

# The National Strategy for Community Governance

Supporting governance in community organisations



In collaboration  
with the **Community  
Governance Steering Group**

## SPRINTING FOR GOOD: USING CO-DESIGN TO COLLABORATE FOR SOCIAL IMPACT

| September 2020

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# 1 Introduction

In Aotearoa New Zealand there are more than 100,000 non-government organisations (NGOs), charities and community groups. Our country would not function without the tireless work of these organisations in all sectors: supporting parents, caring for older people, providing surf-life saving services, protecting the environment and organising education, sport and arts events.

Most of these groups have some form of board or committee. For the approximately 500,000 people currently volunteering in governance roles in the community sector, these roles can be rewarding but difficult. The capabilities and capacity of boards and committees in the community sector are variable.

Raising support for and the overall capacity of governance in the community sector will result in not only stronger community organisations, but more effective services and outcomes for the communities they serve.

However, the challenge to do so is complex. Community organisations are diverse, board and committee members are usually time-poor volunteers and there are limited resources available to invest in training and development.

The Centre for Social Impact (CSI) and the Community Governance Steering Group (a collaboration of people and organisations interested in developing and supporting good governance practices in Aotearoa New Zealand's community sector) used a 'co-design sprint' process, with more than 150 people involved, to develop a National Strategy for Community Governance. Our aim was that 'all community organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand are well governed'.

In this document we share our experience of what we did and how we did it, and our reflections on what worked well and what we could have done differently. In doing so, our aim is to support and inspire you to find innovative ways to work collaboratively to solve complex social good problems.

## Community Governance in Aotearoa New Zealand

There are around 114,000 NGOs operating in Aotearoa New Zealand that generate an estimated \$20 billion in annual income. NGOs employ more than 100 000 people (nearly 5% of the workforce) and contribute nearly 3% to GDP; if the work of volunteers is included, the contribution to GDP increases to 6% each year<sup>1</sup>. A wide range of organisations sits under the umbrella term 'NGO and community organisations', from small, informal committees and marae committees to incorporated societies, charitable trusts, social enterprises and social purpose businesses.

A subset of NGOs are the 27 000 registered charities. These charities employ 93 000 full-time and 90 000 part-time staff, although nearly three-quarters have no staff. Charities are supported by 230 000 regular volunteers<sup>2</sup>.

Many of these volunteers are members of NGO boards or committees. JBWere calculates that if each NGO in Aotearoa New Zealand had four board members (allowing for some people to sit on more than one board), one in 40 New Zealanders would be a member of an NGO board<sup>3</sup>.

NGO boards play a critical role in the performance and success of their organisations. Their role is to determine the purpose of their NGOs and develop clear strategies to ensure the NGOs are successful

<sup>1</sup> JBWere (2017) *The New Zealand Cause Report: Shape of the Charity Sector*  
<https://jbwere.co.nz/media/41bhoesn/the-jbwere-nz-cause-report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Department of Internal Affairs (2019) *Modernising the Charities Act 2005: Discussion Document*, Wellington  
[https://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Charities-Modernising-the-Charities-Act-Discussion-Document-April2019/\\$file/Charities-Modernising-the-Charities-Act-Discussion-Document-April2019.pdf](https://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Charities-Modernising-the-Charities-Act-Discussion-Document-April2019/$file/Charities-Modernising-the-Charities-Act-Discussion-Document-April2019.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> JBWere (2017) *The New Zealand Cause Report: Shape of the Charity Sector*

in their purposes. Boards also ensure their NGOs are financially viable and sustainable and operating in legal and compliant ways.

Charities Services recently undertook a survey of the governance issues of the charities registered with it. It found that 15% of the board members of the nearly 200 NGOs that responded did not know much or anything at all about their governance roles and responsibilities. Even more (18%) felt they did not have oversight of the financial performance of their charities. The top challenges boards faced were obtaining funding, strategic planning, complying with government regulations, managing risk and recruiting staff and volunteers. Many charities relied on the knowledge of their members or did limited training and development for their governance roles<sup>4</sup>.

Limited research has been undertaken into NGO governance in Aotearoa New Zealand, either in its current form or in exploring alternative or new forms of community governance. The most recent is the 2019 CSI report *What is the Future for NGO Governance?*. It found that while there were many innovative practices in community sector governance, especially in Māori organisations and iwi boards, some community organisations and NGOs were not well governed.

The annual large-scale survey of the Australian Institute of Company Directors reports similar trends. The 2019 *NFP Governance and Performance Study* report concluded that the task of the NGO governor was complex due to the need to achieve both mission success and financial sustainability in an environment that was becoming increasingly difficult to survive.

The report identified that strategy was critical to the success of NGOs. The nearly 1500 directors who were surveyed reported that they focused too much on short-term or operational issues. Directors said that their highest priority was adjusting to changes in their operating environments, diversifying income streams and developing and implementing strategic plans. More than 43% said they needed to do better at developing strategy.

Many directors saw weaknesses in their boards and organisations as there was minimal long-term thinking and no clear strategies or resilience in their organisations. They also questioned whether the increasing time commitments required of NGO directors were sustainable<sup>5</sup>. Governance, and in particular the role of board members in leading the development of strategy, is critical for an NGO in a rapidly changing environment.

