



Engaged communities

How community-led development can increase civic participation



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OUR PHILOSOPHY

New problems confront our society and our environment, both in New Zealand and internationally. Unacceptable levels of inequality persist. Women's interests remain underrepresented. Through new technology we are more connected than ever, yet loneliness is increasing, and civic engagement is declining. Environmental neglect continues despite greater awareness. We aim to address these issues in a manner consistent with the values of former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, who serves as our patron.

OUR PURPOSE

The Foundation publishes research that aims to contribute to a more just, sustainable and peaceful society. Our goal is to gather, interpret and communicate evidence in order to both diagnose the problems we face and propose new solutions to tackle them. We welcome your support, please see our website helenclark.foundation for more information about getting involved.

Informed and engaged communities are central to a healthy democratic society. Engaged communities have high levels of community knowledge, cultural vibrancy, and civic participation. Given their importance, local government should be striving to foster engaged communities.

The best way to do that is to create genuine opportunities for vibrant and authentic community engagement. Enabling effective community engagement requires a focus on process. It requires genuine relationship building, deep and diverse community interaction, and a respect for and integration of local expertise.

Instead, local government is currently focusing on very different measures of success. For example, one common measure of whether a community is engaged is local government voter turnout. While decreasing turnout is not necessarily representative of lower confidence in a person's local community, it's indicative of low interest or confidence in public authorities, particularly with younger demographics.¹ It also does not provide any insight into the substance of community engagement.

As a result, even if lower voter turnout does indicate lower community engagement, it provides little guidance on how to reverse that trend. Local governments need to look beyond artificial and short-term methods of pumping up voter turnout to the more fundamental trends driving lower engagement.

For local government to create space for communities to thrive and be engaged, they have to fully step into their role as enablers of community-led development. And they need to ensure that passionate individuals and hands-on helpers of communities of interest, place, and identity are supported. Paradigm shifts take time: flexibility, commitment, patience, perseverance from all parties is needed.

In our recommendations, we address how local government can support different types of community. The communities of place, interest, and identity we describe all have people who participate as active citizens within the community, formally and informally, paid and voluntary. Research shows that people's sense of belonging to a community is linked to their ability to understand and contribute to a shared vision. They must be given opportunities to have a voice and to feel confident their voice will be heard.

Empowering community-led development is complex, iterative, and long-term in nature. It depends heavily on community knowledge, needs, interests, and demands being shared with a local government body that is prepared to listen, respond, and share decision-making power. Meaningful and on-going partnerships can contribute to more informed decisions that reflect the vision of a greater portion of communities.

Local government must commit to fostering genuinely engaged communities to prevent an erosion of trust and cooperation, and to improve the lives of the people that they represent.

¹ Nissen, S. (2019). *Student political action in New Zealand*. Wellington: BWB Texts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

‘The future is made by thousands of people making small decisions every day about what they believe about the future and their role in it. By building up the civic commons to support the active sharing of public spaces and activities by a wide mix of people of different economic statuses, different ages, we can encourage people to make those decisions in a way that builds more informed, engaged communities, and a stronger democracy.’

Carol Coletta, urban revitalisation expert

Our recommendations are based on the premise that community-led engagement will make the difference needed to ensure engaged communities. These recommendations for local government authorities are:

- Provide space and resources for community-led development - build on local strengths, providing appropriate spaces for communities to gather, and resourcing community capability development
- Develop a strategy for effective use of social media and technology - have a cohesive organisation-wide social media strategy that is responsive to the demands of the community, and is resourced appropriately and adequately
- Have effective and meaningful diversity and inclusion strategies - create the conditions and environments necessary to enable communities to have a sense of belonging and connectedness, and encourage people to participate in community life and citizen engagement
- Build trusted partnerships and long-lasting connections - trust community leadership and take time to listen to the wisdom a community holds about their own experience, building trusted and reciprocal partnerships where community contributions are valued.

This report explores dimensions that make communities engaged, looking within and beyond traditional definitions of community and community engagement frameworks. We began by talking with communities themselves, and asking what influences, directs, and also impedes, their ability to be engaged with local government. These dimensions are often driven by main “actors” that are within or engaging with communities, including wider society, institutions, and also technology.

The types of communities we describe include:

- Communities of place – a community of people who live within the same geographical boundary, whether it be a village, town, or city
- Communities of interest – a community of people who share a common interest
- Communities of identity – a community of people who share common affiliations or experiences.

In reality, people belong to many different types of communities. The traditional emphasis on “place” in local government community engagement could be a barrier to other types of communities contributing. We argue for a reframing of the concept of community and for local government to recognise its role as an enabler of community-led development.

This report focuses on engagement by local authorities for the development of public policy. It provides clear recommendations to shape and better inform the development of community engagement tasks that could foster, inform, and lead to more engaged communities.

Does community engagement equate to an engaged community?

There is growing anecdotal evidence that community disengagement is rising with lower participation in local democratic institutions across the country. One of the indicators of disengagement is local authority elections, where voter turnout has been declining in many areas of New Zealand since the 1980s. People may not be voting because they don’t feel their voice matters, and they may not see their concerns reflected or heard in electoral and policy discussions.

This theory has some support through the findings of the Quality of Life Survey 2018.² The number of survey respondents who had confidence that their local council made decisions in the best interests of their city or area (32 per cent) was similar to the number who did not (33 per cent). More importantly, over half of the respondents perceived the public had only a small or no influence over the decisions of their local council (58 per cent). This figure was considerably larger than those who perceived a large or some influence (34 per cent).

