

Case Study 1: Te Hiku o te Ika Revitalisation Project

Using a project as a tool to achieve broader outcomes for the Te Hiku community



Highlights at a glance

- Far North District Council's Te Hiku o te Ika Revitalisation Project is delivering exceptional community development outcomes through empowering local communities to deliver a programme of 81 urban improvement initiatives.
- Far North District Council, is the local government organisation for the northern-most tip of New Zealand's North Island.
- The project has two engagement objectives:
 1. Develop a sense of identity and connection within the regional towns of Kaitaia, Awanui and Ahipara by reflecting diverse community perspectives in the delivery of 81 urban improvement initiatives. The purpose of the engagement was ensuring that design and implementation decisions were made by the communities concerned. The scope was community-led decision-making and consultation to deliver revitalised spaces that the communities identify and connect with.
 2. 70% of project spend must be awarded to local businesses. That said, there were not enough local businesses pre-qualified to work for the council. The objective was to define this challenge and turn it into a community development opportunity. The purpose; figure out what barriers local businesses faced in working for council, then work with them to identify and implement solutions. The scope was to provide support to local businesses and people to allow them to deliver the physical works and increase economic resilience.
- Empowerment, collaboration and communication nurture the relationships that form the heart of this initiative and continue to drive outstanding outcomes. Key outcomes that show the impact of our engagement are:
 - 1) community connection to the revitalised townships; this is their history and their ideas come to life. The heart and soul that went into the initiatives we delivered has won Kaitaia the title of New Zealand's Most Beautiful Town 2021. And we haven't finished yet!

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- 2) legacy of community resilience and future opportunities; 45 local businesses have been upskilled and qualify to work for council beyond this project. Sixty-nine individuals have been trained in industry-recognised safety courses, increasing safety and enhancing employment opportunities.
 - 3) targeted spend within the community; 88% of expenditure we can influence has been spent in the Far North, 47% has gone to Māori businesses.
- This project is highly repeatable and has demonstrated the sheer scale of what can be achieved with clear intent and collaboration. Three key engagement takeaways are:
 - 1) a community can achieve amazing things when empowered to work together from concept through to delivery. Using local people to define and deliver this project has created a meaningful and vibrant sense of identity, connection and pride. For any council it can feel daunting to truly empower a group of 'outside' people to deliver a project but the results can be staggering.
 - 2) defining clear social outcome goals presented challenges, however, analysing what else we could achieve, besides physical construction, created exciting opportunities to really affect positive outcomes.
 - 3) striving for further reach was key. Identifying influential people in the community, then having them identify other influencers and groups, gave us incredible access to groups and individuals we wouldn't have been able to activate as council on our own.
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Key search words: Public Sector, local government, community masterplan, community development, project working group, empower.

1.0 Objectives

Far North District Council (FNDC) is the local government entity for the northernmost tip of New Zealand's North Island. Te Hiku o te Ika ("The Tail of the Fish") is the northernmost ward within the region, with a population of 34,000 people and five iwi. It has a rich history and culture but in recent times the townships of Kaitaia, Awanui and Ahipara have lacked identity and connectivity and have high levels of social and economic deprivation.

When central government COVID Recovery funding became available, FNDC, the Kaitaia Business Association and the five iwi submitted a combined package of 81 separate initiatives, known collectively as the Te Hiku o te Ika Revitalisation Project. Scope ranges from open space development and playground and pump track installations to shared paths, streetscaping and cultural art. Its purpose is to create employment and community resilience through investment and revitalisation that attracts residents and visitors to spend time within Te Hiku town centres.

The project was inspired by a masterplan developed by the community, local iwi and community-led organisations, in collaboration with FNDC. This defined the vision the community had for their towns. The challenge was to develop designs from these concepts that achieved what the community wanted. The purpose of community engagement was to ensure the creators of the masterplan have the ability to influence decision-making and steer the direction of the project.

The funding agreement between FNDC and Kānoa, ensured the project was centred around achieving social outcomes. So, rather than construction being the ultimate goal, it was the tool to achieve broader outcomes for the Te Hiku community. The uniqueness of this brief required assessing how we could achieve the vast number of expected outcomes. The answer was consistent engagement; working with parties to understand barriers and problem-solve.

Targeted outcomes are:

- enhance and restore the vibrancy and mana of Kaitaia, Awanui and Ahipara
- boost employment within the Far North District, targeting Māori, Pasifika and local workers
- award 70% of work to local businesses (Māori and Pasifika in particular)
- develop skills and training to enable local individuals and organisations to continue as Council-approved suppliers beyond this initiative
- initiatives contribute to FNDC's environmental objectives and strategic direction

The project background, and unique social outcomes requirements required an engagement plan that focussed on two core themes:

- shared leadership and action
- community development to allow local businesses to undertake the work

Shared Leadership and Action

The challenge for Council was how to take a \$7m streetscaping project, comprising 81 separate initiatives, from a community-developed but conceptual masterplan through to detailed design, and achieve what the varied stakeholders intended. It was a joint funding submission but the funding agreement was between Kānoa and FNDC.

Engagement needed to reflect a diverse range of community perspectives and profiles in the designs. The purpose of the engagement was to have the community make as many decisions as possible throughout the design process. The scope was defined as community-led detailed design to deliver revitalised spaces that the community identifies with and connects to. Project delivery had to comply with Council policies, standards and procedures. Success would be measured through reach, diverse representation, insights and creativity.

