



THE TODD FOUNDATION

Y2E: Synthesis report

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Report Information

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Overview

Since 2014, the Todd Foundation (TTF) utilised their Special Focus Fund to invest in Youth Employment initiatives. They funded four place-based local partnerships across New Zealand to develop community-led approaches to enable and support pathways for youth to employment (Y2E).

This was a new way of working for TTF. With a strong commitment to learning and evaluation, TTF worked with the Youth to Employment partners to collaboratively learn and reflect over the entire journey. In 2017, Kate McKegg and Louise Were of The Knowledge Institute (Member of The Kinnect Group) were engaged¹ to support Todd in documenting their initiatives and learning.

This learning report brings together a number of insights about systems and community-led change, by drawing from the experiences and feedback from the four initiatives.

In a nutshell

It is a tectonic shift to recognize the centrality of relationships to the complex-adaptive-social-system challenges we face. To recognize the centrality of relationships in imagining and transforming current social systems. To invest — yes, invest — in relationships. To invest in relationships because building relationships — relationships of respect and empathy that have the capacity to neutralize the relationships of exploitation, marginalization, and oppression that lie at the core of our social challenges — is a systems-savvy strategy [Esterle, J., & Kopell, M. (2020) It's all about relationships: Systems-based changemaking, Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE).]²

The Todd Foundation's approach to funding and supporting community-led development and systems change demonstrates the potential of a relational approach for creating the necessary conditions for communities to initiate their own systems-change.

Communities informed us that the Todd Foundation's approach was fundamentally different to their experience of other funders. In previous relationships with funders, they had never felt in true partnership and trusted to have the freedom to make decisions for themselves as they did with TTF.

Proactively investing in local people and relationship building, ceding the power to control and decide, and working in the spirit of continual learning, meant that connections, networks, interactions and local energies and leadership were able to fuel local development and systems change.

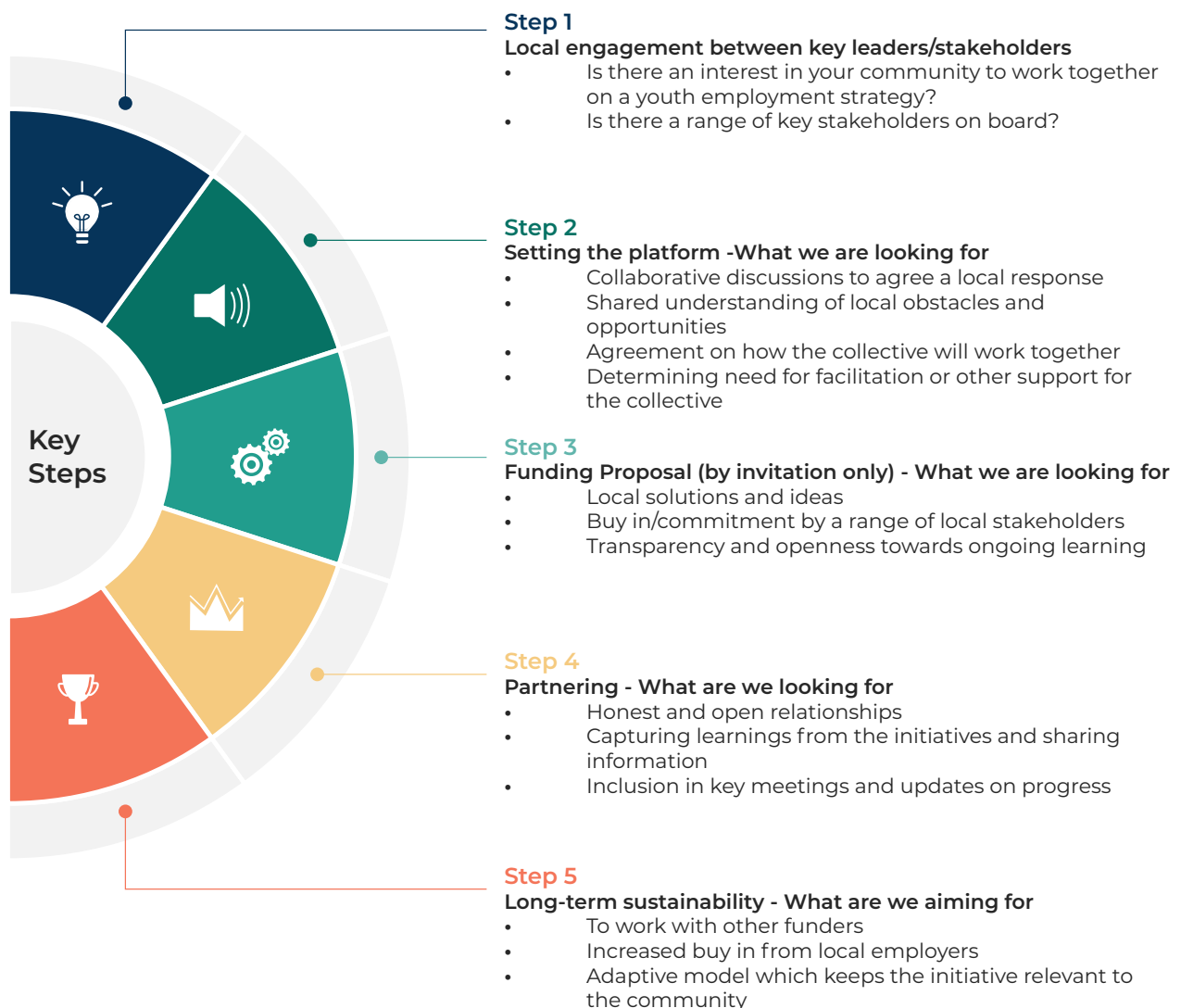


Setting the scene: Youth to Employment

Since 2014, the Todd Foundation (TTF) utilised their Special Focus Fund to invest in Youth Employment initiatives via four place-based local partnerships across New Zealand to develop community-led approaches to enable and support pathways for youth to employment (Y2E).

TTF deployed a five-step phased approach (see Figure 1) to achieve their Y2E initiative over a five-year time period, acknowledging the time and focus required to do things differently and effect sustainable system change.

Figure 1: Key steps of the Y2E Initiative



TTF utilised their five-step approach to identify projects to assist youth into meaningful employment. Their successful approach and practice included:

- Offering continuing support for young people to be ‘work ready’ for a changing economy
- Ensuring employers and communities are supported to be ‘youth ready’, and provide a clear system or pathway for young people transitioning from school to meaningful employment
- Responding to innovation and systems change - recognising future-focused industries, including new, knowledge-based employment opportunities
- Utilising a whole of community youth-to-employment strategy (e.g. the Mayors’ Task Force for Jobs model).

The Todd Foundation selected and worked with four community partners:

1. Tairāwhiti: Trust Tairāwhiti
2. Tairāwhiti: Tāiki e!
3. Eastern Bay of Plenty: Workforce Development, TOI-EDA
4. Lower Hutt, Wellington: Youth Inspire.

An overview of each partner is provided in Figure Two below:

Figure 2: Overview of four Y2E partners

Y2E Partner	Overview
Trust Tairāwhiti	<p>Trust Tairāwhiti brings the region's community trust and economic development agency together under one roof. The economic development part of the Trust, formerly known as Activate Tairāwhiti, initially sought the partnership with the Todd Foundation, and has since been absorbed into Trust Tairāwhiti.</p> <p>A key feature of supporting their people includes developing employability skills through the Licence to Work (LTW) programme. LTW is delivered in local schools in by school facilitators as well as an independent external facilitator.</p> <p>LTW is a cross-sector, business-led initiative designed to respond to business and industry concerns that young people may not be developing the employability skills needed to succeed in the workplace.</p>