If community disengagement becomes an increasingly prominent trend, it has profound implications for local governments. Critically, if communities are disengaged, trust in and respect for institutions erodes, and adherence to regulations reduces. This makes the role and function of local bodies increasingly difficult.

² <http://www.qualityoflifeproject.govt.nz/pdfs/Quality-of-Life-2018.pdf>



While there are almost as many definitions out there as there are people trying to define it, in its simplest terms, community engagement seeks to better engage the community to achieve long-term and sustainable outcomes, processes, relationships, discourse, decision-making, or implementation. Community engagement is on the run sheet for every local government project that impacts a lot of people. Public meetings in community halls, online surveys in emails and on websites, information stalls in local malls, full-page infographics in free local press – these are standard community engagement tools.

Engaging with the community is needed to understand the views and preferences of people likely to be affected by, or interested in, a proposal or decision. If community voices are not heard, how will councils know which decisions have community support? If communities are disengaged, how can councils claim to reflect the values and aspirations of their communities? Do these community engagement efforts actually lead to engaged communities that participate, influence and own the decisions, policies and/or investments being made?

There is a world of difference between community engagement and an engaged community. And this world of difference has a substantial impact in the success of local body decision-makers who want authentic public participation. Understanding the difference between the two may lead to greater understanding of what makes for high functioning, purposeful, and informed communities, in order to inform public policy, and drive more effective community engagement.

‘Ehara taku toa he toa takitahi, engari taku toa he toa takitini.’

‘My strength is not that of a single warrior but that of many.’

Pāterangi of Ngāti Kahungunu

While a population is a broad measure of humans living in a geographical area, a community is more nuanced. A community is a social unit bonded by a something shared between or common to those in the social unit. This commonality may be geographical, like a neighbourhood or a town. Values, identity, social norms, interest, or circumstance may also be what binds a community together.

Within a geographic community, or community of place, there may be smaller communities, connected by the same religion, age, ethnicity, culture, life stage, or world view. These connections rely on trust, belonging, safety, and reciprocity – all key to building social capital.

Social capital

Social capital has subtly different meanings depending on who is doing the defining. The Treasury describes social capital as:

“...the social connections, attitudes and norms that contribute to societal wellbeing by promoting coordination and collaboration between people and groups in society.”³

Meanwhile, social capital theory talks about:

“...networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups.”⁴

And Statistics New Zealand defines social capital as a resource that is:

“...relationships among actors (individuals, groups, and/or organisations) that create a capacity to act for mutual benefit or a common purpose.”⁵

While non-Māori concepts of social capital often emphasise the role of “networks of civic engagement” or community organisations,⁶ Māori views of social capital centre on:

- Whakawhanaungatanga - extended whānau relationships and the norms embedded in these relationships, including whakapono (trust), tautoko (support), manaaki (care and generosity), tika (right actions or integrity), and hāpai (support)
- Tūrangawaewae - knowledge of a specific “place” in society and a sense of belonging that transcends geography, connected to cultural values
- Informal and holistic relationships and networks, taking precedence over transactional or contractual obligations
- Whānui and whakapapa - the defence, preservation and expansion of existing hapū

³ <https://treasury.govt.nz/publications/speech/social-capital-and-living-standards-framework>

⁴ Healy, K. (2005). *Social work theories in context: Creating frameworks for practice*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁵ Spellerberg, A. (2001). *Framework for the Measurement of Social Capital in New Zealand*. Wellington: Statistics New Zealand.

⁶ Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

and iwi communities, and taonga, such as language and culture⁷

What is common among these perspectives, is that social capital comes from the co-operation, sharing, communication, and trust that is characteristic of enduring human relationships within communities. Understanding the role of social capital and the diversity of communities is essential to local government enabling engaged communities.

A key element of social trust in local government bodies is whether they provide real value to the communities they serve.⁸ Whether value is being provided should be measured by the community, and not the organisation itself.

The effective measurement of social capital is perplexing as social capital is simultaneously a cause and an effect.⁹ The Treasury's Living Standards Framework makes an attempt, with indicators for civic engagement, generalised trust, and institutional trust. Social connections or relationships, mentioned in all of the above definitions, need context to be able to make meaning. A Treasury paper on social capital states:

“Unless we know the activities, purposes and values that connect the members of a group, it is impossible to know in advance whether this group adds to or detracts from the sum of public social capital.”¹⁰

And this is the challenge for local government – how do they know the activities, purposes and values of their communities?

Wellbeing at a local government level

The Local Government (Community Wellbeing) Act came into force in May 2019, reinstating social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing to the purpose of local government after they were repealed in 2012. The Act reinforces the role of local government in promoting community wellbeing, and working in partnership with their communities to identify and articulate their wellbeing aspirations.

Understanding community needs from a broader perspective will enable councils to consider the four wellbeings when planning strategies, resource allocation, and other activities. A crucial step is for local government to harness the collective knowledge, skills, and experiences of their communities. And this requires understanding just what types of communities they have in the first place.

⁷ Williams, T, & Robinson, D. (2001). *Social Capital Based Partnerships, a Maori Perspective from a Comparative Approach in Building Social Capital*. Wellington: Institute of Policy Studies.

