

Be the Change

Funding and Equity



A resource for community and funders produced by
Dunedin Community Builders

July 2022

Cover image: Community kapa haka group Te Aho Paihere performs at Matariki celebrations in Ōtepoti. Te Aho Paihere is one of the many groups lifting up our rangatahi as they claim their identity and culture. Te Aho Paihere runs on volunteer energy and aroha, and struggles to access funding through traditional funding systems.

Photographer: Rewa Pene

“It might blow up in our faces, but something amazing might happen.”

To all the people who sit up late writing applications, to all the people who walk alongside them, to the communities they serve, to the funders who see their way to being the change, this resource is for you.

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Contents

Forewords

Dr Michael J Stevens	1
Cr Marie Laufiso	2
Leonie Matoe	3
Rochelle Stewart-Allen	4

Introduction

5

The top 10 (+5)

7

Key themes

8

Honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and seek equitable outcomes for Māori	8
Embed a commitment to equity in funding systems	10
Empower grassroots community-led development	12
Recognise that people are the heart of community	14
Shift from consultation to collaboration and co-creation	16
Harness data and stories to enable and measure change	18

Scones, not wine

20

Quick wins

21

Reflective questions for funders

24

Reading and resources

25

Forewords



In the 1990s, when I was a teenager, I frequently joined my mother working in the kitchen on Te Rau Aroha Marae. The catering efforts we contributed towards were usually local whānau events, such as birthdays, weddings, and tangihanga, or iwi-level events, like Waitangi Day commemorations. However, we also hosted functions for straight commercial reasons, and by such means helped pay council rates, the monthly power bill, and basic building maintenance.

The passage of the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 enabled Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu to pursue a suite of commercial activities and this ultimately relieved us, at Bluff, of the need to rent out our wharekai on a given Saturday night. The Ngāi Tahu Fund, for example, which Te Rūnanga developed as a key means of direct distribution, has hugely boosted marae and marae-based development throughout Te Waipounamu. Te Rau Aroha Marae has been a recipient of this investment, as evidenced by our wharenuī, Tahupōtiki, which opened in early 2003 after a dedicated team of locals, including my grandparents, spent four years engaged in whakairo, tukutuku and kōwhaiwhai under the tutelage of Cliff Whiting.

However, that particular project was also significantly boosted by a generous grant from the Southland Community Trust, as it then was. This was the first time I witnessed the transformative power of a Community Trust-derived grant, especially in a provincial town that had endured two decades of economic decline and all of the social challenges that engenders. Two decades later, having spent much of the intervening time living in Dunedin, my abiding memory of that experience was one of the reasons why I applied to be a trustee of the Otago Community Trust, which I was appointed to in August 2020.

Since that time, I have learnt a lot about New Zealand's philanthropic landscape and the nature and extent of the Otago Community Trust within it. And I have particularly enjoyed meeting some of the numerous volunteers and not-for-profit organisations who give so much of themselves across this city and region in pursuit of that noblest ideal: the equality of opportunity. One of those organisations, which has kindly included me and my fellow trustees in its activities, is Dunedin Community Builders. It therefore gives me great pleasure to furnish this foreword to its latest resource, which I anticipate will assist us with our work at the Otago Community Trust. As you will see, *Be the Change* contains a rich diversity of voices and aspirations and is a powerful reminder of the need for philanthropic funders to maintain a robust and regular dialogue with the many communities we exist to serve. For aiding efforts in that regard, I offer my sincere personal thanks.

Dr Michael J Stevens
(Kāi Tahu)



Tēnā Koutou, Mālō Fa’afetai, Many thanks to Dunedin Community Builders for your aroha, long-term consistency and endurance required by the often ‘one-step-forward-two-steps back’ effort to build trusting cross-cultural relationships of genuine trust and of more than one dimension. Thank you for the creation of *Be the Change* as another resource and guide for funders and community organisations who are exploring how to make or contribute effectively to social change.

Thank you also for the opportunity to contribute this foreword with a prompting question, “What are your anchor points in working for equity?” For my siblings and me, our Mum Eti was, and remains, the fundamental anchor who taught us how to take responsibility for both the people AND the environs of our nu’u/village, Brockville. As a ‘maverick’, our Mum didn’t stay confined in the insular confines proscribed for a former-scholarship-student-turned-Sāmoan migrant. Ahead of her time, she learned Te Reo Māori, studied TESOL and forged working relationships outside her expected mileu. When her younger brother (1986) and older cousin (early 1990s) passed away here in Dunedin, she took them both to lie at the Araiteuru Marae.

An old-hand activist who is deeply privileged to speak ‘from the margins at the Council table’, I experience much frustration whenever we are considering how the Council might respond in ways that foster and enhance equity, diversity and inclusion. To me, local government (and, for that matter, all New Zealand funders whether through public or private philanthropic channels) never deals head-on with the fundamental precept that ‘our’ wealth was established off Māori land, off the backs of Mana whenua and Tāngata whenua.

In our government or community agencies and organisations, we rarely, if ever, take the time to analyse and agree on the root causes of deprivation, locally, nationally and internationally. We don’t take the time to understand how every new funding programme is merely tweaking with symptoms to ensure that we remain entrenched in the ‘deserving poor’ charity ethos of 19th-century England. Because if we were to genuinely focus on causes and not symptoms, we would have to deal honestly and at depth with our fears and loathing of Māori, the most othered group in our context. We might also have to ask ourselves the fundamental and under-asked question – why? – and follow through by ensuring every decision has a component of genuine power-sharing.

Suzanne Menzies-Culling (Tuiwi Solutions) often speaks of the great physical courage of individual New Zealanders and 20th-century New Zealand’s enthusiasm for ‘the underdog’ or for a ‘fair go’. However, as a nation plagued with and betrayed by 35 years of Rogernomics and Ruthanasia, we now have very far to go in genuinely coming to terms with Tāngata whenua vis-à-vis He Whakaputanga o Te Rangatiratanga o Niu Tirenī (28 October 1835) coupled with Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Dealing whole-heartedly with knowing where we collectively stand on Māori land is not an easy ask. If understanding the roots of our own colonisation, thereby finding common cause with Māori, were an easy task, we’d have achieved this by now. I believe firmly that our nation’s reality was determined by the decisions of seven generations ago. To create a different reality for all our future generations, our great-great-great-great-great grandchildren, we must change ourselves today.