*A smaller-scale study of social service NGOs* in Aotearoa New Zealand had similar findings. The research found that attracting skilled board members was a challenge for small NGOs. In some of these organisations the governing bodies operated like 'management committees' that worked to support the chief executives, fundraise and even help in the delivery of services. For these organisations, the strategy and planning functions associated with governance may not have existed.

Investments in training and developing board members were limited. Board appraisals were rare. Constitutional structures, such as elected and representative structures, could also have been creating barriers for many NGOs to establishing effective and diverse governing boards with the necessary mix of skills and experience<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Charities Services (2019) Unpublished Governance Survey, Wellington

<sup>5</sup> Australian Institute of Company Directors (2019) *The NFP Governance and Performance Study* <https://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/-/media/cd2/resources/advocacy/research/2019/pdf/07277-adv-nfp-governance-performance-study-2019-a4-68pp-web-2.ashx>

<sup>6</sup> Cribb Jo (2017) *Governing for Good: The governance capability of social service NGOs* <http://www.jocribb.co.nz/research>

## A National Strategy for Community Governance

Given the importance of governance to the community sector and the opportunities to strengthen it, a group of like-minded organisations started to meet informally to share knowledge and explore options to work together to build capability in community governance.

These informal meetings led to a full-day workshop in February 2019. Representatives from community organisations, government and philanthropy met, and all agreed that success would be the creation of a national plan of co-ordinated action to support community governance. The problems of and opportunities for change were scoped and a ‘Coalition of the Willing’ was formed with the aim of ‘growing great NGO governance in Aotearoa’. Actions arising from this meeting included contacting stakeholders identified as critical to the success of the project.

The Coalition of the Willing met formally again in early August 2019. At this workshop [the shared vision and mission](#) were agreed, as were the principles on which the project would operate. Six outcomes were also agreed based on research findings, discussions and the extensive knowledge of Coalition members. It was agreed that CSI would be the host ‘backbone’ organisation and should seek funding for a Project Manager.

The release of the CSI research report [What is the Future for NGO Governance?](#) followed. The report outlined some of the challenges facing community boards and committees and recommended a national strategy for community governance. There was a strong positive response to the report and its recommendation.

From then on the project gained momentum. Potential foundation partners were identified and approached and the initial funding was secured, the Coalition of the Willing was formalised into the Community Governance Steering Group, [an event was held to launch the project](#) and to call for volunteers, and regular project group meetings were instituted between the Project Manager, the Chair of the Steering Group and the Acting Chief Executive of CSI.

The timeline was as follows:

Informal networking and individual meetings of like-minded organisations	2018
<b>Coalition of the Willing</b> formed with the aim of advancing a national plan of co-ordinated action	February 2019
Coalition of the Willing workshop to determine strategy purpose and principles and outcomes sought. Mandate from the Coalition to seek funding for the strategy development	Early August 2019
Meetings with potential <b>Initial Funders</b>	August-September 2019
Establishment of <b>Community Governance Steering Group</b> , including a series of meetings about membership, Terms of Reference and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with CSI (as backbone organisation)	September-December 2019
Release of research report <b>What is the Future for NGO Governance?</b> by CSI recommends development of a national strategy for community governance	September 2019
Final funding secured	November 2019

Launch of project	December 2019
Project Manager commences work	January 2020
Regular <b>Project Management Group</b> meetings commence	January 2020 onwards
Regular, formal Steering Group meetings commence	January 2020 onwards
Strategic meeting planning for the medium term determines that the ongoing structure and governance of the project will be a <b>collaboration of organisations</b>	May 2020

### Why Co-Design Sprints?

We needed to find a way of developing a national strategy that met these criteria:

- It was inclusive of the wide range of boards and committees and their members. Community groups operate in all sectors across the rural/urban divide, have a range of sizes and have different operating models, risk profiles and constitutional arrangements. Community board and committee members' levels of governance expertise and experience are also variable.
- It could scale up or down to include as many voices and volunteers as stepped forward.
- It was time and cost effective. Those involved would be busy volunteers and the project's operating budget was on a shoestring.
- It built and maintained momentum – projects have their time and windows to be successful. There was momentum building around the need to support capability in community governance. The project needed to be up and running and delivering actions quickly to ride the wave of interest.
- It was action orientated. Many of us were weary of projects that involved meetings and talking and resulted in little action. This project needed to have a strong bias towards action. If it were to be impactful and attract funding, it needed to deliver actions quickly.

The default way of delivering collaborative projects has been to set up working groups, with representatives from a range of organisations meeting either as part of their work or as volunteers after work. Using this approach, work on collaborative projects often gets squeezed out by 'real' work, committee members frequently change and have varying abilities to commit to projects, and momentum is difficult to sustain over time. We did not want to set up a series of volunteer working groups or committees.

The Project Manager had been engaged in 'design sprints' run by [Creative HQ](#) (CHQ) as an expert, and had experienced how, through design sprints, diverse groups could be brought together over five days to solve problems. She was encouraged to read [\*Sprint: How to Solve Big Problems and Test New Ideas in Just Five Days\*](#) and after doing so concluded that adapting sprint and co-design methods was worth exploring.

Sprints evolved out of software and technology development and have been used for many years to bring multidisciplinary teams together for a concentrated block of time to design and prototype products. [Design thinking](#) was developed by industrial and product designers and provides a structured methodology for addressing complex problems, especially those that are not well defined or are unknown. At the heart of the process is understanding the human needs involved and defining problems in terms of who needs what from the solutions. The process includes brainstorming, prototyping and testing.