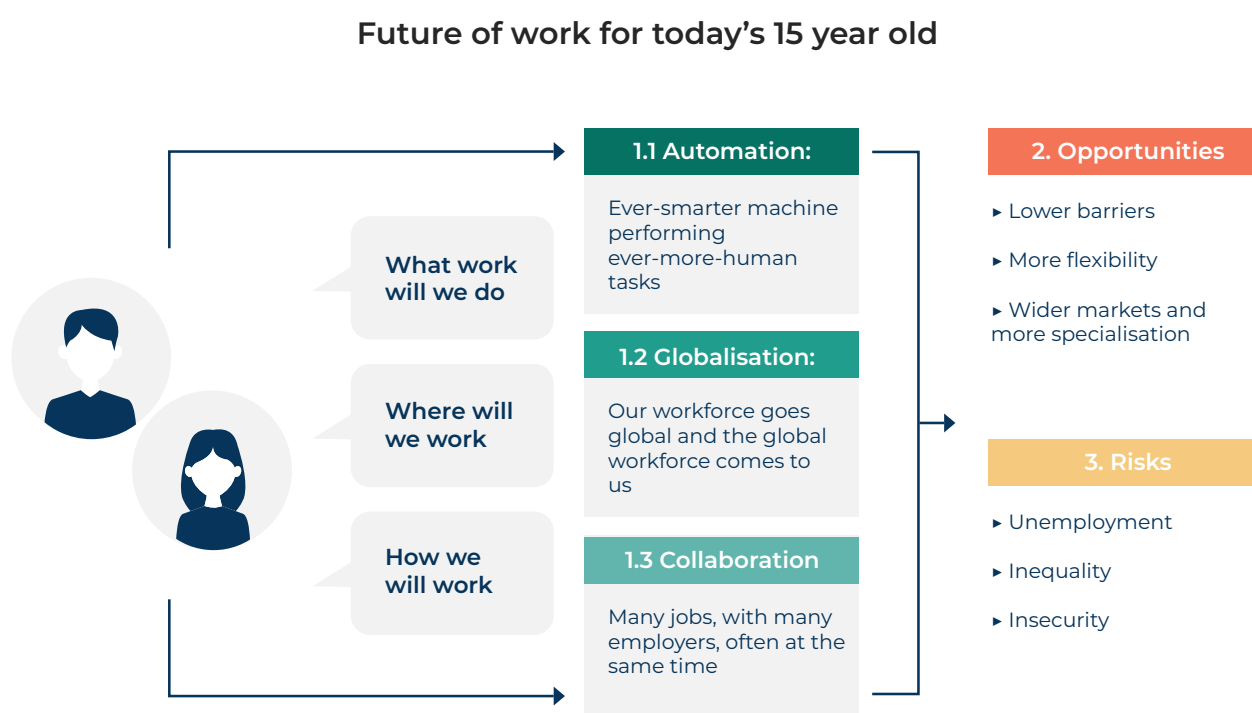
Y2E Partner	Overview
<p>Tāiki e!</p>	<p>In their own words, Tāiki Ē describes themselves as Tairāwhiti's first impact house; a collaborative space with a shared agenda for social and environmental action. They 'lead with aroha' and are all about connecting people who are passionate about creating systemic change using collaborative design principles and entrepreneurial thinking.</p> <p>Building entrepreneurship capability and the development of leadership skills is key to Tāiki Ē! approach to grow and support rangatahi in Tairāwhiti.</p>
<p>Toi-EDA</p>	<p>The purpose and vision of Toi-EDA, is <i>Tini o Toi, kia tipu, kia puawai – to create, grow and blossom the myriads of Toi</i>. To fulfil its purpose and vision to grow the region and its people, Toi-EDA provided a backbone role for a range of workforce development efforts, including: initiatives to grow rangatahi; youth aspirations; readiness for employment; and to encourage more youth-ready employers.</p> <p>A systems approach is integral Toi-EDA's support of youth employability, which acknowledges the unique communities, contexts, common agendas, and opportunities across the Eastern Bay of Plenty. Toi EDA adopted an approach that includes community-led, place-based, region-wide effort and investment to build cross-sector partnerships. They also innovate new programmes and systems, which create and support connections between education, industry, rangatahi and communities.</p>
<p>Youth Inspire</p>	<p>Based in Wainuiomata and Naenae, Youth Inspire collaborates across public and private sectors to support young people into pathways of employment, study, training, including soft-skills and driver licensing.</p> <p>Through Licence to Work and Driver Licencing programmes, they provide a responsive approach to wrap around young people not currently engaged in employment, education or training.</p> <p>Youth Inspire have strong local community and employer connections to ensure the young people they serve can connect with and explore a range of employment and education options. These connections are reflected throughout Youth Inspire, from their Board, to their work to advocate, share and learn regionally on issues impacting youth.</p>

Youth to employment: a focus on systems change

Future of work

TTF has a long-held, deep concern, and commitment to prepare today's young people for the future of work. This concern is well-founded, given that the future of work looks quite different from previous generations. The future is summed up well in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Future of work for today's 15-year-old³



Adding to this concern, is an announcement made by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern in May 2018 at a Future of Work Forum:

"This Government is keen to future-proof our economy, to have both budget sustainability and environmental sustainability, to prepare people for climate change and the fact that 40 percent of today's jobs will not exist in a few decades. If we are to stay ahead of the curve, if we are to develop a robust plan that future proofs the economy, we have to work together. We can't do this alone"⁴

TTF's perspective is further echoed by the following statement:

"Our best response is to prepare ourselves to be in a position to both respond to and shape the future on the basis of our values and the outcomes we desire. " (The Future of Work, 2017,

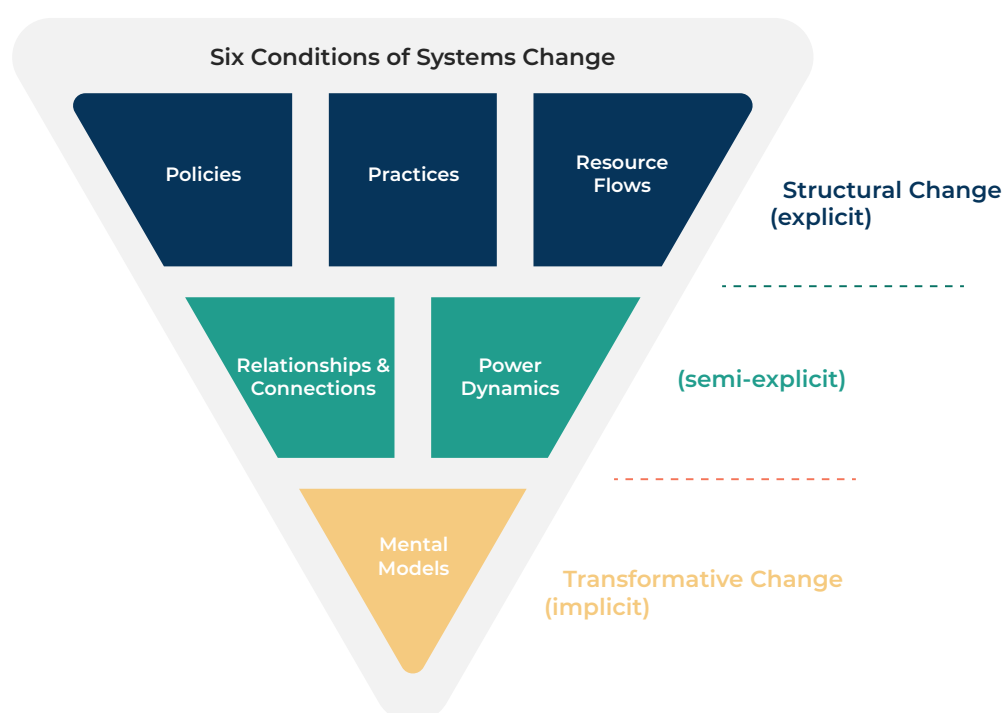
released by the Future of Work Commission, New Zealand Labour Party).

TTF's Youth to Employment (Y2E) initiative recognised that in a competitive labour market (often requiring skills and experience) many young people are finding it increasingly difficult to get their first stable job. Many of the traditional youth pathways to employment are in decline due to the expansion of technology.

Systems change

An overarching theme in TTF's response to youth employment is enabling system change at all levels. While this is not a new concept, such an approach to system change is dynamic and complex. Drawing on extensive literature and experience, Kania, Kramer and Serge (2018) signal six interdependent conditions that typically play significant roles in holding a social or environmental problem in place⁵.

Figure 4: Six Conditions of System Change (Kania, Kramer and Serge (2018))



Kania et al (2018, p.5) propose that foundations, commissioners, and funders “involved in systems change can increase their odds for success by focusing on the least explicit but most powerful conditions for change, while also turning the lens on themselves”.

There are multiple levels of change in the Y2E context, with emerging diversity in the range of contributions being made to respond to youth on an employment journey. For example, funders and

other partners are creating change in this area, but there are many other contributors in adjacent and different sectors, such as iwi, community organisations, and young people themselves. Kania et al (2018, p.5) particularly highlight that funders as part of the system “must be prepared to see how their own ways of thinking and acting must change” and if systems change, it be fully embraced.

Role of Philanthropy in systems change

Knowing that the role of funders is critical to system change, while acknowledging that they need to examine their own way of thinking and action, TTF has focused on developing their understanding of their role in systems change; particularly how they might *best support young people in their transition to employment?*

Firstly, TTF has been intentional about acting as a convenor in the Y2E initiative. They understand that they have the ability to bring together partners and others around a shared kaupapa or vision; and support connections that help people work together to collectively influence policy and practice⁶. TTF also understands that this collective work can help identify promising leverage or entry points to influence system change. Possible leverage points that may produce small but important shifts in the Y2E system include, for example, driver licencing or employer mindsets about youth employment experience. Acknowledging the complexity of systems, Meadows (1997) also reminds us about the role of power when thinking about one’s role in initiating change⁷:

“Magical leverage points are not easily accessible, even if we know where they are and which direction to push on them. There are no cheap tickets to mastery. You have to work at it, whether that means rigorously analyzing a system or rigorously casting off your own paradigms and throwing yourself into the humility of Not Knowing. In the end, it seems that power has less to do with pushing leverage points than it does with strategically, profoundly, madly letting go.” (pg.19)

Donella Meadows

Leverage Points: Places to intervene in a system 1997

Secondly, TTF has explicitly sought to model and demonstrate an orientation to its role as convenor that is ‘power with’ versus ‘power over’.⁸ ‘Power with’ implies taking a participative approach, staying strongly connected to grassroots innovative thinking and approaches, and having an orientation that