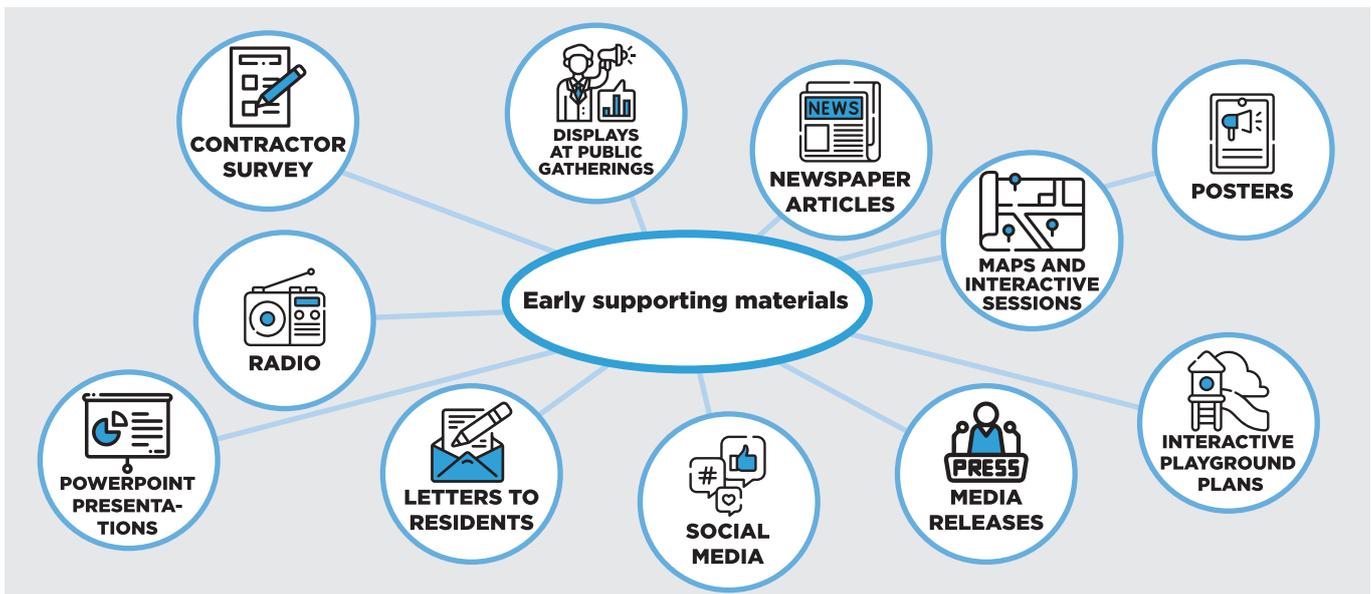
FNDC engaged with all public and private organisations and groups that contributed to the masterplan to decide how we would engage and make decisions on the project going forward. The resulting Project Working Group was then able to consult with the wider community about how affected stakeholders wanted to engage.

Community Development

In addition to management of the project, there was another challenge that required consultation; there were not enough local businesses prequalified to work for council to award 70% of the work to.

Our purpose was to engage with local businesses to understand why this was the case; the objective was to figure out what barriers local businesses faced in working for council and work with them to identify solutions. We needed to work with local businesses to identify training and support required to prequalify them to work for Council, in this project and in the future. Success would be defined by volume of businesses engaged with, percentage uptake, diversity and innovative solutions.

Figure 1 – early supporting materials



2.0 Methodology

Plan engagement

Our engagement plan is split into two core themes:

- THEME 1: Community-led decision-making
- THEME 2: Community development to allow local businesses to undertake the work

CORE ENGAGEMENT THEME 1: Community-led decision-making

The intent of engagement throughout the project is for the community to shape the detailed design of the 81 different initiatives that need to be designed to meet the community's needs and expectations. There continues to be a high level of interest from the community. Each of the 81 initiatives offers different opportunities for engagement, covering all levels of the spectrum from inform to empower.

Many local organisations and community groups contributed to the original conceptual masterplan. The engagement plan set out to let these groups shape their level of influence throughout the project and design what community empowerment could look like in a council project.

Council engaged with all public and private organisations and groups that contributed to the masterplan to decide how they would like to be involved in the project:

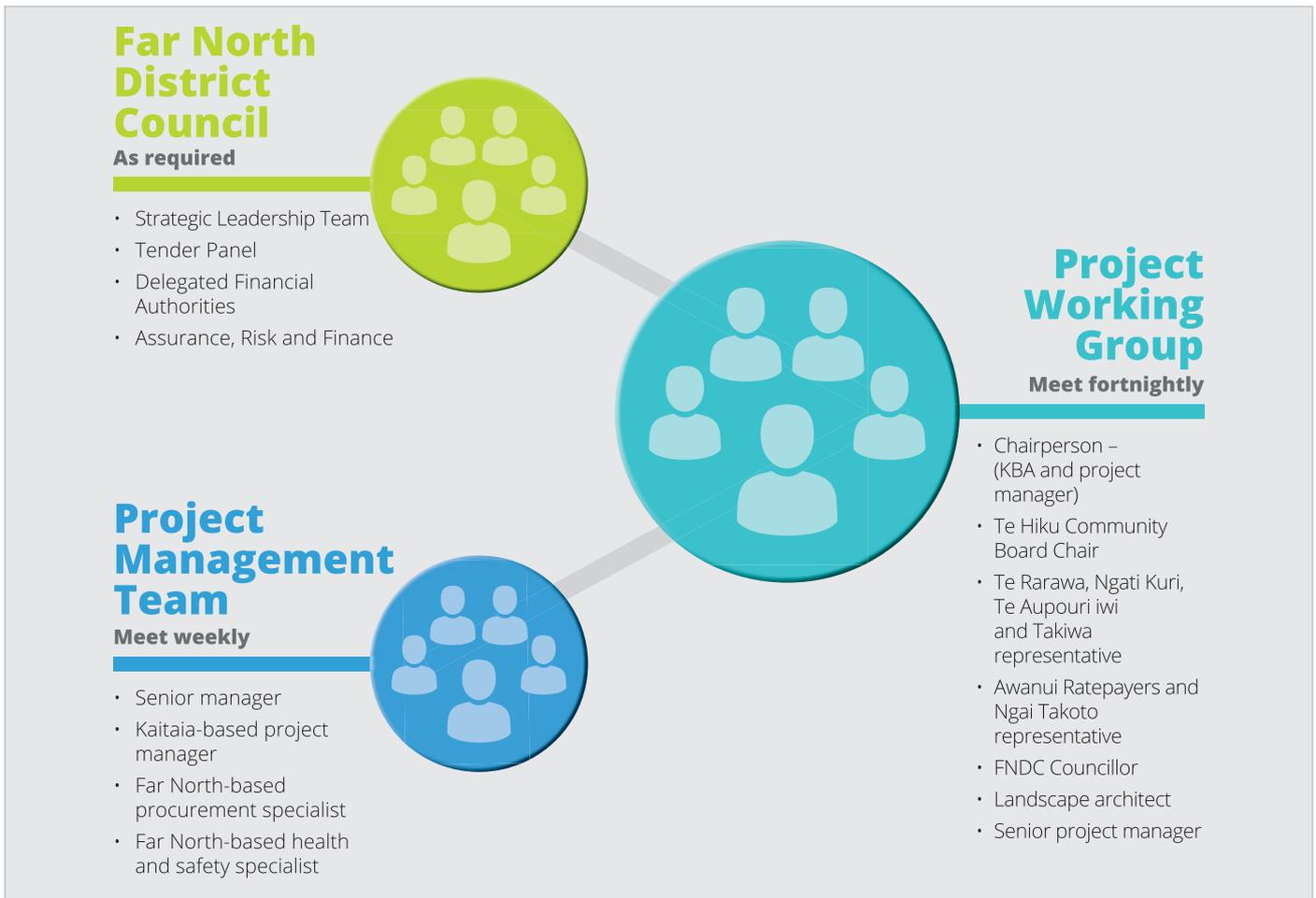
- Empower: one member from the organisation represents their community group on a Project Working Group (PWG).
- Collaborate: a partner, looked to for advice and innovation, not directly responsible for final decision making.
- Involved: helps develop the solutions.
- Consulted: able to provide feedback and will be listened to.

The PWG – shared leadership and action

The PWG has representatives from FNDC, four iwi (Te Rarawa, Ngati Kuri, Te Aupouri, NgaiTakoto), Kaitaia Business Association (KBA), Takiwa, Awanui ratepayers, the project manager and a local landscape architect.

A Memorandum of Understanding clarifies the responsibilities of the members of the PWG and each person is able to influence decision-making. Figure 2 shows the governance structure for the project. Expert resources (such as procurement advisors) are brought in as needed to upskill the PWG members to allow them to make informed choices.

Figure 2: Project Governance, empowering the community through a Project Working Group