⁸ https://ssir.org/articles/entry/six_ways_to_repair_declining_social_trust#

⁹ Portes, A. (2000). The Two Meanings of Social Capital. *Sociological Forum*, 15(1), 1-12. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3070334>

¹⁰ <https://treasury.govt.nz/publications/dp/start-conversation-value-new-zealands-social-capital-html#section-9>

Communities are not built of friends, or of groups with similar styles and tastes, or even of people who like and understand each other. They are built of people who feel they are part of something that is bigger than themselves: a shared goal or enterprise, like righting a wrong, or building a road, or raising children, or living honourably, or worshipping a god. To build community requires only the ability to see value in others, to look at them and see a potential partner in one's enterprise.

Suzanne Goldsmith, author

Exploring the elements that influence, direct, or impede the development of an engaged community is the first area of focus. We know that these elements may differ depending on the type of community, so we will look at these dimensions within various communities, such as a community brought together by shared interest trying to bring about change, a community brought together by geographic boundaries, and a community brought together by external events or situations. People are often a part of more than one type of community, but are likely to more strongly identify with a particular community at different points in their lives. All of these community types need to see themselves represented or reflected in local or central policy.

Communities of place

Communities of place, sometimes called spatial communities, are defined by geographic location and boundaries. People may live, work, socialise, attend school, shop, or engage in recreation activities within a community of place. The location is what brings everyone together, with varying levels of interaction and an assortment of values and beliefs. Somehow, through this diversity, shared cultural norms and processes develop, and this becomes the “flavour” or character of a community.

One such community is Paekākāriki, a village on the Kāpiti Coast, bound by the coastline to the south and Queen Elizabeth Park to the north. Located off State Highway One, the village has a population of around 1,700. This figure is unlikely to grow at the rate of other communities on the Kāpiti Coast given the lack of spare land to fill with houses, and houses being on septic tanks impacts the ability to subdivide sections.

Paekākāriki residents are fiercely proud of their village with a long history of tolerance and creativity, and a culture of volunteering and community-driven action. The community made the news in 2016, forming the Paekākāriki Housing Trust after long-term residents and valued members of the community struggled to find a home after the rental they'd lived in went on the market.¹¹ The Housing Trust website states, “A good community is no accident”. Their objectives are:

¹¹ <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/property/87809909/paekakariki-wants-to-buy-home-for-beloved-resident-who-cant-afford-to-stay-there>

1. To help ensure a strong, diverse and connected community by assisting those people in need to access affordable and appropriate housing in Paekākāriki.
2. To recognise mana whenua’s special connection to this land.¹²

As part of the second objective, the Trust is supporting the re-establishment of a marae for Paekākāriki mana whenua hapū, Ngāti Haumia.



Source: John Nicholson/Stuff

The community also came together to purchase and renovate St Peter’s Village Hall from the Anglican Church in 2007. Previously underutilised and falling apart, the Hall is now a hub of activity with monthly markets, regular music events, repair cafés, community meetings, recreation activities, weddings, birthdays and general celebrations. The hall is run by the Paekākāriki Community Trust, with a core principle that, “All activities of the Trust will be within a

framework that retains the existing character of Paekākāriki”. One of the Trust’s aims is, “To encourage the economic and social sustainability of Paekākāriki to help ensure that local services are retained for the benefit of present and future generations”.

A third charitable entity, the Paekākāriki Informed Community Incorporated (PICI), publishes a website with community notices and information, and runs a community radio station.¹³ The website states, “Paekākāriki is an engaged and expressive community” and the platform sources content from the collective community. Between 2001 and 2011 PICI generated a local newspaper, Paekākāriki Xpressed, with independent journalism and community classified notices.

The common thread weaving through the various charitable structures and other community activities is a pride in the special character of Paekākāriki, and a desire and willingness to take actions to enable that character. The initiatives have been born of the community to meet needs identified within the community, and with solutions provided by the community. Like many such communities, there is a core group of passionate individuals and visionaries who bring in others to get action happening. The community-led local activity has generated employment opportunities for some, while for others, it leads to strengthening community ties.

Elected officials in Kāpiti are said to understand and value the character of the village, but a gap between governance and operations is felt by

¹² <https://www.paekakarikihousingtrust.org/about>

¹³ <http://paekakariki.nz/>

those in the community who feel administrative obstacles don't always reflect this understanding. The community board says greater collaboration is needed between the different arms of council so finer details can line up with the bigger picture. They also identified that a plain-English organisational structure is needed to help find who to speak with in particular situations.

Case study: a well run community board

An important enabler of community engagement in our example community of place is the Paekākāriki Community Board. Community boards were established as part of local government reforms 1989 as a way of bringing local government closer to their communities. Auckland now uses local boards, a distinct model with different delegations.

The Paekākāriki Community Board is a vehicle for the community voice and for locally led development, including the Paekākāriki-Pukerua Bay escarpment track that is now an extension of Te Araroa trail. Conscious of their role as community liaison and the advocate for Paekākāriki in Kāpiti Coast District Council meetings, the Board holds their meetings at accessible times, including evenings and weekend afternoons, to increase community participation and transparency.

The role of a community board is to—

- a. Represent, and act as an advocate for, the interests of its community; and
- b. Consider and report on all matters referred to it by the territorial authority, or any matter of interest or concern to the community board; and
- c. Maintain an overview of services provided by the territorial authority within the community; and
- d. Prepare an annual submission to the territorial authority for expenditure within the community; and
- e. Communicate with community organisations and special interest groups within the community; and
- f. Undertake any other responsibilities that are delegated to it by the territorial authority.

