

YOUTH INspire

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 YOUTH INspire (YI) 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 YOUTH INspire (YI).

Throughout the course of the evaluation, we were privileged to speak to various YI stakeholders, including the Chair of the Board, General Manager, and other key staff, in addition to a range of business partners and employers, and young people themselves. Collectively, their perspectives provided the evaluation team with a wealth of insight and understanding into their unique journey to create change and improve outcomes for their young people.

The main funders for YI have been Hutt City Council, the Ministry of Social Development and TTF. Other supporters have included the likes of COGS, Lottery Grants Board, NZ Transport Agency, Macarthy Trust, Value Motors, Thank You Trust and the Nikau Foundation.¹



Background to YOUth INspire

YI was established as a charitable trust in 2014 and is based in Wainuiomata, Lower Hutt. The Trust is governed by a strong and diverse board, and the visions and aspirations of the organisation are actualised by a skilled and passionate team of staff and volunteers.

The impetus for YI came from a deep concern amongst key Wainuiomata community members that young people were being neglected in terms of education and employment opportunities. YI is part of the Mayor's Taskforce for Jobs² and the organisation has strong partnerships with Hutt City Council and local Wainuiomata community and business.

According to the YI website, "our focus is to see all young people under 25 engaged in meaningful employment, training, or education."³

YI support young people by delivering a free Youth Employability Programme developed by COMET.⁴ This helps them to learn key employment skills/competencies, apply them in work placements and connect with community via volunteer projects. The Youth Employability Programme runs for 14 weeks. YI also run a youth driving school, delivering Learner, Restricted and Full driver licencing programmes.

They also help young people by assisting them to gain micro-credentials i.e. First Aid certificate; Fork Lift Licence etc and by providing support to those who may already be work-ready. An explicit focus is placed on the wellbeing of young people and giving individualised care and support without judgement.

A brief profile of young people in Lower Hutt⁵

Population

- According to the 2018 census, the Lower Hutt region has a usually resident population of 104, 532 people and a median age of 36.9 years, compared to Wellington's population of 506, 814.
- The number of Māori in Lower Hutt is 19, 260⁶, or 18%. From 2013 to 2018, the population of people of Māori ethnicity grew faster than the population of other ethnicities, with growth rates of the non-Māori population relatively low
- Young people aged 15 to 24 years make up approximately 6.25% of the Lower Hutt population and generally live in the urban corridor along SH1, and in Wainuiomata.

² For more information see <https://www.mtfj.co.nz/>

³ Retrieved from <https://youthinspire.co.nz/about-us/>

⁴ For more information see <https://cometauckland.org.nz/>

⁵ Unless otherwise stated, information comes from 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: Lower Hutt. A collation of data from a variety of public sources on social and economic characteristics of people aged 15-24 years living in the Lower Hutt area. Prepared for The Knowledge Institute.

⁶ Retrieved from <https://www.mtfj.co.nz/your-mtfj/wellington/hutt-city/>

Education, income, employment and industry

- In the 10 year period from 2009 to 2018 (ranging from 7.6% to 35.5%), the proportion of school leavers who left school before their 17th birthday was relatively low in Lower Hutt City (16.3%), compared to other Territorial Authorities and Auckland local board areas
- However, rates of achievement of NCEA levels 1-3 were relatively low compared to other Territorial Authorities, with University Entrance rates towards the higher end of the range
- Between 2008 to 2018, overall economic activity per person (GDP per capita) has grown relatively slowly in Lower Hutt compared to other areas. Overall household incomes are relatively high in Lower Hutt, and the proportion of households with low income (below \$50,000) is relatively low. As expected, personal incomes are relatively low for people aged 15 to 19, however are relatively high for people aged 25 and older
- Within the Wellington Community Trust (WCT) region specifically, Lower Hutt has the highest average NZ Deprivation Index (NZDep18) score at 5.8, with 21% of the population in that area living in deciles 9-10, (44% in Porirua). People identifying as Māori and/or Pacific are over-represented in areas of highest deprivation.⁷
- In the WCT region, more children and young people live in areas of highest deprivation than other age groups, particularly in Porirua and Lower Hutt. Children aged 5–14 years in Lower Hutt are particularly over-represented in areas of highest deprivation (37%)⁸
- Overall, the unemployment rate for the Lower Hutt region is 4.8%, while the labour force participation rate is 71%
- There are somewhat high rates of unemployment in Lower Hutt, particularly for males, and labour force participation rates for people of all ages are in the middle of the range across Territorial Authorities
- Generally, there is higher unemployment for those aged 15 to 19, than for those aged 20 to 24, with a pocket of relatively high unemployment of 15 to 19-year-olds around Naenae.
- For the 15 to 19-year-old age group, the NEET rate (Not in Employment, Education or Training) in Wellington is similar to the national average, and slightly lower than the national average for the 20 to 24-year age group
- However, within the WCT region specifically, NEET rates are high in Lower Hutt for 15 to 19-year-olds (as well as Porirua and Upper Hutt), particularly in the 20 to 24-year-old age group⁹
- For those in Lower Hutt aged 15 to 19, and 20 to 24 in particular, the unemployment figures are 11.7% and 9.2% respectively (see Table 1).