**Cr Marie Laufiso
(Sāmoan, Tongan)**



Growing up in the Māori public health sector, I was exposed to Māori community leaders, kaupapa Māori researchers and evaluators, Māori health promotion practitioners and Māori business entrepreneurs, who all inspired my journey in working for equity. I have been fortunate to work in Kaupapa Māori and Iwi organisations in my professional capacity.

Fortunate because it was in these organisations where I was able to privilege mātauranga Māori, look to karakia, waiata, kōrero tuku iho and whakapapa to imagine new approaches, new theories, which, in actual fact are not new at all but were elements of the old world there to guide us in designing new solutions. This took courage, a belief in tūpuna wisdom and a belief in oneself to challenge the status quo, to think beyond what we know and to really examine our past, our present, in order to shift. On reflection, the people I worked with at the time fully embraced the reality of a transformative shift that reconnected us with our own knowledge systems to lead us through the journey. We purposely let go of the sector influences that restricted us and with our primary funder by our side, we pushed off with determination to do better. We still had to adjust our kaupapa Māori aspirations to fit the procurement contract, however, and what's worse, as was in the case of working in the iwi sector, we still had to line up as a 'stakeholder' not a 'partner to te Tiriti' in order to access government funding. Which is why there is still so much to do and why this work by Dunedin Community Builders is so timely and relevant.

This is an important regional perspective and part of a wider sector movement toward funding for equity. In September 2020, I joined the Hāpai Hāpori team at Te Tari Taiwhenua (Community Operations, Department of Internal Affairs) as a regional manager of community advisory services for Te Waipounamu, caring for a team of community advisors across Waitaha, Ōtākou, Murihiku and Te Tai Poutini. Our community advisors are recognised as taonga for Hāpai Hāpori due to their strong relationship-building skills as well as their deep connection and support for community. This serves as a good foundation for Hāpai Hāpori who are seeking to evolve our community funding model. We know that current funding is built on systemic bias which has led to inequitable funding outcomes and acknowledge that we operate from an imported charitable model in which 'worthy purpose' is determined by the giver. By the nature of the system, Māori are excluded and other minority communities also overlooked. We can see that there is opportunity to build a Māori worldview into the system, provide support for community organisations to grow as well as deliver and be responsive to changing needs.

This is our intention and our intention is our becoming. Working for equity requires all of us to more consciously engage in a process of change and to engage with the necessary knowledge systems to transform reality. To all of us stepping into new realms, let this publication be one of your anchor points in working for equity. Tēnā tātou katoa.

Leonie Matoe
(Ngā Rauru, Ngā Ruahine)



Over the past two years, Aotearoa New Zealand has collectively witnessed incredible turmoil in our lives and those around us as the Covid-19 pandemic has taken hold. But we've also witnessed the urgent need for change across our institutions and the systems that are designed to support us.

At the forefront of our nation's Covid-19 response have been our tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector. Small and large community groups everywhere have tirelessly supported their communities, often sacrificing their personal time and energy to ensure those most in need were not without care. As well as ensuring the basics were covered (shelter, food, safety), our community workers and volunteers continued to offer a listening ear, found creative solutions to problems, entertained us, connected people, and shared a large amount of generosity and kindness with those who needed it.

Despite this resilience and ongoing commitment to care, Aotearoa's community groups continue to face long-standing funding challenges. Our grassroots non-profits are diverse, varying in size, operating differently, and achieving variable outcomes. However, most community groups receive no or inadequate government funding to meet their service costs, and are heavily dependent on philanthropic funding, as well as their own fundraising efforts.

Many organisations struggle to meet basic running costs, let alone make sure they have reserves to see them through the challenges major issues like Covid-19 highlight. However, the competitive funding environment encourages organisations to keep accepting under-funded contracts. These ongoing issues meant that when Covid-19 hit, much of the sector already had limited resilience.

I'm so pleased to see Dunedin Community Builders capturing the funding challenges in Ōtepoti Dunedin over the past two years from those most impacted by our broken funding systems. What one community group experiences in Dunedin, another experiences in Kaitaia, and this resource's clear, practical solutions offer a way forward across the motu for everyone.

At Hui E! Community Aotearoa, we are committed to working alongside Dunedin Community Builders to amplify this important taonga to ensure it reaches the right decision-makers. Our funding landscape needs collaboration, not competition. It's long overdue to bring funders and community groups together for shared decision-making and power sharing. In the words of Gina Hu'akau, "You may hold the pūtea, but we hold the people".

As this resource points out, we need to improve our funding models to be more responsive to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, more equitably distributed, and significantly easier to access. Let's not waste the lessons we've learnt from Covid-19, otherwise we will need to learn them again the next time around. Let's take this opportunity to make the systemic shifts so desperately needed so that, collectively and collaboratively, we may better serve the wellbeing of Aotearoa's communities.

Rochelle Stewart-Allen
(Tangata Tiriti)

Introduction

Dunedin Community Builders is an informal, volunteer-run network of organisations, groups and people from across the community sector in Ōtepoti. We hold regular hui that bring together a wide range of people and groups to connect and share ideas.

Our kaupapa is to:

- support a culture of grassroots, community-led development in the city
- encourage place-based community leadership
- elevate community voices
- share knowledge of best practice

One of the planks of our mahi as Dunedin Community Builders is to look at how funding systems could be shifted to create change and equity. In the past couple of years, we have produced a report based on a survey of 40 community groups and held two large community hui.

In 2020, our report, *Funding for Change in Ōtepoti: Perspectives from Dunedin's Community Sector*, was launched at a hui that gave grassroots community leaders a platform to discuss challenges with the funding system and new responses. We followed up with a second hui held in 2021 that extended this conversation by inviting some of our major funders to share their stories about innovative approaches they take when working with communities. In late 2021, we held a zoom hui with around 30 participants from community groups and funding organisations to explore the question of “What’s Next?” This latest resource, which carried that title in its draft form, gathers together themes and ways forward from these conversations and hui.