Source: Local Government Act 2002 s52

The legislation provides substantial powers of delegation but this is dependent on the how supportive the council of the day is of this community-led structure. A recent study found local councils are using community boards in very different ways, with some boards having little influence over local services.¹⁴

Where community boards have the potential to differ from councils, is in setting the agenda. While traditional community engagement by councils can be “top-down” with the council

¹⁴ Hammond, C., & Hammond, D. (2019). *Serving New Zealand? A 2018 Survey of Community Boards*. Nelson: Business Lab.

deciding what problems it needs to solve, community boards can be a form of grassroots and participatory democracy, supporting communities to decide the problems they need solutions for.

One of the recommendations of the Hammond and Hammond (2019) research was that councils recognise and support the capability of community boards, noting that place-shaping is more resilient when boards are empowered to lead local decisions. We support this recommendation in areas where the community board model is utilised.

Communities of interest

Communities of interest are brought together by a shared interest, such as housing, arts, sports, or the environment. Members of this type of community may live in different areas, and have different backgrounds or values. As a collective, whether organised or loose, they draw attention to a common problem or interest, and seek solutions to bring about change.

“The value in this form of community is in their ability to help each other to do things better or quicker or cheaper than they could do if each person worked on their own. The more energy and excitement they have the more quickly their problems get solved. People get to know each other and talk to each other,

although they might not even meet face to face or work together every day. Some might be at every single event, some might only come to one. Some might already know a lot about the problem, others might know nothing, but these people can still help the rest of the group by saying what they think about ideas or passing on what they have learned to other people they know.”¹⁵

In 2018, a Swedish teenager, Greta Thunberg, began striking from school with a homemade placard that read “skolstrejk för klimatet” (school strike for climate). She sat outside the Swedish Parliament every Friday demanding politicians take stronger action and develop policies addressing climate change. Thunberg subsequently organised a global school strike for the climate, and on 15 March 2019, an estimated 1.4 million students from more than 100 countries joined Thunberg in walking out of school for a day and calling for action from their governments.¹⁶

In New Zealand, the movement was picked up by a young environmental activist, Sophie Handford, and grew nationwide via social media. The 15 March strike saw over 20,000 young New Zealanders take to the streets and make their voices heard, with an additional strike on 24 May. A third strike took place on 27 September, and this time an estimated 170,000 New Zealanders took part across the country.

¹⁵ <https://www.healthknowledge.org.uk/public-health-textbook/organisation-management/5b-understanding-ofs/social-networks#develop>

¹⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/mar/19/school-climate-strikes-more-than-1-million-took-part-say-campaigners-greta-thunberg>



Source: Monique Ford/Stuff

School Strike 4 Climate is now broader than the school strikes, with an active network of young people, some as young as eight years old, in towns and cities across the country continuing to plan and take action. They hold weekly video chats discussing regional activities, including meeting with central and local government representatives. Most have never met in person but they are united by their concern. While some media are focusing on kids striking, the group say striking from school is not the issue and they're not doing it because they think it is fun.

Sophie Handford, was elected to the Kāpiti Coast District Council in October 2019, after campaigning on having a council climate change committee established.

Their manifesto makes clear their demands, centred around Government “doing everything in their power to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees to safeguard our right to a future on Earth”.¹⁷ Councils across New Zealand have responded, with some declaring a climate emergency and committing to targets of net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

¹⁷ <https://www.schoolstrike4climatenz.com/about>

What is unique about the School Strike 4 Climate movement is that while united nationally with savvy use of social media to promote and coordinate, they are also very locally based. The website has resources for any interested young person to give speeches, make posters, meet local political representatives, or organise their own school strike. The video chats are open to anyone who wants to take part and leaders are very conscious about making sure everyone has space to talk and is supported. This is a campaign aimed squarely at enabling and empowering the youth voice.

Their focus is nationwide mobilisation – learning about civic engagement, presenting at council meetings, and holding local and central bodies to account. They said it can be hard to feel meaningfully engaged when their ideas and voices are not valued as much as adults. A significant barrier is that council meetings are often held during the day, which makes it challenging for school children and young people to attend. An additional obstacle is that young people have to enter into an unfamiliar space to have a voice. They feel that non-voters are often not considered in the picture even though they also live in the communities that elected officials represent.

Genuinely uplifting youth voices is key, and this requires councils be bold and visionary. It requires them to recognise that they hold a lot of power, and it is up to them to make space for youth. One way to make space is to hold meetings in the evenings or weekends when

young people can attend. Another way to lessen the power dynamic is to go into youth spaces, such as schools and youth centres, to hear their concerns. Enabling the youth voice also requires councils listening openly and authentically, and keeping in contact, directly inviting them to speak at meetings and events, and following up on concerns raised.

Similarly, genuinely hearing youth concerns means going onto their platforms, such as social media and online forums. Local body officials and staff in local government need to be active on social media in the same way they are active on the phone, on email, and out in the community. The use of online platforms encourages broader citizen participation in decision-making, and increases satisfaction with, and trust in, local government.¹⁸ Essentially, it is about building good and long-lasting relationships with all community citizens, not just the ones who vote.

