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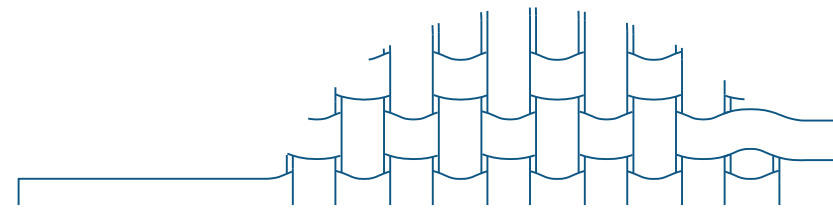**EVALUATING AND LEARNING ABOUT COMMUNITY-LED CHANGE**

A principles-based approach

CLD Evaluation and Learning

# INTRODUCTION

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Community-Led Development (CLD) is a way of thinking and working. The **CLD theory of change** has **five CLD principles** at its core. It assumes that thinking and working in CLD ways will enable sustainable positive change because social connections are being strengthened in ways that enable communities to thrive.

Evaluating and learning about CLD builds on a foundation of our everyday learning and reflection culture and is part of activating the Learning by Doing principle. Evaluation and learning about CLD helps us to:

- Create intentional feedback loops that inform our mahi, such as finding and working with community strengths, aspirations, concerns
- Provide feedback to help improve/adapt/rethink what we are doing, how we are doing things and seeing things
- Notice patterns, trends, the difference we are making over time and what's supporting those changes
- Share our stories with others and grow support. Such as from funders, partners, other communities doing similar work
- Spark conversations about how (well) we are walking the talk of the agreed values and CLD principles in our practice
- Improve our practice not just prove our contributions to various outcomes

Why evaluation and learning?

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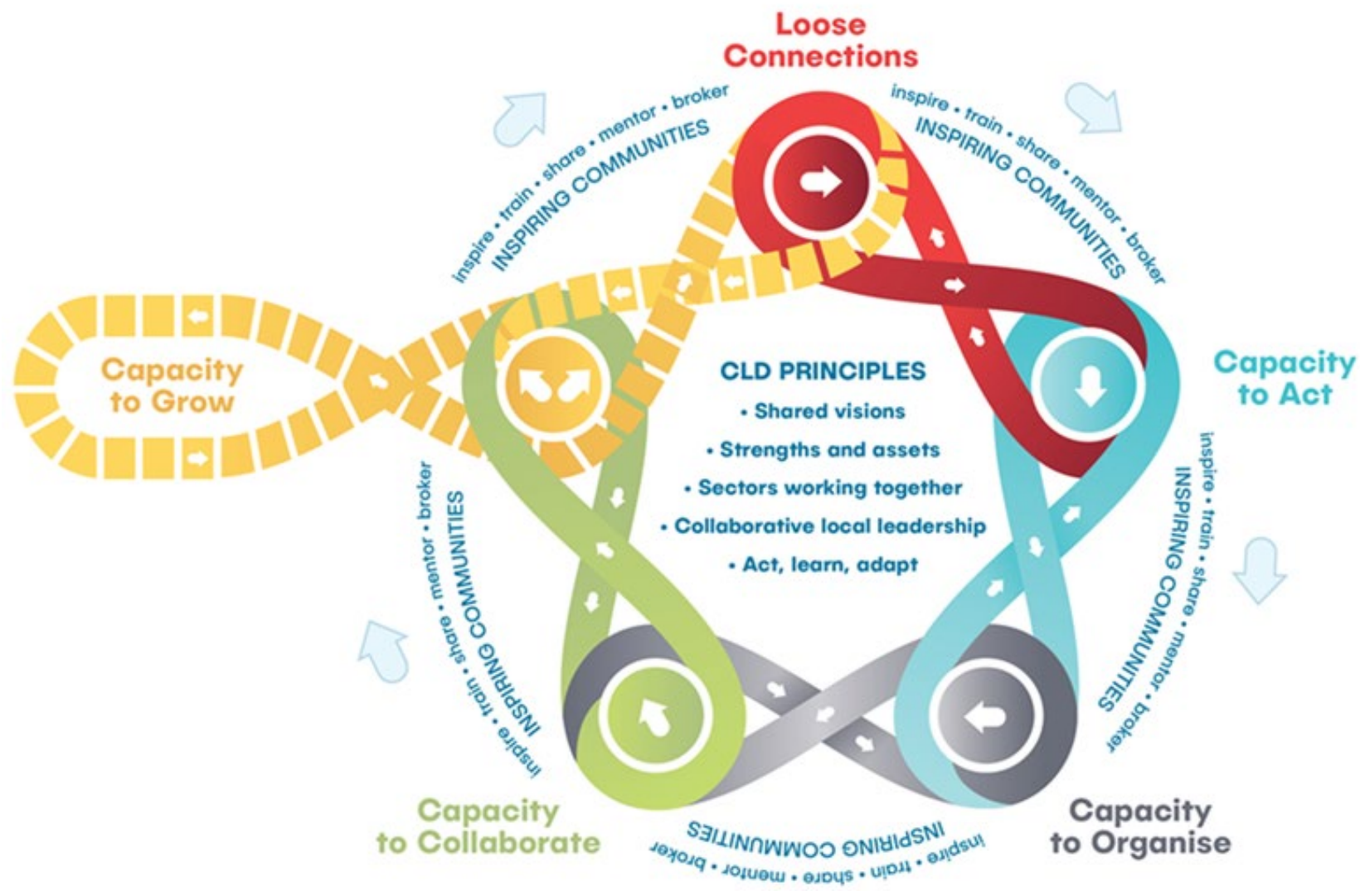
A key way of learning about how CLD is working and what it is contributing to can, therefore, be achieved by assessing the relevant CLD principles. This means, for each principle, there is interest in understanding various kinds of outcomes:

- who is involved and how
- how well the approaches used are working
- how progress towards a goal is happening
- what new possibilities are emerging
- what impacts and outcomes activities are contributing to
- what kinds of systems changes are being influenced

Created by Michael Quinn Patton, a principles-based evaluation can look very different depending on the initiative, the principles, the context, and the people conducting the evaluation. Principles-based evaluation examines whether principles are:

- clear, meaningful and actionable
- actually being followed
- contributing to desired results

"The journey is as important as the destination. We need to give them equal weight."

Michael Quinn Patton

Summary of Principles-focused Evaluation: The Guide by Michael Quinn Patton

Why use a principles-based evaluation approach in CLD?

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This resource provides a practical kete of tools for assessing how each of the five community-led development principles is showing up in our mahi – and it's not about them having to show up 'perfectly'!

A wide range of approaches are often required to build community and support change at the community level which means that community-led approaches are frequently accompanied by a host of other ways of working.

The practices and tools offered here are tailored to CLD and offer starting points for getting to know and understand what's working, why and how so we know what we need to pay attention to as we grow collective capacity, scale, connections to do deeper collaborative local change work.

This framework matches each of the five community-led development (CLD) principles with a principle for evaluation. It is organised by each CLD principle and offers links to practices and tools for assessing each CLD principle.

Some of these tools can be embedded in our everyday mahi. Others are more suited to a focused effort to evaluate.

We encourage you to apply the tools in ways that are useful for the initiative you are assessing, and those involved with that initiative.

What is this framework all about?