As with other settler-colonial societies, Aotearoa New Zealand has a history of violence, dispossession and disruption and, consequently, a range of inequalities. The gap between those who are doing well and those who are not widened rapidly as a result of the neo-liberal reforms of the 1980s and 1990s and remains persistently large. Across many measures, disparities in socio-economic status, wellbeing, education, health, housing and other areas can be attributed to inequitable access to resources and opportunities depending on ethnicity, gender, disability, wealth and income, sexuality and age.

As a redistributive mechanism, funding should be targeted squarely at addressing these inequities. We have heard about many ways in which funders can help to create change, but we have also consistently heard about the cost of funding systems that do not put an equity focus front and centre of their strategy and practice.

It is not enough to have an 'open door' approach with one-size-fits-all templates and forms. We must recognise systemic privilege and advantage, and work actively to bend the system towards equity if we want to avoid cementing the status quo and hardening the boundaries that ensure Pākehā, middle-class values and viewpoints continue to dominate. Otherwise – while funders may have strong reserves and healthy balance sheets, comfortable relationships and low risk, high accountability processes – the price is paid by our most marginalised communities. It is paid in late nights and long hours, in under-resourced and over-worked volunteers and staff, in deferred dreams and compromised visions. Those who have the least resources and who do the most life-changing work often find it the hardest to access and sustain funding. This report highlights and points towards ways in which this can change.

With a generosity of spirit and thought, some changes are relatively straightforward and achievable. Such changes can include making application and reporting processes more accessible, strengthening relationships and networks across and between sectors, and developing ways to report on equity measures and community impact. The changes that have deep impact require a fundamental reimagining and rebalancing of power and decision-making processes. This is about building genuine Treaty-honouring relationships and practices, enabling true community-led development, embedding a commitment to equitable outcomes in funding systems, and elevating the voices of marginalised groups.

We need to be working all the way along this spectrum by continuing to have open, wide-ranging conversations, centring the dreams, kaupapa and tikanga of tangata whenua, and responding to the solutions that emerge from grassroots communities.

A note on our sources

It is important to us that our work is always grounded in and drawn from community voices. This resource is distilled from the kōrero that we have heard from across the community and funding sectors over the last two years and more, and we acknowledge the weight and value of what has been shared with us.

The quotes are taken from the "What's Next?" hui, in which small groups recorded comprehensive notes from their discussion. Some quotes have been edited lightly for clarity. In this resource, we also include some case studies, commentary and reports to reinforce and give wider context to these community perspectives. There is a reading list at the end if you would like to do some further exploration.

The top 10 (+5)

What a funding sector focused on equity might look like

1. Te Tiriti o Waitangi is embedded in strategy, policy and practice
2. Strong relationships with mana whenua are prioritised
3. Relationships are sustained with diverse local communities
4. Communities participate in local strategic planning and decision-making, and there is a clear, agreed understanding of communities' priorities
5. Governance and staffing teams look like the communities they serve
6. Funding organisations demonstrate strong cultural competency
7. Community advisors come from their communities, are steeped in best practice, and know how to have relationships
8. An equity lens is applied to funding, decisions and planning
9. Funding and reporting systems are co-designed with local communities, prioritising equity, accessibility and ease of use
10. Story-telling and lived experience are centred in decision-making and reporting
11. Cross-sector networks and relationships are invested in
12. There is increased access to multi-year funding, funding for people, general operational funding and full funding
13. Quick, trust-based funding is readily available for grassroots responses to Covid-19 and other emergencies, particularly those led by Māori and Pasifika communities
14. Capacity and capability building for grassroots community groups are well resourced
15. Navigator roles, shared fundraising resources and pooled or collaborative funding are all possible

Key themes

Honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and seek equitable outcomes for Māori

“A challenge is to not mix up ‘Treaty honouring’ with a commitment to equitable outcomes for Māori – these are different activities by both funders and community groups.”

“How do we invest in supporting Treaty honouring activities (and the actual cost to do this well) – but not at the expense of seeing equitable outcomes for Māori?”

To achieve the systemic change required, it is critical that funders and community groups have cultural capability and a strong understanding of Te Ao Māori and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The process of colonisation has marginalised Māori in their own country. A failure to recognise indigenous sovereignty, the theft of land, destruction of language and culture, and the hegemony of Pākehā values and ways of doing things have been the hallmarks of our history and, all too often, current policy and practice.

The national response to the Covid-19 pandemic is a potent example. The burden of Covid has fallen disproportionately on Māori, and whānau and iwi have led the way in supporting their communities, managing their rohe borders and caring for sick family members. These experiences are mirrored for Pasifika communities.

The Government has systematically failed to partner with Māori to address this inequity or to properly resource responses grounded in tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake. In this context, equity for Māori whānau, hapū and iwi should be the first priority of any organisation, and the massive (and largely voluntary) work done by Māori organisations to care for and strengthen their whole communities should be properly recognised and resourced.

Funders should be making long-term impact investments in groups that empower whānau and build resilience, connection and wellbeing. They should also be ready to release quick, high-trust funds to enable emergency and crisis responses, and should have the relationships and understanding they need to do so effectively.

A commitment to identify and create opportunities to honour Te Tiriti and ensure equitable outcomes for Māori requires investment from funders and community groups. A challenge is to recognise the cost of this mahi and to properly resource the time and expertise given by tangata whenua. As noted in the first report, some funding organisations may also need to lift their cultural capability to improve the quality of their decision-making.

When only contestable funding is available, opportunities to invest in significant and systemic change are missed. Strategic impact investment driven by community aspirations is needed for funding to make a real, sustainable social and economic difference.

Local funders are exploring models to give a ‘no strings attached’ annual grant or koha to marae in their area and to establish a joint funding process with an iwi fund that already has culturally relevant mechanisms built in. These and other models are worth wider consideration and investment.

“Covid funds for Māori and Pasifika – it’s good that there’s some willingness to make money available, but the processes are still following a middle-class model.”

Te Tiriti and the pandemic

Gaps in the Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic from a Te Tiriti perspective have been well canvassed by Māori organisations and public health experts and have also been identified in significant reports released by the Waitangi Tribunal and the Human Rights Commission.

These issues have been widely reported. As an example, the inequities arising from the Government's failure to design the vaccine rollout with a risk-based lens – which would have meant vaccination was prioritised for Māori and Pasifika populations at much lower age ranges than for Pākehā – are discussed in an article by M. Daalder published on Newsroom in September 2021. These outcomes had been well forecast by Māori health experts such as Dr Rawiri McKree Jansen and Dr Rhys Jones. Dr Rawiri Taonui also writes regularly on the pandemic, tracking data and policy shifts from a Māori perspective and with an eye to equity considerations.