⁶ Social Innovation Generation. 2014, p.5

⁷ Meadows, D. (1997). *Leverage Points: Places to intervene in a system*. Retrieved from http://donellameadows.org/wp-content/userfiles/Leverage_Points.pdf

⁸ Kania, Kramer and Serge. (2018). *The Waters of System Change*, p.14.

is “comfortable following the lead of grantees and allowing agenda to evolve”. Understanding, evolving, and being aware of new forms power is essential for systems change work – to be “power aware” and unlock the full potential of collective action.⁹

A strong belief in locating change within the leadership and ownership of local communities to create place-based solutions is embedded in TTF’s approach to system change. A tenet of TTF’s practise is that success is increased when key local leaders and stakeholders are enabled to work together on a community strategy or change process.¹⁰ Although collaboration can be difficult and messy, it is vital for systems change.¹¹



⁹ Social Innovation Generation. 2014, p.7

¹⁰ The Todd Foundation. (2018). [personal communication with Todd Foundation]

¹¹ Social Innovation Generation. (2014). Building ecosystems for change – How do we collaborate to create ecosystems that support innovation for systems change? Retrieved from http://www.msppguide.org/sites/default/files/resource/-building_ecosystems_for_systems_change_public.pdf

Evaluating systems change

Evaluating systems change is a high stakes undertaking. There are many challenges to doing evaluation in complex systems change, including unknown lag times between activities and results, difficulty in assessing the contribution of different actors in the system to change, being alert to and accounting for unanticipated changes, weaving multiple perspectives together, and the ever-evolving nature of the system.

A recent article¹² suggests evaluations of complex initiatives need to:

- Recognise, acknowledge, surface, and address the paradoxes inherent in complex systems
- Pay attention to relationships as a unit of analysis as they are key to understanding and engaging with the dynamics of a complex situation
- Have a mindset that is willing to be uncertain at times and to know that being uncertain is crucial to the process.

Principles of success for Y2E

The outcomes or impacts of systems change are notoriously hard to define and measure and often not known in advance, rather, they are often only known in retrospect. For this reason, rather than using pre-determined outcomes as a focus to our work, the evaluation team worked with TTF and three of the Y2E initiatives early on to collaboratively develop a suite of principles that everyone felt were important collective markers of success.

The six principles that were identified are as follows:

1. Genuine, diverse community ownership and leadership
2. Collective and system focused solutions
3. Supporting youth to be work ready (hard skills, soft skills, readiness)
4. Employer Engagement
5. Innovation behaviour (at the edge, social enterprise, innovation)
6. Supporting functions & processes.

Each of these principles embody a way of working, a leverage point, driver or behaviour shift, as well as actual outcomes for young people; all of which are recognised as key types of systems changes¹³. They also align closely with Kania¹⁴ et al's six conditions of systems change, and with Inspiring Community's principles for community-led development¹⁵. They have guided our enquiry with the four partners

¹² How does complexity impact evaluation? An introduction to the special issue.

Brenda J. Zimmerman, Nathalie Dubois, Janie Houle, Stephanie Lloyd, Céline Mercier, Astrid Brousselle, and Lynda Rey, *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, Special Issue, 2011, 26:3, v-xx*.

¹³ Cabaj, M. (2018) *Evaluating Systems Change Results: An Inquiry Framework*, Tamarack Institute.

¹⁴ Kania, Kramer and Serge. (2018). *The Waters of System Change*

¹⁵ https://inspiringcommunities.org.nz/ic_resource/nga-mataponono-cld-principles/

throughout the evaluation, as we have looked for how these principles might be presenting in each of the initiatives.

Questions guiding the learning journey

Three high-level questions guided the Y2E learning journey:

- What are the different community perspectives on their role and experience of the place-based change they are engaged in?
- What deep learning can we find in some of the local initiatives for future action on supporting systems shifts and changes?
- Where and how can Philanthropy leverage its influence and resources for greatest impact?

Our approach

While recognising the uniqueness of each partner and partner communities, the following five steps provided the structure for our approach to gathering information and bringing together this report:

- Development of shared principles of success – collaborative workshop
- Journey mapping – face-to-face engagements with each initiative diving deeply into their journeys and histories
- Data profiles - consolidating key data and information about transitions for young people between education and employment
- Local case studies – development of brief case studies for each location/initiative that summarise their unique story of change
- Synthesis – utilising the principles of success

What did we find?

Utilising the six principles of success for Youth to Employment and the experiences of young people and the four partners, we found that:

- Unwavering kaupapa-driven responses engender leadership and enable collective experiences, perspectives, skills, and resources to come together, making real change possible
- Rangatahi themselves are 'connected into making a difference – they want to be enabled to make change'. And when they are empowered, real change happens.
- The attributes for systems convening - collaborating, sharing, connecting, convening and building bridges with and between people – embody the type of collective leadership that is critical to systems change
- The importance of convening – by funders and at local levels, is critical to community-led responses and the shared belief in community-led change.
- Principles are excellent guides – each of the principles were evident in all initiatives – the combination and interplay of these has led to transformative changes in rangatahi and communities.

The following section describes the insight that has emerged for each of the six principles in more detail.

Genuine, diverse community ownership and leadership

Belief in communities to lead systems change

An absolute **belief in communities to lead systems change** was a consistent theme found across all four initiatives. Communities have the primary interest in what happens to them, so more than just leading, communities need to feel that they own the process of development. Communities need to know that they have sovereignty over key decisions that matter to them – and the future of their rangatahi is of vital importance to them all.

...The most important thing is, I guess, the influencers in the region are on board with the kaupapa...
[Partner Respondent]

Marginalised communities, such as rangatahi and Māori, are beginning to demand support for this kind of **belief building**, because change doesn't happen if things are done **to** them.

...it always ends up people coming to try and change them, rather than sort of coming and changing themselves and building their own leadership capacity... [Partner Respondent]

Community participants stated that creating long-term, sustainable opportunities for rangatahi requires communities to come together. When collective experiences, perspectives, skills, and resources come together effectively, real change is possible.

*Learned a long time go, it's better to do together; can't do it your own, you have to have shared experiences because it's too small a community to not speak and work with each other.
[Partner Respondent]*

We have learned here that the whole joined up approach is the only way to go. [Partner Respondent]

...it takes true community partnership to achieve this stuff...[Partner Respondent]

Staying connected to kaupapa and values

Staying consistent and connected to kaupapa and values was a strong theme voiced by participants. The importance of integrity to kaupapa and values was emphasised, in contrast to being motivated purely by money: it is kaupapa that sustains community systems change work.

...our kids are really connected to purpose...money is not enough of a motivator...if you bring them to a kaupapa, they will kind of jump in. [Partner Respondent]

*...we've remained really consistent to our values...which has been really important throughout...
[Partner Respondent]*

*...finding common ground and identifying where shared values lies is important...
[Partner Respondent]*

Diverse community leadership

Diverse, strong leadership from the community was a theme emphasised by all four initiatives. They each talked about this as a foundational aspect of community-led systems change.

...quality of people in the leadership is really important...[Partner Respondent]

However, leadership was described as more than just the attributes of individuals. Participants spoke about **collaborative and cooperative forms of leadership** needing to be nurtured and supported if systems change efforts are to be successful.

...the more we can build collective muscle, not individual muscle, when we talk about leadership, then people have a bit more appetite for taking risk, and kind of diving in...more afraid...when it's just kind of them feeling like they're all by themselves...people...need a team, a whānau...lots of interaction... whanaungatanga is our resilience. [Partner Respondent]

Leadership is an attribute of rangatahi themselves, because rangatahi are 'connected into making a difference – and they want to be enabled to make change'. Any systems change effort about or for rangatahi, needs to recognise that rangatahi want to be included, and they want opportunities to lead, be involved, and be inspired.

One of the most critical and transformative aspects of leadership for change across all initiatives, was that of key people undertaking 'systems convening' work¹⁶. This form of leadership is not the traditional formal position of authority that directs, plans, manages, and governs. Instead, 'systems convening work' takes the form of collaborating, sharing, connecting, convening, and building bridges with and between people.

Participants repeatedly told us about the importance of this connector role, how the changes that they were seeing could not have happened without this kind leadership.

Not quite sure where we would be...if we didn't have someone hold the message about stronger together...a driving force...if there was one word...it would be cohesion...there were times when different groups wanted to do their own thing... just kept saying we can do this a whole lot better if we combine our resources and recognise each other's strengths. [Partner Respondent]

Collective and system-focused solutions

Systems of trust and belief

Trust and belief among community members as well as between funders and communities was a constant theme, and a clear foundation of systems change work.

What will maintain that momentum of realising dreams – collaboration will keep us going and I believe we have trust in each other to work alongside each other. [Partner Respondent]

Ecologies of change or innovation at the very least require collaboration, relational trust and diversity of thought. For Māori and other indigenous communities, their ecology is relationships, with one another, with the environment, and with the cosmos¹⁷.

One community described the 'secret sauce' of their success as whanaungatanga. Through the building of trusted relationships over time, they had created the social licence for action in their community.

Good relationships take the competitiveness out...safe space for people to come in, value each other's contribution. [Partner Respondent]

Funding systems change – a relational process

Getting the funding environment right is one of the key mechanisms for creating an eco-system for collective and systems-focused change. Community building and community-led change takes time, but it is a significant struggle if communities have to constantly negotiate with numerous funders. Difficulties are further exacerbated by trying to survive year-to-year on short-term, low-trust, high-compliance, piecemeal contracts.