Co-design is a term that is also widely used. For us, the principle of co-design means that those for whom actions are designed are fully engaged in the design process. This meant community board and committee members were critical participants at every step of our process.

There is a lot of hype about sprints and design thinking. The sprint process is widely used in software development teams and has its own specific language (including 'scrum' masters who have nothing to do with rugby). However, after discussions with experts at CHQ and CSI, we concluded that an adaptation of the sprint process could work well for our needs.

The sprint methodology has some great features that align with what we needed for our project. Sprint methodologies:

- Bring people with diverse backgrounds together for a short time (which is feasible for busy people, especially volunteers)
- Assume the problem is complex and not well defined (which is the case with improving the capability of community governance)
- Are structured, well-tested processes that have been proven to get results for complex social problems.

Sprints can last for months, weeks or five days. We knew we would have to adapt and develop our own version because we knew most volunteers could not free up a week of their time. We would have to design a shorter, condensed version.

### **This Document**

In the following sections we outline how we adapted, developed and implemented the sprint process to create the National Strategy for Community Governance. Section 4 documents how we ran the sprints and Section 5 outlines how we built action and implementation into every step of our work. In the final chapter we offer our thoughts on what we got right and what we did not.

Our aim in publishing this document is to share openly and honestly how we used co-design sprints to develop actions to address a complex social problem. Our hope is that what we have learnt is of use to you and your community.

## 2 Designing the National Strategy for Community Governance

This section discusses how we organised ourselves to develop the National Strategy for Community Governance and what we learned from doing so.

### **Mission, Vision, Principles and Outcomes**

After more than a year of informal discussions and sharing knowledge and research, the Coalition of the Willing met in August 2019 to agree on the structure and direction of the project. While we had already agreed that a national collaborative strategy was needed, no further details had been finalised.

Based on a review of feedback from the sector, data and knowledge, the Coalition considered a draft outline of six areas that had been consistently identified as needing focus. After discussion and revision the Coalition clarified the vision and mission of the project and confirmed the six outcomes sought. The wording of these outcomes was subsequently tweaked and edited by Coalition members, but the essence was agreed at this critical meeting.

By identifying and agreeing on a statement about the project, the work could progress. This was an important milestone for the project.

#### **Lessons**

- Take the time to clarify and formally record the project aims, mission, vision and outcomes sought. Doing so will solidify the steering group around a common goal (or not – as some members may decide the project is not for them), allows for consistent messages about the project to be widely shared and provides the substance needed to engage funders.
- Investing time early in the process in thinking about the high-level project implementation and the roles people will play is also time well spent.

### **The Community Governance Steering Group**

As the project aims and mission were solidified and funding was secured, the respective roles of those involved needed to be clarified. After several months of discussion, the Coalition of the Willing formalised into a Community Governance Steering Group. Not all members of the Coalition decided to stay formally connected to the project.

The ‘storming’ phase of the establishment of the Steering Group included debate about the following and other issues:

- Whether the role of the group was governance or steering. As the backbone organisation, CSI, held the contracts with funders and the employment relationship with the Project Manager, governance in terms of appointing and managing the employee was not appropriate. Likewise, the backbone organisation could not delegate accountability for delivering on the contracts it had entered into with funders. Stewardship and steering were what the project needed.
- There were different views among members as to what extent government and businesses could be involved. Ultimately the decision was that they were key partners in this work.
- How much consultation with the ‘community’ needed to happen and who had the mandate to act for the ‘community’ were also debated. This was resolved through widespread communication about the project and by including everyone who wanted to be part of it.

- Issues of organisational and personal self-interest arose, as did ‘scarcity thinking’: if this project gets funding, perhaps my one will not. Such behaviours are not compatible with a high-performing steering group.

Some initial members of the Coalition decided to withdraw, and others joined or were invited to join. The Steering Group included a diverse range of perspectives, including those of philanthropic funders, government agencies and cultural umbrella groups.

Ensuring Māori perspectives were embedded in the Steering Group was critical. Four members who brought a strong te ao Māori (Māori world view) perspective to the work helped shape the project from the beginning. They also helped guide the development of a specific Māori sprint so that the issues and opportunities specific to Māori governance were acknowledged and appropriate actions identified.

The Terms of Reference were then confirmed; they clearly outlined the purpose of the Steering Group (Appendix One).

Regular monthly meetings of the Steering Group focused on the quality of delivery of the project, its sustainability in the medium term, and opportunities to influence decision-makers to invest in community sector capabilities.

The value of the Steering Group lay in its ability to test and develop ideas with a diverse group of committed experts, the wide networks each member brought, and the members’ willingness to contribute in terms of knowledge, communication channels, introductions and resources.

### **Lessons**

- The Community Governance Steering Group was a critical factor in the success of this project. The Chair was committed, connected and incredibly competent.
- Ensure Māori perspectives are embedded in any governance and decision-making bodies from the start.
- If possible, ensure the steering group has a strategic focus from the onset. In complex projects with lots of operational detail, it is easy for a steering group to get swamped in project logistics rather than stewardship and oversight.
- Steering group members need to be committed to the project and capable of leaving their organisational roles aside.
- Even though Terms of Reference and MoUs seem very formal, they are useful tools to help establish working relationships and, in the initial stages, to clarify roles. After that, it is to be hoped that they are never needed.