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CLD principle	Principle of practice for evaluation
Grow from shared local visions	Evaluate what matters to your communities
Build from strengths	Strengths based approach
Work with diverse people and sectors	Diverse voices, evidence and perspectives
Grow collaborative local leadership	Participatory evaluation and learning
Learn by doing	Learn as we go (embedded, reflective)

Evaluation principles of practice for each CLD principle

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GETTING
ORGANISED

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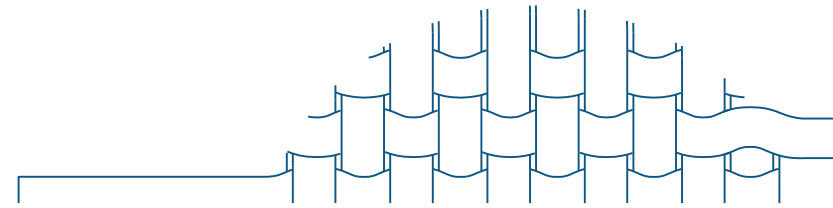
Start with:

- Why do we want or need to evaluate and learn
- Who is the evaluation and learning for
- How will these people use the information gathered
- What are their major evaluation and learning questions
- What information do we already have

Find a worksheet for this **here**.

Agree which aspects will be prioritised and how they will be valued:

- What is most important to focus on
- What is valued in this context
- What are our success criteria

Use this information to inform which CLD principles we wish to evaluate and to decide on success or performance criteria that can help judge quality and value in ways that stakeholders see as fair, transparent and credible.

"Be as clear as you can... focus on finding out things we don't know yet, not reproving what we already know, or testing the obvious"

Mark Cabaj

Getting started

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CLD principles/ outcomes	Participation	Progress	Performance	Possibilities	People	Policy
1. Shared local visions						
2. Existing strengths						
3. Working together						
4. Collaborative & diverse local leadership						
5. Working adaptively						

Focus on finding out the most useful things to know. What are the evaluation questions we want to answer? It may not be useful or practical to evaluate and learn about every CLD principle, and it is likely that some aspects are more important to find out about than others, such as who is involved and how (participation), how well things are going (performance) or what new opportunities are emerging (possibilities). **Find out more about the '6ps' here**

What is our evaluation looking for?

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Designed to help navigate "tricky issues" in Collective Impact, we have adapted these rules to help guide assessments of how and how well CLD values and principles are being activated, and what results they are contributing to:

1. Use evaluation to enable – rather than limit - strategic learning.
2. Create multiple ways of assessing so different perspectives are included and the results are useful for multiple users.
3. Opt for 'good enough' systems of shared measurement and use them. Achieving an approximate measure of useful things is more important than an accurate measure of things that are not useful to learning.
4. We become what we measure, so what we pay attention to in evaluation is really important. Aim to notice both intended and unintended outcomes, things that happen immediately, those that happen sometime later and how one thing leads to another.
5. Acknowledge that multiple factors are at play and seek to understand the contribution this project has made to any change.
6. Link findings to intentions and use them to learn (and make changes) as the initiative progresses and evolves.

CLD change is complex and contextual. There is no universal evaluation model for CLD and the best tools and approaches depend on the initiative and its context as well as how they apply these six key factors.

Six key factors

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Part of what good looks like in CLD is [Facilitating a learning culture](#) and another part of it is judging quality and value in ways that stakeholders see as fair, transparent and credible. This requires the development of a framework to assess success and/or performance. A simple framework is:

Rating level	Description
Excellent (Always)	Clear example of exemplary performance. No weaknesses
Very good (Almost always)	Very good or excellent performance on almost every aspect and strong overall. No weaknesses of consequence.
Good (Mostly, with some exceptions)	Reasonably good performance overall. Some slight weaknesses, but nothing very serious.
Emerging (Sometimes good, with quite a few exceptions)	Fair performance, but with some serious (non-fatal) weaknesses.
Not yet emerging (barely or not yet good)	No clear evidence that performance is good.
Poor (Never or only very occasionally good, with clear weaknesses evident)	Clear evidence of unsatisfactory functioning and serious weaknesses on crucial aspects.

This framework can be developed symbolically, such as in this example from [The Workshop](#). Find out more about rubrics [here](#). *The table is adapted from McKegg, K. Oakden, J., Wehipeihana, N and King, J. (undated). Evaluation Building Blocks: a guide (p6)*

Determining what 'good' looks like

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Credibility of evidence will depend on why the evaluation is being done, the values of who it is being done for and with (stakeholders) and how it will be used.