⁷ Centre for Social Impact. (2020). *Regional Community Profile: Wellington Community Trust. October 2020*. Retrieved from: <https://wct.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Regional-Community-Profile-October-2020.pdf>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Table 1: Labour force status of young people in Lower Hutt (2018 census)

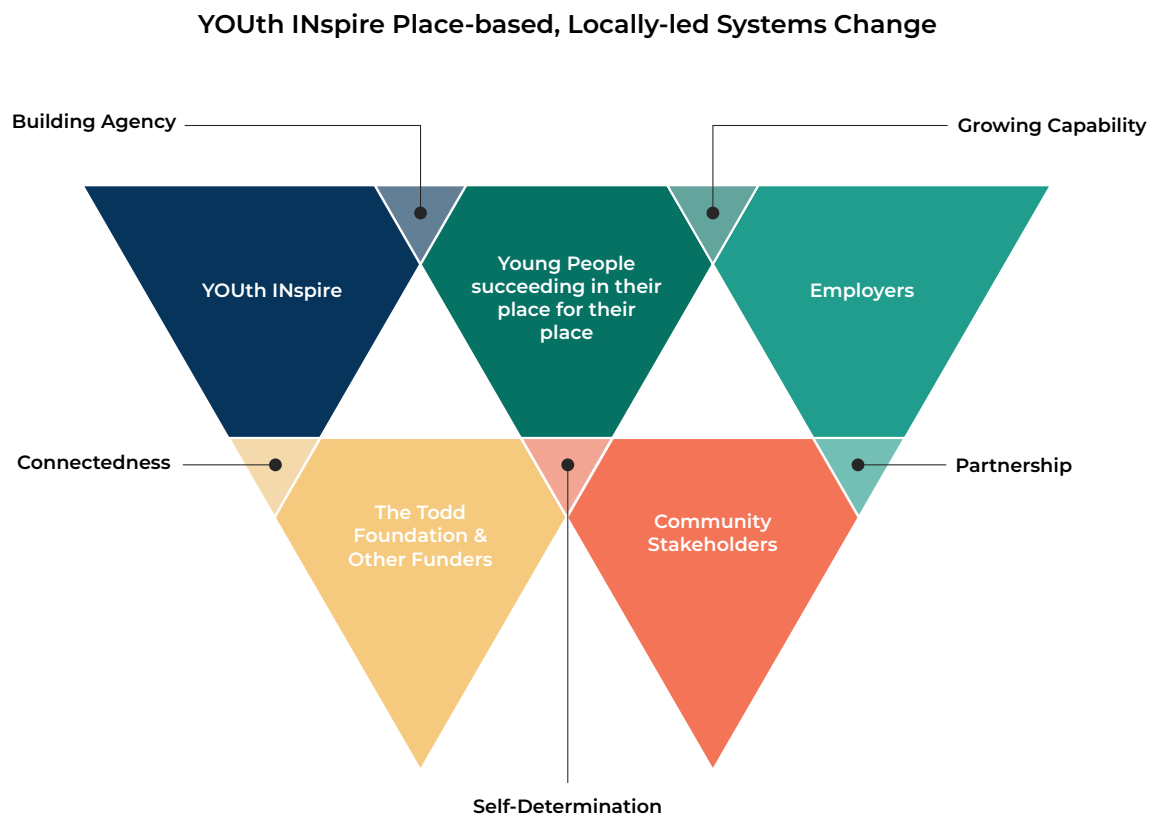
	15 to 19	20 to 24
Not in Labour Force (includes those in education or training)	47.9 %	17.0 %
Unemployed	11.7 %	9.2 %
Employed part-time	28.3 %	20.5 %
Employed full-time	12.1 %	53.4 %

- According to MBIE, in Lower Hutt, four of the top five industries are service-related, with agriculture being the fifth industry (top five industries by their contribution to GDP, 2007-2017)
- In terms of jobs, healthcare, retail, construction, and manufacturing are relatively important in Lower Hutt, while food services, education, and hospitals are relatively important sources of employment. Jobs are relatively concentrated around the urban centres of Petone, Hutt Central and Seaview.