The pandemic also worsens existing discrimination, an issue discussed in an article by G Dexter and published by Newshub that explores the difficulties of accessing vaccination and managing home isolation for isolated communities, people without cars, crowded households and households without good phone and internet access.

The Human Rights Commission released a series of briefings in November 2021 that looks at the Covid-19 Protection Framework from a human rights and Te Tiriti perspective. The briefings note that any Covid-19 response must recognise that “efforts to address health and other disparities affecting Māori are unlikely to be effective if they are not real partnerships upholding Māori tino rangatiratanga”.

A Waitangi Tribunal inquiry into the Crown's vaccination strategy and the shift to the Covid-19 Protection Framework found that the Crown had breached the Treaty principles of partnership, active protection and equity, and that its approach had created inequitable outcomes for Māori. The tribunal recommended that the Crown urgently provide further funding, resourcing, data and other support to Māori providers and communities; improve its collection of ethnicity data and information; strengthen its monitoring; prioritise Māori in vaccine rollouts; and strengthen its engagement with its Treaty partners.

Intentional funding for impact

The JR McKenzie Trust is a philanthropic family trust known for funding groups and initiatives that struggle to get grants elsewhere. The trust uses a range of approaches and mechanisms to distribute funding to organisations that align with its vision of a socially just and inclusive Aotearoa New Zealand. Catalysed by a review identifying that Māori were under-represented in the trust's funding allocations, Te Kāwai Toro was established in 2003 to proactively support and enable ngā tangata whenua-led aspirations. The trust works in partnership with ngā kaikōkiri (rōpū supported by the trust), who have critical connections and relationships with their hapū, iwi, rūnanga and hapori. This enables an approach of working alongside and being guided by their communities, not doing to or for them.

Embed a commitment to equity in funding systems



Combined, there's a lot of money around – it would be good to point it in a more directional way.”



If you are from a comfortable middle-class background, you don't have a burning desire for change – the status quo suits you well.”

Across the board, people we have spoken with in the past couple of years recognise the critical need to rectify funding inequities. This continues a thread of analysis and thought leadership that has been developing over decades. Equity needs to be considered all the way along the funding chain and be fully embedded in the acquisition of funds, investment parameters, distribution policies and settings, outreach, engagement and promotion, application and grant allocation processes, public communications, reporting requirements and ongoing relationships.

At the most basic level, there is concern that money flows from low-income communities to rich ones if funding structures and culture (particularly with funds that are generated from gaming) do not have a strong equity focus. Many councils have a sinking lid policy to control and reduce the number of gambling machines and venues. While this is a positive social wellbeing strategy to reduce gambling harm, it can affect the total funding pool available for community groups. It has also been noted that gambling-derived funds help to support operational and staffing costs among many community groups, including in the arts and sporting sectors. This funding revenue cannot be easily replaced currently, with minimal motivation by government or philanthropy to step in and replace this funding option. This has caused a deep contradiction in our community with many groups now reliant on this funding, while also recognising that gambling continues to cause direct harm among some of our most vulnerable people.

There is widespread recognition that applying for grants is hard and requires specialist skills. Better equipped organisations are more likely to have a team and the resources to contract services – they can afford fundraisers or staff who have this as part of their role. Supporting small organisations with grant applications, making application processes flexible and open, providing multi-year grants and resourcing collective and collaborative fundraising approaches can all help to redress this imbalance.

Working towards equity may also mean changing who is at the table in funding organisations. There is a call from the community sector for funders to involve in their decision-making more people who work at the coalface and represent vulnerable communities. There is also a call to change the experience of acting in a governance role for a funding organisation so that people, particularly those from marginalised communities, are empowered and not isolated.

Understanding issues of equity requires attention to the drivers and language of funding systems. Dismantling the structures that perpetuate these policies and processes needs a clear analysis of how power is held and controlled. Funding systems are often driven by a belief that funders must have oversight and accountability mechanisms to manage risk. However, this focus on accountability at the expense of trust and relationship-building can create structural barriers that disable participation by grassroots and non-mainstream groups and contribute to inequitable distribution of funding and outcomes.

We encourage funders to explore more innovative and relational ways of framing accountability and to consider ways to prioritise other drivers such as community impact, Treaty-honouring processes, equity and inclusiveness. It's worth comparing the language (and practices) of grants and accountability in the NFP sector with investment and return in the private sector. How does the language we use drive actions and decisions?

“*Pokies money – it flows from Māori communities in South D to Māori Hill, Caversham to St Clair.*”

“*We as community groups walk alongside vulnerable/unreached people and also the vibrant people. We are connected to those people – those who we want to be representing in governance, we plead others to join, but there is resistance.*”

“*Community groups have been carrying out the Government's work since the 80s. Bring in activists and people who represent groups that are affected by inequity.*”

“*There are lots of Dunedins – ideally, our funding bodies will reflect those Dunedins.*”

“*We sometimes have the same person on more than one funding body – they might be privileged but end up with lots of say over people on the ground. They need to be in touch with what's really happening.*”

“*We need to find methods of governance that are real and don't break people down/intimidate them, ie not token.*”

Developing an equity mindset

The blog Nonprofit AF, by former non-profit executive director, writer and speaker Vu Le, explores issues of social justice and equity in the non-profit sector. In a post on 27 February 2022, Le posed nine questions to assess what's equitable and what's not in a situation:

- Who are the most marginalised people and how have they been affected?
- How are the voices and opinions of the people most affected by this situation centred?
- What power dynamics are involved? Who holds the most power in this situation?
- Who developed this system in the first place?
- Who benefits most from things remaining unchanged?
- Who is asking for change, and who is defending against it?
- Who created the evidence that supports status quo?
- What does the data say when you disaggregate it?
- How do your identity, upbringing, culture, education, privileges, and biases affect your perspective?

Nonprofit AF and RVC Seattle have created an equitable grant-making continuum tool that funders can use to see how equitable their funding practices are.

Empower grassroots community-led development

“We need to fund our visions and missions and not chase money determined by funders. Funders’ strategic objectives can be unclear or vague.”