According to these communities, funding arrangements are rarely designed to be responsive to their everyday emergent needs and issues. This is particularly true of government funding, but also some philanthropic funding. Old funding ideas get 're-hashed' as if they are new, but all the same constraints exist, such as short time-frames, lack of flexibility, too much of a focus on risk, and not enough on building a relationship. This kind of transactional funding environment makes communities feel that funders don't have any real understanding for what is going on in the communities they fund.

Typical funding from governments as well as philanthropic funders was described as usually 'very transactional' and being 'about the numbers and reporting these'. What is really important to success, however, is the quality of the relationships that are formed with young people and their whānau and the wider community. A consistent statement was that the 'key infrastructure for success is trust', and 'time'. This applies to the funding relationship as much as it does to the local initiatives and their local relationships.

People want funders they can develop trusted relationships with, who are prepared to stick around and give them time to build momentum. They want a form of funding that is relational; where funders recognise them not just as contract takers, but as experts in what is going to work in their

¹⁷ Hopson, R., and Cram, F. (2018) *Tackling Wicked Problems in Complex Evaluation Ecologies*, Stanford University Press, California.

communities. This aligns with recent research that shows that ‘investment in the establishment and maintenance of high-trust relationships that facilitate collaboration and partnership leads to more effective and sustainable outcomes’.¹⁸

Furthermore, communities are simply ‘over programmes’; there’s fatigue among communities at the idea of another programme idea coming in from a disconnected funder. When funders are absent, with no vested interest, communities end up feeling they are not important; they feel that all the funder is doing is ticking a box; that they are not really serious about changing lives and communities, building social capital and eco systems capable of driving long-term solutions.

All four communities are looking for funders who can support them to build from within, to ‘build belief and trust in themselves to do better, to do different for themselves’. They want funders who believe in them and recognise their expertise. For them, traditional funding processes feel like there is little trust or belief in communities to make their own changes.

Supporting youth to be work ready (hard skills, soft skills, readiness)

Creating hope

The leadership of these initiatives were clear that they are in the business of creating hope for young people.

Joy in the young people is huge...it comes from here (inside). They feel hope. [Partner Respondent]

Young people are at the heart of the day-to-day work in all Y2E initiatives funded by TTF. However, all initiatives are also centred on long-term systems change, which is a broader remit than learning how to write a CV or providing people with employment skills, for example. Creating the system conditions for local pathways into meaningful employment and futures for young people means whānau, schools, iwi, businesses, employers, Councils, government must collaborate to design meaningful community solutions.

The economic, educational and employment profiles of the communities and young people in the Y2E initiatives suggest there are long-term, systemic conditions that need addressing if young people are to succeed. For example, in some of these communities, young people have had to leave the rohe

(area) to find meaningful work and futures, because much of the work available in their communities is seasonal, casual and low-waged. Some young people who remained became disengaged, were neither in employment or education, and according to participants, “a lot lost sight of their aspirations”.

Furthermore, higher paid positions in these local workforces have often been filled by people from outside the community. The systems change efforts in these communities is as much about creating the foundations for young people to be work-ready and igniting their aspirations, as it is about transforming and building the community infrastructure needed for the future of work. These foundations are built so that young people can be entrepreneurial; they can have and sustain meaningful work, at home; and employers and industry will seek local people for their workforce.

One person told us that in their community, there would be “no more courses without jobs to go to”. Connections between whānau, schools, workplaces and employers is critical – it is not enough to just teach a skill, without connecting it to the exposure, exploration and experience of the workplace¹⁹.

Creating on-ramps and inspiration

We heard many times that “...how young people think about their working future and what they do to explore and experience it while still in school can make important differences.” It’s not enough to only focus on developing skills, or solely on providing work experience opportunities. Young people need to be scaffolded through multiple opportunities and iterative experiences to develop their thinking and agency about work pathways open to them. Equally, it is vital that these pathways are authentic and represent real jobs for the future.

All the initiatives are trying to build pathways and on-ramps to success by inspiring young people to grow and think about the world of work in ways that go beyond traditional, mainstream thinking. They forge imaginative and innovative ways for young people to explore and experience work in real-world ways, while ensuring multiple, thoughtful experiences and engagements between young people and employers, mentors, employee volunteers, and workplaces.

I wouldn't be in the bachelor of business, it got me interested in business stuff.
[Rangatahi Respondent]

We need a practical side to it [learning about work]...this was such a good learning...about myself and business...so happy I did this and worth it already...[Rangatahi Respondent]

¹⁹ Turner, D. (2020) *The WE3 Continuum and Activities. Scaffolding vocational education and successful youth transitions through Work Exposure, Work Exploration and Work Experience. A publication of D J Turner Consulting and Toi EDA, the Eastern Bay of Plenty Economic Development Agency, New Zealand.*

From other employment courses I've done, nothing's happened...but here, they make sure we've achieved something... [Rangatahi Respondent]

They gave us the opportunity to do it your pace...they make you feel comfortable enough to ask questions...they offer more than job training, they help with lots of other things [Rangatahi Respondent]

They don't look down on us...[Rangatahi Respondent]

Driver licensing

A 'lightening rod' initiative has been the support for driver licensing. People told us that there is broad-based understanding that having a driver's license is key to creating shifts in the trajectories of rangatahi and is also central to local industry development.

Each local community has adapted the licensing experience to meet the needs of rangatahi in their regions. Some rangatahi only need a short time and a small amount of support, others need longer and more intensive support to obtain their license.

'Drivers Licensing is a perfect tangible outcome to build confidence; it's a real-life step that everybody needs. But if that's a barrier or you can't get it, it puts distance between you and the rest of the world. So, every time a young person gets that, you can see that they feel genuinely motivated and inspired to do other things. Really beautiful outcome... the beauty is it's something simple that can turn into something quite transformative...'
[Partner Respondent]

The initiatives recognise that the development of foundational skills and self-belief in the young people they work with is critical. We heard that it takes a special kind of person to do this well. People we talked to used words like “committed”, “passionate”, and “caring”, when they talked about the staff and leadership of the initiatives. They told us how the staff and leaders see potential in young people; they build on the strengths that they actively seek and identify. They are focused on broadening and raising young people's aspirations.

Each initiative has a deep commitment to the relationships they form with the young people they work with. They are interested in them as people, recognise that the quality of relationship they have with each young person and their whānau is the key to change.

...not a tick box; get them a job, but supporting them through the journey to find something or something else; ongoing connections and support over time... [Partner Respondent]

This can be slow work, the timeframes are different for each young person, but the mahi is ultimately transformational. Young people often start out as diffident, and over time, they build confidence in themselves. During this process, they learn that there are people and places they can go to for support, while moving out into the world with more optimism.

Whilst getting job ready and obtaining employment is an important milestone for young people, most of the initiatives are also invested in more than just supporting youth to be ready for work; they also support them to dream bigger, mentoring them to develop their own ideas and aspirations.

The initiatives ultimately support young people to have a greater degree of control over their future, as they recognise that young people develop their understanding of pathways through experiences.

Building rangatahi social enterprise

Tāiki e! supported and mentored a group of young people to build a social enterprise – a community kai sharing pantry – Pātaka Kai.

The young people had to learn a diverse range of new skills, such as attracting sponsorship through writing and structuring sponsorship letters, understanding markets and customers, building business metrics and data collection, cash flow, using QR code technology, and social media.

The impact of the experience has been long-lasting:

*'it was really eye opening, didn't really realise how much impact we made...'
 '...it's definitely experience that helps me...what I did last year...100% got me through this
 [Partner Respondent] first term [of tertiary study]...I think it will help me through the whole
 three years...'*

Impacts

The initiatives are changing lives, as evidenced by rangatahi themselves saying that they are gaining confidence, skills, new inspiration, going into different fields of study, creating their own social enterprises, and getting jobs. Rangatahi are becoming role models for others, taking leadership roles in school and other places, and developing pride in themselves and their community.

These initiatives are also changing lives through their support and awhi of rangatahi to overcome the effects of domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction, as well as a range of difficult whānau dynamics.

Engaging whānau is key to the success of most of these young people, and everyone told us how important it is that they engage with whānau throughout the young person's journey.

*...the pride...also the parents...despite a hard life...see their young person stick with the course...
engaging with the whole whānau [Partner Respondent]*

Employer Engagement

Having a systems view of the world of work is key to how the youth initiatives operate; they understand that work is not just about employers, it's about the wider community, including schools, training providers, funders, iwi, hapu, whānau etcetera. However, all recognise that local employers have a vital part to play in the future of work in their communities.

They all seek those employers who have a '*passion for youth and love to see them succeed...*' and don't just perceive them as '*arms and legs*'. The relationships they have with employers are not only about work experience; they are about creating connections, fostering relationships and utilising the experience of those who are open to mentoring and supporting young people.

People talked about the importance of meaningful connections between industry, employers, and young people. However, all participants felt that these connections have not been created by traditional approaches to career guidance, education, or training courses. Young people often leave their formal education without a realistic understanding or appreciation of the world of work, or of what might be possible to achieve in the future. Similarly, employers often don't appreciate the talents, gifts or promise of the young people living in their communities. Someone described the "reticence" of employers to take on rangatahi because they are not "ready" for employment. Yet research shows

that when young people are engaged with employers while in education, their chances of long-term success are increased²⁰.