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

Figure 1: Youth Inspire – key ingredients for place-based, locally-led systems change



1.

Genuine, diverse community ownership and leadership

Community partnership, relationships and connectedness is vital to ensuring success for everyone connected to YI and a lot of work was put into early conversations and collaborations.

Well, I think first and foremost, the first success was setting up the community partnership.

Diverse leadership from different sectors of the community has been key, and getting the right mix of leaders and collaborators in place from the outset was the impetus of YI's success.

Get the right people around the table, get them first and foremost, so, again, quality of the people in the leadership is really important and having the right people, particularly early on in those conversations. And then having the right people do the work.

And then, very, very quickly thereafter, I think the successes were about the relationships that we brought to the table through that network of people, particularly I've got to say, council.

There is recognition that larger and more resourced organisations like councils can have a significant role to play in on-ramping other networks/supports/resources for community initiatives.

Passionate people who have a desire to help young people is a key value of everyone involved that enables success. Values driven conversations also help to overcome challenges when diverse groups come together to work on an issue.

.....All hand in hand with community, I mean, [Evaluator's name], you know as well as I do that it takes true community partnership to achieve this stuff and often those things get off to a really rocky start and Youth Inspire got off to a rocky start, actually.

We've had, at times, some iwi groups, I guess expressing some concern that they thought that some of the pūtea, some of the funding should go to them, to some of their initiatives, that's been a challenge. Throughout all of that, we have remained really consistent with our own values which, and integrity has been really important throughout all of those different conversations and with a total commitment to our kaupapa and what we're here to achieve, which is all about our rangatahi, right?

2.

Collective and system focused solutions

As previously noted, the impetus for YI came from concern among key Wainuiomata community members that young people were falling through the cracks when it came to gaining what they needed from the education system to move into meaningful employment. **Evidently, the local community identified a need to wrap more support around young people and they connected with influential players in the region, such as council, to find a solution. This demonstrates a belief in community to lead change.**

When approaching funders like TTF, YI was clear that this was a community driven solution to a community identified issue:
Had the first hui with TTF – what can you do? But this is a community led initiative.

This is one way that YI asserted their self-determination early on in the process of seeking funding. As will be explored later in this case study (section 6: supporting functions and processes), TTF were very receptive to this shift in the traditional funder-recipient relationship.

3.

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

This is the main drive for YI. These efforts give young people an opportunity to gain real life skills, including employability and soft skills, such as gaining confidence and developing good habits that contribute to building their agency and capability.

However, YI's focus goes much further than simply helping young people into employment or further education/training. A lot of emphasis is placed on giving young people hope for the future.

For me it's that transformation – from when they come in at the beginning – with their heads down... and at the end... and it's up and down throughout... but by the end...the transformation at the end...whether it's employment or not...it's giving that person hope, so that they know they can experience success...

There is significant focus on pastoral care, and many examples were given of how the YI team provide care and support beyond what is deemed “necessary” to help young people find employment or training. Much of this was attributed to the passion and empathy of staff to see young people succeed, who focused on the individual strengths of young people (explored more in sections 5: innovation behaviour, and 6: supporting functions and processes).

....These are people who don't get paid well, you know, we don't, charitable organisations like Youth Inspire can't pay top dollar but the additional work they do over and above is what, you know, makes the success for the young people. The fact that, you know, Ali herself will be out all hours of the night driving the van around to pick people up to get them to work, you know, and the team will do that, that's the stuff that, you know, matters and shows the young people in particular that someone does give a damn and someone does care and it's really hard to put a price on that and measure that but that, you know, bluntly, that's what Youth Inspire is all about.

3.

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

The young people in the programme also shared numerous examples of how YI staff have helped them to achieve their goals. Beyond gaining important employability skills and experience, they spoke about making connections with peers and their tutors, and developing positive habits.

The one thing that made the programme what it is, is the sense of community, and how close we are as a class.

In addition to the significant benefits of gaining their drivers licence or work experience, young people spoke about being inspired by seeing progress towards their goals, and the supportive environment that tutors created. This non-judgemental, whānau-like environment was facilitated by tutors that they felt genuinely cared about them and went out of their way to demonstrate care. The tutors provided individualised support and created a safe space for young people to ask questions and progress at their own pace.