Recommendation - Provide space and resources for community-led development

In order to focus wider than where people live and what they do there, local government can look to communities of interest for broader views and concerns, and create space for community-led development. For community-led development to thrive, local governments need to support community capability to have common ground and shared interests, and to find their voice. Context matters: what works with each

¹⁸ Schmidhuber, L., Stütz, S., & Hilgers, D. (2019), Outcomes of open government. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*. Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 438-456. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPSM-02-2018-0056>

community may differ, and this is the value of community-led development.

This means it's about building on what the community has already and progressing in small steps – communities need to own the change and lead where possible. Local body enablers are there to support, connect, advise, guide, resource, inform, and leverage. By valuing the knowledge that the community has about their own experience and the visions that community has, local governments can operate from a strengths basis.

Local governments can also support community-led development by providing appropriate spaces for communities of all types and interest to gather. They can encourage and resource socially inclusive spaces for people to meet and connect, such as farmers markets, creative spaces, street parties, music/cultural festivals, as well as the usual meeting spaces on council agendas. Spaces may be physical or virtual: what's important is they are consciously enabled, and made widely accessible.

Providing spaces and resources can shift the focus from “consuming” services to co-creating solutions. Those who are co-creators within communities, actively shape and invest time in communities they are involved in. They take responsibility for and within their communities as their communities are part of their identity.

Stepping into community-led development may also require resourcing for capability development in order to understand how to

enable community. Expectations around local government process and outcomes may need to be balanced with where community needs, priorities and interests are.

Recommendation - Develop a strategy for effective use of social media and technology

Having a range of communications channels for different types of engagement with different groups and types of community is vital, such as sending texts to mobile phones, using a variety of social media, having printed materials, and opportunities for face-to-face interactions. Technology itself does not answer the question of how to transform people's concern about local events into deeper participation. However, we live in an increasingly digital world where people have expectations of easily accessible information, and prompt responses to queries.

Overseas research has shown millennials lead in the civic use of social media. Pew Research found that half of 18-to-29 year olds decide to learn more about political or social issues because of what they read on social networking sites.¹⁹ Fifty-seven per cent engage in political activity on social networking sites and nowhere else. When local governments consider how they communicate and engage with the different types of communities they serve, this type of within-community difference is crucial to keep in mind.

¹⁹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/topics/social-media/>

The supply of local government social media needs to correspond with the demand from communities to engage through those channels. Social media conversations can be visible to wider community, and issues that emerge on social media are more likely to be raised in interpersonal forums, such as meetings. Having a cohesive organisation-wide social media strategy that is responsive to the demands of the community, and is resourced appropriately and adequately, is essential for a local body. An inactive Facebook page or a Twitter feed with only one staffer from one department posting one-way sources of information is not going to increase social media visibility or effectiveness.

Communities of identity

Communities of identity are brought together by common affiliations or experiences. Identity can come in many different forms, some of which could be related to a specific personal feature, such as ethnicity, gender, hapū, sexuality, age, religion, or ability, and others which may be situational, such as people who are homeless, those caring for an elderly parent, or refugees. Communities formed around people actively involved with an aspect of their identity can create safe spaces to discuss concerns, and receive shared understanding and support from peers. These types of communities may

be formal, as in Rainbow Youth or the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand, or they may be informal community networks, like the deaf community.

Migrants to New Zealand are one type of community of identity. They carry with them cultural understandings, language, traditions, values, and beliefs that can be different to those they find when they arrive. Each year, thousands of people emigrate from around the globe to make New Zealand their home. The number of people living in New Zealand who were born overseas reached 1,001,787 people in the 2013 Census. The percentages of people who were born overseas were:

- 25.2% in 2013
- 22.9% in 2006
- 19.5% in 2001

Our migrant population is also becoming more diverse: while in 1961, 70.1 per cent of those born overseas were born in England, Scotland, or Australia, these countries accounted for 30.4 per cent of migrants in 2013 (Table 1). In comparison, China, India, Republic of Korea, and Philippines accounted for 22 per cent of migrants in 2013, up from 5.2 per cent in 1961.

Table 1: Ten most common countries of birth in 2013 for the overseas-born resident population

Birthplace	Overseas-born living in New Zealand (#)		Per cent of overseas-born people (%)	
	1961 Census	2013 Census	1961 Census	2013 Census
England	154,869	215,589	45.7	21.5
China, People's Republic of	4,194	89,121	1.2	8.9
India	4,752	67,176	1.4	6.7
Australia ¹	35,412	62,712	10.5	6.3
South Africa	2,190	54,276	0.6	5.4
Fiji	3,039	52,755	0.9	5.3
Samoa ²	4,449	50,661	1.3	5.1
Philippines	33	37,299	0.0	3.7
Korea, Republic of	..	26,601	..	2.7
Scotland	47,078	25,953	13.9	2.6

1. Includes Australian external territories.

2. At the time of the 1961 Census, Samoa was called Western Samoa.

Symbol: .. figure not available

Source: Statistics New Zealand

The New Zealand Federation of Multicultural Councils Inc. (Multicultural New Zealand) is a non-government umbrella organisation for the migrant and ethnic communities of New Zealand. Their primary role is to promote, support and share information among 62 Regional Multicultural/Multi-Ethnic Councils and New Zealand Newcomers Networks, as well as youth, women's, seniors, and business advisory councils. They also represent ethnic, migrant and refugee communities at a national level.