“The shift post-Covid in terms of funding and trust – what was it? How do we capture it and keep it going? But also, is this going to be problematic in the long term?”

Community groups are crucial in building strong, resilient communities that have the connections and grassroots knowledge to determine and pursue their own solutions. Investing in groups that are embedded in and responsive to their communities has the potential to create wide impact and generate change. Funding and philanthropic models have evolved from a colonial mindset of doing good to others. The real shift will come when communities can lead their own solutions and funders become enablers of this change rather than the hurdle that needs to be overcome.

In making this kind of strategic investment, it is vital to recognise the expertise that comes from lived experience and being close to the communities you serve. While funders may not have this experience themselves, they can build relationships, get to know their communities and identify the people who are doing great mahi. Funders can effect lasting change by prioritising funds for authentic grassroots communities without directing what they do.

Community groups often invest considerable time and energy in determining their own visions and strategic directions. One of the roles of funders can be to support the capacity and capability-building required for these processes, both financially and through in-kind support such as workshops and staff time. In developing application processes, it is also helpful for funders to provide space for groups to talk to their own vision and strategic goals rather than just those of the funder.

It is important to recognise that grassroots community-led development is usually only financially sustainable within an ecosystem in which long-term operational funding is readily accessible. Self-sustainability is an illusion for grassroots community groups and single-year partial funding is a huge source of frustration, creating extra workload for projects that run over many years. Genuine relationship building can help to balance out the unequal distribution of resources. Groups deeply value their relationships with funders who are prepared to take the time to work closely with them and support them through the funding process. Having a relationship with someone who can help is a game-changer for some small groups and can unlock funding that enables the group to build capacity and strengthen its impact for the people it serves, leading to transformational change. Funders are encouraged to spend time getting to know their communities, to look beyond mainstream groups and to invest in relationship-building at all levels.

“Funders (often middle-class) often don’t understand the precariousness of community organisations.”

Making connections to learn and act collectively

Supported by Te Hiko Centre for Community Innovation, which is part of Wesley Community Action, Just Change is a collaborative way of funding grassroots communities to address inequity and create change.

Just Change connects people leading innovative, grassroots community initiatives with donors who are concerned about inequity and understand the importance of community-led change. The group works with pooled funds to learn about how to build relationships across different communities and act collectively to address inequality. Allocation decisions are made together, and the group shares and reflects on the impact of its work and any challenges.

Flexible donations for on-the-ground work

Share My Super helps channel New Zealanders' surplus superannuation to trusted charities that are working on the ground in communities in response to child poverty. Charity partners are chosen for their ability to make the most impact at crucial stages of children's lives. The donation system is flexible, allowing superannuitants to choose how they donate, how often, and where the donation goes.

In a Spinoff article published in March 2022, Patron Dr Hinemoa Elder says the organisation "is about giving the people who already know what to do the money to do it. Let's get rid of the barriers and fund those people who already know their communities and are known by their communities and trusted by them."

The efficacy of community-led responses

Community-led processes and solutions can have a powerful impact and reach. The Ōamaru Pacific Island Community Group was given funding to lead community responses to the pandemic and the vaccination rollout. Their community-led engagement achieved a 90% vaccination rate (as of 31 December 2021).

Recognise that people are the heart of community



We need to change the volunteering/value landscape. How do we place value on resources, people, etc? It creates a hierarchy that is then reinforced through lack of representation.”



We need funders to fund people. We need the sector to reject funding that doesn't pay for people.”

Time and again, we have heard that the most useful funding is that which pays for people – staffing, operational resourcing, capability building, volunteer support, strengthening governance. Many funders are finding innovative, interesting ways to support governance and operational development. One successful model is to contract a trusted, independent person or group to support applicants to apply for a particular fund and develop project work plans – this provides capability and capacity support to organisations and lessens the power imbalance that sits between groups and funders. Another model is to offer regular hui where staff are available to answer questions, providing an opportunity for talanoa and whanaungatanga.

One issue with resourcing of community groups is that the government rarely funds – it offers contracts of services. There is a challenge for funders to look at ways to support community groups to raise their capability to be able to hold these contracts. At the same time, groups may identify that directing their work to fulfill contracts is not the best way to achieve their strategic goals. Likewise, many groups do not want to grow beyond a particular size, meet accreditation criteria, take on work that sits outside their kaupapa or become social enterprises – the role of funders is not to direct how groups should evolve but rather to resource and empower the evolution that groups drive for themselves.

There is also a disconnect in the common requirement for organisations to be 'not-for-profit' or charitable trusts to access funding. This muddies the path many organisations try to map towards financial sustainability – often also a requirement of funders. NFP structures often involve organisational layers that add work for people without necessarily advancing the desired outcomes.

Financial sustainability for groups may be as simple as knowing they can always pay their artists, administrators or poster distributors a fair wage for their mahi but it may also contain bigger dreams of reduced reliance on the uncertainty of contestable funding and long-term surety about stability and growth potential for their people and their communities. Does it serve funders better in the long term if community and arts organisations are enabled to be for profit?

Groups are also mindful that it's not always easy to find the points of connection between their mahi and what others are doing – the common ground may not be obvious but can be very fruitful. Finding ways to broker connections and relationships between groups (or to resource community organisations that perform this function) is a useful contribution funders can make. Many funding staff are appreciated for their wide networks and creativity in making links and supporting collaborations.

Increasingly, there is a keen awareness in the community sector of the risks of stress and burn out – both for people working at the grassroots and for people working as staff in funding organisations. There is great interest in finding equitable ways to do things, with a strong focus on wellbeing.

“It’s frustrating we can get funding for the service but not for operations – we need to fund people who are central to the organisations.”

“Most of New Zealand is run on a volunteer basis – but how sustainable is this?”

“It’s not easy finding governance and staff to manage these organisations – can be a real challenge.”

“There’s a massive issue with governance in the NFP sector – roles are voluntary or low paid. Look at IOD – if you want to do a company directors course, you can only get a voucher if you are in a company, not in a NFP – why is this?”

“We need to support community people so we lessen ‘burn out’ – supporting them to be sustainable.”

“Advisors’ wellbeing and community groups’ wellbeing is key.”

“Wellbeing to be heart and centre (kaimahi, advisers, organisation leaders). Funding for capability can include wellbeing.”

