; genuine partnership between central and local

government and more equitable funding. We note there has been some criticism that more hard wired 'structural' recommendations were not included in your Draft Report. However, we understand the need to bring the local government sector and its central government, iwi/Māori and wider community partners together as part of a longer term transformational journey that co-creates rather than imposes a long term programme of change.

Everyone has a key role and part to play in enhancing local governance outcomes – especially local government. In fact, we observe much of the change required is more dependent upon mindset shifts and quality of local relationships than central government permission or legislative mandate. This starts with Local Councils role modelling the change they want to see. Following the Panel's final Report, it would be encouraging to see Mayors and their Councils sign up to a **Transformation Charter** to publicly signal to their community's commitment to working in new ways to better enable local wellbeing outcomes – with local priorities and accountability mechanisms co-created as part of this.

We offer the following comments and recommendations for consideration and inclusion in your Final Report, noting that we have focused on review elements most aligned to community-led development and thriving local communities - which remain at the heart of our mahi.

A Collaborative Approach to Supporting Sector Transformation

Turning the Titanic of local government operating systems and central government perceptions of and relationships with local government will be long term work. We totally support the establishment of implementation processes and programmes that resource and incentivise innovation, experimentation and shared learnings. We would encourage these processes not just to focus solely on the local government sector. Strengthening local governance is about more than local government.

Key community sector, iwi and business partners should be involved in the detailed design phase for transformation implementation planning to ensure that expertise outside the public sector is also effectively leveraged.

Strengthen and Enable Local Government within the Context of Collaborative Local Governance

The approach the Panel has taken to look at local government within the evolving context of local governance is the right one to enable and strengthen wellbeing outcomes across Aotearoa New Zealand's diverse communities. This should remain the key frame for the Panel's final report and change programme that follows.

Local government is of and about place. To be truly effective, local government does and cannot exist in isolation from:

- the communities that it serves.
- Te Tiriti o Waitangi aspirations, obligations and relationships it must enable

- the legislative, policy, service, and investment arrangements that need to be more intentionally co-determined and collaboratively enabled with central government, and other business and philanthropic partners.

In light of the above, the key aspirations noted in the Panel's report will only be achieved **when local eco-systems are working proactively and collaboratively together** in respectful, relationally focused and strengths-based ways – enabled by supporting central systems, processes, policies and investment and activated citizens, communities and hapū, iwi/Māori organisations.

We support inclusion of all efforts and actions local government can take to be a better Te Tiriti partner. This starts with building respectful relationships and understanding the steps that can be taken first/next to enable Mana Motuhake for mana whenua. While politicians and plans come and go, iwi remain as kaitiaki of their place/whenua.

Incorporate Community-led Development Principles and Approaches into the Framing of Governance and the Future of Local Government in Aotearoa

The aspects noted above are key to an effective community-led development (CLD) approach, within which, local government is a key anchor. Over the last 14 years, Inspiring Communities has worked alongside communities and agencies across Aotearoa to identify success factors and key ingredients in collaborative locally-led change. Clearly there is much to be gained when local communities are understood and supported as key wellbeing partners. This aspect should be strengthened in the Panel's final report.

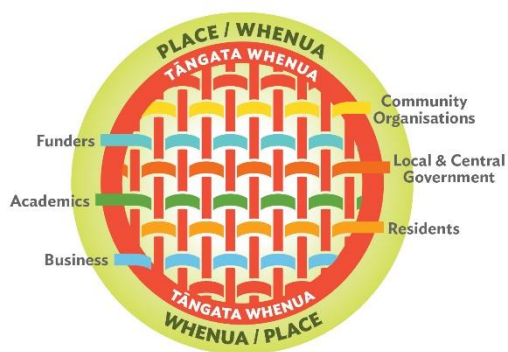
"We tend to underestimate the capability and capacity and resourcefulness of our communities - and in fact providing them with the resources and the information to get on and do the right thing, can lead to enormous success."

