From kitchen table to legislative chamber: creating change for children

Reflections on how the Todd Foundation's Partnership Funding[1] is progressing following the annual two day hui held for recipients in Gisborne[2], February 2013.

At the heart of the work done by both the Todd Foundation and the organisations[3] receiving Partnership Funding is a common theme - the desire for all children and young people to thrive.   "Who will speak for the child?"[4] we were challenged at our annual hui this year. It is important that community organisations speak up for and care about our children. But it is not enough. "The work doesn't stop at 5pm on a Friday. When stuff happens at 11.30 on a Saturday night, it's families and communities who have to try to pick up the pieces." [5] For all children and young people to thrive, we need all communities speaking up for our children.

 The community of Gonville in Whanganui has heard this call - "Let us not be silent anymore"[6]. And across the Partnership Funding organisations we see similar themes of communities being supported to take the lead.[7] In fact, if we examine the visions of the 15 organisations receiving Partnership Funding, the most frequent word we have in common is "community". Implicit in this is the belief that for a child to thrive they need a family / whanau / caregiver who is at least "good enough" - and this in turn requires support from the communities they relate to. More simply, if it takes a village to raise a child, let's start with the village.

And yet, "working on the ground isn't enough by itself, and neither is just working on policy. All levels need to be working together to really make a difference."[8]. Further, "Advocacy needs to be informed by community"[9]. The Partnership Funding group now consists of organisations working at both grass roots (the kitchen table) and the national level (the legislative chamber). We both "advocate and serve"[10]

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[1] Partnership Funding is for five years and is untagged - See Appendix 1 for an overview

[2] Thanks to our host organisation, Tairawhiti Reap.

[3] The organisations involved and participants at the hui are listed in Appendix 2

[4] Dr Kuni Jenkins, Mana Ririki, in response to the death of Nia Glassey

5 Sally Christie, Jigsaw

[6] Judy Kumeroa, Tiakina o tatou Tamariki, response from community members to violence in Whanganui

[7] Examples of this include the delivery Early Childhood Education by parents, Teen parenting support provided by teen parents, the alumni of a mentoring programme becoming mentors in turn, and financial literacy training by people who have successfully managed their debt issues.

[8] Denise Bijoux, Inspiring Communities

[9] Deborah Morris-Travers, Every Child Counts

[10] One of the identified characteristics of highly effective community organisations as identified in the influential book "Forces for Good, The 6 practices of high impact non-profits" by Leslie Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant. See also the even more relevant article Local *Forces for Good* | Stanford Social Innovation Review.

In the Partnership Funding group there is also trust, hope, honesty, a commitment to learning, a desire to share and work together - and some small continuity of funding. The diversity of the group is a strength - "I appreciate a network of diverse people more than a homogeneous one" [11] And that strength can translate into practical action; as a result of our 2013 hui there are some concrete commitments to new and shared initiatives – see Appendix 3.

In summary, Partnership Funding is beginning to blossom. There is a shared focus combined with diverse but complementary approaches, and collaborative actions are emerging. "Our communities are a lot better if we just care." [12] This is true whether the community forms around the kitchen table, the board table or the legislative chamber [13] - or through a shared funding scheme like Partnership Funding. And ultimately it is through caring that our children and young people thrive.

By Kate Frykberg, The Todd Foundation
Kate@toddfoundation.org.nz
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[11] Matt Crawshaw, Good Cents Porirua
[12] Meredith Akuhata-Brown, Tiakina o tatou tamariki
13 Kirsten Grenfell, Great Start Taita

Appendix 1: What is Partnership Funding?

Partnership Funding is five year, untagged funding offered to three or four previous recipients of Todd Foundation funding each year. This funding is the Todd Foundation's response to research indicating that many common funding practices inhibit the impact of community organisations:

Challenge:	Our Response:
Funding is often too short-term	Partnership Funding recipients receive up to $100,000 per year for five years with reducing amounts in years 4 and 5.
Funding is often so specific that it is difficult to build a strong, responsive organisation	Partnership Funding recipients can use the funding for any purpose that meets their vision. However, because this is a high-trust approach, only small numbers of previous Todd Foundation recipients are invited to apply after a thorough due-diligence process.
Opportunities to share and learn are often limited	Recipients and Todd Foundation staff and trustees attend a two-day retreat each year, which is hosted by one of the recipient organisations. The aim is to learn together, build leadership and strengthen relationships. Additionally, match-funding of up to $3,000 per year is offered for professional and organisational development.