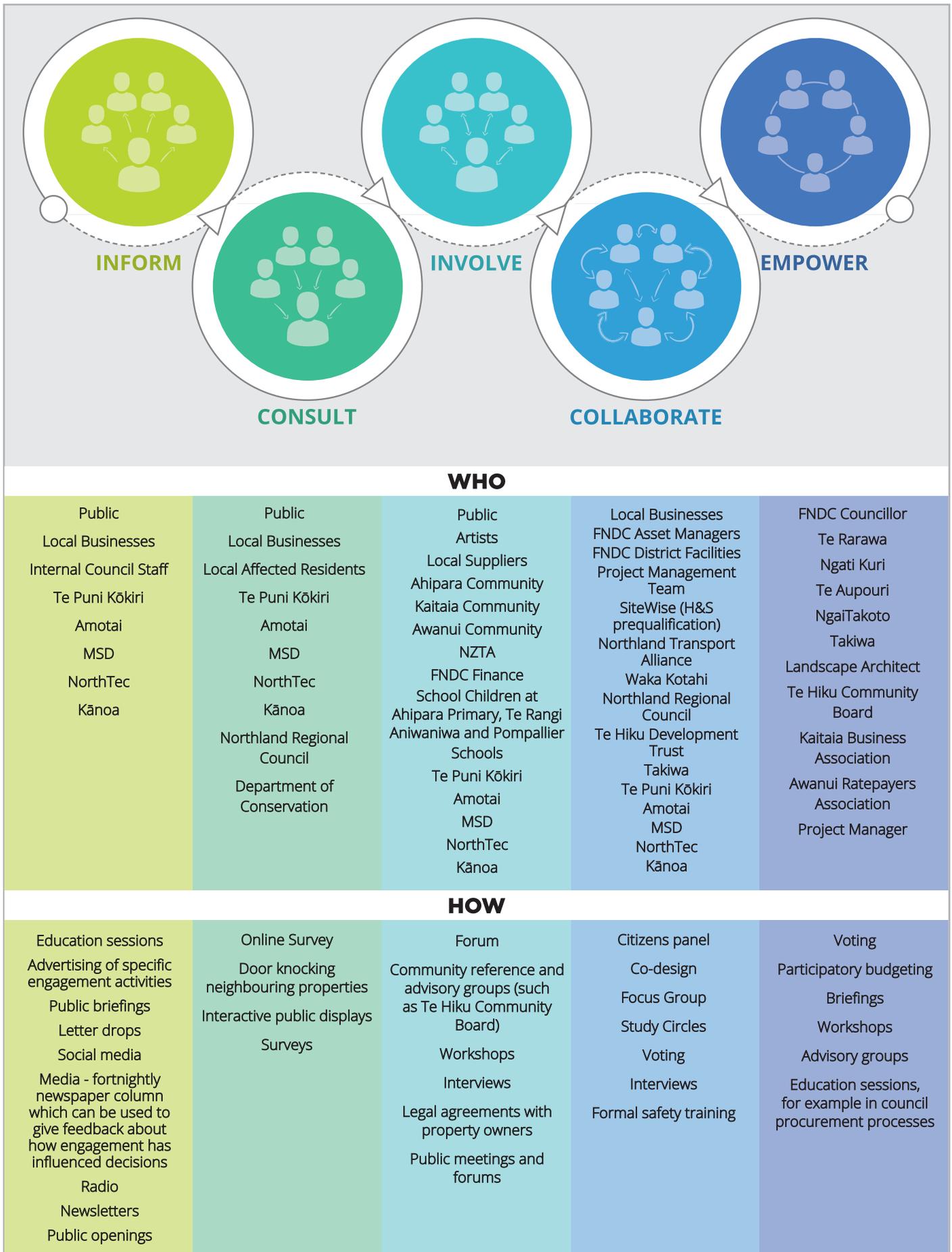
The PWG, as decision-makers, meet fortnightly to agree on the direction of each individual initiative, set engagement expectations and monitor progress and expenditure. A dedicated Te Tai Tokerau (Northland) based project management team then implements directives from the PWG. This model allows the PWG to focus on community engagement and ensuring each initiative represents the wants and needs of the community. There are a wide pool of specialist advisors, community leaders and influencers that the PWG draw upon as required.

Gaining even further reach

These three small New Zealand towns are beautifully interconnected communities; often families have lived here for generations and it seems like everyone is connected to someone who knows someone. That affords us a fantastic opportunity for reach with our engagement.

Our core mission is that the whole community should have the ability to influence the design of the initiatives, which include artwork installations, streetscaping, parks and playgrounds.

Figure 3: Breadth, depth and spectrum of engagement and methods used



At a basic level, success of the PWG relies upon each member communicating with the groups they represent. However, the members' actual role is more influential than this; they are the gateway to influential members in the community who can activate other groups and members of the public to participate.

The PWG gives this project vast reach to all corners of our community - from disenfranchised, difficult-to-engage groups to those passionate about a subject or place and seeking to be involved. Often, community groups outside the PWG design and run the method of engagement, approved and overseen by the PWG, creating almost limitless engagement capacity. As a result, a high volume of meaningful engagement has been able to occur in a short timeframe, as shown in Figure 3.

There are so many individual initiatives that, for each one, the PWG has analyses who in the community is most likely to be affected by, and want to be involved in, the design. They approach those people and ask the same question to get further reach beyond the obvious. Together, the parties shape an engagement plan or method to refine the design to reflect what the community want. The engagement is assigned a leader (either from PWG or community) and timeframe, then the results are reported back to the PWG, where they influence the final design of the initiative.

CORE ENGAGEMENT THEME 2: Community development to allow local businesses to undertake the work

Small local businesses lack the skills and resources to gain the Sitewise accreditation (safety prequalification) FNDC requires of all contractors. This has left them feeling left out in the cold, excluded and disengaged. The local business community was engaged through a public forum to come up with a plan to get them prequalified and able to be employed directly by the Te Hiku o te Ika Revitalisation Project. To ensure inclusion, businesses were sought out through our local networks and contacted directly, by phone and letter, inviting them to participate.

To encourage attendance an online survey was distributed before the meeting, asking for feedback on challenges they faced in working for Council and gaining Sitewise. The aim of the forum was to give locally-based civil contractors the confidence that Council had a significant program of works coming up, to demonstrate a determination to partner with as many local firms as possible, and to describe the support available to help grow contractor capability and capacity in the Far North.

Data collected from the online survey was analysed; three key challenges highlighted by the businesses were then presented at the forum. This showed the businesses that we had heard them and that we were committed to working with them to overcome their challenges.