Sir Ashley Bloomfield, final media conference as Director-General of Health, 27 July 2022

We would also encourage the Panel to use and reference community-led development principles and thinking in the next phase of their work and in final recommendations to Government. With increasing recognition of the value of community-led approaches and ongoing use of community-led language and policy intents by both central and local government, it is important to more **explicitly incorporate CLD framing** into next step local government plans and programmes. Embedding a CLD lens into the future focus of local government is imperative to effectively and efficiently strengthening CLD policy, practice, investment and capability building for the whole local government sector. It will also go far in enabling the engagement, participation, collaboration, trust, social capital, and resilience outcomes the Review has identified.

Figure 1: Te Pou Manawa - CLD Framework and Principles

Te Whakawhanake ā-Hapori ki Aotearoa
Community-led Development in Aotearoa



Te Whakawhanake ā-Hapori
Weaving our connections and contributions

Ngā Mātāpono CLD Principles

1. Grow from shared local visions
2. Build from strengths
3. Work with diverse people and sectors
4. Grow collaborative local leadership
5. Learn by doing



www.inspiringcommunities.org.nz



We would also argue this lens and approach is essential for central government partners also! See our **Shaping the Future Report** which notes key shifts that became possible during Covid-19 lockdowns when old rules and ways of operating were swept aside to keep people safe and get things done.

Use principles-based approaches rather than 'one size fits all'

The answer to better local government (and local governance!) is not a structural response that narrowly focuses on the numbers of Councils, boundaries, and prescribed roles, functions and organising models. Local contexts, histories and relationships mean that 'one size fits all' approaches to local government sector reform will only ever be a step backwards. We agree with your cautioning against the creation of predetermined models or structures in legislation that would prescribe collaborative wellbeing models and processes at the local level. Aspirations and principles, definitely yes – but legislatively prescribed models, no. We also agree that changing mindsets and ways of thinking is as important as structural responses.

Set up a long-term programme of central government co-investment in and with the sector to enable iterative place-based innovation and change. Get started with the Bright Spots.

The Panel's two reports clearly identify there is much to be done to enable greater impact, effectiveness and outcomes from local government roles, functions and investment. The challenges noted in the Panel's draft report (including climate change, loss of biodiversity, growing social and economic inequality, loss of trust in government institutions etc) are pressing, interconnected and real. Successfully addressing these will require a long term programme of central government co-investment and equally, committed local government sector leadership for change. It should be noted that international evidence suggests that transformative place-based change initiatives work to a 10-14+ year timeframe.

The kinds of innovative changes in the sector the Panel is suggesting must be viewed as intentionally developmental. There are no perfect models to be rolled out. Collaboration is not a technical exercise. Effective place-based change is contingent upon deep relational working and adaptive leadership and management which support 'learning by doing' approaches.

Not all local government organisations will be transformation ready. With this in mind we would recommend a long term, phased and tailored approach to capability building that better meets Councils where they are and what they need next. In terms of runs on the board, we would also prioritise co-investment in and alongside Councils and their communities who can demonstrate that they are committed to and/or are already on a change journey. Taking a 'bright spots' approach means going where the energy is and investing in those who are ready and have the right conditions (including political, management, and partner support; staff capacity; some resource; and real time change projects and processes in mind) to trial new approaches. In our experience, '**working with the willing**' will yield faster results and provide early learning, evidence and examples to support the next tranche of Councils stepping up to innovate in their places.

Take a wider lens on Participatory Democracy - better engagement is not enough

We agree that local government should be a key facilitator, rather than deliverer of democracy. There are many ways civic participation outcomes can be strengthened and enabled. While we support more active Council experimentation with deliberative processes such as citizen's juries and assemblies, these processes in and of themselves are not a panacea for the trust issues currently inhibiting community-local government relationships, participation and confidence in local democracy. And in fact, many of these processes can be incredibly expensive to run, and when they're consultant-led and one-off, may have no longer term impact in changing council-community relationships or participation cultures.

We feel strongly that growing participatory democracy should be the priority focus for local government. We would also encourage a wider lens on your framing of participatory democracy. It's not just about greater participation in Council decision making processes. Internationally this concept extends to also enabling citizens and communities to be meaningfully involved in dialogue and decision making around key local issues and solution making AND as active partners in the work that follows to enable outcomes. It's also about Councils being ready and agile to get in behind and support the things that hapū, iwi/Māori and communities care most about too. Doing small (and big) things together and building relationships over time is the way that trust and confidence will be **mutually** strengthened and grown. This requires more than just being involved in Council decision making. Better engagement is not enough.