Many employers do not view themselves as being in the business of community development, yet all these initiatives have developed connections with local industry and employers who care, many of whom have come to recognise their role in creating and growing positive communities. Participants enthusiastically discussed the connections and relationships they have with employers who support their kaupapa, who want to see young people succeed.

Opotiki Packing and Cool storage Ltd (OPAC)* has its head office in Ōpōtiki, Bay of Plenty. The organisation has been growing, harvesting, packing and storing high quality kiwifruit since 1987.

As one of the employers involved in the Ōpōtiki's Pathway to Work initiative, OPAC came to recognise their connections to the community. *'Connecting with people, opening up a dialogue'*, they have developed a deeper understanding of local history and culture and a much greater sense of connection to the place and the history of Ōpōtiki.

With this renewed connection to the community, they committed to the kaupapa of long-term workforce development, including scholarships at the local high schools and increasing the levels of permanent employment for locals within the organisation. This is having a transformational effect for some Ōpōtiki whānau, who for the first time have income security. This then opens up possibilities such as long-term stable housing, including home ownership.

Permanency is about giving people the opportunity to apply for a mortgage, it's about certainty of work, they wake up and know they are working today, and this is how many hours I'm going to be working; that's what I mean by connection.

In the Bay of Plenty, work with schools has meant that more opportunities have been developed for rangatahi who are still in school to become 'industry ready'. This means studying for an entry-level industry certificate, as well as being provided with increased exposure and experiences in the workplace.

²⁰ Turner, D. (2020) *The WE3 Continuum and Activities. Scaffolding vocational education and successful youth transitions through Work Exposure, Work Exploration and Work Experience. A publication of D J Turner Consulting and Toi EDA, the Eastern Bay of Plenty Economic Development Agency, New Zealand.*

*Seeka Ltd has subsequently purchased OPAC.

But working directly and closely with employers has also been vital, and government support for apprenticeships has been helpful in this process. However, participants stated that it was critical to have facilitation to bring employers together to better understand their requirements and to create workforce development options that will serve their needs longer term.

*...[we] spend a lot of time and effort with employers to become ready to take on rangatahi...
[Partner Respondent]*

*More engagement now from employers and awareness that they need to change perceptions, how
and what they do... [Partner Respondent]*

*It is difficult to get employers to fund this kind of development, as they must see the payoff before
most are willing to put resources toward 'intangible' things like facilitation and collective work.
However, some are beginning to see benefit in collaboration and an increased investment in people.
...But now they are starting to see value ... will now fund themselves... [Partner Respondent]*

*There are so many more conversations about workforce development now, people know what it
means...more employers are thinking about it, collaborating... see it...as a smart business decision due
to aging workforce; they need to be thinking about that... and... a lot more businesses...seeing their
social responsibility. [Partner Respondent]*

The arrival of COVID 19 has also highlighted the need to look after local staff and the importance of being actively engaged in supporting the development of a local workforce.

Innovation behaviour (at the edge, social enterprise, innovation)

Shifting from a competitive mindset to a collaborative one

Participants consistently described a mindset shift from competitive to collaborative as a result of the Y2E initiative.

*...all hand in hand with community...it takes true community partnership to achieve this stuff..
[Partner Respondent]*

Collaboration was perceived as one of the single most important shifts required to propel change in their communities. In addition, collaborating has helped people to understand the value of the contribution they each make to an overarching kaupapa.

Good relationships take the competitiveness out, safe space for people to come in...value each other's contribution [Partner Respondent]

Working collaboratively is a new behaviour for many, but is now acknowledged as key to unlocking innovation and change.

...You'd get all these groups...all doing their own thing in their own area and inevitably they end up doing a bit of competition, because they've got to stake their ground and show their abilities and sometimes, they see it as being at the expense of somebody else and that's really the competitive model that past Government department funding has worked on... [Partner Respondent]

Without funding for a role with this critical expertise, where would these communities be with such important work, and what do they need for the future?

Rangatahi leadership and innovation

One aspect of innovation that stood out across all the initiatives was the leadership that rangatahi accomplish when they are supported and given the space, resources, and trust to create change for themselves.

Rangatahi have a significant appetite for innovation, technology, and entrepreneurialism. When they are given the opportunity to lead change, they step up enthusiastically. In the words of one rangatahi:

.... don't limit yourself...just be really open to all opportunities you come across...biggest things to enhance your wellbeing is to just get involved...don't be whakamaa about starting... [Rangatahi respondent]

Once rangatahi experience some success, they tell others in their community and the impetus for change ripples out to their friends and whānau. Their leadership inspired and the positive changes they make becomes intergenerational in impact.

...S bought his sister in, then popped in with her friend to see support for a CV; Mum came in...wanting to learn Te Reo...have the environment where things spin off... [Partner Respondent]

This is a strong theme across all the initiatives, but particularly through the work of Tāiki e!. They hold firm to a Māori-centred perspective of operating collectively and being open and inclusive. Although they view what they are doing as holding a space for innovation, they also see that same space as decolonising who they are, and being open to rediscovery.

Young people from Ōpōtiki talked about leadership and rangatiratanga as leading by example and being good role models for the next generation.

*...Rangatiratanga to me is leading by example, making sure the next generation, knowing the morals and customs that we have had for generations...
[Camdyn Collier - Te Ihi Ka Roa Digitech, IT Technical Support²¹]*

Supporting functions & processes

Kania and Kramer (2014, p.8) state that “the expectation that collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons why it fails”²². Not only has TTF ensured that partners have explicit funding to enable supporting functions and processes, but they have also actively sought to be part of a supportive local infrastructure. This infrastructure contributes to aiding community-led change, and the combination of supports and conditions for collaboration enabled challenges to be recognised and collectively overcome.

Backbone function required for community-led change

While each of the four partners are unique, their leaders all provide dedicated, essential support, or back bone functions. Whether typified by the system convening attributes or tikanga practices, it is clear that the valuing and dedicated resourcing for backbone functions is vital for communities to enact change.

...everything would be different without the role... [Partner Respondent]

Without funding for a role like this, this expertise, where would these communities be without this kind of work...? [Partner Respondent]

²¹ Camdyn Collier speaking about Rangatiratanga <https://www.facebook.com/whakatoheamtb/posts/5517181571656707>

²² Collective Impact Forum and FSG (n.d.) The Backbone Starter Guide: A Summary of Major Resources about the Backbone; from FSG and the Collective Impact Forum. Retrieved from <https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/sites/default/files/Backbone%20Starter%20Guide.pdf>

Developing a shared understanding and perspective

One of the key benefits of a skilled 'backbone function' - or person fulfilling this role – is to support diverse interests and perspectives uniting around a shared kaupapa or purpose. One example of this was the Pathways to Work plan facilitated by Barbara in the Bay of Plenty.

This proved to be a turning point for many, particularly for employers. It helped people see that workforce development was critical. Having someone who could support the important conceptual thinking, such as forecasting and modelling of future workforce needs, and then help people find the funding to deliver on the plan, was pivotal.

Similarly, in Ōpōtiki, having someone like Barbara persevere, push for a joined-up approach in a respectful and gentle manner, meant that the community was able to develop a successful joint workforce development proposal, that they otherwise wouldn't have managed to do.

Not quite sure where we would be...if we didn't have someone hold the message about stronger together. [Partner Respondent]

Connecting people and ideas

This role or function is all about connection: connecting people with one another, to funding streams, to different ideas, to what other people are doing, connecting employers to other employers to talk about their experiences etcetera.

The ability to bring people together effectively as part of community-led systems change is important, and also requires a number of specialist skills and aptitudes.

...important in terms of bringing people together... hard job and requires a certain skill to do that, tenacity... personally savvy, that's important. The role requires someone who is commercially savvy to know where a business is or where the community is at any one point and time to be able to broker a discussion that hits the sweet spot... [Partner Respondent]

[It] was valuable because it was someone to talk to, bounce ideas off and someone who knew what I was talking about but didn't have a direct interest but was vested (committed) to the kaupapa. She was slightly outside the circle, that it was always good to have that kōrero and the good thing was she knew all those organisations I was talking about and all those people involved. [Partner Respondent]

The work that has been done as a collective has enhanced the reach, more than if we had done it individually... [Partner Respondent]

Overcoming barriers to collaboration

The complex and competitive environment for funding was a key barrier to collaboration. There are many different funders competing for space in local and regional issues, and it is difficult for local communities and organisations to know who to approach, and how to navigate this complexity. Funding processes also continue to be largely competitive, pitting one organisation against another.

Funding has been a competitive element and in a small community... it was hard at the beginning and could be hard and intense... We have transcended, but not sure I would want to do that work again; but we are all really accepting that we are here for our people and not about the funding or organisation... [Partner Respondent]

This environment creates a barrier to collaboration, because people become protective of what resources they manage to secure. People have been operating in a competitive environment for so long, that it's hard to break out of this mindset.

If communities are to successfully work together, it is crucial that they have someone in a connecting role, to help dismantle competitive barriers.