- It is good practice to have more than one source of evidence to inform judgements
- Evidence can be collated from existing information such as internal reports, social media data and website analytics but this doesn't always suit evaluation purposes
- A need to gather new evidence creates an opportunity to design and implement practical data collection approaches that are underpinned by the 5 CLD principles
- **Develop an evaluation plan** with key stakeholders and end users so everyone knows and understands the evaluation approach (values, principles, theories, evaluation criteria, performance framework, data collection, data analysis and reporting) as well as who will do what by when
- Aim to collect **both qualitative and quantitative data** and to use at least a couple of methods in ways that complement one another, and which involve stakeholders in decision making as well as contributors of information (e.g. their stories of change they have experienced or observed)
- There are some great data collection methods described **here** and the 'What works' site has some great resources for running **surveys**, **focus groups**, undertaking **observations**, **counts** and many other aspects of evaluation

What is credible evidence and how will we gather data?

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Evaluation and learning in CLD is participatory, so involve stakeholders according to their capacity, as you go.

- Systematically organise and interpret the data relative to the evaluation criteria. This will show everyone where we have lots of evidence and where there isn't so much
- If we are getting consistent messages for the criteria we are looking for, we may have enough data. If different messages are present, we may need to collect more data
- Once we are satisfied we have enough data (and it is robust), work with key stakeholders to use the data to inform the key questions we are aiming to answer
- This process helps to turn data into information to help answer the evaluation questions. It does this by informing defensible conclusions based on agreed success criteria about participation, progress, performance, new possibilities, people and policy outcomes
- Collaborative sense-making processes also enhance the transparency and credibility of evaluation findings for stakeholders

How will we synthesise and analyse data?

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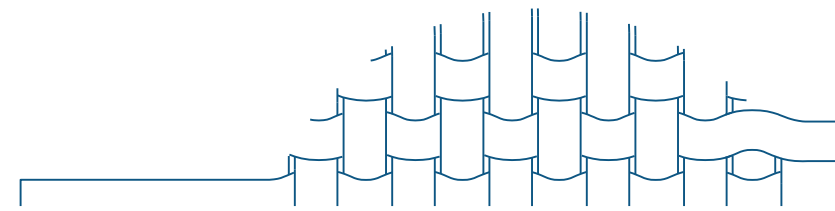
Grow from shared local visions

Evaluate what matters to your community.

What does this look like?

Identifying desired community outcomes:

- Whose outcomes? Who are we wanting to reach/work with? What are their aspirations, needs and hopes? Are diverse voices in the mix? Are we capturing what matters for our target group/s?

Look for what will tell us:

- Who is involved and how effective their participation is?
- Whether and how we're making progress towards our bigger vision as well as achieving goals on the way?
- How well the things we do are received?
- What new opportunities are emerging both as a result of our mahi and due to other things happening in the space we are in?
- What positive changes are we part of making happen and what is our contribution to those changes?
- How our own ways of working and those of others are changing as a result of this mahi?

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Grow from shared local visions

Finding out what matters to our community to focus our evaluation and learning can be done in a number of creative ways that can grow engagement with our mahi at the same time.

Tools and practices for everyday mahi
- **Practical steps to growing a community vision** - guidance for reaching out, designing powerful questions for visioning and ways of making the most of what we hear
- **Reaching out** - tried and tested ways of engaging community
- **Powerful questions** - for getting community conversations started
- **5 Wais** - a framework to guide engagement with Māori

Tools and practices for focused evaluation
- **Ideas boards** - an example of a way of gathering ideas from a range of people. Can be placed in a variety of places such as cafes, pubs and lunchrooms
- **Wishing trees** - an example of an interactive way of gathering a range of aspirations from people in public space
- **Including feedback into evaluation** - tips and tricks for actioning feedback, including for evaluation and learning

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Build from strengths

Being strengths based

What does this look like?