This funding has been provided by the Foundation since 2009; see over for a list of the organisations funded each year and the focus of each year group.

Appendix 2: Partnership Funding Recipients and Hui Attendees

Partnership Funding 2012: Community-Led Development

Good Sense Porirua (Wesley Community Action)	Matt Crawshaw, Makerita Makepelu,
Great Start Taita (Barnardos)	Mark Bromley, Kirsten Grenfell
Inspiring Communities	Megan Courtney, Denise Bijoux
Tiakina o Tatou Tamariki (Te Ora Hou)	Manu Caddie, Judy Kumeroa, Justine Crawford, Meredith Akuhata-Brown, Karen Phillips

Partnership Funding 2011: Child and Family Advocacy

Every Child Counts	Deborah Morris-Travers, Denis McKinley
Great Fathers	Dave Owens, Rodger Smith
Jigsaw Family Services	Tim Metcalfe, Sally Christie
Te Kahui Mana Ririki	Anton Blank, Dr Kuni Jenkins

Partnership Funding 2010: Youth Transitions

Big Buddy	Richard Aston
FIRST Foundation	Anthony Ford
Thrive Teen Parent Support Trust	Niamh Wingate, Heather Newberry-Keats

Partnership Funding 2009: Families love to learn

COMET Auckland	Susan Warren and Alison Sutton
Far North Parent Mentoring	Christine Gilmore
Tairawhiti REAP	Adrienne Ngata and George Brown
WestREAP	Corrina Gestro Best

Todd Staff and Facilitator

Todd Foundation	Kate Frykberg, Christina Howard and Seumas Fantham
2013 Hui Facilitator	Jill Hawkey

Appendix 3: Initiatives Seeded or Developed at the 2013 Hui

The 2013 Partnership Funding hui was an opportunity for the organisations involved to reflect and connect, and a number of initiatives were seeded or launched:

Group-wide initiative:

Create a group-wide capacity development initiative tentatively calling the "wisdom exchange" to intentionally share skills and knowledge. This could involve:

- Peer review:[14] Organisations can invite someone from within the group to review an aspect of their work. Todd Foundation can provide travel costs, the inviting organisation provides food and accommodation, the reviewing organisation donates their staff member's time. Assuming reciprocity and billeting, this could provide virtually cost-fee consulting.

- Peer secondment: Seconding or swapping staff members for a specified period could be undertaken on a similar basis

- Peer mentoring: CE peer mentoring could also be set up[15]

Collaborative Initiatives

- Undertake a national campaign around family learning, focusing on the whanau rather than the child and encompassing parenting, literacy, financial security and other components of whanau wellbeing (an initiative to be led by Every Child Counts and involving at least 6 of the other organisations)

- Create a community of practice for the four Community-led Development organisations to actively learn from each other (the four 2012 recipients)

- Explore whether pro-bono fund-raising support might be made available to Partnership Funding member, possibly through the Fund-raisers Institute of NZ (Every Child Counts)

- Explore working together on ante-natal class facilitators (Great Fathers and Comet Auckland)

- Explore working together on Māori fathering resources (Great Fathers and Ririki)

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[14] Thanks to Corrina Gestro-Best from Westreap for this concept

[15] Thanks again to Corrina, who suggests learning structured techniques for this and recommends http://www.coachingmentoring.co.nz/about-us/profiles/aly-mcnicoll . Alternatively a CE forum model with a facilitator was suggested by Dennis from Every Child Counts

Individual Initiatives

- Find ways to make neighbourhood support groups "sexy again" and produce decals stating that "this home is committed to non-violence". Also review resource allocation processes for projects (Tiakina o tatou tamariki)

- Further explore diversification of services, including a screening service providing psychological assessment of people working with children (Big Buddy)

- Pilot the creation of a network of community-lead development experts who can work with community organisations (Inspiring Communities)

- Review vision, goals, strategy and plans to ensure they are as useful as possible (Ririki, Thrive Teen Parenting, Far North Parent Mentoring and Inspiring Communities)

- Draw on advice from within the group to better engage with Māori (First Foundation and Great Fathers)

- Refer clientele to the services from the Partnership Funding network that operate in our area and review our evaluation methodology (Good Cents)

- Adjust how the success of an initiative is measured to include "is there a reduction in reliance on agencies" (Westreap)

- Participate in the conference for young parents being organised by Thrive (Jigsaw)

- Develop measures of Whanau Well-being to evaluate what works for those families (Tairawhiti Reap)

- Host the 2014 hui, including time spent at parliament meeting with MPs (Every Child Counts)