

What works for community hubs?

We have compiled a set of resources to support the work of community hubs focused on improving the wellbeing of children and youth.



Community hubs facilitate the co-location and co-delivery of services, and they also often take holistic and whānau-centred approaches. Events such as the Auckland floods and Cyclone Gabrielle have demonstrated the contribution of these hubs in supporting outcomes.

To support the work of community hubs we have compiled this resource to bring together evidence on what works, insights from existing community hubs alongside other relevant resources.

- [Community hubs](#)
- [Read what makes hubs thrive](#)
- [Read about good practice and success factors](#)
- [Learn more about funding sources and support](#)
- Learn about your community using our [Community Insights Explorer](#)

What are community hubs?

A community hub is a central place where members of the community can interact, find assistance and access services. Community hubs can respond to the unique needs of their communities and build social cohesion.

Hubs often take holistic and whānau-centred approaches and typically include a physical location people can visit. Community hubs can also increase community access to government and non-government services and support.



Types of community hubs

In Aotearoa New Zealand there are many different types of community hubs including marae-based hubs, emergency community hubs, community hubs, sports hubs, and rural community hubs. The nature and structure of community hubs can differ. Many are run by the community, for the community, and have developed in response to shared community aspirations and or identified needs. Some are established with assistance from central government or local authorities and may help deliver core services on behalf of government.

Insights from community hubs

In 2020, the Department of Internal Affairs Te Tari Taiwhenua conducted interviews with representatives from 16 community hubs. Based on these case studies, this section highlights what community hubs said were their key markers of success and what made them thrive.

Successful hubs are community-led and community owned

People and partnerships are the backbone of successful community hubs. Hubs that succeed have a shared community vision and the ability to draw from the strengths and assets of the community.

“This wasn’t because great minds said ‘how can we help’ but because the community said ‘this is what we need. This is where we’re hurting. This is how we’re struggling’. From the get-go we were community focused and driven”.



For several community hubs, being embedded in the community enabled increased support from the wider community and local partnerships helped the community hubs develop and grow.

“This hub will belong to the community, and will be a community hub for and by its community.”

Being embedded in the community created a sense of ‘community ownership’ and this made it easier for people to access services and support.

Hubs succeed when they are enabled to grow and adapt to the changing needs of their communities

These hubs worked towards meeting a need in their communities to be relevant. A common thread across all of the interviews was that a community hub provides a ‘place to be’ and a space where people can feel valued and safe. For example, one youth hub described the deliberate choice they made to build their premises to a high specification as it would ‘scream’ to the young users of the hub that ‘they are valued’. This hub adapted to its community’s need of having a safe place for young people.

Successful hubs have a strong community leader, and a strong supporting workforce

All of the community hubs linked their success to having the right people on board. This was considered important for the leadership of the hub, as well as having front-line staff who were able to create the ‘safe and valued’ environment for people accessing its services. Strong leadership was considered crucial in the early stages. Those that were in the earlier stages of their development highlighted the importance of having someone who acted as the ‘catalyst’. These leaders were generally described as people that hustled and worked relentlessly to bring others on board.

“This was three years of work where I wouldn’t go away.”

In most cases, community hubs leaders brought significant governance and administrative experience with them that they were able to draw on to navigate across government and funding systems requirements. This experience, as well as existing networks that came with their previous experiences, helped generate sustainable support for the hub.

High trust partnerships enable success of hubs

The hubs had a variety of connections with central and local government, iwi, non-government organisations and local business. These connections were considered to be more effective in the longer-term when they operated as ‘supportive partner’, sharing the vision of the hub and being there to support them as the hub developed.

“Visit the roots. Come out of uniform. Rather see their soul than be a tick in a box. Whatever their goals, I want to see them face-to-face at the marae. A lot of decisions are made face-to-face.”

While all of the community hubs described many of their relationships as partnerships, they made a distinction between partnerships and ‘high-trust’ partnerships. In their view, ‘high-trust’ partnerships provided a space to

'learn and fail'. Such partnerships were considered crucial in the early stages when hubs need space to try new things and adapt.