Multicultural New Zealand is volunteer led, with over 320 volunteers contributing more than 44,000 hours annually of their time to support programmes in the regions. These programmes include:

- Huarahi Hou – an initiative developed in partnership with tāngata whenua, connecting migrants to their local iwi through marae based activities, such as noho marae and marae visits, to build mutual understanding and awareness of each other's cultures and values

²⁰ Christchurch City Council has a multicultural strategy (<https://www.ccc.govt.nz/assets/Documents/The-Council/Plans-Strategies-Policies-Bylaws/Strategies/Multicultural-Strategy.pdf>) and Auckland City Council has an Ethnic Peoples Advisory Panel (<https://www.advisorypanels.nz/>).

- Social gatherings to combat social isolation, with coffee groups, group activities and outings playgroups, dinners, Migrants Meet and Share Gatherings, and other regular events providing social conversation and support for issues, and educating migrants about their new surroundings
- Pathway to successful settlement and employment: piloted in the Hutt Valley and Porirua, and including a conversational English programme in Palmerston North, this programme is for Syrian women who are refugees aimed at growing confidence as they settle into their new homes
- Organising multicultural and multi-ethnic festivals and sports events celebrating cultural diversity.

Different regional branches also work with their local government bodies, submitting to long term plans, while Multicultural New Zealand tends to work more with central government on the bigger picture. Nonetheless, as one of the most multicultural nations in the OECD, there is no still requirement for local or central bodies to have a multicultural strategy or to consider how to welcome migrants.²⁰

Executive Director, Tayo Agunlejika, said that cultural competency and representation at governance level were major issues for migrants. He asked, “Who are the people around the table making decisions for communities of identity in particular? Are they from that identity, are they a peer? If communities of identity do not see themselves represented in decision making

bodies, there is a high risk of disengagement”. Migrants, in particular, have connections into their communities and those relationships can help inform decision-making, but Tayo feels there is a lot of work to be done regarding migrants having seats at the decision table on issues that affect them. He described the actions of the Electoral Commission, which took a leadership role in this area:

“They invested into the community by connecting, engaging, establishing relationships, and building the trust of the community. They identified the leaders and influencers in that community, and employed them. Those people now work with their community, because they have the trust, the relationships, the mana, the voice, and they reflect their community. That community is now an engaged community - you cannot do community engagement when you haven’t got engaged community.”

Tayo said the keys to making engaged community possible were honest sharing, open and brave listening, valuing people at grassroots through building authentic relationships, and supporting migrant development by co-designing with the community. He says the migrant community is becoming fatigued by transaction based community engagement.

“Government bodies can’t continue to prescribe solutions and lead interventions - they should be working side-by-side with community, guiding them in trust and respect. Any intervention policy or programme has to be community owned, led and delivered through an asset based community development approach. This is imperative if we truly want to address community challenges like domestic violence, migrant labour exploitation, civic participation, and systemic marginalisation.”

“We enable, empower, and educate,” he said, “That is how we build confidence in migrant communities”. The question for policy makers should not be, “What does this community think about this issue?”, but “How do I identify someone who is a leader and support them to enable bottom-up community-led interventions?”

Recommendation – Have effective and meaningful diversity and inclusion strategies

When we’re talking about communities of identity, we’re talking about diversity. Diversity is a broad umbrella term used to describe layers of difference between people in terms of their:

- Migrant or refugee background
- Age and physical characteristics
- Ability

- Culture, nationality and language
- Values
- Religion, spirituality or beliefs
- Gender identity and sexual orientation
- Socio-economic status or background
- Education and qualifications
- Life experiences

Diversity encompasses respect, acceptance, and understanding the importance of recognising and encouraging the value of difference in communities. Consideration of diversity is vital in local government service provision and decision making, workforce practices, community development, and advocacy, and in designing built environments, public spaces, and facilities.

Inclusion is the partner to diversity, recognising that differences are strengths. Being inclusive requires intentionally addressing equity, access, and participation. In particular, those who are marginalised by circumstances may not be given opportunities to participate in traditional community engagement activities.

Ensuring there are effective diversity and inclusion strategies across local government activities is imperative to providing avenues for communities of identity to have a voice. Such strategies should aim to create the conditions and environments necessary to enable communities to have a sense of belonging and connectedness, and encourage people to participate in community life and citizen engagement.

Diversity and inclusion policies should be co-designed with the communities of identity they seek to include. Effective policies not only include priority areas and aims, but how these policies inform strategic actions. Strategies that flow from policies may include:

- Workforce practices
 - Anonymised recruitment and diverse interview panels
 - Flexible work policies and practices
 - Addressing gender and ethnicity pay gaps
 - Graduate and internship programmes
 - Diversity representatives as staff members
- Community development
 - Set specific diversity and inclusion goals for all business strategies
 - Sub-committees and advisory boards with diverse representation to reflect all identities within communities
 - Facilitate cross-cultural engagement, i.e. marae visits for new migrants
 - Promote inclusive engagement with the community
 - Social impact assessments to consider how decisions impact diverse communities
 - Adopt universal access principles and assess accessibility of community facilities

- Ensure external and internal communications, i.e. language, messaging, signage, and imagery, are representative
- Celebrate a breadth of cultural events.

A monitoring and reporting framework is essential to ensuring policies are meaningful and are having the intended impact. Any monitoring must reflect the views of the communities of identity a policy is seeking to include.