From the forum we developed an action plan of support, co-designed with the businesses. This included education workshops, led by SiteWise, and the engagement of a safety consultant who coached businesses one-to-one through safety systems development and gathering evidence for SiteWise accreditation, and who identified specific training needs for individuals.

Figure 4: A snapshot of engagement methods used

Displays at public gatherings (Saturday Markets, Pak'n Save Kaitiāia, a 3 month display at Kaitiāia Digital Hub and 2 month electronic noticeboard at FNDC's Te Ahu Centre), invited public to leave post it note feedback on the concept plans and provide written feedback.



Targeted workshops were used as a way to upskill PWG members to provide them with the tools and knowledge to make informed decisions and understand the council policies and procedures that they had to work within.



Local artists ran an Expression of Interest process for 10 separate art installations, to be completed by multiple artists. Winners were selected by a community panel who were fully responsible for decision making.



School children worked together to decide what play equipment they wanted, compromising on the combinations they could afford, and set the layouts that they wanted the items to appear in the playground.



Formal partnering agreements with each of the five local iwi empower them to design and deliver the cultural gateway sculptures and pou, along with informative plaques to tell the stories and history of each local iwi. Concept shown below.



Community consultation days were held as interactive ways to share the plan and receive feedback from local residents that would use the open spaces.



Following a survey, a public meeting was held with local businesses to find out the challenges they face in becoming prequalified to work on Council projects.



Hui were offered to all iwi and each evening we allocated a night and zoom meeting. The purpose was to inform the iwi how the masterplan had come together and where to from here, inviting their input into all the various projects and milestones.



Community run workshops were used to discover what the community wanted or help facilitate the community designing artwork or space. The Akau workshop (shown below) guided Awanui students to design a stunning piece of artwork.



Both public and group meetings were (and still are) held via zoom to stay connected and provide opportunities for the public to provide feedback when covid affected face to face meetings.



Education sessions were arranged for Sitewise to explain their accreditation and its requirements to interested businesses. Following this, a Health and Safety professional helped guide the businesses through the process.



A fortnightly newspaper column and facebook page were used as a way to inform the community how their feedback influenced decisions and update on progress.



Alignment with IAP2 Core Values for the practice of public participation

IAP2 Core Values	Example of how this was considered in the design of your project methodology
1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process	The PWG, made up of representatives of core community groups, is responsible for decision making. Members often represent multiple groups and report back to seek input into decisions. Networks with other community leaders and influencers are used to identify a wide range of people affected by particular initiatives that need to be engaged with.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision	The Te Hiku o te Ika Revitalisation Project is based entirely on the premise that the whole community should have the ability to influence the design of all 81 initiatives it comprises. PWG members seek input from the 'group' they represent and feed back on how their input influenced the decision. Other organisations and public groups were able to set their level of influence at the start of the project and have a feedback loop via the PWG. For each piece of work, affected stakeholders are engaged with and informed of the initiative brief (and constraints), engagement methodology (if they haven't designed or co-designed it) and level of influence they have.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers	The PWG identify stakeholders for each initiative and engage with them to identify their needs. The plan for each initiative is tailored to the specific needs of stakeholders, there is no 'copy and paste' approach. Barriers to participation are identified, particularly within the disaffected small business community and traditionally-hard-to-reach groups. Community members with extensive reach are also sought out.
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision	Relationships are the heart and soul of this initiative and they are everywhere. To ensure affected parties are adequately identified and able to access engagement, the PWG initially identify affected groups and individuals, then further advice is sought from other leaders and influential members of the community. This ensures multiple people from varying backgrounds identify a broad cross-section of who would be affected and enables us to ensure the engagement is appropriate, accessible and effective.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate	Organisations and community groups initially involved in the masterplan were able to set the level of influence they wanted to have over the project. PWG members chose to have influence over decision-making. This is a significant commitment of time and energy and is not suitable or desired by all interested groups. Other organisations and public groups were able to set their level of influence at the start of the project and have a feedback loop via the PWG.
6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way	The PWG has decision making capacity within clearly defined constraints; they must comply with FNDC policies, standards and procedures. In addition, each initiative is scoped to ensure core deliverables are understood prior to setting engagement goals. This ensures stakeholders understand the scope and boundaries of the decisions they can influence.
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision	PWG members represent core community groups and council; they seek input from the 'group' they represent and feed back on how their input influenced the decision. The same is true of any groups and organisations that are engaged with or engage with the public, on behalf of the PWG; there is a feedback loop once decisions are made at fortnightly PWG meetings. Public meetings, a fortnightly newspaper article and regular Facebook updates help to communicate the public's influence in certain initiatives.

“You know, often the community has it done ‘to-them’ not for or with-them... we have felt like the driver of the bus, not the passenger and what a difference this makes to us as locals-who-really-care... In closing, relationships absolutely work best when the workload, the decisions and the design are shared objectives. I see this happening throughout our initiative. We do not feel like outsiders, we are inside the tent, being listened to (not talked at). I think it is this chemistry which, although unseen makes up the success of our secret sauce. Have we been successful – “hell yes”.”