### **Backbone Organisation**

It became clear quickly that this project needed a home base. Funders needed an organisation to contract with, a Project Manager was required, administration and communication resources needed to be secured and an office infrastructure (such as an email address, meeting places and filing systems) had to be set up.

CSI, a social change consultancy based at Foundation North (a substantial philanthropic funder in northern Aotearoa New Zealand), was an initial member of the Coalition of the Willing. CSI had expertise and interest in building governance capability in the community sector and had been delivering governance support and development to community groups funded by Foundation North. The National Strategy for Community Governance fitted with its strategy and remit.

As a substantial hub of expertise, it was an ideal candidate for the backbone organisation.

However, what was best practice for backbone organisations? A review of the literature on collaboration, especially work on 'constellation governance', provided some guidance. Collaborations need some sort of secretariat function that holds the work together. Key roles for the backbone should include co-ordinating and organising the work, measuring its impacts and communicating progress.

It was agreed that all material from the National Strategy would be co-branded as 'CSI working in partnership with the Community Governance Steering Group'.

The MoU with the Steering Group (Appendix Two) clearly articulated CSI's role as:

- Providing project co-ordination and management
- Seeking and hold the funding for the project, managing expenses and contracts and reporting to funders
- Engaging the Project Manager and any other staff
- Undertaking risk management processes for the project
- Leading communications about the project.

#### **Lessons**

- This project would not have been possible without a competent, well-resourced and committed backbone organisation.
- During the project there were some internal changes at CSI. While they had no impact on the project, they did demonstrate the risk of key personnel or priorities changing mid-project. It is important to formalise relationships and expectations to insure against this.
- Backbone organisations need to understand their roles as partners not controllers. What might be good for them (such as higher profiles) might come at the expense of project and other partners. This was not our experience, but it is a risk worth anticipating.
- Administration and communication resources and expertise are critical to most large-scale social change projects, and should be factored into budgets through backbone organisations.

#### **Initial Funders**

It quickly became clear that the project would not progress without dedicated paid resources. A Project Manager was needed to co-ordinate the contribution of a large and diverse group of volunteers. So, for the project to progress, funding was needed to hire someone.

After discussions with the Coalition of the Willing, CSI approached five potential funders with a proposition for them to contribute collectively to the project. The aim was to start as we meant to go on with a collaborative partnership, so potential funders from government, corporates and philanthropy were approached.

Those approached were known to be interested in supporting community governance and capability-building. Some had vested interests in strengthening community governance.

The first funder agreed quickly. It funded and interacted with many small community groups and understood the challenges of governance and the potential risks to public money of poor governance. Once the first funder had agreed, it was easier to attract the others.

The Rātā Foundation was also a strong backer of the project. It invests around \$20 million a year in community organisations in its region, so has a strong interest in how to best support governance of community organisations.

The Rātā Foundation had been working with its local communities to identify and meet their needs around governance. Some of what its communities were telling it they needed would be similar across Aotearoa New Zealand. Wherever possible, the Foundation aims to collaborate to ensure it has maximum impact, so this was a great opportunity to work with others for collective impact.

Knowing that the process for developing the strategy was inclusive and user focused gave the Rātā Foundation confidence that the solutions developed would meet the needs of its communities.

The project's alignment with Grant Thornton's national and worldwide focus on the For Purpose sector attracted it to support this project. While it helps many in the sector, being a private business means most of its assistance goes to organisations that can afford to pay for it, whereas this project would help provide resources to an important part of the For Purpose sector that needed it but found funding a barrier.

For Grant Thornton, being involved was also an opportunity to deepen its relationships with others in the sector, and the reputations and track records of those leading the project gave it confidence that this project would succeed where others had foundered.

Some funders were also interested in the proposed process and what they could learn from organising social change projects using co-design sprints, as well as the impacts the project could have on community governance.

Our project funders had much to offer, more than just funding for a Project Manager. They were involved in sprints as experts, generously shared their knowledge, made introductions, were members of the Steering Group, worked hard to use their networks to connect the project with new audiences and made ongoing commitments to the actions and the project.

Building an ecosystem and a community around the project was a critical part of its success, and the funder relationships were a key component of this.

### ***Lessons***

- Take time to draft high-quality proposals and project plans. For us this needed to be done in part by volunteers while the Steering Group was brainstorming, so it can be a challenge.
- Identify and approach funders who share your ambition. For us that meant philanthropic funders and government agencies that wanted to grow governance capabilities in the organisations they funded, and audit firms that had first-hand experience of the downsides of poor governance.
- Do not underestimate the time and resources your project will require. We did, and needed to spend valuable time finding 'top-ups'. For example, we underestimated how many people would want to be involved and therefore the demand for travel and expenses for those who could not self-fund.
- Think about potential funders as project partners, not as reservoirs of cash. Seek and value their expertise, knowledge, infrastructure and networks.

### **Reflection**

One of the most important factors for us in terms of the project's infrastructure was attracting and inviting the right people to the Steering Group. The importance of gathering a group of champions who are fully committed to a project cannot be understated. Personalities do matter when you need people who are able to collaborate

and work together collectively, putting aside self-interest. Having a diverse group working together to steward a project brings energy, resources, reach and challenge, and increases the chances of ongoing sustainability. Having an experienced and committed Chair of the Steering Group was core to achieving this.

