

Collaboration in real time...

Embedding cross sector collaboration into our organizational practices



‘HTOWN connect’ hui - a place where Waikato youth sector orgs can make and maintain authentic, genuine and meaningful relationships

Collaboration is the latest ‘buzz word’ most commonly found being floated around numerous social sector org’s and in progressively minded funding bodies. It is usually spoken about in high-level hui’s where everyone agrees we should all collaborate more. No doubt about it. Let’s collaborate. We should definitely collaborate more...and so it is decided, we will collaborate.

This is often followed up with a strangely long period of business as usual; doing what we always did before, doing our daily mahi working in isolation of each other and left scratching our heads thinking, I wonder when the ‘collaboration’ thing is going to happen.

Collaboration, it turns out, is not as easy to do in real time as it is to talk about in hui’s, write into our policies or include in a funding application to ensure we get the putea we need for our new ‘collaborative kaupapa’...

If this sounds frustratingly familiar, then there is hope and good news! Collaboration can work 'for real' and it can lead to the improved work and wellbeing outcomes we are all aiming for both personally and professionally for our organizations and the people we work to serve.

The reality is, 'real life collaboration' is down to the people who work on the ground, in community, and in this case, with rangatahi to make it happen. More often than not, these people are not included in the 'high level collaboration huis' and so the disconnect between what 'should' be happening and 'how that actually looks' is the space between collaboration in policy and planning and collaboration 'for real' on the ground in community.

This kaupapa all started through meaningful, caring and well-nourished whanaungatanga, relationships, and more accurately, the whanaungatanga between the people who work on the ground with people they serve, not in offices. This is bottom up collective action, acting first in response to a clear understanding of the need, asking permission later, showing what success looks like, continually innovating and always supporting each other with each other's mahi when they need it.

The example we would like to shine a light on and share with you is an ongoing collaboration in the youth employment and training space between Te Wananga o Aotearoa Youth Services, K'aute Pasifika and the Graeme Dingle Foundation. Initiated by Jami Dickson, Gina Bird (TWoA), Steven Naidu and Faraimo Tuifua (K'aute Pasifika), this is a collective youth to employment and training kaupapa that has since developed into what is now an organic embodiment of collaboration across the Waikato youth to employment, further education and training scene with many amazing people all pulling together. Like many who work in the social sector, they are 'head down tail up' in their mahi and time poor to meet in lots of hui...they are doey people and have found ways that work for real that has allowed successful cross sector collaboration to flourish.

When Jami, Gina, Steven and Faraimo started working with Te Wananga o Aotearoa and K'aute Pasifika, respectively, they were able to bring their previous working relationships, skilled labor market perspectives, networks, contacts and know-how to work with industry and training providers from their MSD work broker days to the youth sector. By having their skills and existing relationships based within youth service and social sector organizations, it meant they could pinpoint their passion for helping young people in a preventative, holistic and strengths based approach that bridged the industry, education and youth sectors. The skills Jami, Gina, Steven and Faraimo brought to the youth to employment space were significant, however, without an even wider and deeper connection with Waikato youth sector orgs and schools, their ability to contribute to the greater kaupapa was limited; and so began what is a never ending journey of whakawhanaungatanga with everyone and anyone who could help awhi the collective kaupapa!

A critical first step was getting out and finding who else in the sector and was delivering on similar kaupapa and working out who was open to collaboration. First stop was the amazing crew at the Graeme Dingle Foundation, who, amongst many awesome programmes, run the 'Career Navigator', a kaupapa in Secondary Schools to help get senior students ready for life after school. Graeme Dingle Waikato Manager, Clive Somerville (and long time champion of cross sector collaboration in the youth space) had no hesitation in giving the freedom and trust to his staff (initially Lisa Spyve and currently Cameron Quetier) to work in whatever ways were needed to ensure our rangatahi are best served. Through this collective and shared kaupapa way of working that placed the best outcomes of our rangatahi at the centre of their mahi, it removed the mentality of competition that is so often a barrier to collaboration between social sector organizations. It also meant that things were made easy for the Schools and AE groups, who's students they were working with. Having less 'individual knocks on the door from outside service orgs', rather a set of well coordinated collective of youth to employment teams contact and turning up together, meant that life was made easy for school administration and the rangatahi received a far greater and more diverse learning experience that captured all the unique skills and opportunities that sat within each organization.

At this point, it is poignant to acknowledge the amazing people, staff and managers of all the organizations that have allowed their staff to make 'collaboration for real' a success. With the permission and trust of the amazing and open-minded staff at Te Wananga o Aotearoa, K'aute Pasifika and Graeme Dingle (a critical first step in any 'collaboration for real' mission), then passionate and capable people on the ground cannot innovate and forge collaborative working relationships and make things happen.