With this in mind, including measures around quality of relationships is an important thing for Councils to build into their performance monitoring frameworks. Too often success is narrowly judged on project

completion within budget – incorporating ‘quality of relationships¹’ as a topline measure will help ensure that HOW local government does its work is valued and recognised. Change not noticed is not change.

Building Capability for Sector Transformation

In our work across Aotearoa, we too observe Council and community relationships, and readiness for transformational change to be patchy at best. All Councils will have significant work to do to take up the transformation challenge the Panel has outlined. Legislative requirements have constrained the creative potential of long term strategic planning processes. This combined with decades of doing and or/providing things ‘for or to’ local communities leave a legacy of systems, processes and ways of working within much of local government that effectively serves to maintain power and control, minimise risk and uphold the ‘status quo.’

That said, we do want to acknowledge the many individuals working within local government who have been proactively trying to change traditional approaches. It’s inherently hard, and often lonely work. Moving forward, there will be significant value from a more active sharing of the practical tools and tactics they’ve been using to make change in their places. There are many stories of local governance success in Aotearoa that have not been told as well as they could. While overseas models and experience is incredibly useful, we must also get better at leveraging learning and next step opportunities from what’s working well and evolving here in Aotearoa, our place and context.

Equipping elected members and Council staff with knowledge and skills to work in more adaptive, enabling and strengths-based ways will be essential. In our experience, focused investment in both capability building and structured learning support processes are essential to ensure that real time support is consistently provided to assist Councils embedding new practices, establish prototypes, bust systems barriers and quickly share and scale good ideas, as well as learning so the whole sector benefits.

In terms of capability building, we encourage a broad range of approaches to be progressed. For example, going beyond training programmes and usual tool boxes to encourage short secondments of both local and central government staff into hapū, iwi, whanau and community groups, organisations and networks. This approach will help create ongoing and reciprocal opportunities for listening, reflection, and problem solving with people, groups and organisations in local communities also working to overcome complex challenges and wellbeing aspirations.

Establish a *Field Catalyst* to Support Sector Transformation

We recommend the Review Panel to explore the key role that intermediaries like Inspiring Communities, and others can play in helping grow and strengthen sector transformation across multiple Councils as they begin implementing new ways of working. The roles of Field Builders and Field

¹ Responses to this question should be asked of all partners, not just Council staff, with a useful follow up question encouraging greater description of the factors which helped strengthen/weaken relational outcomes. In this way measurement and reflective learning can usefully work together.

Catalysts are increasingly recognised internationally as a key part of a transformative change mix. These highly skilled intermediaries act as independent system enablers, helping bring together the best of bottom up (locally-led) and top down (centrally-enabled) learning and practice to help scale change both locally and nationally.

Key roles and tasks of field catalysts include:

- Building collective capability of change makers at multiple levels (rather than Councils invest in this individually)
- Acting as mentors or critical friends for local change makers
- Making connections and strengthening peer-learning relationships at multiple levels
- Helping document, harvest and share emerging learning, stories, and practice-based evidence about what works to enable positive change
- Bringing profile, language and legitimacy to an approach or issue that has emerged from local 'doing' challenges or success
- Influencing system changes (e.g. funding and policy approaches) to make it easier for local level innovation to succeed

While existing local government peak bodies Taituarā and Local Government New Zealand should have close working relationship with any new Local Governance Field Catalyst entity – it should not be embedded within either body. We would expect however that highly experienced local government personnel would form part of the Field Catalyst team, along with seconded staff from the Public Service Commission and/or the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to ensure that systems learning and improvements are taken seriously and proactively influence the ongoing programme of work underway to implement intents of the new Public Service Act (2020) across the public sector.

For more see:

https://ssir.org/articles/entry/field_catalysts#

<https://www.bridgespan.org/about-us/for-the-media/new-bridgespan-group-research-examines-how-funders>

https://ssir.org/articles/entry/how_field_catalysts_accelerate_collective_impact

https://inspiringcommunities.org.nz/ic_resource/field-catalyst-thinking/

Field Catalysts in Action

The Canadian federal government is currently investing in field catalyst infrastructural support to address related complex issue – for example, partnering with the Tamarack Institute to support the implementation of its Youth Futures Policy (place- based approach to address persistent youth unemployment and disadvantage).