It took the Steering Group a while and some pain to become fully functional. The debates and discussions in the 'brainstorming' phase of the development of the Steering Group helped clarify and strengthen thinking, so were a necessary part of the process.

A competent, committed backbone organisation was also a critical factor in our project infrastructure. The logistics of including everyone who wanted to be involved were complex and needed dedicated administrative support. Communicating as widely as possible about the project was also critical. Both were strengths that CSI brought to the project.

Finally, backing from our funders was vital. Not only did they provide the necessary resources, they also came to the table as partners, affirming the importance of our work and feeding our determination to proceed and succeed.

### 3 Designing the Sprints

This section outlines how we adapted sprint and co-design methodologies to suit the needs of this project and how we set them up.

#### Calling all Volunteers

From the beginning we wanted the project to be inclusive. Everyone who wanted to contribute would be enabled to do so. If the actions in the National Strategy for Community Governance were going to be impactful, we needed a diverse range of perspectives included in their design. Board and committee members in the community sector are diverse, and the ability to include a wide range of experiences and perspectives needed to be built in to the project. We were determined that the project would be co-designed, so we needed as many volunteers who were board and committee members as possible.

Releasing the report *[What is the Future for NGO Governance?](#)* by sharing it widely through social media and community sector networks (usually through e-newsletters), and drafting articles in key community publications, meant we generated interest in the often-invisible topic of community governance.

We then built on the soft release of the report by hosting a panel event discussing the findings. As one of the key recommendations of the report was the development of a co-ordinated, collaborative national strategy of investment in community governance, this event provided the ideal platform to formally launch the project and call for volunteers. Hosting the event in partnership with the [Institute of Directors](#) meant we attracted a wide and diverse audience to both the physical event and the [webcast](#).

We followed the launch with a series of posts in social media and community networks, and [an article in a national newspaper](#), all reiterating the call for volunteers to be involved in the design of the strategy and providing a contact email address. We also shared [videos of community leaders](#) sharing their thoughts on the importance of community governance.

Within a month we had more than 80 volunteers. By the end of the sprints, more than 150 people had contributed.

#### *Lessons*

- What worked well: Working with partners and networks to share the invitation to be involved in the project and building momentum around the issue (through a mini-campaign approach, including a series of posts in a range of media).
- What did not work so well: Our reach needed to be wider to include more Māori 'flax-roots' committee members, Pacific community leaders and ethnically diverse groups. We took extra steps to address this in our targeted networking.

#### Designing the Sprint Process

The key questions for us in adapting the sprint process were:

- How could the process be designed so it could scale up or down to accommodate everyone who volunteered?
- How could the process be designed so that it was most likely to generate action?
- Given that most of those involved would not know each other, how could we create the most inclusive process for all voices?
- Given that most of those involved would not be familiar with sprint processes, what did we need to do to ensure the process worked well?
- What could go wrong and how could we mitigate the risks?

Discussions and testing draft processes with experienced sprint facilitators resolved all these issues.

Our sprints were constructed based on these roles:

Sprint Roles	
Facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organises the sprint and assures logistics are in place</li> <li>• Works to establish the Code of Conduct for working together</li> <li>• Upholds the Code of Conduct</li> <li>• Keeps the team to task, process and time</li> <li>• Supports the team to work to consensus</li> </ul>
Sprint Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brings networks, resources and knowledge willingly into the process</li> <li>• Ensures Sprint and Challenge Team members are well briefed on processes for and expectations of working together</li> <li>• Makes decisions if gridlocked and consensus cannot be achieved</li> <li>• Is responsible for the quality of the end 'prototype'</li> <li>• Is responsible for the ongoing implementation of the prototype</li> <li>• Champions the prototype</li> </ul>
Sprint Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brings networks, resources and knowledge willingly into the process</li> <li>• Works collaboratively to create a high-quality end prototype</li> <li>• Contributes to the ongoing implementation of the prototype</li> </ul>
Challenge Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brings networks, resources and knowledge willingly into the process</li> <li>• Constructively challenges and tests the ideas</li> <li>• Asks, "Will this work in my context?"</li> <li>• Contributes to the ongoing implementation of the prototype</li> </ul>

In creating a Challenge Team role we were not only building rigour into the process and more assurance that the actions developed would be impactful because they were being tested by diverse and 'fresh' eyes, we were creating the ability to scale up (or down) the number of participants.

By including an up-front expectation that all involved were committed to contributing to the ongoing implementation of the actions identified, we built the foundation for implementation groups and more assurance that the ideas generated would become reality.

Everyone who volunteered was offered a role. Once they had confirmed their acceptance of their role and availability, we sent two preparatory emails in the weeks preceding the sprint with the following content:

Preparation	
Flow chart about the sprint process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A basic introduction for those who were not familiar with the sprint process</li> <li>• An outline of the two-day process for those who would like some detail about how the days would be run (the content of this is included in the next section)</li> </ul>
Role descriptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each role was described</li> <li>• This provided clarity about the volunteers' roles and the roles of others</li> <li>• The Sprint Leader had the role, if necessary, of adjudicating and it was important to set this expectation beforehand</li> </ul>
Code of Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This outlined the behaviours required by sprint participants in order for the sprint to be successful</li> <li>• Establishing ground rules before the sprint gave people the option to opt out if they did not wish to comply or had any questions</li> </ul>
Draft Challenge Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure everyone on the sprint started from a similar understanding, draft Challenge Statements were circulated. These outlined the rationale for the sprint and posed challenge questions</li> <li>• Sprint members were encouraged to comment on, discuss and edit the Challenge Statements before the sprint. This helped generate engagement and a sharing of knowledge, but most importantly ensured that we defined the challenge in terms of what were the most critical issues to focus on. Several Challenge Statements were amended in this process</li> <li>• The Challenge Statements also included a map of what was already occurring to address the challenge questions, such as a map of current provision</li> </ul>

Copies of these documents are appended for reference (Appendix Three).