The crew behind this example of collaboration are happy to share their learning journey to promote and welcome others to explore how they can find ways to collaborate in their mahi. Here is a simple step by step guide that documents their journey, how they went about it, what their learnings were and how the benefits of collaboration have contributed to improving the outcomes for the rangatahi they serve.

We hope this can serve to inspire and help others to reach out in their field of mahi and find ways to resonate, innovate and collaborate!

Written by **Joe Wilson**

COLLABORATION... (IN REAL LIFE)

HOW WE TRANSLATED HIGH LEVEL 'COLLABORATION SPEAK' INTO MEANINGFUL GROUND LEVEL OUTCOMES

WHO ARE WE?

We are three collaborating partners who work for K'aute Pasifika, Te Wananga o Aotearoa and The Graeme Dingle Foundation.

There is no one who stands out. We leverage off each others' relationships, connections and skill sets and bring others along. We are lucky to have the support of our managers to do the doey for better outcomes for our rangatahi and who understand relationships are key. There are no MOU's, no funding each other, no hidden agendas...without the bureaucracy and processes it is just a true collaboration for our rangatahi

STEP 1. KNOW YOUR MAHI EXTENDS BEYOND JUST YOUR ORG...

Have a clear understanding of what YOU do so that you can see how you fit into what everyone else does...then you're ready to go and meet them!

The start of this beautiful relationship began with (left to right) Faraimo Tuifua (K'aute P), Jami Dickson (TWoA), Gina Bird (TWoA) and Steven Naidu (K'aute P) realizing that together they could achieve so much more. This was the core group of an ever expanding and evolving collaboration!



STEP 2. NETWORK, REACH OUT, CONNECT ...REPEAT, MAINTAIN!

Collaboration is just people getting together who share the same values and finding ways to support each other. It's not new...

We bring our existing relationships and always seek to build new ones such as Jami's and Stevens from their previous mahi. For the youth sector, the 'Htown Youth Connect' is invaluable for many of our connections- **(shout out to Daynah Eriepa at HCC for being our torch holder for this kaupapa and Dujon Cullingford before!)** This is what the start of collaboration can look like...



Htown Connect utilizes numerous places and spaces to meet across Kirikiriroa

STEP 3. MOVING FROM COMPETITIVE TO COLLABORATIVE

Creating working collaborations outside of your org can mean bosses and managers feeling a lack of control... business not as usual...

Some barriers to collaboration may include **competitive funding models and contracts** that have typically led to competition over collaboration. Collaboration asks us to see past our specific contracts and work together for a higher purpose.

We are lucky because our bosses are awesome so it makes it easy... shout out to our managers at Te Wananga o Aotearoa, K'aute Pasifika and Graeme Dingle Foundation!

STEP 4. FIND THE SIMILAR ORGS WHO DO SIMILAR MAHI AND PLAN...

Shared kaupapa, shared values, shared resources, shared ideas, share people, make it REAL!

STEP 5. SEE YOUR NEW COLLABORATION AS YOUR ACTUAL WORK TEAM...

Making collaboration between service providers means shifting our thinking from 'we are employed by one org to do a contract for our org' to...

'we are employed by 'rangatahi' to give them the best support possible' we are paid and enabled to do this by (name of our org!) and we do this by REAL LIFE COLLABORATIONS!



Collaboration between HCC, K'aute Pasifika, Te Wananga o Aoteroa, Hamilton East Community Centre and Vision Complete Pathways '2022.

STEP 6. WHAT DOES REPORTING LOOK LIKE WITH COLLABORATION?

With new ways of working, we have had to find new ways of reporting.

We have realized that testimonials from the industries, schools, rangatahi, AE groups and collaborators are crucial to help our management understand how we work and what our outcomes are. This is always in development and evolving to suit the latest collaboration



*An example of a report designed and produced by Jami Dickson (TWoA) that shows qualitative and quantitative information that includes testimonials, ratings, charts, pictures and feedback for improvement that captures and celebrates collaborative mahi. Note the report includes the names of the collaborators for the event - crucial in ensuring collaborative partners are acknowledged and celebrated. *

OUR LEARNINGS SO FAR...

Good people find good people and we all bring our relationships with us from job to job. Work with the willing and don't waste time with those who do not wish to collaborate. Maintaining collaborations is CRITICAL as starting from scratch takes a long time and lots of energy to build trust and alignment. Always keep the momentum going and advocate for collaboration and high trust ways of working. Collaboration makes work fun and improves outcomes for us all. Being innovative and always learning to adapt is crucial. Above, enjoy it and celebrate the wins far and wide to help change the old culture of organizations working in silos.



Collaborations with K'aute Pasifika, TWoA, Oho Mauri, Fairfield College and Graeme Dingle Foundation '2021-22'

