

Trust Tairāwhiti

The Todd Foundation Youth to Employment Collaboration



- What does it take to grow placed-based, locally-led systems change to enable young people to achieve success in their place, for their place?
- How does Trust Tairāwhiti demonstrate this through their journey, and in their relationship with The Todd Foundation (TTF)?



Introduction

Since 2014, The Todd Foundation (TTF) has utilised their Special Focus Fund to invest in Youth Employment initiatives via four place based local partnerships across Aotearoa to develop community-led approaches to enable and support pathways for youth to employment (Y2E). These partnerships have been with: Toi-EDA (Eastern Bay of Plenty), Trust Tairāwhiti (Tairāwhiti), Tāiki e! (Tairāwhiti), and YOUth INspire (Lower Hutt, Wellington).

In 2017, TTF engaged The Knowledge Institute (Member of The Kinnect Group) to assist the collaborative development of an evaluation framework in partnership with their Y2E partners. A range of evaluative processes were facilitated with these partners to gain insight into their 'story of change', and the steps they took in their journey towards achieving community-led, place-based systems change for the Y2E initiative. TTF and the evaluation team also examined what attributes supported and hindered this process of change, including the role that TTF played as the funding partner. A key goal was to inform the wider philanthropic and funding sectors on what it takes to successfully support communities to achieve systems change.

One of these evaluative processes involved facilitating a half day workshop with partners to collaboratively determine what success looks like and what is seen as credible evidence. A suite of six success criteria for the initiative were identified:

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.

These criteria will provide the general structure for the remainder of this case study, which considers the community-led systems change journey of Trust Tairāwhiti, based in Gisborne.



Background to Trust Tairāwhiti and the Licence to Work Youth Employability Programme

Trust Tairāwhiti brings together the region's community trust and economic development agency to better assist the wellbeing of its people, the success of their businesses, and the future of the region.¹

The economic development aspect of the Trust, formerly known as Activate Tairāwhiti, initially sought the partnership with TTF and has since been absorbed into Trust Tairāwhiti.

The response to youth employment has been embedded within the region's Economic Action Plan and the regional youth employment strategy. It sits within wider workforce development efforts overseen by the CARE Forum (Commitment, Action and Reciprocity resulting in Employment), which Trust Tairāwhiti's CEO co-chairs with the Ministry of Social Development. This diverse regional group oversees workforce capacity and capability development.²

The Trust is now focused on developing their people by building employability skills through the Licence to Work (LTW) programme.³ This programme is delivered in local schools by school-based facilitators as well as an independent external facilitator.

As a cross sector, business led initiative, LTW is intended to respond to business and industry concerns that young people may not be developing the employability skills they need to succeed in the workplace. It is particularly beneficial for those transitioning directly to the workforce from school or training (15-24 years), and people returning to work.⁴

Young people learn how to become work ready by participating in 18 hours of employability and work readiness sessions, completing 10-20 hours voluntary work, and at least 80 hours with local employers.⁵ There is also an explicit focus on 'soft skills', such as the importance of a positive attitude, communication, problem solving, decision making, self-motivation and resilience.⁶

LTW has been operating since 2016, and in 2020, in the midst of Aotearoa's introduction to Covid 19, 128 completed the programme and graduated.⁷

¹ Trust Tairāwhiti website: <https://trusttairawhiti.nz/>

² Trust Tairāwhiti website: <https://trusttairawhiti.nz/industry-business-and-employment/workforce-development/>

³ Licence to Work was originally developed by COMET Auckland – Te Hononga Akoranga and is supported by Employers and Manufacturers Association (EMA). See COMET website: <https://cometauckland.org.nz/resources/youth-employability-programme-yep-licence-to-work-encourages-businesses-to-offer-work-experience> AND <https://cometauckland.org.nz/our-campaigns/yep>

⁴ Trust Tairāwhiti website: <https://trusttairawhiti.nz/news/licence-to-work-2020/>

⁵ The Todd Foundation website. Video. <https://www.toddfoundation.org.nz/activate-tairawhiti-te-tairawhiti/>

⁶ Somerton, S. (2018). Tairāwhiti Licence to Work Evaluation Report. Prepared for The Todd Foundation.

⁷ Interview with LTW Programme Leader.