Local government can also consider community wellbeing when looking at broader resourcing, particularly through social procurement policies or through social investment strategies. Policies that enable economic and social change through locally-focused procurement can have significant positive impacts.

Recommendation - Build trusted partnerships and long-lasting connections

There is a well-known expression, “Nothing about us, without us”, which conveys the concept of policy development and decision-making being made with the full and direct participation of communities that will be affected by that policy. It often refers to particularly oppressed or marginalised communities of identity, but also applies more broadly when thinking about the diversity of people within communities of all types and how they are represented and consulted.

With regards to community-led development, it means not coming in with solutions but working with communities and building long-lasting relationships. Being able to build trusted partnerships is a key element in fostering social trust.

Communities trust local bodies when the trust and partnership is reciprocal, and community contributions are valued. Local governments need to trust community leadership and take time to listen to the wisdom a community holds about their own experience. Being present means turning up, enabling ongoing communication, and co-designing solutions. It means focusing on relationships rather than transactions.

Enablers within local government can work

between and across agencies, and navigating the system and acting as community champions. Good processes are essential to ensure relationships are handed over if community enablers in specific roles move on. This is a crucial part of developing and preserving institutional memory.

Questions to ask when developing community-led policies include: ²¹

- How are decisions made in the community?
- What are the community's decision-making bodies?
- How is decision-making power distributed or concentrated within the community?
- What gives the decision-makers their authority?

Build your community's capacity for partnership by:

- Offering leadership training
- Assisting with outreach tools like translation to support migrants
- Working with community groups of all types and sizes
- Providing forums for networking
- Offering non-meeting options for engagement
- Sharing stories of successful communities
- Highlighting community strengths
- Moving beyond citizen participation to community empowerment

Adapted from: Jim Diers <http://neighborpower.org>

²¹ <https://community-canvas.org/>

Four traits of trustworthiness

The four key ingredients people use to decide whether or not to give their trust are competence and reliability (how we do things), and integrity and empathy (why we do things).

- **Competence:** Do people in your organisation have the skills, knowledge, time, and resources to do effective engagement? Are you honest about what can and can't be done by your organisation? Has the engagement strategy been planned with an adequate amount of time and resource?
- **Reliability:** Can the community depend on you and your organisation to keep the promises and commitments you make? Is community engagement embedded into the culture of your organisation and included in every decision? Are people within the organisation consistent and reliable in the way they behave from one day to the next?
- **Empathy:** Do people within your organisation care about the community's interests as well as your own? Do you discuss within your organisation how your decisions and actions affect communities?
- **Integrity:** Do you say what you mean and mean what you say? Do your words align with your actions? Is your community engagement strategy a tick-box exercise? Are you honest about your intentions and motives when engaging with communities?

Source: Adapted from Rachel Botsman

THE ACTORS WITHIN COMMUNITIES

The engaged communities of interest, place, and identity we have described all have people who participate as active citizens within the community, formally and informally, paid and voluntary. All communities have the ability to flourish and thrive – engaged communities do so due to individuals and organisations who make this possible. They galvanise in response to local needs because they see the possibilities. They form shared visions, make plans, and take action. Individuals or groups have the capacity to shape their world by reflecting on their situation and the choices available to them, and by purposefully take action.

How they do this may vary, and they're likely to be in three broad groupings:

- Grassroots/hands-on people – often informally and voluntarily, these are people who take practical action with and for others in their community where they can offer their skills and expertise
- Passionate individuals – often involving collaboration with others across their community, these are people, sometimes within a group, who deliberately initiate, organise and lead initiatives that may effect change. They may also be “social bridges”, developing relationships and connecting enablers with communities
- Enablers – these are people who have a formal role, paid or unpaid, with an organisation that works within a community, e.g. with an iwi or hapū, an NGO, a business, a local or central government agency, or some other type of group



The formal role of community enablers means they have a level of decision-making rights within their area of responsibility, which can help or hinder passionate individuals and groups in resolving community issues. The decentralisation of decision-making to front facing roles working directly with the community can help to empower community enablers to be innovative and timely, which can contribute to improved relationships with those in the community. Another powerful tool is distributed decision-making, where local government shares the responsibility for decision-making in partnership with communities.

Tayo, from Multicultural New Zealand, described a community enabler, also a migrant, who is trusted in their community because they have invested time and energy. Inspector Rakesh Naidoo, National Strategic Ethnic Advisor for the New Zealand Police, sits with people as support and listens to them, participates in community events, and has been known to be there cleaning up afterwards. He understands the importance of belonging and of relationships to the migrant journey, stating, “If the settlement experience can be managed well, it really contributes to the long term wellbeing of the person”.²²

Research shows that people’s sense of belonging to a community is linked to their ability to understand and contribute to a shared vision. They must be given opportunities to have a voice and to feel confident their voice will be heard.

We live in a time where globally social trust in institutions and government is declining.²³ And trust is a key indicator of social capital. Trusting relationships built up between people, within communities, is vital to facing any complex challenges facing those communities.

“From a policing perspective we need to be quite confident when we go into neighbourhoods where a big proportion of the population speak a different language or come from different cultural and religious backgrounds. We need our staff to have the language and cultural skills to deal with new communities.”

Rakesh Naidoo

The role of technology

Technology plays a crucial role in keeping communities connected and engaged. All our example communities use social media and the internet to mobilise and inspire, share up-to-date and relevant information and resources, and organise events and gatherings. Social media, in particular, allows for rapid dissemination of information, and different channels reach different audiences. School Strike 4 Climate largely use Instagram and Twitter for keeping in touch, and Facebook for specific information on events and for the livestreaming facility.