It's the people in this class that made this whole experience better, makes you want to come every day... I guess we can see progress happening. From other employment courses I've done, nothing's happened...but here they make sure we've achieved something.

It's just Shannon and Brett in general....they are basically uncle or aunty or mum and dad....you know how we were talking about 'the stare'...that's real....it just shows how much she wants us to achieve. They are just really supportive....Shan or Brett is always there to give us advice about what we need.

4.

Employer engagement

Strong relationships with local businesses and employers are fundamental to the success of YI and the staff do an incredible job of maintaining these relationships. They ensure that the interests and aspirations of young people in the programme align with employers/businesses. Local businesses were also brought into collaboration with YI early on, and they were encouraged to buy into the collective vision of inspiring and supporting young people.

....I had a bit of leverage with a number of big suppliers like Downers and Fulton and Hawkins Construction and we, you know, I leant on them pretty hard to be part of this and they all jumped on board and, you know, that was really important, those relationships.

The employers know they can call us anytime to, you know, if they've got some challenges with the young person that's working with them, they can call us and we can be part of the solution to help, you know, guide that young person back on the right track.

Once again, passion to see young people succeed was highlighted as being an important feature of the businesses and employers that YI connect with.

The partnerships we have formed with people who understand the kaupapa – who don't see the young people as 'arms and legs'. They stick with it because they know the importance of the work we do.

4.

Employer engagement

One local business also spoke of the 'duty of care' they had to young people, and others spoke of providing a safe space for young people to make mistakes and grow their confidence. Again, the belief to do better for local young people is strong.

There is not a single young person to give up on; despite background we have a duty of care to encourage and enable them to make the best decisions they can. This is why I want to support them and reach out to more young people.

The tension of we need people to have experience, but how can young people get experience if no one will provide an opportunity. If we don't continue our efforts, we will perpetuate the issues, we need to believe we can make the changes.

5.

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

Many participants highlighted that the key point of difference with YI, and what makes them unique, is their significant focus on the wellbeing of a young person. As discussed, YI staff care deeply, and they aim to empower and inspire young people, which is highly valued and effective.

What's the difference to make the difference? Engagement and empowerment. The pride of young people but also the parents – despite hard life and see their young people stick at the course, Youth Inspire are engaging with the whole whānau.

Partnership is about providing a sense of place; this means something more and is a point of difference.

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.

During the initial lockdowns of the Covid pandemic, YI staff ensured that they stayed connected to their young people, and supported them as much as possible. This continuity of care and support was crucial for the young people, as they were able to maintain some of the new habits they had formed. They were also able to stay connected during uncertain times and maintain a focus on their goals.

Made sure they had laptops, or phones, or data – and kept the relationships going. Even though some couldn't keep connected, most did. They didn't have to come to the session every day....

6.

Supporting functions & processes

This case study has clearly highlighted the fundamental role that the YI team plays in inspiring and empowering young people to achieve their goals. Values driven and caring staff provide a solid foundation for success.

Absolutely, yeah, fundamental, yeah, that's implicit when I say, if they don't care, they're not the best people.

6.

Supporting functions & processes

At a local level, YI management and staff are creating the conditions in which young people can thrive, and the 'systems convening' has been recognised as a key mechanism of systems change.¹⁰ Their design of conditions for young people to thrive is also supported by local employers and businesses who want to see young people inspired and supported in practical ways to be able to stay local and gainfully employed.

Beyond the importance and effectiveness of local level systems convening in creating change, the nature of the relationship that YI has with its funders is key. Participants reiterated that the magic behind YI was Ali and her team and the lengths they went to for their young people, while also emphasising that the role that TTF played was crucial. The way that TTF designed and maintained their relationship with YI created an environment where YI could respond to the complex needs of their community while also being aspirational.

Key features of this relationship are high-trust and low compliance, and that it is long-term, which leaves the door open for future opportunities. YI leadership made it clear that this was not the norm for them and that their experience with TTF has been vastly different to those with other funders, particularly government.

The whole funding structure has been, is an ongoing challenge. You know, MSD are still giving us year to year contracts which makes it really difficult.

I mean, I think the Government's focus on this stuff is still very transactional, it is about numbers and reporting numbers back up to the Minister to say – oh, we've, you know, isn't it great that we've got this number of people in this number of jobs....that stuff is important for Youth Inspire but actually, what's much more important is the quality of the relationship with the young people and their whānau and the community and that's what we spend our time focusing on and measuring, you know, the quality of the relationships.