“We need an NFP hui that isn’t focused on funding – but on people.”

Putting the pūtea where the whānau is

Like many iwi, Ngāi Tahu has funds for its people, supporting projects to protect and preserve culture, build tribal cultural capacity, grow leadership and enable whānau to achieve their aspirations.

The Ngāi Tahu Fund ensures whānau can access resources for projects that build cultural knowledge and encourage cultural practices and leadership. Since 2005, the fund has contributed more than \$13 million to projects in Te Waipounamu and across Aotearoa and Australia. It has supported people wanting to investigate their whānau whakapapa and history, groups hosting workshops on traditional arts like weaving and carving, and environmental revitalisation projects.

The Marae Development Fund has also put more than \$13 million into building, repair and maintenance work on marae around the rohe since 2012. Other funding strands deliver pēpi packs, help out with household and health costs, provide hardship and emergency grants, and support learners and students through scholarships, learner support and learning assessments.

A highlight of the 2021-22 year was the opening of an exhibition, *Paemanu Tauraka Toi: A Landing Place*, which was supported by the Ngāi Tahu Fund. The exhibition was co-curated by a team of senior Ngāi Tahu artists and trustees of the Paemanu Charitable Trust. It celebrates contemporary Ngāi Tahu visual art, featuring works and performances from more than 40 Ngāi Tahu artists. This exhibition signals the beginning of the Paemanu Art Collection and an ongoing relationship with the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

Shift from consultation to collaboration and co-creation

“Do communities feel safe to come or do community groups need to be known about to be invited? It should be a mutually beneficial relationship – honour each other’s contribution. Few groups take up the funders’ invitation to come and talk with them. The messages may not be received without an established relationship.”

“We need to stop working in silos – and this is across sectors and in funding.”

Community voice must be at the centre of creating change.

In general, funding processes inform, consult and sometimes involve communities, but do not extend to collaboration or empowering people to make decisions or co-create solutions. Co-design is a tool that can be used to bring different perspectives to bear on funding strategies and processes.

Key to co-design or collaborative processes is the need to recognise and shift the power dynamics at play. Communities often have a lot of good will and are keen to be more active partners with funding organisations, but structural power imbalances need to be overcome to enable this involvement.

Funders need to actively invite communities to work with them, creating an environment that empowers people and communities and working from a place of trust.

This is especially important for funds that directly target particular groups, such as the Covid-19 funds for Māori and Pasifika communities – an opportunity is missed and potential impact is lessened if the processes don’t reflect and empower the communities that funds are for.

Collaboration and co-design also work both ways. For example, community groups are often asked to measure their impact or outcomes. Funders, which generally have resources in the form of paid staff and access to professional tools, have opportunities to take on some of this work and offer the data back to community groups, or to help community groups build their capacity to carry out such work themselves. The structures of support that funders offer can also reinforce deficit thinking. Funders are asked to consider not just what support they can offer, but also what learning they could do from community groups.

Having said all this, funders also need to be mindful of consultation fatigue – groups have limited capacity and need to direct their energy to the work that has the most impact for the communities they serve. Working from clear, community-informed strategic objectives enables organisations to collect as much information as they need from the community without contributing to exhaustion and burnout.

“I hate the word NFP – and funding – we need to work from a place of trust. We work alongside and with – not to – and we are co-designing.”

Building relationships that support community self-determination

In reviewing its funding strategy, Wellington Community Fund commissioned research from the Centre for Social Impact. The key points highlighted by the research are below.

- The positive impact of moving away from some traditional ways of working to support a more relational, responsive, and proactive approach.
- The importance of being close enough to communities to understand their aspirations and needs and to see where there is a willingness and interest in collaborating.
- The importance of approaching funding relationships in a way that supports community self-determination. Self-determination means making things happen in a person's own life, instead of having others do things to, or for them.

The organisation prioritises funding for applications that:

- support equity and inclusion.
- serve and are led by the following population groups – Māori, Pacific peoples, Middle Eastern, Latin American, African, youth and children.
- serve and are led by people who are part of communities in Ōtaki, Lower Hutt and Porirua.

Pairing community groups with volunteer grant writers

Hui E! Community Aotearoa provides grant-writing support by pairing small and medium-sized community groups with skilled volunteer grant writers to draft their first funding application. Phone and email support are offered alongside the grant-writing work.

The service has been invaluable since the arrival of Covid-19 as additional funding has become available and community groups have been in overdrive ensuring their communities had the necessities they needed to survive. Applications for grants are usually completed within 2-7 days of matching a skilled volunteer to a community group. Due to Hui E!'s involvement, more than 200 community groups have been supported over the past two years and approximately \$250,000 of funding applied for that they would otherwise not have been able to access. Hui E! works alongside funders to help them reach new community groups and also supports groups needing to get ready to apply for funding.

Harness data and stories to enable and measure change

“*We need better funding data between and across sectors, funders – to help answer questions like what groups don’t apply, how much ‘funding’ is missed in projects, has inequity always existed for some groups, or has this got worse or better over time?”*

“*Accountability reports should be taken as opportunities to celebrate achievements. Look into different ways for reporting back.”*

Funders need better data that is useful for the people they serve as well as the organisation. There is a lot of interest in gathering more comprehensive information on diversity and equity, such as the populations and demographics of areas relative to their share of grants and how funding distribution tracks against per capita income in different regions.

Funders gather a lot of information from community groups and can play an essential role in feeding collated or aggregated data back to community groups so they can use it to support their own kaupapa. It is important that communities retain ownership and control of their own stories through this process – this enables them to protect the project and how information is provided.

We are also keenly aware of the value of the ‘on the ground’ knowledge community groups hold – this can support funders and larger organisations to make informed decisions and get a real take on the success (or otherwise) of projects. Community groups can provide different lenses on issues and see the potential for the roles everyone can play. There is also interest in seeing high level research (eg at Masters level) to provide an evidence base for different approaches.

Funders and community groups both recognise the need to share stories more, to market and promote the outcomes for our communities. This story-telling can be done at all sorts of levels – community to community, between sectors, to operational staff in different areas for large organisations, nationally and locally.