...it's one of the challenges the connector role continues to face and work really hard at, is trying to get people to be open and transparent about where the resource is going and for what things... it is helpful having someone who sits outside of the projects themselves trying to make that happen... [Partner Respondent]

Participants mentioned that funders are increasingly asking communities about how different players in local places are communicating, collaborating, and how they 'are stitching their outcomes together'. However, the time and resources needed for working collaboratively is rarely funded or recognised.

The connector or 'backbone function' also plays an important part in helping communities understand their collective contribution, something that many said participants said is easy to lose sight of.

... in an ecosystem sense, you'd lose the championing of understanding how we are all coming together and contributing... [Partner Respondent]

Summary thoughts and insights

Auspos and Cabaj (2014) describe communities as complex adaptive systems²³. The characteristics of communities include having a diverse population with different values, cultures, interests, and perspectives. There is no one 'in control' of a community; rather, there are numerous ways of organising, being, and operating that cannot be directed or controlled. Communities exist within wider systems e.g., health, economic, labour market, environmental systems, where the boundaries are often overlapping and porous. Each community is unique, and has its own mix of features, histories, and personalities. Therefore, an approach that works for one community, may not work for another

As such, systems change work in communities is challenging, and requires those working in communities to be able to constantly adapt and respond to changing needs. It is important to be open to emergence and the unexpected, and to welcome collective, collaborative, and participatory styles of engagement and management.

All of these attributes feature in the work of the Y2E initiatives. In addition, a commitment to local, community-led change, and a unique form of systems leadership was commonplace across all initiatives.

Local, community-led systems change

The findings in this evaluation align with research that demonstrates that communities are best placed to identify and understand the issues affecting them, and more importantly, come up with their own innovative solutions. TTF recognised and supported this from the outset, and understood that communities are much more than passive recipients of contracts, but rather, are experts in local community solutions. While they provided funding, they saw their role as supporting and reinforcing locally led visions rather than funder-imposed solutions.

...Communities hold, I believe, a lot of the solutions within themselves. If you go and ask them, let the ideas bubble up, there'd be stuff in there that's really awesome. One of the big problems is that our governments, mostly central but also local, don't give anybody credit... they think people are stupid and dumb and they're not, communities are much smarter than what we think, and we have to let them come up with ideas to problems, they're not all going to be good ideas but something in that mix will have some currency... [Partner Respondent]

Rather than top-down approaches that impose solutions and are rarely grounded in the realities of local communities, sustainable change is more likely to occur when those who live in communities have the opportunity to engage and participate in their own development and change processes. Community-led development approaches support communities to establish what is important to them, while assisting communities to build their own capacity to work together and draw on the strengths and opportunities within, and to ultimately realise their visions and plans²⁴.

...power in and of community and power of taking control has been important...[Partner respondent]

TTF also recognised the wisdom from years of community-led development by supporting key people in communities, such as Barbara, Cain, Karen, and Ali, who are able to build trusted relationships and can bring people together on substantial journeys of change²⁵.

...quite a lot of relationship building to be done, and getting buy-in to taking a joined up approach took perseverance...[Partner respondent]

System convening²⁶ - the work of systems change

Systems convening is becoming recognised as one of the key mechanisms of systems change. It is through convening that the conditions of systems change can be realised. There is a unique type of work and leadership that emerges from people disrupting systems and creating radical change, particularly in situations with complex moving parts. Research shows that this type of leadership is critical to creating important changes that add up to 'making a sustainable and transformative difference'.²⁷

System convening can happen on different scales, locally, nationally and globally. It is about enabling conversations and learning across boundaries, engaging with diverse perspectives in complex situations, and typically begins where people are at, prioritising participation and ownership.

System convening recognises that systems change is not so much about formal positions of authority or about plans, management and governance, but about collaborating, sharing, connecting, convening and building bridges with and between people.

²⁴Inspiring Communities. (2013). *Learning by Doing: Community-led Change in Aotearoa NZ*. Inspiring Communities Trust. Aotearoa New Zealand.
²⁵Inspiring Communities. (2012). *Community-led development in Aotearoa New Zealand: a Think Piece from Inspiring Communities*. Aotearoa New Zealand.

²⁶Wenger-Traynor, E., and Wenger-Traynor B. (2021) *Systems Convening: A crucial form of leadership for the 21st century*, Social Learning Lab, Portugal. <https://wenger-traynor.com>

²⁷Ibid, p8

Leaders of Y2E – local systems convenors

All of the Y2E leaders displayed the characteristics of system convenors²⁸. They are passionate, values driven individuals who are committed to making a positive difference. They are visionary and pragmatic, working across many boundaries and relationships, creating connections and bridging partnerships. They are steadfast community fixtures, strongly invested in their roles, because they know that systems change takes time.

Each of the leaders are deeply connected and aware of the broader landscape in which they are working. They can take a high-level view just as easily as they can work closely at a local level. And perhaps crucially, they are people-focused with strong relationship-building skills.

Barbara MacLennan

The following quote highlights the general response when discussing Barbara MacLennan from ToiEDA :

Everything would be different without the role...Barbara has been the driving force...to get together well before the money arrived...with no structure, no talking, no relationships, if the money arrived, we would not have been ready.[Partner Respondent]

Participants said that Barbara had brought cohesion to a complex landscape, and that her role was responsible for ...setting the whole community up to work together... has had long reaching impacts, strengthened us as a community. [Partner Respondent]

Others stated that if they hadn't had someone like Barbara who consistently gave them the message that they had to work together, they are not sure they would have collaborated. However, it was also mentioned that the 'value of her role goes unnoticed'.

[Having Barbara] was valuable because it was someone to talk to, bounce ideas off and someone who knew what I was talking about but didn't have a direct interest but was vested (committed) to the kaupapa. She was slightly outside the circle, that it was always good to have that kōrero with and the good thing was she knew all those organisations I was talking about and all those people involved. [Partner Respondent]

²⁸Ibid.

Still, other participants noted that Barbara works: *'completely without glory'* and *'deliberately puts kudos with those delivering'*.

Ali Black

The following quote highlights how participants viewed Ali and her role at Youth Inspire:

...the success of Youth Inspire is really about the magic of Ali and her team and what they do... organisations like Youth Inspire can't pay top dollar, but the work they do over and above is what makes the success for the young people. [Partner Respondent]

People said that Ali and her team have an absolute belief in the young people that they work with; that they are *'not worth giving up on'* because they recognise these young people as our future. It was stated that Ali will *'go beyond'* to support the young people she works with; that she's committed and passionate and really cares.

Ali is grounded in place; committed to growing, and connecting young people with local businesses and jobs. She is also highly skilled at negotiating and leveraging resources from government agencies, working with employers, business and other organisations to bring them on board. She has long-term relationships with many local people, and she works relentlessly *'behind the scenes'* to make sure she can continue to create opportunities for rangatahi to flourish.

Cain Kerehoma and Renay Charteris

...Cain always had the next best idea and was able to share with me and help me out...
[Rangatahi Respondent]

Participants described Cain and Renay as purpose and values driven. Tāiki e! is grounded in tikanga and values that are visible and practiced every day. They operate *'with aroha at the*

heart' of what they do, diving deep into people's value systems, because they believe real change will emerge from that space.

They have a long-term vision and plans to get there; at the same time as having a deep commitment to allowing people to *'live their most'*.

Participants said that both work selflessly to hold space for people, so that they have time to explore themselves and their contribution. They intentionally *'absorb the risk and stand with the community'* as they do this exploration and experimentation. They have a strong focus on building up people's belief in their ability to lead as a way of creating change.

They both have extensive local knowledge, relationships, and networks, and work relentlessly to create an ecosystem of change that suits the context and place. They are constantly searching for new knowledge and inspiration, and are quick to adapt, borrow ideas, and tweak them to fit the context of Tairāwhiti.

They feel the pulse of the community, notice potential, gaps and opportunities, and are good observers and listeners, starting where people are at.

Karen Fenn – Trust Tairāwhiti

For Karen, helping young people is personal and based on the interests and needs of those she and her team work with. The Licence to Work programme is designed to be young-person centric and the selection of passionate facilitators and intentional matching of young people with supportive employers reflects this. Karen also spoke about the importance of facilitating conversations between young people and industry to find the best possible 'culture fit'.

Karen also acknowledged that key enablers for her to successfully deliver in her role include having a future and forward-thinking chief executive and leadership team, and the backing of an organisation that has an appetite for change.

Karen spoke about an encounter she had with a young man they had previously worked with to find work experience. After some trial and error, the team were able to work with this young person to find something he was fulfilled by:

.....and he said, he ran up into my arms, like, this is a 17, would have been then an 18-year-old Māori boy, threw his arms around me and he said: 'Karen, I'm successful, I'm successful, I now have a fulltime job, I have my own transport', and obviously furthered his licence and it's like, oh, my God, that's so cool. That's what works, that's what works.

Philanthropic funders as systems convenors

As previously noted, TTF has been intentional about acting as a convenor in the Y2E initiative. They recognised early on that they have the ability, resources and connections to bring groups together and encourage collaboration around a shared vision.

TTF also understands that this collective work can help identify promising leverage or entry points to influence system change.