Laurie Andrew, Secretary of Awanui Progressive and Ratepayers Association (represented by Suzie Clark on the Project Working Group)

“It was decided that the FNDC would step in a help businesses achieve the pre-qualifications needed to successfully tender for the jobs. For the first time we were able to access a Sitewise session which was held here in Kaitaia... and our staff were also able to attend the working from heights course which was also held in Kaitaia at no cost... we were very grateful to have been successful with our tender, and without the support of the FNDC this would not have been possible... it has now enabled us to confidently tender for future FNDC works within the Te Hiku District.”

Raymond ‘Fish’ Jones, Director Kinetic Electrical Far North

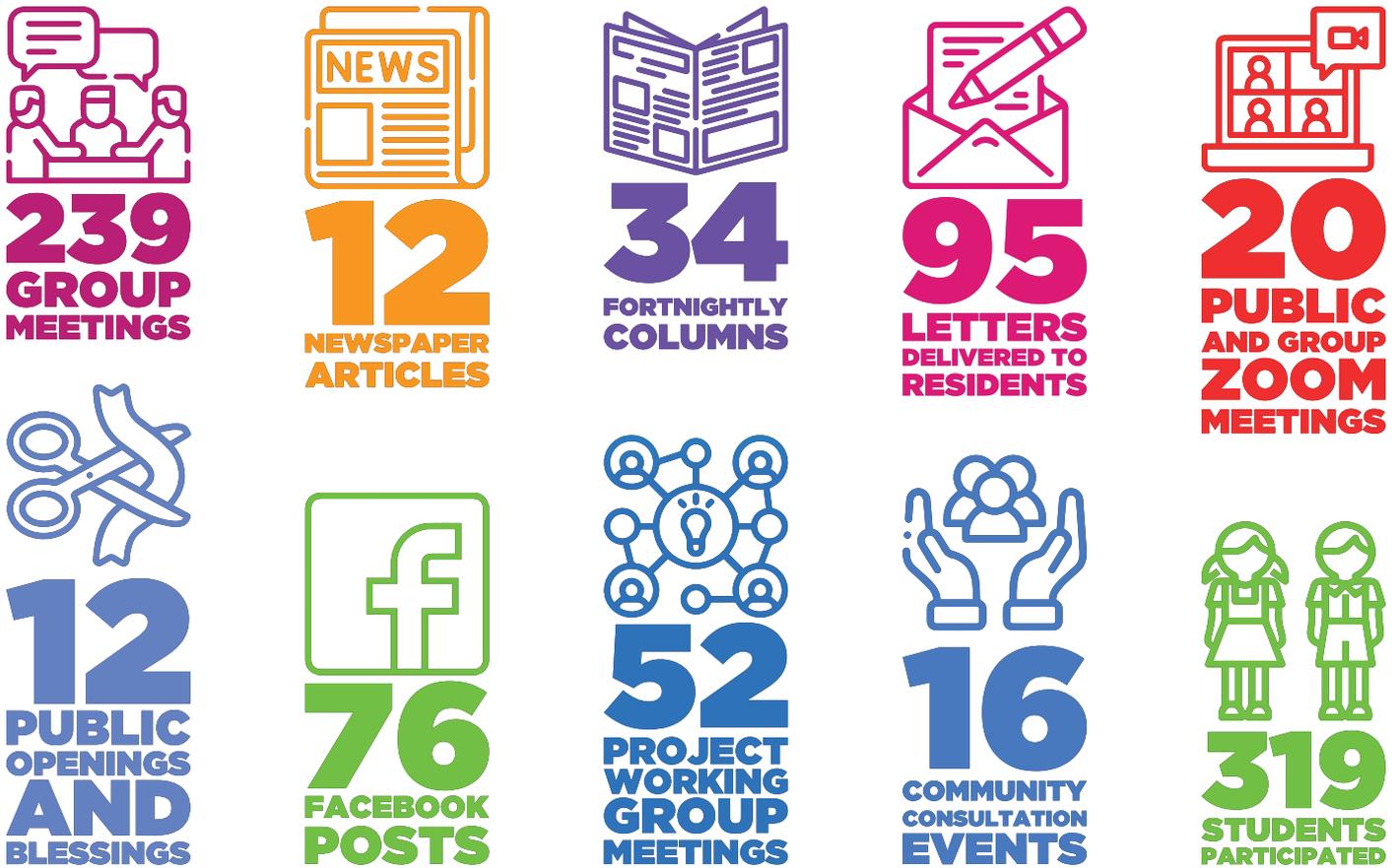
“My business Wāhine Wild is a small sustainable landscaping, gardening and maintenance business and has been in operation over the past year. Since becoming sitewise approved the opportunities for quoting for projects has really expanded. I am now in the process of quoting on several FNDC projects and am considering expanding my team to cope with the amount of work available... A big part of Wāhine Wild’s kaupapa is being as sustainable as possible in our practise and having this kaupapa shared with FNDC feels like our community spaces are being created/maintained with kaitiakitanga at the centre.”

Jade One, Director Wāhine Wild

“In October 2020, I answered a call for Local Artists to attend an Artists Forum. Initially the meetings were well attended, however it was a daunting project and requiring detailed input from the community of artists. As an experienced artist, I was able to see that the huge project needed to be divided into individual concept spaces, so I measured and made outline plans of each space for the projects... Everyone’s contributions, including my own, were respectfully and well received, even though I was not widely known as a local artist as I had largely been working on commissions... I, and my family too, feel proud and honoured to have been able to contribute to our home town.”