“*Stronger relationships, sharing of knowledge and information about possibilities.”*

“*Funders could seek the stories and the reasons why these projects are submitted / implemented and see other ways to present their work, not always written, stories, clips.”*

“*We need to capture stories about the good stuff that’s happening – best practice models – this is happening, you should consider joining with us.”*

Having the courage to “welcome change and forge new paths”

In 2019, the JR McKenzie Trust commissioned the Centre for Social Impact to carry out a review of key trends and contemporary practices in philanthropy. The focus of the review was to identify emerging ideas and practices relevant to New Zealand’s bicultural context and the trust’s size and identity as a family foundation and innovative philanthropic leader. The themes that emerged from the review are a focus on equity, power sharing, systems change, decolonising practice, and adaptability and learning. The review presents the following key questions that funders might ask:

- How can our strategy be designed to prioritise investment in reducing inequalities?
- Do we understand the issues that we are trying to address? Do we understand the conditions that are holding the problems in place? And, how can we make space for those with lived experience of these issues to shape our understanding and our actions?
- Does our organisation reflect the communities that we serve? How can we ensure that we strengthen diversity and inclusion in our leadership and decision-making roles?
- In what ways could our practices be unconsciously perpetuating inequity?
How could we empower and share power with communities more effectively?
- How is our philanthropic practice experienced in the context of Te Ao Māori?
How can we build relationships, enable, share learning and share power with Māori communities more effectively?
- Aside from funding, what roles could our organisation play in influencing systems change? In what ways can we leverage our institutional voice? Who else in the system should we be collaborating with?
- Do we have the right grant-making tools at our disposal for working in complexity?
How might we build greater flexibility and adaptability into our funding framework and programmes?
- What opportunities are there to more systematically embed learning into our practice? How can we ensure that we recognise and value Māori ways of knowing and understanding impact – both the impact of ngā kaikōkiri, and our own impact?

Shifting direction and practice can be difficult and uncomfortable for funders, requiring a willingness to take risks, make mistakes, learn and change. As the report states:

“Answering these questions is a journey of continuous development and learning. It requires philanthropic organisations to step outside of their comfort zone, engage with community and, in some cases, confront uncomfortable truths about their organisational practices. It also requires philanthropic organisations to be ready to embrace ‘failure’, to anticipate the need for ‘course corrections’ and to prioritise learning in order to continue transforming themselves and their impact.”

Scones, not wine

How great enablers work



It's not about corporate-style schmoozing with a glass of wine. Manaakitanga is about taking the scones and the cuppa tea to the hui and making time for a kōrero. Community building starts with relationship building – a real, genuine interest in people and their lives.” Funding for Change in Ōtepoti, p. 1.

One of the most effective ways to support equitable practices in funding organisations is to empower staff to be true community enablers. Many of the people who contributed to the *Funding for Change* report spoke of the importance of relationships, of how the right people acting with openness, warmth and manaakitanga can make a significant difference. This theme has been reiterated in all our conversations since.

We've collated a list of some of the attributes we've observed in great community enablers – this list also incorporates some of the qualities noted in the *Funding for Change* report.

- They uphold the mana of community members and take care of the details of relationships, eg making sure people are invited to things or are involved in changes that affect them.
- They notice leadership qualities in others and gently facilitate those to come forward.
- They understand the power they hold as people who work in the system and take care to centre the voices of Māori, Pasifika, community and youth.
- They have cultural competency and a strong understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. They understand the principles and practices of community-led development.
- They have a wide grasp of the community ecosystem and work to build relationships and connections between people.
- They visit groups, spend time seeing them in action and have informal kōrero. They take the time to really understand what groups do.
- They build genuine relationships over a long time, reaching out proactively to groups rather than waiting for them to come to the funder.
- They work with groups to help them write applications, navigate options and find the path forward.
- They are enthusiastic and prepared to go the extra mile in the work – and their organisation resources and supports them to do that.
- They get involved and do the leg work to help community members participate and lead, eg driving around, picking people up, washing the dishes, organising supplies, helping with event set-up.
- They feed people and care for their wellbeing. They bring the scones.
- They share resources whenever they can.

A useful document is *A Capability Framework to Guide Community-led Development Practice in Aotearoa*, which was developed by Inspiring Communities. The framework speaks to the values, qualities, skills, knowledge, behaviours and attitudes that can help support sustainable change in communities. The framework outlines the capabilities of enablers – those who support local community-led development from their primary work place, which might be a funder, school, NGO, iwi or hapū organisation, business, or local or central government agency.

Quick wins

How to make funding systems more accessible and easier to use

“One group has had two declines in the last 3+ weeks. They are trying to understand why and may lose their co-ordinator shortly. They are looking through funding recipient lists and not seeing a lot of ethnic groups in that list. They are smaller groups struggling because of resources, they don't know how to apply, the criteria are big and there are no examples of how to apply.”

“As community, you learn over time – the first time through, it was intimidating! Accessibility is very important for groups who are less resourced – and less engaged.”

We've consistently heard that smaller, grassroots groups (especially those with language barriers and limited financial skills/experience) struggle with the funding system. The skills and attributes needed to make a difference in the community may not be the same as those needed to successfully navigate the funding system – so groups doing great work can be at a disadvantage if they can't access specialist fundraising support.

Online application processes can create barriers for groups that don't have strong technical skills or IT equipment. Online application software is often designed with the funder's needs in mind rather than for community accessibility. Time-consuming processes can also prevent community groups from committing to the funding system – it becomes unsustainable for groups that rely on volunteer power or are already operating at (or beyond) capacity.

Even with professional expertise, applying for funds can be time-intensive due to the need to adapt projects, objectives and budgets to the templates and requirements set by funding organisations. The project focus of much funding also means that professional support may need to be 'gifted' at the application stage when considerable work is often needed to develop a plan or project brief.

Other processes and expectations may also need to be examined from a community perspective. For example, meetings with community members may be impossible during working hours due to work commitments, or kai and childcare may need to be provided for evening meetings. For smaller groups, having more than one person at a meeting or workshop can also make the experience more comfortable and allow for a shared understanding.

Clear and wide-reaching communications can make a significant difference. Wide and targeted advertising and personalised invitations to events and workshops may help to reach smaller groups. Groups have also called for more information about why their application wasn't successful or to have an opportunity to discuss expectations for next time.