These documents were designed to minimise identified risks. There was a risk that the sprint process would be daunting for those who were used to and expected a different way of working. In particular, the sprint process is rigorous but quick. Decisions are made without full information and this could have been uncomfortable for those who sought certainty. Outlining how the process works beforehand can help to set expectations and ensure that participants take open and creative mindsets to the sprints.

Likewise, experts can come into the sprint process with predetermined answers and a determination to see their ideas adopted. The Code of Conduct set out clear expectations about listening and collaboration and the importance of leaving one's organisational role outside the room. The potentially thorny issue of intellectual property was also addressed in the Code of Conduct. Participants agreed that all ideas generated in the sprints were collectively owned, and that if anyone had a product, service or idea they did not want collectively considered, they had to either not mention it or mention that they did not want it included.

The Challenge Statements included maps of what was currently available that might already address the challenge question. We did not want to duplicate any existing provision or adapt or scale a provision that was already in place and working. We needed to know what was already in place, so we encouraged sprint volunteers to add to the map based on their knowledge.

The Challenge Statements also included short summaries of key data and research that related to the challenge questions. This ensured that the sprint volunteers were up to speed and all had similar understandings of the evidence and ‘facts’ before they started.

The process we used to run the sprints was as follows:

#### **Before the sprint**

- E-meet your team and team leader
- Work together on the Challenge Statement. The aim is that your team has a clear, shared view of the challenge you are working on
- Map the current state. Working together as team, complete (as much as possible) a map of what is currently available and happening in your challenge area

#### **Day 1: Session 1: Welcome and whanaungatanga**

- Karakia [blessing] and welcome
- Introduction to your team
- Overview of the two days
- Brief about design processes and mindset

#### **Day 1: Session 2: Focus on the ‘end users’**

- Create 4-5 personas of people who will benefit from our work. Focus on understanding their context, their needs and their ‘pain points’

#### **Day 1: Session 3: Focus on the future**

- Exercises to imagine what the ideal future will be if we solve our challenge
- Exercises to map how we can get from our current state to this future state

#### **Day 1: Session 4: Solutions**

- Identify 3-4 actions that will get us from our current state to our future state

#### **Day 1: Session 5: Test the solutions**

- Test the actions against the personas we have created – will they work for each of our end users?
- With the Challenge Team, test the actions that have been identified to see what we have not thought of and how realistic they are, and how relevant they are for different contexts

#### **Day 2: Session 1: Develop the solutions**

- More fully develop the actions, and prototype and design them
- Iterate and refine the actions

#### **Day 2: Session 2: Test the prototype**

- Test the more fully developed prototype against the personas
- With the Challenge Team, test the feasibility, practicability and relevance of the prototypes

#### **Day 2: Session 3: Develop the implementation plan**

- Work out how to take the actions and make them reality: who will lead it, resource it and champion it?

#### **Day 2: Session 4: Recap and debrief**

- Time to reflect, debrief, provide feedback, commit to next steps

#### **After the sprint**

- Be part of the ongoing implementation and championing of your actions
- Provide feedback on your experience of the co-design sprint and what was achieved
- Be part of the launch hui in August and the ongoing development of the National Strategy for Community Governance and actions

Substantial time was built in to the first sessions to build trust and connections between those in the Sprint Teams. This meant we could then move quickly into robust conversations and team work. Included in the process were two sessions with the Challenge Team (the challenge sessions) – one on the first day when the ideas were being formed, the second on the second day to test ideas that had been prototyped.

Feedback from participants – both Sprint and Challenge Team members – was overwhelmingly positive about the process. Three-quarters of participants responded to the post-sprint survey and 90% responded that the overall experience had exceeded their expectations.

Most participants (over 60%) also concluded that the actions developed in the sprints would be ‘very’ useful for boards and board members of community organisations, with a further 35% concluding that the actions would be useful. Any hesitation from these participants was based on the need for actions to be funded and implemented well.

*“Practical, considered, intelligent, based on experience and refined based on feedback” “The actions will be very beneficial” “I am very excited about the potential”*

#### **Process Improvements**

In the post-sprint survey, Sprint and Challenge Team participants were asked how the process could be improved. Overwhelmingly, participants responded that the process had been engaging, productive and enjoyable. Many were surprised by this given that, pre-sprint, the thought of spending two days on Zoom was daunting.

Improvements could have been made (and were made as we progressed) to the challenge sessions. It is hard to come into a process cold, receive a quick briefing about an idea and then be expected to critique it. The effectiveness of the challenge sessions depends a lot on the quality of the briefings from the Sprint Teams – that is, how effectively they communicate their ideas. When we began briefing the Sprint Teams on how to communicate to the Challenge Teams using a simple pitch framework, the sessions improved.