The high value that Y2E partners place on their relationship with TTF was a noticeable and consistent theme throughout discussions. Key features of this relationship include it being one of high trust, low compliance and long-term. The flexible and adaptive nature of this relationship enabled each partner/initiative to respond to the changing needs of their communities at pace, and gave them the space to be aspirational. They were able to report on progress according to a timeline and in a way that best suited their needs – and this was welcomed and encouraged by TTF. It was also acknowledged that accountability goes both ways.

Philanthropic funding models

Flexible and long-term funding with an enduring relationship – relational commissioning

...We would never have got that type of enabling funding from, like, a government agency or our local kind of Trust. [Partner Respondent]

Without exception, the relationship between TTF and each of the Y2E initiatives was broader than the money. It was described as enduring, and about ‘sticking around’ in the longer-term. The relationship is also about genuinely caring for people and about trust.

...fundamentally, what it came down to was trust...they trusted us to get on with it'
[Partner Respondent].

The extant literature reinforces the importance of designing commissioning relationships based on features such as flexibility and trust. For example, in research undertaken by Collaborate for Social Change and Newcastle University Business School based in the United Kingdom²⁹, they identify a myriad of key principles of enabling funding in a ‘complexity friendly’ way. Some of their key findings in regard to what is important to forming and sustaining these relationships include: developing trust, flexibility, interdependence, learning and listening, challenging power dynamics, context, outcomes, it is not cosy, rather, it is challenging.

Trust appears to be the foundation upon which successful complexity-friendly funding culture is built. Participants said that the conversations they had with TTF were completely different to those they have with other funders – they were ‘*so much easier*’. They were focused on ‘*...who we are, what we were trying to achieve, how we could work together...*’.

The Te Piringa Synthesis Report (2020) notes that traditional approaches to commissioning, have side-lined community input, and removed decision-making from the very communities it is meant to serve³⁰. By engaging with partners early and co-creating each unique relationship -and maintaining this commitment throughout - partners can be a key part of decision-making processes from the outset.

Long-term funding and a relational approach is another feature of successful commissioning³¹. Stable funding recognises that change takes time and allows for communities to have the freedom to respond to these changes and adapt in their local contexts.

TTF entrusted all the partners and initiatives with autonomy. This allowed partners to show up for their young people and community in a way that was effective in meeting their subjective needs and circumstances.

²⁹Knight, A.D., Lowe, T., Brossard, M., & Wilson, J. (2017). *A Whole New World: Funding and Commissioning in Complexity*. Newcastle: Collaborate for Social Change & Newcastle University Business School.

³⁰FEM 2006 Limited., Moana Research., & Ihi Research. (2020). *Te Piringa: Commissioning for Whānau Centred, Māori and Pacific Led, Primary Health. Synthesis Report. Prepared for Te Puni Kōkiri*, p59.

³¹Knight, A.D., Lowe, T., Brossard, M., & Wilson, J. (2017). *A Whole New World: Funding and Commissioning in Complexity*. Newcastle: Collaborate for Social Change & Newcastle University Business School.

Funding as leverage

Something that several people noted was that TTF's funding was able to be used as leverage for communities to access additional funding. Other agencies and organisations seemed more willing to 'match' funding - or fund at all - if a philanthropic funder has already granted funding.

TTF's funding was precisely what some communities needed at a time when it was difficult to convince other funders to come to the table. TTF's funding gave other funders '*...the confidence that making that investment is going to leverage, is going to get the right conversations going, is going to deliver the right outcomes...*'

Knowing that this is the case, there may be opportunities for philanthropic funders such as TTF to be more intentional about providing such leverage. A number of participants discussed the potential to change the way funding operates, by recognising the potential of this leverage.

Network and intelligence building

Each of the initiatives were grateful and excited about the opportunities they had to participate in reflective and collaborative practice. They valued TTF being in a unique position to make connections that community groups and initiatives may not have otherwise made. Some of these important connections included doing innovative work, making important collaborations, and obtaining other funding opportunities. Staying connected to a network of partners and other funders is valuable, and gave these communities hope for the future.

As noted in the aforementioned Collaborate for Social Change, it is important for funders to take some responsibility for the health of the systems they work with, and this aids relationship management. This includes investing in the development of networks (network infrastructure), the quality of relationships, and capacity and skill development/workforce development.³²

Advocacy for different funding approaches and models

Sustainability for community initiatives was a consistent theme across interviews. There is a noticeable feeling among some communities that they are in a 'poverty cycle', whereby they do not get enough from government contracts to cover what they need to deliver. Contract terms are short, so they are in a perpetual state of scarcity, unpredictability, and flux. They depend on on short term grants, which significantly impacts on the quality and sustainability of their work, ability to plan, improve, and develop. Retaining good people is at the core of this work, and that is almost impossible when funding is precarious.

Conclusion

TTF's approach with funding the Y2E initiatives represents a critical set of shifts in how funders - particularly philanthropic funders (although by no means exclusively) - can support and enable local-led systems change. Such an approach has long-term benefits.

The table below highlights the important changes created by TTF's funding practice.

Figure 5: Shifts in funding practice critical to locally-led systems change

From	To	Why
Looking for external solutions	Looking locally for community innovation	Communities are best placed to identify and understand the issues affecting them and come up with innovative solutions
Bringing in expertise	Enabling local expertise	It's more likely that communities will achieve their visions when local people with passion, commitment and expertise are enabled to build relationships, convene stakeholders, engage with diverse people and groups, navigate difficult relationships and systems.
Controlling resources	Offering resources	When local people have the freedom to do the work that they know is needed, without restrictive constraints and controls, it's more likely that what happens on the ground will be what's needed.
Holding power, being 'risk averse'	Ceding power, trusting communities	Found to be one of the foundational aspects of successful systems change that leads to effective and sustainable outcomes.

From	To	Why
Short term contracts	Flexible, long term partnerships	If we accept that there is uncertainty in complex change, and that there is a need to be responsive to changing local needs, then flexibility and long term relationships are key to sustaining effort and creating long lasting change.
Paying attention to relationships	Being relational	Being 'in relationship' with communities as a funder means accountability goes both ways. There are mutual obligations and responsibilities. This is far more likely to lead to success as well as deep learning across the system.

Many funders are interested in making a difference and contributing to systems change. When compared to government funders, philanthropic funders are in a position to be 'nimble, to take risks, and be at the forefront of learning'³³. TTF's experience of using a new funding approach to supporting locally-led systems change has provided important lessons about what changes this approach can create. Sharing this learning will be an important opportunity to influence other funders, particularly those in the philanthropic sector.

The funding approach used by TTF represents an important form of systems leadership at a time when there is an imperative to make a difference to '*challenges with multiple moving parts in socially complex contexts*'³⁴. TTF recognised that for the systems change efforts of communities to succeed, they needed people who could: make connections, go the extra mile, and be visionary, pragmatic, tenacious, willing and able to engage many different people and stakeholders, play the long game, and weather successes and failures.

Communities who are trying to create radical shifts on complex and wicked challenges need system convenors. The work that these convenors do is often not recognised, nor does it fit the scope of typical projects, outputs or deliverables. They frequently work within structures or organisations that don't understand what they do, and those organisations can sometimes be obstructive. Yet, they believe in

³³ Esterle, J., & Kopell, M. (2020) *It's all about relationships: Systems-based changemaking*, Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE) <https://medium.com/office-of-citizen/its-all-about-relationships-systems-based-changemaking-470207584bf4>

³⁴ Wenger-Traynor, E., and Wenger-Traynor B. (2021) *Systems Convening: A crucial form of leadership for the 21st century*, Social Learning Lab, Portugal. <https://wenger-trayner.com>

the power of people and they recognise the seeds of transformation in the experience and lives of the people in the communities they live and work within.

These people are bold as well as humble, as they face risk and uncertainty. They need funders like TTF who recognise their worth, and their importance to the transformations so needed in their communities to make the same funding approach paradigm shift as TTF has done.