For more see: <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/communitiesbuildingyouthfutures>

In Australia, the federal government is in the process of setting up the Nexus Centre to “amplify the effects of existing and emerging place-based initiatives”, with the centre envisaged as an independent, non-government entity that will work with and across governments, communities and other stakeholders around Australia. A lead consortium, comprising experienced community and academic agencies is currently in negotiations to finalise processes and arrangements for the Centre’s \$2.5m set up phase.

For more see <https://www.dss.gov.au/place-based-collaboration>

A Stronger Wellbeing Role for Local Government

Inspiring Communities supports a stronger wellbeing role for local government. This must begin with Councils and their iwi/Māori, community and government partners coming together to develop collective wellbeing aspirations and organising approaches for their places.

We support the concept of local government as an anchor institution. With the right mandate, capacity, capability and support it can take a greater role in planning, facilitating, monitoring, oversight and strategic leadership for wellbeing outcomes in their place.

The reallocation of roles and functions from central to local government however should be well down the track – especially in the social wellbeing domain. The initial work should focus on building local collaboration tables, systems and plans so that the strengths and contributions of hapu, iwi/Māori and community partners can be leveraged, supported and connected. Agreement needs to be reached on HOW key partners will work together in place ahead of WHO should do what. In this way, the role of local government in devolved service delivery is part of a wider conversation around who in a district or region is best placed to deliver on the locally tailored outcomes, priorities and aspirations.

Your current recommendation that only local and central government review future allocation of roles and functions disregards the fact that hapu, iwi/Māori and community partners need to be part of these decision making processes too, ensuring all options for who delivers are up for local discussion rather than view Councils as a local default. A collaborative approach to local governance requires all partners to be involved, especially in key decisions. This is about local Councils making decisions **with** their communities rather than on behalf of their communities.

Take an Eco System Approach rather than focus narrowly on Central and Local Co-Investment Approaches to enable Community Outcomes

We support commentary in your report around the structural and interpersonal barriers to current central-local government relationships. These factors also drive mindsets which in turn impede meaningful power sharing and collaborative planning and outcome setting at the local level.

We note the initial conceptual work you’ve done to identify principles for central and local government collaboration and co-investment. While this binary relationship is important, community wellbeing is about more than central and local government. Communities also need to be part of these co-design

processes – the old adage of nothing about us without us should influence next design steps the Panel takes. We also note that philanthropy and business are other key investors in place-based development. For example Foundation North currently invests around \$50m annually in enabling wellbeing outcomes across Auckland and Northland. This is not insignificant.

Their guidance and Council should be sought as part of designing new collaborative place based planning and funding processes too.

Improving wellbeing outcomes from Council's own assets and core activities

We concur with the Panel that there is much potential from Council's current services, assets and activities that could be better leveraged to strengthen local wellbeing outcomes. Social procurement is a key mechanism that many Councils have yet to fully grasp and utilise and can be a key enabler of greater local economic resilience. We support embedding this approach more formally into the business of local government. Alongside this, we would also support investment in a national programme to assist Councils understand the benefits of social procurement and practically support them into implementation. Noting that effective social procurement requires focus not just on Council internal procurement systems but on strengthening relationships and readiness of hapū, iwi/Māori community and local business partners to respond to new business development opportunities and collaborations this change encourages.

Conclusion

Inspiring Communities thanks The Local Government Review Panel for the opportunity to comment on your draft report and look forward to your final report in mid-2023. We strongly support your call for local government transformation and welcome the opportunity to be involved in supporting implementation planning and programmes which will be essential to enable and embed the long-term changes signalled.

Appendix 1:

About Community-led Development – Te Whakawhanake ā Hapori – ki Aotearoa



Te Whakawhanake ā-Hapori ki Aotearoa Community-led Development in Aotearoa

What is it?

Community-led development strengthens the vitality of communities by activating and weaving the contribution of everyone connected to a place/whenua.