A brief profile of young people in Tairāwhiti⁸

- According to the 2018 census, Gisborne district has a usually resident population of 47,565 and Wairoa district has a usually resident population of 8,400
- 6.3% of the Tairāwhiti workforce are currently unemployed compared with 4.1% nationally and Tairāwhiti has approximately 1,300 15–24-year-olds who are not currently in employment or education⁹
- The Tairāwhiti population tends to have more people in the 0-19 age group, compared with the national average, and there is a high proportion of Māori in the region, compared with the national average. Tairāwhiti also has a very high proportion of people in the most deprived section of the population¹⁰
- Although there are more young people in the region, historically, they have not remained local. However, the young workforce coming through presents a real competitive advantage¹¹
- The proportions of people aged 15-19 (Gisborne=68.0%; Wairoa=82.1%), and 20-24 (Gisborne=63.9%; Wairoa=78.6%) identifying as Māori are among the highest of all Territorial Authorities
- The population of Māori grew faster in Gisborne and Wairoa from 2013-2018 than the population of other ethnicities, and there were significant reductions in the non-Māori population, particularly among those aged 20-24 years old
- The proportion of school leavers who left school before their 17th birthday was relatively high in Gisborne and Wairoa compared to other Territorial Authority and Auckland local board areas, in the ten-year period from 2009 to 2018
- The proportion of school leavers with an NCEA level 3 qualification is relatively high in Gisborne district compared to other areas, but across all districts, this proportion of school leavers is relatively small. Larger proportions of school leavers in Gisborne either have an NCEA level 2 or University Entrance qualification
- For both 15 to 19, and 20 to 24-year-olds, the NEET rate (Not in Employment, Education or Training) in the Gisborne and Hawke's Bay regions is higher than the national average and is higher than most other regions
- Geographically, the distribution of the 15-24-year-old population is similar to the distribution of employment opportunities in Gisborne and Wairoa. The largest cluster of jobs is around the urban centre of Gisborne

⁸ With the exception of data sourced from the Trust Tairāwhiti website or Ministry of Health website, information presented here is from a variety of sources including the 2018 census, Statistics New Zealand, Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. This information was largely collected and collated by: Schiff, A. (2020). Youth profile for: Tairāwhiti (Gisborne and Wairoa). A collation of data from a variety of public sources on social and economic characteristics of people aged 15-24 years living in the Tairāwhiti area. Prepared for The Knowledge Institute.

⁹ See footnote 2

¹⁰ Ministry of Health – Tairāwhiti DHB: <https://www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-system/my-dhb/tairawhiti-dhb/population-tairawhiti-dhb>

¹¹ Trust Tairāwhiti. *Tini nga hua maha nga huarahi: Creating pathways. Workforce Development Plan 2021*. Retrieved from <https://trusttairawhiti.nz/assets/Uploads/200930-TTA-Workforce-Development-Plan-FA-Online2.pdf>

- Agriculture is a significant industry in Gisborne and Wairoa, and accounts for around a quarter of jobs. Other important employers in the area are manufacturing, healthcare, and social assistance.

What has it taken for Trust Tairāwhiti to achieve place-based, locally-led systems change?

Figure 1: Trust Tairāwhiti – key ingredients for place-based, locally-led systems change



1.

Genuine, diverse
community ownership and
leadership

Finding regional influencers and community stakeholders who are invested in creating positive change for young people has been particularly enabling for LTW.

The most important thing is [that] the influencers in the region are on board with this kaupapa, right?

Everyone has their part to play in the wider 'ecosystem' of youth workforce development or Y2E, and working collectively while keeping young people central has been important. This includes groups such as iwi, industry, community groups, local and central government, and schools. LTW leadership also acknowledged that they would like to do some more work in this area and strengthen connections with other groups and influencers, such as local iwi. This illustrates the ongoing process of relationship building and its centrality to a locally-led systems change journey. It also highlights that time is required to build and maintain these relationships, which should be factored into funding arrangements.

Values driven conversations help to find common ground and identify where shared values lie. It can also help with overcoming challenges.

....it comes down to understanding values, understanding everyone's values, whoever the groups are, whoever the influencers are. Is the vision the same? Is the goal the same? What do we all want to achieve in that?