- Taking strengths-based approaches in terms of focus, language, looking for bright spots and successes, generating powerful questions

- Being holistic and including tinana, hinengaro and wairua (body, mind and spirit) in data collection

- Noticing needs and challenges and seeing them as opportunities

- Working in ways to gather data, interpet, analyse and report that show manaakitanga and are mana enhancing

- Ensuring that those whose story it is to tell are included in ways that work for them and enable them to shine

- Following the 'first do no harm' principle to ensure ethical practice in how we gather, store and share data, including people's stories and insights

Build from strengths

A strengths-based evaluation looks for what is working well and aims to provide information to both continue and improve that work as well as adapt successful approaches to areas that may not be working as well.

Tools and practices for everyday mahi
- **SOAR** - an example of one way of revealing existing strengths and organising them to contribute to the achievement of a vision
- **Powerful questions** - information on how to craft powerful questions
- **Te Whare Tapa Wha** - a holistic and creative way of seeing the strengths in a room, team, organisation or community
- **Asset Mapping** - a description of asset mapping and links to resources
- **Discover cards** - a way of mapping what is already in a community to guide action and establish baselines for evaluation and learning

Tools and practices for focused evaluation
- **Appreciative Inquiry** - a framework for building on what already works well to get more things to work well
- **Positive deviance** – a way of seeing bright spots

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Work with diverse people and sectors

Diverse voices, evidence, perspectives

What does this look like?

- Noticing who is in the space (and who isn't) and what their roles are/how they've been involved so far
- Working to ensure diverse voices and views are included, especially our target group/s
- Centring values and knowledge systems that are reflective of the initiative's context such as matauranga Māori and Te Ao Pacific
- Considering mana and including those whose views will influence our community/space as we assess how well things are going, the progress being made and the differences our mahi is contributing to
- Decentering pakeha/mainstream perspectives by broadening what counts as 'evidence' and including multiple evidence sources such as:
  - unsolicited feedback from people we work with,
  - references to our mahi that are published by others,
  - media coverage, and
  - decisions made by power-holders our mahi has influenced
  - stories from stakeholders' observations/experiences of change happening

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Work with diverse people and sectors

Including a wide range of people into an evaluation means going to where people already are: clubs, pubs, cafes, markets, parks etc. It means talking with them in their language, at their pace, and in their style. And it means listening to hear what matters to them.

Tools and practices for everyday mahi
- **Building collaborative working relationships** - ways to grow the diversity of people involved in your mahi
- **CLD ways of working with Tāngata Whenua** - includes principles of engagement and questions to guide engagement
- **Active listening** - ways to listen attentively to a speaker, understand what they are saying, respond and reflect on what is being said, and retain that information to inform your mahi

Tools and practices for focused evaluation
- **Photovoice** - a way of engaging people who aren't often heard or find it hard to communicate about the things that are important to them
- **Partnerships analysis tool** - a way of assessing, monitoring and improving the effectiveness of partnerships
- **Success Evidence Strategies** - an exercise for groups to identify successes, how these are measured and assessed, and what strategies contributed to these successes, that is particularly powerful, and has been used effectively in diverse cultural contexts

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Grow collaborative local leadership

Participatory evaluation and learning

What does this look like?

- Using participatory tools and processes that people enjoy throughout the entire evaluation process - design, data gathering, analysis, sensemaking and deciding how the information and knowledge generated is applied
- Supporting people to learn about and experience being a leader by creating opportunities for a range of people to lead and participate in the different stages of evaluation and learning, building on and enhancing the skills they already have
- Embracing a range of practices and tools to include a wide range of values, perspectives and experiences
- Groups/initiatives building confidence and capability to shape and use their own meaningful evaluation and learning approaches (their criteria for success, ways of tracking and evidencing progress) rather than only responding to what funders prescribe as criteria and data needed
- Groups/initiatives being confident to invite funders and other key stakeholders into 'ako' mutual learning conversations around evaluation findings

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Grow collaborative local leadership

CLD is about growing the leadership of everyone, including in the evaluation and learning phases of an initiative. Everybody's ideas, experiences and knowledge are useful when we are making decisions about how to evaluate CLD.