Maintaining strong connections with local and central government, iwi, and non-governmental organisations, philanthropic and local businesses positively impacted the work hubs do

Hubs considered these connections to be more effective in the longer-term when they operated as 'supportive partner', sharing the vision of the hub and being there to support them as the hub developed.

"They're safe people to work with. They're working to help build you up. It's ok to have gaps because they help you find ways to fill those gaps."

Good practice

National and international research points to some key factors that contribute to successful community hubs. Read more about good practice evidence and success factors for community hubs using the resources below.

[Becoming a learning organization](#) : An article on how ChildFund NZ uses Results Based Accountability to measure key outcomes

[Christchurch Learning Community Hubs](#): This report presents the initial findings based on the voices and experiences of Learning Community Hubs for Ethnic Parents, Whānau and the Community in Ōtautahi | Christchurch proposal (Learning Hubs).

[Communitynet Aotearoa](#) : An online hub of resources designed to strengthen communities

[Community hubs - the importance of developing a sustainable business model - Local Trust](#)

[Community Hubs: Understanding Survival and Success](#) : A report on characteristics of hubs, success factors and challenges by Power to Change UK

[Evaluation Basic steps](#) : Resource from What works NZ

[Independent Evaluation of the National Community Hubs Program](#): This report is a process evaluation of hubs in New South Wales, Victoria and in Queensland. It also discusses challenges faced and success factors for these community hubs

[NZ Navigator](#) : An online self-assessment to help build strong and effective organisations

[Process Review: Community Hub Model](#): City of Ryde model of service provision through community hubs

[Social return on community hubs in Australia](#)

[What works: Successful community hubs](#): A report on factors that enable community businesses to be successful by Power to Change UK

[What works](#): This site helps smaller community groups to show the value of their work

Funding a community hub

Hubs are funded through a range of mechanisms. These mechanisms include central government grants and contracts, local authority grants,



philanthropic funding, donations, fundraising, rental income from premises and running not-for-profit enterprises.

Funding is often directed to support specific outcomes. This means that the availability of funding to support any community hub will depend on the focus of the activity of that hub, for example, whether the hub supports a health need or a social need.



For more information about funding:

- [Generosity New Zealand](#) has a searchable digital database of New Zealand funders. [GivUS](#) offers access to grants and schemes for communities, volunteer organisations, schools, groups, sports clubs and iwi. This is a paid subscription service but is often available free through public libraries.
- [Hāpai Hapori](#) , is a group within the Department of Internal Affairs that administers grant funding on behalf of the [Lottery Grants Board](#) , Crown, including the [Community and Volunteering Fund](#) and [Community Organisation Grants Scheme \(COGS\)](#), and Trusts. You can find information about available funding and how to apply for a grant on the [Community Matters](#) website.
- Community Trusts: New Zealand has a regional network of community trusts who provide funding support to community organisations and charities. Click [here](#) for information about the twelve regional community trusts
- [Weave](#) : is a collaboration of eight Family Foundations from around Aotearoa New Zealand that helps groups work together to achieve greater outcomes for their communities.
- [Community Foundations of NZ:](#) is the national body supporting and uniting all of the regional Community Foundations across Aotearoa New Zealand.
- [Granted.govt.nz:](#) provides information on pokie grant distribution data and information on applying for a pokie grant.
- [CommunityNet Aotearoa](#) : has a wide range of quality resources on topics ranging from funding to legal resources.
- [Hui E!](#) has access grant writing support along with other resources.
- [How to Amaze your funders](#) : This webinar by Rachael Trotman (Weave Consulting, ANZEA) and Kate McKegg (The Knowledge Institute, ANZEA) is for time-poor, cash-strapped organisations who are under pressure to produce evidence of their results.
- [Charities Services](#) : Access educational support, advice and materials about good governance and management practices, and funding opportunities for Māori organisations.