And then it's going to be mapping the ecosystem and making sure you've got the right people.... if we think workforce development – what does the region want to achieve and have the influencers like iwi, like industry, like local government, like central government, hey, we have all agreed from our own values that this is what we want to achieve for our young people but it [needs to] be young people-centric, and find out – hey, young people – what are your values? What do you want to see? What's your big picture?

And we do this in Licence to Work anyway, we dig down into their values and use that. It's going to take an ecosystem that is young people-centric.

2.

Collective and system
focused solutions

As part of wider and collaborative workforce development efforts, and specifically through delivery of the LTW programme, Trust Tairāwhiti successfully bridge the gap between education and employment. They have been unwavering in their commitment to their young people and in creating conditions that provide them with hope and opportunity. While it is recognised that there may be some areas in the wider system that are slower to consider a different way of doing things for their young people, the belief that this can be done is strong.

....and still, people are thinking about reaching targets, not actually thinking about the kids. So, I believe we can change this.... it's just changing the narrative and getting the persuadable.

2.

Collective and system focused solutions

Given that the LTW programme has been running since 2016, it is clear that it works for this community and that it is helping young people. It has helped to have a wider focus on creating the conditions that set young people up for success and to be willing to connect with others in the Y2E space.

Covid has happened and it's still chaotic and employers [are] looking for workers and people are losing their jobs but Licence to Work has doubled their numbers by 50 percent and we're still having the programme rocking, as well as growing it. It's because we do it from a different lens.

Mapping the ecosystem was considered to be a critical first step in undertaking a systems change journey to identify gaps and areas for collaboration.

Oh, absolutely, and it's all around that ecosystem, map the ecosystem, otherwise you're just starting in little silos and then people get protective.

....but hey, you've only got a part to play in the whole lot and it's just the interactions that are the important things.

As the quote above indicates, nurturing the interactions between those in the ecosystem is important, as is an understanding that everyone has their part to play in achieving the collective goal of improving outcomes for young people.

The opportunity for funding a separate role that facilitates and supports interactions to collectively respond to local issues is explored further in point six of this case study (supporting functions and processes).

3.

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

Supporting young people to become work ready makes up a large part of what Trust Tairāwhiti does through the delivery of LTW. They start by working to really understand what interests and motivates the young people they work with, what their strengths are, and what their values are in order to match them with employers. **Selecting the right facilitators/trainers to work with young people was also highlighted as a key component to success.**

I think it's more around, when we look at young Māori, Alt Ed engage with them in their way, in their learning, with their knowledge. It's the whole mātauranga Māori, whereas in school, it's just – you either fit this stream or you don't.

The most important factor when it came to selecting facilitators, was that they needed to genuinely care about young people and be passionate about wanting to make a tangible and positive impact on them.

No alternative agenda or they're just doing it because it's a job. They actually need to care about young people and their future and make an impact.

What are the good things? What are the things that we need to work on? How can we help you do it [and] what are the barriers you're finding? Let's work on that together.

4.

Employer engagement

Trust Tairāwhiti has a significant level of engagement with employers in the Tairāwhiti region. Where possible, the team tries to align the values of the employer and young person in order to maximise the potential that both parties will have a positive experience. In doing so, they focus on the strengths of young people and recognise, celebrate, and promote how much of an asset young people can be to employers, providing they have the right support in place.

.... it's about finding the right employers for the kids as well. What makes a good employer for a young person?

First of all, no pre-judging. It's about.... there's got to be culture fit, so, it needs to be – hey this is the employer's values, employer – understand that young people have values too. How do we work those together?

It is important that businesses and employers, and all others within the ecosystem keep young people at the heart of what they do.

It's going to take an ecosystem that is young people-centric.... This is what they're telling us they want, industry you're telling us this is what you want, now, let's talk and negotiate. So, don't tell young people what they need but understand how big an asset they can be to you.

Trust Tairāwhiti are willing to try new and innovative ways of working, and therefore, held an industry event for young people in early 2021 by collaborating with other organisations. This event was designed by young people, and also brought in employers. Known as Game of Life¹², the purpose was to support connection and conversation between young people and local industry. This newly created event was a great success that involved around 1400 students and 70 employers.

.... they're talking about talent pipeline and 1400 jobs that they can't fill, it's like, wow, this is how we do this, and it's about kid-centric, their thinking and building the positiveness of what they can do for their business. So, we've got that, that we're doing, and I think that will start creating semi-system-change stuff, well, a mind shift, in their thinking.