Sylvia Haines, member of the public who developed an artwork installation selected by a community panel

Figure 5: Key engagement metrics



3.0 Manage Engagement

Challenges in Stakeholder Engagement

Non-essential investment in the communities targeted through this project is rare. Insufficient engagement was a real risk. It would be perceived as Council taking over, thinking it knows best and getting it wrong. This is a historical viewpoint of many communities and a universal engagement risk. It would have been disastrous if the 81 initiatives comprising the Te Hiku o te Ika Revitalisation Project did not reflect what the community wanted because it wouldn't result in identity, connection or vibrancy.

Historically, iwi groups and the public have been 'consulted' with but not able to influence decision-making, therefore reducing the trust they have in the engagement process. This presents challenges in activating them to engage.

The PWG gave us good reach into the community groups that had created the original masterplan. But we needed greater reach into a diverse range of backgrounds to ensure we captured the needs of the entire community.

Engagement capacity was a serious risk; there were 81 initiatives to design, with engagement required for each one, and a \$7m programme of works to deliver. The PWG address this by involving other community leaders to help design and run the method of engagement, approved and overseen by the PWG, creating almost limitless engagement capacity. The PWG focus on engagement and making decisions while a Project Management Team implements the physical works.

The PWG comprises people with different backgrounds; they are not specialists in this type of work and not familiar with Council systems and processes. Specialist workshops (such as procurement procedures) were used at key strategic points in the project to upskill the PWG members and give them the knowledge and tools to make sustainable decisions.

Challenges in Community Development

The small business community was disengaged; getting them to attend a public meeting with council would be challenging unless we could show that we were willing to listen to them and help develop a solution. Personal contact by phone and letter showed we were interested in working with them specifically and a survey with probing questions on difficulties they experienced in working for council demonstrated that we knew there was a problem and were identifying viable solutions.

Drawing businesses into the initial engagement and educating them on what's required for SiteWise accreditation was not enough; too many would just drop out of the program. Guided by business feedback we engaged a safety consultant to help each business define and document its systems and then submit its evidence to Sitewise.

Analysing Community Development

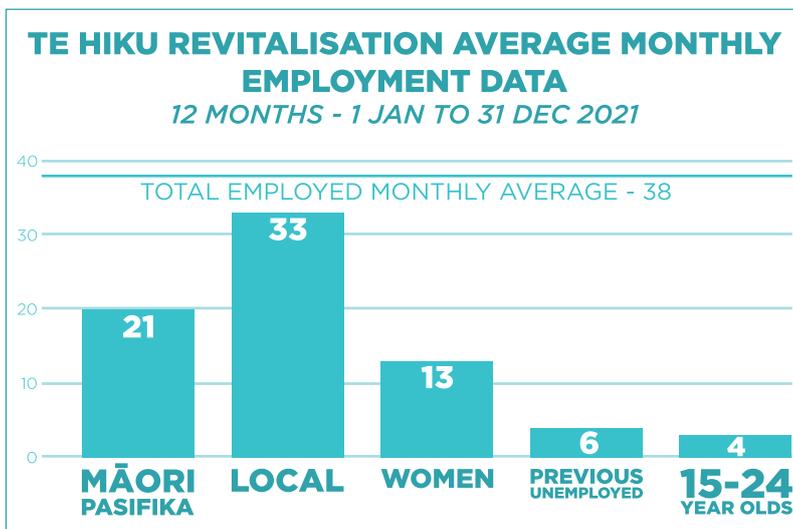
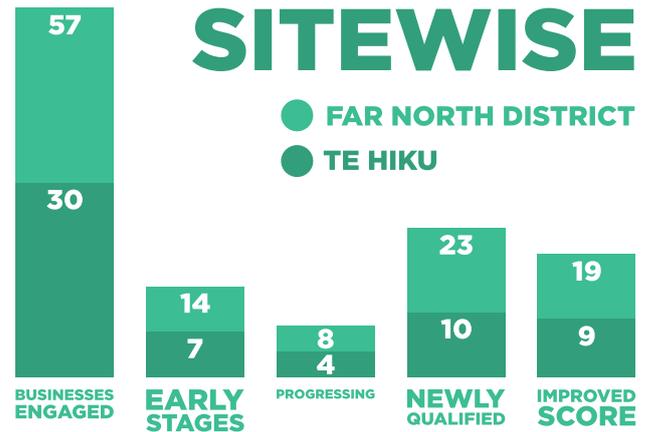
In keeping with the relationship-focussed nature of the project and the PWG, most engagement is undertaken face-to-face through workshops and group meetings. Verbal input is the largest contributor to engagement, with outcomes reported in person at the PWG meetings.

Formal monthly reporting allows us to track the results of our engagement and the overall results we're achieving through this project. Figure 6 demonstrates the social outcomes we've already achieved through our consultation.