Oh, [Evaluator's name], I can't speak highly enough for how we have worked with The Todd Foundation and when Seumas in particular, was the key lead behind that, and the conversations were so much easier. Those earlier conversations around who we were, what we were trying to achieve, how we could work together, was so much easier than the conversations you have with the bureaucracy of Government and council too, actually.

As noted, trust was a key mechanism for success that underpinned the relationship.

So, with Seumas and The Todd Foundation, once they were on board with our kaupapa, they trusted us to get on with it and the, you know, the relationship, the formal funding relationship was consistent with that, you know. We weren't bound to be providing monthly reports like we do with MSD and all that stuff, you know, so, it's...yeah, I can't, I mean, The Todd Foundation have been instrumental, instrumental in getting Youth Inspire to where it is today.

6.

Supporting functions & processes

While there was immense gratitude expressed for the way in which TTF conducted their relationship with YI, which made contributing to change for young people much easier, it was also recognised that there was potential for growth. For example, for TTF to leverage with other funders and help YI become less dependent on grants, or to help enable more capacity within the organisation, particularly around pastoral care.

One of the things that I'd like The Todd Foundation to think about is how to help organisations to become sustainable.....we are constantly in the poverty cycle....constant flux, that doesn't help retain quality staff....

I think more strategically, you know, we're really keen to stay connected and networked with The Todd Foundation and your network and partners, so, I think six months ago we had a really exciting conversation with Seumas around being connected to the network and, you know, what can the network collectively do to support organisations like Youth Inspire, so, rather than just Todd Foundation being a partner, how can the network of funders be part of this?

Conversations with MSD – they don't pay us enough money to cover the cost of what we deliver to their clients....we are delivering champagne for the Lindauer budget.

What can other communities and funders learn from YOUTh INspire's journey?

This case study has demonstrated how a local and collective vision to see young people succeed has been successfully actioned, over multiple years. This has resulted in countless young people finding employment or training opportunities. Beyond the tangible outcomes of young people finding employment or achieving their driver's licence, young people and those connected with them reported being inspired for the future, a growth in confidence, development of positive habits, and forming helpful connections with employers and industry.

At the heart of Youth Inspire's success to create change for their young people has been:

- An unwavering commitment to their unique, locally identified and led kaupapa (also reflected in values driven conversations)
- Diverse leadership
- A strong focus on developing and maintaining diverse relationships with key stakeholders and communities: *Quality of our relationship with our young people, with their whānau, with our business partners, with our employers. That's what it's all about*

- Recruitment and retainment of passionate staff who can harness the potential in young people (an incredibly difficult task with traditional year-to-year government contracts): *One of the big challenges is how you retain those people when you're surviving on year-to-year contracts*
- A strong focus on pastoral care and empowerment of young people and whānau: *We will be ticking our boxes when we know we've got an empowered individual who is on a completely different pathway to where they were previously, who have support, who know where to go when they need support and we don't just, you know, don't just wave goodbye once they start a job, it's an ongoing relationship...*
- Having a long-term vision – continuously identifying ways to become more sustainable and partnering with funders who recognise the significance of pastoral care
- Having a high-trust and long-term funding relationship with TTF (the importance of commissioning vs. contracting). As one YI staff member noted: *.....you are investing in social capital and support when you invest in YI – this can help support the whole family on the journey.*

In section 6 above (supporting functions and processes), some YI staff raised the question of how funders like TTF can potentially use their unique position as a funder to further enable organisations to create locally-led systems change. Specifically, questions were raised about how TTF (and others) can advocate within the system and support organisations to be more sustainable and less grant dependant. Undeniably, funders like TTF and others willing to fund in a different way and recognise their powerful role within the system of change, can further support organisations beyond providing funding. For example, by:

- Creating funding relationships that are long-term and based on high levels of trust
- By changing how they think about compliance
- By funding supportive functions and processes, such as networking opportunities or capacity building
- By recognising the implicit expertise communities have in generating their own solutions
- By advocating within the system – e.g., with other funders to show how commissioning can work and how it is important to be accountable to those that funders partner with, and their communities.

Finally, as the board chair of YI noted, it is important to share these success stories of change so that others may learn from them and perhaps take elements that can work for them:

And thirdly is, you know, sharing the Youth Inspire story and sharing the success of the partnership we've had with Todd.

Because it works, right? It works.

And Government leaders, in particular, need to hear it.





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