5.

Innovation (at the edge, social enterprise, innovation)

Trust Tairāwhiti recognise that having an appetite for system level thinking, change or innovation is important to starting a systems change journey. It was acknowledged that current Trust leadership is focused on systems change and are future thinkers.

Their relationship with TTF was also characterised as being innovative and enabling of Trust Tairāwhiti/LTW staff to 'think outside the box'. This is reflected in TTF's intentional design of the partnership to be long-term, flexible, trusting and reciprocal. It is also reflected in the understanding that communities are best placed to know what their people need, and that initiatives might take some experimentation and learning, and will therefore adapt and change over time. Such a relationship provides the space for communities to be innovative and aspirational.

¹² Retrieved from: <https://trusttairawhiti.nz/news/game-of-life/>

5.

Innovation (at the edge, social enterprise, innovation)

I think, if I look at it in terms of Licence to Work, what the funding allows, and also working with the likes of Todd – is it's proactive, it's innovative, it's forward-thinking, it allows the thinking outside the box. It sits outside Government, so, you're not sort of structured into this – hey, we're going to do the same old stuff, and blanket approaches don't work, we know with Government, that doesn't work, so, it does, it allows for that thinking around systems change.

.... this is why with Licence to Work, we predominantly, we started off with trial and error; let's just get this into training providers, some schools, too hard to go towards the Ministry and NEETs at that stage but we found, at the moment, to get it going easier, was in the schools, and [to] be proactive.

Trust Tairāwhiti are very interested in using technology and data to enhance their impact and ensure they are being responsive to young people's needs. One example of this is in their pursuit and receipt of funding to enable them to work with a local entrepreneur and collect real-time data on how young people are feeling/thinking. They hope to be able to continue with this particular work.

So, give us the data [so] that we can possibly change the system.

6.

Supporting functions & processes

At a local level, strong and diverse leadership, as well as passionate staff, have helped create the conditions in which Tairāwhiti young people have the opportunity to thrive.

Beyond this, an enduring and high-trust partnership with TTF has also helped create these conditions. This unique way of funding has been highly valued by Trust Tairāwhiti, particularly because it has been enabling and supportive of local community solutions, which is critical to the success of community-led systems change. This goes beyond a typical funding contract that is often short-term and laborious for funding recipients to comply with. It also typically removes the ease with which groups can respond spontaneously, innovatively, and at pace to their people's needs. This is a relationship intentionally designed to be flexible, and one that is based on principles such as trust, accountability, and reciprocity. This is a different way of thinking about funding partnerships.

.... a totally different mindset, totally different bunch of people. It's alleviated the frustration and it's the working together, like with the hui and stuff, it's just positive, it's positive thinking.

.... they've been fabulous with getting the funding for Licence to Work in this region because as we know, it takes five to ten years to put a programme through a community but we're in our fourth year, that people are talking about Licence to Work, so that's pretty cool and that's because of Todd allowing that to happen. That's given us power to be able to change stuff in the community, so, that's a big up.

6.

Supporting functions & processes

Other elements that make this relationship successful include the supportive nature of TTF staff and the speed that they are able to dispense funding as a philanthropic agency, which is enabling of local ideas. TTF regularly demonstrated that their focus was on supporting Trust Tairāwhiti and LTW to achieve their vision, and were invested in contributing to conditions that made this as simple as possible.

TTF were also invested in supporting connection/collaboration and professional development. This was highly valued, and participants felt that it was critical to continue with training on how to think differently and to use a systems lens.

.... I suppose I've also learnt a lot through the Todd Foundation too, I wouldn't be thinking skills ecosystem without them....

.... goes down to the training that they allowed us to do on systems change and changing the narratives, those type of forward thinking [people], and the groups of people that they can pull together on the same kaupapa, those positive outside the box people, whereas we probably would have been stuck still in the old system, stuck in the box. So, they gave me an awareness to be able to push against that.

Funders and wider policy that reflects an understanding of youth needs and potential, as TTF does, is also critical and reflects a change from the way Government in particular has typically responded to Y2E needs.

What they do really well, [what] Todd does, that not everybody really understands, and they band around saying – youth are our future. Do they really understand what that means? And the Todd Foundation really get that – hey, they are our future leaders.