It is easy for Challenge Team members to be negative and find holes in ideas. Even though it is their role to challenge, as we progressed we spent more time before the sprints communicating with Challenge Team members, encouraging them to ask open, constructive questions that would help participants in developing or critiquing ideas, rather than just finding fault.

The effectiveness of challenge sessions also depends on the reactions of those in the Sprint Teams. Some Sprint Team participants wanted to refute the feedback they were being given, especially when Challenge Team members' comments covered something they had discussed.

In the first challenge session, we spent time on introductions and there were often three or four ideas still 'live' at that point of the sprint. There was no time for in-depth exchanges between Challenge and Sprint Team members. We learnt to prepare Sprint Team members for this, that they were going to receive quick-fire feedback, the gifts of insight and initial reactions from Challenge Team members. The Sprint Team members' role was to document and listen hard to the feedback they were being generously given. Once these expectations were set, subsequent challenge sessions were more productive.

The value of this first session was that it gave a clear indication of the merit of each idea. Due to excessive questioning by Challenge Team members', several ideas met their end points. Such rigour was critical to the overall process.

The second challenge session usually involved two remaining ideas that were more fully developed and therefore easier to communicate clearly, and time was not taken up with introductions. The session usually became a discussion, even to the point of Sprint Team members seeking specific feedback on areas they had struggled with.

### ***Lessons***

- Preparation is key: time spent communicating and ensuring all participants are comfortable with the process and expectations will be well spent.
- The Challenge Team and challenge process are critical to ensuring high-quality ideas are generated. It can be hard to get the dynamics right, but it is worth it.
- Effectively briefing the Challenge Team can be difficult for Sprint Teams. Following feedback, we gave each team a guide for 'pitching' so that they could better present their ideas and save the time (and frustration) caused by the Challenge Team needing to ask many clarification questions.
- The Challenge Team needs to be well briefed and facilitated in the challenge sessions to get the best value from their input. It is easy to find holes in an idea; it is less easy to ask powerful, constructive questions that help build and develop ideas.

## Leaders and Logistics

The Sprint Leaders had a specific role in supporting the sprints to be successful. At a practical level they were the venue hosts if sprints were run face to face, but more importantly they brought their reputations, profiles and resources to support the sprints.

We selected Sprint Leaders based on their expertise in and commitment to community governance. We were clear about their leadership role, especially before and after the sprints, and everyone we approached enthusiastically agreed.

Sprint dates were set based on the Sprint Leaders' diaries, and logistics were worked through with them and their support teams. As the sprints moved online the logistics became best managed by CSI, but all had offered considerable support for the sprints.

All took their leadership responsibilities seriously, including joining the Steering Group in workshops to determine the medium-term focus and the strategy for the sustainability of the work.

Barry Baker, Sprint Leader for the *How can we ensure best practice is identified and shared?* sprint, reflects on his role. He had been involved in many processes like this in the past, and while he had agreed to participate and contribute funding, he was initially cynical about the effectiveness of the process. His cynicism increased with the sprints' move to being online.

For him though, the effectiveness of the planning by and communication from the project team made his role easy. Moving online, he concludes, with the right structure, facilitator and technology, the sprints and challenges over two days delivered a much more efficient and pleasant experience than the traditional 'post it' hell he had experienced before. The ability to take micro breaks and not travel overnight also worked well. The good mix of participants meant the thinking was wide and impressive.

### Lessons

- Identify and approach Sprint Leaders early and work with them to develop the sprint process.
- Make any expectations of a post-sprint commitment clear on the initial approach. We wanted to continue to engage our Sprint Leaders in the development of the actions and the National Strategy for Community Governance as a whole. Their reputations, networks and knowledge of community governance were valuable, not only to the project for the two days of the sprints, but well beyond it.

## Sprint and Challenge Teams

For Sprint Teams to be successful there needs to be a diverse range of people in the room. Volunteers were categorised into experts (such as researchers and consultants who work with boards), potential funders or supporters, and end-users (community board and committee members, acknowledging that many volunteers had multiple hats).

In creating the Sprint and Challenge Teams we were determined to ensure we followed the principle of co-design. We aimed to have half of each team comprise community board and committee members (end users) and were generally successful in doing so. This meant the process was not about experts, funders or government designing for the community sector, but rather community board and committee members working alongside others with a shared aim of supporting them. And by having experts and potential funders in the mix we ensured that the actions identified not only were grounded in the reality of community governance but drew on the best evidence available and stood the best chance of attracting investment.

When people contacted us to volunteer, we asked them which of the six outcome areas they were most interested in and how they wanted to volunteer. From this we created a database of volunteers with the information they had given us.

Using the database we were able to (through a messy process of sticky notes and large pieces of paper) construct Sprint and Challenge Teams of roughly equal size based on people's interests. We tried to ensure that all members of a Sprint Team came from different organisations, as the dynamics of a small team would change if it included people who worked together.

Sprint Teams comprised 9-15 people and Challenge Teams 7-10. Any fewer than nine people would make a sprint difficult as it would be hard to do small-group work, especially the persona work. The Sprint Teams could scale up, but a team of more than 20 would make it more difficult to build trust and connections among participants. Some of the Challenge Teams were too large and not everyone spoke, so teams of five to seven are probably a good size to get productive dialogue and feedback.