Groups have lots of ideas for ways to make the system more equitable, and we acknowledge the funders who are already using or moving towards these practices:

- Share a fundraising resource (role) between small community groups – a funding coordinator or specialist.
- Create mechanisms that link small community groups with skilled community grant writers or people who are comfortable navigating funding systems – and resource these relationships.
- Gather funding into one place and connect the haves and have nots.

- Coordinate across funders, eg have a simple application that can go to a number of funders.
- Keep working to simplify the language and structure of application forms. Provide application forms in Te Reo Māori, languages from across Te Moananui-a-Kiwa, and other languages.
- Use 'navigator' roles to connect communities and funders.
- Develop and promote a calendar of funding streams and deadlines.
- Provide tools for groups to use, eg exemplars of successful applications.
- Accept budgets and plans in whatever format groups are working with.
- Offer flexibility in accountability processes, eg. accept reports prepared for other funders / purposes, allow verbal, video or in-person reporting, visit the organisation in lieu of a report.
- Look at alternative ways that funders can present their information and data – eg videos, graphics, stories.
- Have more small group grants that can simply be asked for at any time and where decisions are made quickly by email or over Zoom – these funds could be pooled with other funders.
- Provide a computer and support for groups that need help with online applications.
- Consider community calendars/capacity when setting funding application deadlines.
- Consider funding pilot projects that support cultural-based wellbeing for community groups.

“If relationships are important, can't the first encounter be face to face? Zoom?”

“Accountability reports should be taken as opportunities to celebrate achievements.”

“The funding criteria and budget can be stumbling blocks. One department said 'don't write too much' (summary and bullet points); another department declined the application due to inadequate info. We need clarity on: what information, how much, what format? We need online working examples of grant applications – content expectations, expectations for meeting funding criteria, the level of detail required.”

“Our funding model is: 1) funder talks to people in community to let them know about their support, 2) email -> conversation re: funding (funder can support them through the process), 3) community writes a letter to their contact (NO APPLICATION FORM) – hear their story (more personal when it's written to someone rather than generic application form), what they want to do, what they need, 4) letter processed by their contact, and 5) committee makes decision.”

“Navigator role – put some funding towards people who can do work on the ground, make quick decisions, have ownership of territory.”

“The risk appetite is shaped by trustee requirements – we need to be a bit bolder, give a percentage to high-risk funding. It might blow up in our faces, but something amazing might happen.”

Making the case for change

In March 2022, Hui E! published a Community Funding white paper, which sets out recommendations for ways that funding challenges faced by the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector can be (and, in some cases, are) addressed.

The paper points out the significance of the sector's contribution to Aotearoa New Zealand's economy, with around 115,000 organisations contributing 2.8% of GDP, at a value of about \$8.1 billion. Along with more than 150,000 paid staff, well over one million volunteers work close to 160 million hours a year, voluntary labour that is worth about \$4 billion. The paper outlines the ways in which the sector also contributes to other wellbeing areas.

The paper points out that most community organisations are heavily reliant on philanthropic funding and organisational fundraising and that the majority of funding goes to large organisations.

The recommendations, in short form, are below.

- Support the sector's responsiveness to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- Provide multi-year funding so organisations can plan for the longer term.
- Invest in people and their professional development.
- Fund infrastructure and staff costs.
- Move to trusted not transactional relationships, as a step towards removing competitive funding models.
- Simplify application procedures.

Reflective questions for funders

We recognise that funders often lack the data they need to support changes in strategic direction or to measure the impact of their funding. The questions below have been developed to support organisations that would like to enrich their decision-making with information derived through use of an equity lens.

- What relationships do we hold with mana whenua and with tangata whenua in our area? How is this reflected in our strategic planning and decision-making?
- Are our strategic priorities and decision-making community-led? Do we look for opportunities to use co-design practices?
- How many groups in our region have applied for funding from us in the last year?
- Can we describe those groups in terms of sectors, communities, geography?
- What is the dollar value that has been applied for (range and median) and how does this compare with what is granted? Could this data be presented in aggregate form in our annual reports?
- How many groups have we funded in the past year?
- Can we describe those groups in terms of sectors, communities, geography?
- What areas can we fund, but find it difficult to allocate funding to? For example, some funders say they do not grant much funding to Māori/Pacific/youth as they do not have many applicants from these communities. If this is our situation, what are our strategies to address this?
- Using a sample project, how long would it take us to apply for and report on funding using our organisation's forms? How much would we need to amend the project's objectives and planning to make it fit with the strategic goals in our application forms? How easily would the project budget fit into our funding template?
- What is the evidence basis for the way we operate and the decisions we make? For example, what evidence do we have that shows partial or contributory funding is an effective strategy?
- What assumptions do we make and what are the values that underlie those assumptions? How do these assumptions contribute to the inequities around us?
- How might we reframe some of our language and cultural frameworks, eg shifting from a funding to an investment perspective, lifting the practice of community development so that people are at the centre, or seeing community energy and interest as not something to be managed but something that is worth investing in and being led by?
- Do we apply an equity lens across our work? Does our research explore issues from an equity perspective? Do we include metrics in our data collection and reporting that will give us a picture of how different groups are doing? When we set objectives for our policies and projects, do we aim to reduce inequalities and ensure equity of access and opportunity?

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Some examples of innovative funds

JR McKenzie Trust: <https://www.jrmckenzie.org.nz>

Just Change: <https://www.wesleyca.org.nz/just-change>

Match: <https://match.org.nz>

Ngāi Tahu Fund: <https://ngaitahu.iwi.nz/whanau/opportunities/ngai-tahu-fund>

One Percent Collective: <https://www.onepercentcollective.org>

Share my Super: <https://sharemysuper.org.nz>

Te Rourou, Vodafone Aotearoa Foundation: <https://foundation.vodafone.co.nz>

The Gift Trust: <https://www.thegiftrust.org.nz>

Todd Foundation: <https://www.toddfoundation.org.nz>

Wellington Community Fund: <https://wellingtoncommunityfund.org.nz>

Whānau Ora: <https://www.teputahitanga.org/ko-wai-matou/whanau-ora-history>

“

The mechanisms need to be based on long term relationships of mutual trust with the funders, rather than a lot of fitting into project-based application structures. What our community wants from us changes over time and we need to be able to explain that to our funders, and slowly adapt what we do with their support.”



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