Tools and practices for everyday mahi
- **Art of hosting meaningful conversations** - a four fold practice for supporting people to be present in the mahi, to participate, be hosted and to create together
- **Growing collective leadership confidence means navigating tensions** - a leadership as learning model for navigating the messiness of CLD in ways that uplift those who are part of the mahi
- **Reimagining governance** - a collection of things that have worked here in Aotearoa for CLD governance including four key functions of governance (page 3) that can provide a useful tool for governance group review, evaluation and learning
- **Organise your evaluative work** - an ongoing format for Board or community reflection hui

Tools and practices for focused evaluation
- **Most Significant Change** - participatory story gathering to better understand impact and outcomes
- **World Café** - A way of hosting conversation with a large group that can help data gathering and sensemaking by revealing differing as well as similar perspectives, values and priorities
- **Quadrants of change** - a tool for analysing where and how change is happening

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Learn by doing

Learning as we go

What does this look like?

- Starts with an everyday culture of learning/reflection (not blame/shame or all action/no reflection)

- A regular, consistent reflective practice that is documented and applied in real time

- 'Lifting up' learning sessions that look for insights across your mahi

- Bringing people together to share and learn

- Learning space at Board level

- Sharing your insights with others, informing the community story you're telling about yourself

Learning by doing means looking to how you can embed some consistent questions, processes and practices into your mahi so it is part of your culture of 'how we do things around here'.

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Learn by doing

Tools and practices for everyday mahi

- **Fostering a learning culture** – ways of being/becoming a learning organisation
- **Regular reflective sessions and Ako learning sessions** - from the Niho Taniwha toolset to help reconnect with Tangata Whenua and Pasifika innovation to support social and economic transformation.
- **Splash and Ripple** - using outcomes to design your mahi
- **Writing your CLD story** - a framework for documenting why, what, who and how as well as what differences have resulted

Tools and practices for focused evaluation

- **What kind of evaluation?** - different kinds of evaluations for different purposes
- **Develop a simple evaluation plan** - our 6 P CLD indicators is one way to start
- **Collecting or retrieving data** - a collection of methods to choose from. Ideally use 2-3 ways of data gathering together in order to ensure multiple data sources and perspectives
- **Assessing community impact** - how to develop evaluations that provide information that will be used. Includes assessing readiness for community-engaged evaluation
- **What, so what, now what?** - a simple tool to collectively look back on progress so far and decide what adjustments are needed
- **Outcomes Harvesting** - a way of 'harvesting' what has changed in a place over a given period and working backwards to reveal what has contributed to these changes

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Regular reflective practice questions (TSI/WI)

Lifting up learning sessions (TSI)

Resource from Niho Taniwha Toolset (pg. 14)

So what now?

Where to from here?

Don't get paralysed with all the possibilities of what you could do or what you don't yet know.

- Start with what's clearly useful, achievable and keep learning by doing!

- Keep your questions and processes 'alive' to what matters most, what you are most curious about

- Choose data gathering methods that are appropriate for your community, culture and context

- Get creative in how you weave this evaluative work into your everyday mahi and have some fun with how you use and communicate what you learn about the difference you are making

- Let go of perfect - an approximate measure of the important things that really matter is great

- Build networks with others with research skills and a heart for your mahi - draw on their strengths

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Resources

If you want to explore a wider range of evaluation tools, check out these websites:

Inspiring Communities – Learn by doing

What Works - a very useful resource developed by Community Research

Community Research - who support and share research in the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector - yours could be up there too!

Better Evaluation - for a huge range of evaluation resources

Tamarack Community - for more evaluation resources specific to community impact context

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