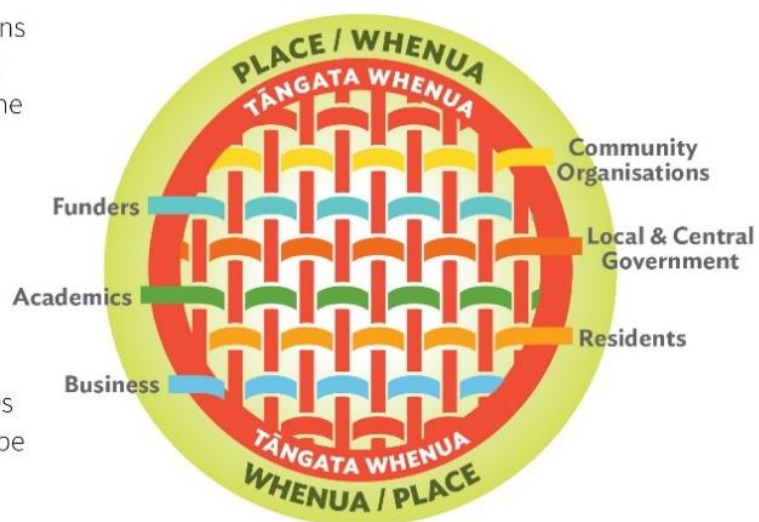
*Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou,
ka ora ai te iwi*

*With your contribution and mine
the community will flourish*

In Aotearoa, Te Tiriti ensures the histories and world views of tāngata whenua shape relationships, actions and outcomes in local communities.

*Whatungarongaro te tangata
toitū te whenua*

*People disappear from sight,
the land remains*



Te Whakawhanake ā-Hapori

Weaving our connections and contributions

A principles-based approach

Rather than a service or model, community-led development (CLD) is a way of thinking and working that's underpinned by five principles.

Inspiring Communities has crafted these principles from working with communities. They continue to evolve.

Ngā Mātāpono/CLD Principles

Grow from shared local visions

- Learn about tāngata whenua, their history and aspirations.
- Understand who was in this place, who is in this place and who will be in this place.
- Build plans with those who live, work, care, play, and invest in a place – the principle of te ahi kaa¹.
- Tailor-make solutions that reflect local ambitions, goals and contexts.
- Grow a shared sense of optimism and collective ownership of the future.

**Mā mua ka kite a muri, mā muri
ka ora a mua**

– those who lead give sight to those
who follow; those who follow give life to
those who lead

Build from strengths

- Everyone has a contribution to make.
- Value residents as ‘experts’ in their place.
- Proactively involve people who are frequently ignored.
- Recognise the strengths tāngata whenua bring and build respectful relationships.
- Value community assets. Use what you’ve got to help get what you want.

He kai kei aku ringa

– there is food at the end of
my hands

Work with diverse people and sectors

- Foster connections between groups who don’t usually work together.
- Support the aspirations of local whānau, hapū and iwi.
- Ensure residents are actively involved in all aspects.
- Build relationships between neighbours.
- Encourage networking between community-led initiatives locally, regionally and nationally.

**Mā whero, mā pango, ka
oti te mahi**

– by red and by black the
work will be completed

Grow collaborative local leadership

- Seek leadership from across the community – everyone is a potential leader.
- Value different cultural approaches to leadership.
- Support local people who are doing things and connect them to others to grow their effectiveness.
- Invest in developing skills and capacity of local leaders.
- Celebrate local leaders and community achievements.

**Ehara taku toa he toa takitahi,
engari taku toa he toa takitini**

– success comes from the strength
of the collective and not of the
lone individual

Learn by doing

- Plan and work adaptively.
- Build in time for structured reflection to understand what’s working and what’s not.
- Use data and insights to measure impact. Document and share progress widely.
- Embrace small steps that contribute to transformational change.
- Use local practice-informed evidence to support system changes locally and nationally.

I ore te tuatara ka patu ki waho

– a problem is solved by continuing to
find solutions

¹ Te ahi kaa is a term used to describe the home people – the ones that live on their whenua, that keep the home fires burning, that keep their place, particularly the marae, alive.