Figure 6: Key social outcomes achieved

47%
SPENT
WITH
MĀORI
BUSINESS

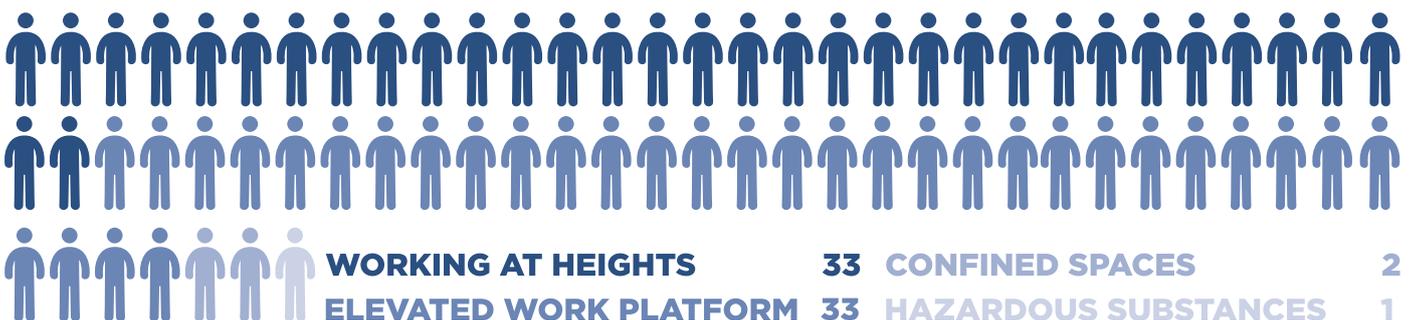
88%
FAR
NORTH
SPEND



45
LOCAL
BUSINESSES
UPSKILLED

69
INDIVIDUALS
TRAINED

TE HIKU SAFETY TRAINING



4.0 Outcomes, impact and insights

Reflection and evaluation of engagement

We have far exceeded our original expectations and demonstrated the scale of what can be achieved with clear intent, engagement and collaboration. Relationships are the heart and soul of this initiative and they are everywhere, opening opportunities to reach further and strive for more.

Through the PWG we continue to engage with the creators of the original masterplan. PWG members, with their diverse backgrounds have proved invaluable in identifying the most appropriate groups to engage with on each of our 81 initiatives. We have further boosted our level of reach with the help of other community influencers. This allows us to tailor consultation for each individual project and ensure we match the audience(s) with the most meaningful engagement methods.

Figure 3 demonstrates the wide array of engagement we have undertaken. Feedback from targeted engagement exercises, members of the public and internal council stakeholders is constantly shaping PWG decisions.

Community Development Effectiveness

Originally, we activated 28 businesses to attend the initial contractor's forum, but as we collaborated with businesses to refine a programme of tangible, meaningful support we were able to reach double that.

This project has resulted in 57 businesses registering for our support; to date 23 have achieved Sitewise accreditation and 22 are still in the process. In addition, 69 individuals have been trained in industry-recognised safety courses. For example, local artists have been trained in Working at Heights to allow them to paint their murals on the side of buildings.

By creating resilience in businesses and individuals we are creating a stronger, more vibrant community.

In Summary

We built, and continue to build, community connection to the project with many tools via a large number of important relationships. The result is that the mana of these communities is reflected fully in each of the 81 initiatives.

As a result of the urban revitalisation undertaken throughout this project, Kaitaia has just been named New Zealand's Most Beautiful Small Town of 2021. And we are only half way through!



We continue to:

- empower the community to deliver this project
- upskill local businesses so they can be FNDC suppliers in the future
- engage previously-unemployed people in the towns involved
- consult hard-to-reach, frequently-disenfranchised groups
- create a sense of community identity and belonging.

Our communities are excited by the scale and momentum of their achievements on this project. The lessons we learn along the way are already shaping the way we approach new projects and we're assessing how we can transfer some of the strategies further afield.

This initiative is highly repeatable; organisations everywhere can replicate the results using lessons we have learned about:

- engaging and empowering local communities
- reaching further through other community influencers to activate groups we wouldn't normally be able to access
- supporting local businesses and community development

Innovation and Uniqueness

When we analyse the success of this project and the scale of what we've achieved, we find the following key actions that can be applied to enhance future engagement practices:

1. **A community can achieve powerful results when you empower it** in the right way to deliver a project, from concept through to delivery. Using local people to define and deliver this project has created the meaningful and vibrant sense of identity, connection and pride we set out to achieve. For any council it can feel daunting to truly empower a community group to deliver a project but the results can be staggering.
2. **Having clear goals for outcomes** allows identification of challenges. Treat these like a project in their own right and use engagement with the right people in the right way until you find a way through the difficulties.
3. **Step back from a project and analyse what else you could achieve**, besides physical construction. This can create exciting opportunities for organisations to really affect positive outcomes for their community.
4. **Strive to reach further**. The key to our success has been identifying influential people in the community and using them to identify other influencers and groups. This has given us incredible access to groups and individuals we wouldn't have been able to engage on our own.

Acknowledgements and to find out more

We would like to thank Far North District Council for agreeing to share this case study and insights to advance engagement practice. This case study was authored by Grace Henty, Hoskin Civil.

At the time of publishing, Grace Henty was employed by Hoskin Civil in the position of Business Manager and has provided specialist support to the Te Hiku Revitalisation Project Working Group. Grace has expertise in public participation and engagement.

For more information about this project see:

- <https://youtu.be/8oiVK3s4rLw> (YouTube) and
- <https://www.facebook.com/Te-Hiku-Open-Spaces-Revitalisation-Project-100889691915279> (Facebook)

To connect with the author:

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