Appendix One: Y2E criteria for success

Success Factor	Priorities for Success	Credible evidence of success	Sources of evidence
1. Genuine, diverse community ownership and leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth-led or informed by youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning conversations highlight that they are youth lead • Products and resources produced for young people by young people • Spaces are created for rangatahi voice and involvement • Youth stories highlight their leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning minutes • Resources • Youth stories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of people engaged • Active conversations • People/partners actively involved • Different stakeholders engaged at different levels and leading actions <p>ENGAGE, ACT, OWN, LEAD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of people involved in meetings • Range of contributors and contributions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project plans • Formal reports • Minutes • Interviews / stories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating ownership/ buy in / skin in the game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions occurring – we know who are doing them • Funding contributions • Succession occurring • Stakeholder feedback • Connected, collaborative applications • Funding applied more collaboratively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding applications • Stories • Photos • Feedback • Media releases
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent plans and ways of sharing information • Talking about differences, processes for working things through 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community youth employment plans • Project plans including values and ways we work together • Captured the process of how the collaborative process occurred • Reflection on the journey / stories • Evidence of evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans • Evaluation reports • Interviews / Stories
2. Collective and system- focused solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity about systems we are trying to change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision mission and goals - knowing what success looks like 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual reports • Other specific intervention plans
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent systems for collectively • Sharing between the regions is valued • Opportunity for continuous learning together with open minds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not just saying a whole lot of us are doing it but have systems to show who is doing what and how people can join • Approaches and insights shared so others can implement in other areas if it works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral pathways • Journey maps of change • Interviews / stories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity of perspectives • Cross-sector focus • Seeing things from other perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversations and meetings demonstrate how diversity of perspectives is valued and encouraged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting minutes • Interviews/stories

Success Factor	Priorities for Success	Credible evidence of success	Sources of evidence
3. Supporting youth to be work ready (Hard skills, soft skills, readiness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More young people ready for work, in work exploration and/or employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers of referrals • Number of young people participating in activities • Number of young people securing employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant database • Reporting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More 'on-ramps' for young people to develop readiness – 'fit to learn' • Barriers are being addressed – literacy, numeracy, driver licencing, employability skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of opportunities by location, region • Number of young people attending • Participant pathways/journeys – important touch points, destinations • Numbers identifying and addressing barriers, and in what way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people Interviews / stories • Participant database
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people building connections and positive experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of engagements and connections • Participant pathways/journeys – understanding entry and exit of young people through and with services • Feedback from young people • Feedback from the sector (providers, employers etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews/stories • Participant database • Reporting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More valuable and meaningful work exploration and learning experiences 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary and tertiary programmes that are relevant to workplace needs • Employers involved in design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maps of local pathways – changes over time • Training outcomes – destinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews / stories • Case Studies • Participant database • Reporting
4. Employer engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to co-design solutions for immediate vacancies, awhi, 'give it a go' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment, not cost • Value proposition – 'what's in it for me'? • Buy-in to work readiness programmes – seen as solution to employer problems • Connecting employers with young people • Enabling young to be 'work ready' requires partnership – employers and education providers add value via pathways/pipelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness, partnering, buy-in • More work experience, exploration, jobs for young people • Connections to education / training pathways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes • Reporting • Interviews / stories • Participant database
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional acknowledgement and recognition of employers who participate / provide opportunities for young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry awards/events • Participation at graduations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews / stories • Media releases • Promotional materials • Reports

Success Factor	Priorities for Success	Credible evidence of success	Sources of evidence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of areas of job growth • Understanding labour market supply and demand conditions regionally and nationally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Localised, up to date information, everyone has contributed to it • Employers offering more opportunities to local young people • Recruiting young people through local pathways • Local education training maps – tailored for real jobs in regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional labour market reports • Young people Interviews / stories • Feedback from employers, education providers • Media releases • Participant database • Minutes • Reports
5. Innovation (at the edge - social enterprise, technology)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth innovation – rangatahi leadership – blogging / building their own platforms • Container café – opportunities for industry experiences – partnership model • More integration of youth innovation into education early • Building awareness of innovation in region in industry and business – e.g. social enterprise, hemp, food • Ways to engage parents and other to help prepare YP for changing world of work • Skills that you need to create innovation – develop and grow 	<p>Youth Innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage, Recognise – existing and future changes • Examples of Youth innovation and entrepreneurship, social media <p>Sector Innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage, Recognise • Examples of sector innovation – curriculum, MyBiz, education based exploration, dairy farms changing practice to attract yp • Onramps <p>Whole of Community Innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in future of work opportunities • Knowing about what on the horizon – forums, sharing information, discussions to keep you engaged, digital native academy • Community - ko wai au, digital natives, social enterprise • Examples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports • Feedback • Media releases • Social media • Examples of curriculum • Forums with parents, employers

Appendix Two: System convening dimensions, mindsets and dispositions³⁵

Figure 6: Systems convening: dimensions of the work

Systems convening: dimensions of the work	Brief description
Creating an invitational narrative and space	This is all about the invitation to bring people together, in a way that speaks to people, inspiring them to get involved.
Earning legitimacy	The legitimacy of convenors is earned, through the building of relationships and networks
Engaging with boundaries	Convenors understand the role boundaries play in systems and people's identities and find ways to facilitate boundary spanning spaces and conversations – whether these are social, cultural, professional, institutional etc.
Values and identity work	This is about the ongoing work of learning 'how to be' in the world, what sense you have of yourself, the values and perspectives you hold vis-à-vis others, the decisions you make, what's at stake and who you are accountable to. It's also about recognising the work others will need to do, to shift and create new and changed narratives about what's possible and who they can become. Convenors recognise this identity work is a critical part of systems change work.
Cultivating agency	Convenors recognise that peoples' agency to participate and get involved often needs strengthening. Opening avenues for people to have their voices heard – individually and collectively - and their perspectives taken into account is a critical aspect of the work.
Dealing with power	When people develop agency they haven't necessarily had before, this can challenge the status quo, including existing hierarchies of power. Being politically savvy, and having strategies for working with formal and informal power relationships is a key part of systems convening.

Systems convening: dimensions of the work	Brief description
Articulating value	Sustaining systems change work over the long term requires an ability to articulate the value of the work to different stakeholders and audiences. Systems convenors know they must be good communicators about what's valuable in with many different situations to sustain the energy of systems change.

Figure 7: Systems convening: mindset and dispositions of convenors

Systems convening: mindset and dispositions of convenors	Brief description
Determination to make a difference	Convenors are driven by a 'restless determination to make a difference'; with a strong ethical and moral compass. And this allows them to take on the challenge of convening and managing tensions at whatever scale is necessary and meaningful. They are also a combination of passion and pragmatism. Lofty missions and visions are important, but so is getting things done.
Keen awareness of the social and cultural landscape	Convenors are aware of the rich tapestry of the social and cultural landscape they are working within – formal and informal. They understand that there is constant interplay between systems, practices and relationships that they have to work with and influence. Whether local or global, landscapes have their own complexities, and each level requires different kinds of convening work. Convenors are aware of the different levels and recognise the need to work across these. And they understand that systems change requires them to work the landscape from within, rather than from above or outside the landscape.
Able to work WITH people	Convenors place a premium on finding meaningful ways to engage and involve people in the work. They are deeply committed to this way of working, and to developing and honing ways of navigating personal and professional relationships and demands because they see the transformative potential in people.
Develop and demonstrate a learning capability	Convenors recognise that through engagement and interactions, people learn together, find common and new ground, and inspiration and challenges will bubble up from within. They don't impose a learning approach, rather they look for learning opportunities and moments in the work. They learn with people, they see themselves as part of the learning journey.

Appendix Three: Principles of Developmental Evaluation

Adapted from Patton, M.Q., McKegg, K., & Wehipeihana, N. (Eds.). (2016). Developmental evaluation exemplars: principles in practice. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

DE Principle	DE Principle into Action
Developmental purpose	Illuminates, informs and supports what is being developed, by identifying the nature and patterns of development, and the implications and consequences of those patterns
Evaluation rigour	Asking probing evaluative questions; thinking and engaging evaluatively; questioning assumptions; applying evaluation logic; using appropriate methods; and staying empirically grounded.
Utilisation focus	Pays attention to intended use by intended users from beginning to end, facilitating the evaluation progress to ensure utility and actual use.
Innovation Niche	Clarifies how the change processes and results being evaluated involve innovation and adaptation, the niche of developmental evaluation.
Complexity Perspective	Understands and interprets development through the lens of complexity, and conducts the evaluation accordingly
Systems Thinking	Thinking systemically throughout, being attentive to interrelationships, perspectives, and boundaries, of the social system that the innovation is being developed within and evaluation is being conducted.
Co-Creation	Develops the innovation and evaluation together – interwoven, interdependent, iterative, and co-created – so that developmental evaluation becomes part of the change process.
Timely feedback	Informs on-going adaptation as needs, findings, and insights emerge, rather than only at pre-determined times (e.g. quarterly, or at midterm and end of project).

Appendix Four: Propositions for evaluating complexity

Preskill, H., Gopal, S., Mack, K. and Cool, J. (2014). Evaluating Complexity: Propositions for improving practice. Retrieved from <http://fsg.org/publications/evaluating-complexity>.

Characteristics of Complex Systems	Propositions for Evaluation
A complex system is always changing, often in unpredictable ways; it is never static	1. Design and implement evaluations to be adaptive, flexible, and iterative
Everything is connected; events in one part of the system affect all other parts	2. Seek to understand and describe the whole system, including components and connections
Information is the fuel that drives learning and helps the system thrive	3. Support the learning capacity of the system by strengthening feedback loops and improving access to information
Context matters; it can often make or break an initiative	4. Pay particular attention to context and be responsive to changes as they occur
Each situation is unique; best principles are more likely to be seen than best practices	5. Look for effective principles of practice in action, rather than assessing adherence to a predetermined set of activities
Different sources of energy and convergence can be observed at different times	6. Identify points of energy and influence, as well as ways in which momentum and power flow within the system
Relationships between entities are equally if not more important than the entities themselves	7. Focus on the nature of relationships and interdependencies within the system

Characteristics of Complex Systems

Cause and effect is not a linear, predictable or one-directional process; it is much more iterative

Patterns emerge from several semi-independent and diverse agents who are free to act in autonomous ways

Propositions for Evaluation

8. Explain the non-linear and multi-directional relationships between the initiative and its intended and unintended outcomes

9. Watch for patterns, both one-off and repeating, at different levels of the system



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