²² <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/media-centre/newsletters/settlement-actionz/actionz1/a-conversation-with> In New Zealand “Trust in government institutions” sits in the mid-40s as a percentage

²³ In New Zealand “Trust in government institutions” sits in the mid-40s as a percentage (<https://lsfdashboard.treasury.govt.nz/wellbeing/>), similar to general population measures globally but lower than the mid-50s percentage of “informed public” (<https://www.edelman.com/trust-barometer>).

The way local government engages with communities has changed with the increasing prevalence and diversity of technology. Twenty years ago, gathering community opinion required going door-to-door or calling a meeting. However, nowadays many people have access to a platform and an opportunity to have a voice. The possibilities for engagement have increased exponentially. Increased internet availability and mobile use means people can have a high volume of data at their fingertips via their phones, laptops, or computers. This growth means people can participate regardless of timing or geography, in online surveys, and accessing information through e-newsletters, websites, or social media accounts. These can be more efficient than offline methods of surveying or information sharing, but not necessarily more effective.

There are potential risks in new technology too, particularly in the spread of disinformation. Local authorities have an important role to play in preventing and controlling the outbreak of infectious disease, which is a major threat to public health. This includes being ready to act or react as necessary by pointing communities towards credible sources of information via their social media pages. For example, with the recent measles outbreak, some local authorities used social media and websites to notify their communities of confirmed cases, to advise of symptoms, and to direct those who may be unsure of their vaccination status to seek medical advice.

While a larger number of people may be reached through technology, there is a risk of this type of engagement becoming transactional, and devolving to gathering and disseminating information. Informing is a critical part of community engagement, but it is not the only part – consulting, collaborating, empowering, enabling, and feeding back, are equally as important in demonstrating accountability to communities. The act of sharing information in itself does not build trust.

Local and central government is now expected to provide a timely, accessible, and responsive service, and must be innovative in how they work to form trusted and valued relationships. Being available beyond working hours by using modern technologies like online customer portals, and looking at Smart City and Internet-of-Things initiatives to manage resources more efficiently, are ways of staying approachable and up-to-date. Being innovative also means looking at community engagement through the lens of trust and thinking about communities in a whole new way, while also maintaining offline channels to ensure local government remains accessible to all.

Virtual Wellington is a Virtual Reality version of Wellington. It immerses people in a 3D city experience and allows them to interact with city data to understand urban issues and futures. The model covers all of Wellington City, and the surrounding metropolitan council's and contains the buildings, trees, roads and other physical features which make up Wellington's environment. This environment then provides the base to project data, proposals and alternative futures in an engaging, informative and intuitive way. Over the past two years, Virtual Wellington has been used by Wellington City Council to:

- Engage stakeholders for various programs (e.g. Resilience Strategy launch, Climate Change Adaptation plans in Makara, Education post-7.8 Magnitude Kaikoura Earthquake)
- Support Council engagements with the community at tech based community events and hackathons
- Model alternative proposals and visualise the resulting urban form from different zoning schemes
- Bring together different city building disciplines and providing a medium for exchanging information, briefing leaders and facilitating collaboration to define, understand and work towards common goals
- Collaborate across local government boundaries and central government jurisdictions to understand larger scale issues and help find joined up responses to challenges such as climate change



Source: Virtual Wellington - WREDA and Wrestler

Source: Wellington City Council

There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.

Margaret Wheatley

In the 2016 local body elections, the turnout was just 42 per cent of those on the electoral role, and in Auckland the turnout was 38.5 per cent. Turnout was widely predicted to fall for the 2019 local elections, but in the end, only somewhat fell short of the 2016 results. Provisional turnout results at the time of writing show turnout of 41.4 per cent nationally, and 34.8 per cent in Auckland.²⁴

Many of the big issues – water quality, climate change, public transport, local amenities – affect everyone, not just those who receive a rates bill. Voter turnout is particularly low for students, young people, renters, and those in lower socio-economic areas. In a climate of low voter turnout and community disengagement, it's down to local bodies to consider how their policies make a difference in creating engaged communities.

For local government bodies to really engage with the people they serve, they have to have engaged communities. To encourage engaged communities, they need to understand the many and varied types of communities those people identify with. What people consider their community to be may differ, and these differences influence how they want to engage in civic life and contribute to local decision-

making. Therefore, community engagement based solely on place-based communities and neighbourhoods may not be meaningful for everybody. Considering community as broader than where people live, but also encompassing interest and identity, provides rich opportunities for deeper community engagement leading to increased participation in civic life.

Bringing a focus to how to enable communities to be more engaged means a focus on encouraging greater active participation in community life. It means local governments being a bridge between different communities and providing opportunities firstly for all types of communities to have a voice, but more importantly, to authentically contribute to and influence decisions.

Empowering community-led development is complex, iterative, and long-term in nature. It depends heavily on community knowledge, needs, interests, and demands being shared with a local government body that is prepared to listen, respond, and share decision-making power. Meaningful and on-going partnerships can contribute to more informed decisions that reflect the vision of a greater portion of communities.

²⁴ <https://www.lgnz.co.nz/vote2019/voters/preliminary-voter-turnout-2019/> Retrieved 1 November 2019

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