If we look at our region which is almost, [it's a] total bicultural region – 50 percent Māori, 50 percent non-Māori, and if we extrapolate that out to 2050, the majority in our region are going to be Māori; they are our future leaders. Do you understand region? Do you understand what that means and what we need to do support that in their learning and stuff like that?

As noted in point two of this case study (collective and system focused solutions), mapping the ecosystem was considered an important first step to undertaking systems change. A suggestion was made that TTF or other funders could potentially resource such a role.

Indeed, a similar 'backbone function/support' has worked with other Y2E partners in other communities. Other partners have suggested that there should be a role funded to facilitate connections. Such a role would enable broad oversight of what is happening in the community, especially with regard to issues like funding opportunities, who is doing what in the community, and where collaboration can be encouraged and supported.

So, ecosystem thinking, map the region in terms of workforce development.... either pay somebody to do that or make sure that's in place first and then help the interactions and what's needed so that funding then can be targeted better.

6.

Supporting functions & processes

.... if I think about the systems, and so long as you've got synergy between the interactions between everybody, once you've mapped the system, you can actually see what's missing. I think that's when, I guess the likes of Todd, could fund something different to say – well, hey, this is what we need for our region, we know this, this is what industry is saying, this is what iwi is saying, this is what young people [are saying] – yes, this makes sense, let's fund that part of it.

What can other communities and funders learn from Trust Tairāwhiti's journey?

The key ingredients that have enabled Trust Tairāwhiti to create positive change for their young people have included:

- Being steadfast and unwavering in their commitment to doing better for their young people in a way that works for their community
- Being willing to engage with diverse and passionate regional stakeholders, influencers, industries, employers, and different sectors of the local community, to collectively work together to improve outcomes for young people
- Working to find shared values and common ground – values-driven conversations that keep young people at the heart of any initiatives
- Understanding the local Y2E ecosystem and who exists within it, and recognising the importance of building relationships and fostering interactions among these individuals and groups
- Focusing on the strengths and interests of young people and tailoring experiences and opportunities to these strengths and interests
- Recruiting passionate facilitators and staff that genuinely care about young people and their futures
- Collaborating with employers and businesses that can recognise, support, and celebrate young people's interests and talents
- Having an appetite for change and innovation that comes from the top of the organisation, and being willing to learn through trial and error what will work for their community and young people.

All of this work has been quietly supported by a funder who:

- Intentionally designed a longer-term relationship with the Y2E partner (and the others) that was based on high-trust and low-compliance – in stark contrast to a typical funding contract
- Understands that communities are best placed to know what their people need, therefore giving

partners the space to pivot and adapt as their complex communities require. In doing so, such a relationship provides the space for communities to be both innovative and aspirational, as Trust Tairāwhiti certainly is

- Supported collaboration and professional development.

Other ways that funders can help is by:

- Advocating within the system with other funders to demonstrate how this way of funding can work, resulting in positive change for communities
- Funding specific roles such as that of a 'backbone function', helping to canvass the system and identify stakeholders and their respective needs, support connection, and assist with funding.

This is a commissioning model that works and one that other funders should look to when considering how to best support community-led development, or community-led systems change. As demonstrated in this case study, it is particularly well suited to the philanthropy sector.

When all of this comes together, as it has done with Trust Tairāwhiti delivering LTW, the impacts speak for themselves. Young people who do not go on to pursue traditional forms of higher education or training and leave school now have an opportunity to participate in a programme that exposes them to more options, experience, and training.

As a tangible example of the impact on young people, LTW's Programme Leader recalled the following:

....a perfect example is I had a kid that, he's like a lot of young people – they want to either do music or graphic design So, we had this young person who wanted to do graphic design, so, we said OK, he was really set on that, put him in to do work experience with a youth friendly employer in graphic design and he was there for about, I don't know, four Fridays, and he said: 'I've just realised that I think this is my hobby, not my career.'

And no career advice could give him that hands-on experience.

He said: 'I think I want to be an electrician.'

'OK, let's put you in for work experience, as part of the programme, with an electrician.'

....we hooked him up with youth services, got payments, got his licence, the employer gave him a bike in the meantime.

It was just after lockdown had happened, and I saw him in the dairy one day and he was getting his lunch and I said: 'Hi, how are you going?'

And he ran up into my arms, 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.







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