Given that we had a limited ability to cover travel and other expenses and the Team sessions were planned to be face to face, we sought to minimise the need for Sprint Team members to travel. For this reason sprints were planned for the two main centres. Sprint members were offered travel if the relevant sprints were not held in their home cities and their organisations could not support them to be part of the process. Challenge Team sessions were online, so we could include anyone outside the main centres or who did not have the capacity to volunteer for two full days.

Every volunteer was sent a personal email and invited to be part of a sprint as a Sprint or Challenge Team member. Most agreed; some needed to move from a Sprint Team to a Challenge Team and some needed to move sprints based on diary clashes, but generally the first invitations were accepted.

In analysing who volunteered, we found patterns. Volunteers were overwhelmingly women. We obviously had not connected with Māori, Pacific and ethnically diverse communities as well as we should have. There were missing sectors (such as sport). Using the networks of the Steering Group, we approached community leaders to proactively invite them to be part of Sprint Teams, and our approaches were positively received.

Feedback from sprint participants was overwhelmingly positive about the diversity of sprint members and the wide range of experiences and perspectives working together. A few, however, noted that having more younger people involved could have improved the discussions.

### **Lessons**

- We were determined that the process would be inclusive, so we shared invitations to be involved widely and anyone who volunteered was offered a role that suited their interests and availability. To ensure diversity, we then needed to target specific networks. The people involved are the most critical factor in the success of the sprints. Do whatever is needed to get the right people in the room (or on a Zoom call).
- Think about the barriers to being involved – travel, language, confidence – and seek to remove them. If working face to face, choose your physical locations carefully, making provision for a travel budget to ensure access to participation for all.

### **COVID-19 Pivot: Moving Online**

In the last weeks of March 2020, life in Aotearoa New Zealand changed. Our sprints had been designed for the Sprint Teams to work face to face. The COVID-19 pandemic changed this. One sprint was postponed (the night

before it was to be held) due to the increased risk of transmission. The remaining sprints were held online during Aotearoa New Zealand’s lockdown.

When it became clear that working face to face was not possible, we reviewed the literature about running sprints online. For many global companies this had been the usual way of working when their experts lived in different regions or even on different continents. Their experience showed that it was possible, with adaption, to move the sprint process online.

Given that the work supporting community boards and committees was to become even more important in the fall-out from COVID-19, we decided to proceed online.

Through our review of the literature, we made some changes to the sprint design and process:

- We increased pre-sprint preparation for participants: A tutorial on how to use the online tools was offered, with a focus on the tools that would be used in the sprints (whiteboard and break-out rooms). During the tutorial participants could test their webcams and microphones. The aim was to ensure that all participants felt confident and able to participate. All participants were called before the sprints to ensure they were confident and to address any issues they might have.
- We increased pre-work by the facilitator: Before the sprint the facilitator assigned working groups and personas.
- The sprint process remained similar with tweaks to the working sessions: More structure was provided for these sessions (an individual, small-group and then full-group process) and more help was provided to facilitate the dynamics in the small groups and to keep participants engaged. The sessions were also shortened.
- The facilitator was helped with another support person who focused on the technical aspects: Participants could message them directly for help to use tools or with their set-up.

We communicated what was happening and how the process would change to all sprint participants. Their responses were positive; only two out of more than 150 participants withdrew (based on work pressures). Due to the lockdown, many people were travelling less and attending fewer conferences and events. As a result they had more time to commit to the process. Several participants moved from Challenge to Sprint Teams.

More people contacted us to volunteer to be part of the online sprints. By removing the time and expenses involved in travel, we were able to include more and a wider range of perspectives than if we had completed the sprints face to face.

Before going live we trialled the process. During the trial we confirmed the importance of having technical support online and being very clear about instructions before moving to break-out groups and seeing each session as a discrete module.

The timeline for establishing the sprint process was as follows:

Launching the project, call for volunteers	December 2019
Designing the bespoke sprint process	Early January 2020
Drafting sprint documentation	Mid-January
Creating Sprint and Challenge Teams	Mid-January
Approaching Sprint Leaders	Late January

Confirming logistics	Early February 2020
Approaching Sprint Teams	Early February
Communicating with Sprint Teams, preparing for sprints	Mid- and late February
Holding first sprint	Early March 2020
Postponing second sprint and re-designing sprint process	Mid-March 2020
Holding second sprint, now online	Late April 2020
Holding last sprint	Late June 2020

### **Lessons**

- Pivot fast and decisively.
- Communicate clearly and call people if needed; it is time consuming but builds connections.
- Learn from others. We were not the first group doing co-design sprints online, so there is a wealth of knowledge to learn from.
- Test run the tech tools you plan to use and ensure there is tech support in place for rapid troubleshooting.
- We set expectations that nothing would be perfect but it would be done, and it was.

### **The Māori Governance Sprint**

Although there was diversity in the participants in the sprints, it was obvious that specific issues for Māori were not adequately captured. To address this, a sprint specifically focused on issues for Māori governors and trust members was created.

Under the leadership of two Steering Group members, and supported by their organisations, the sprint members were identified by drawing on those who had already volunteered and participated in sprints who were board members of Māori trusts or organisations, and from the networks of Steering Group members.

The Challenge Statement was carefully constructed to focus on an issue of relevance to Māori governance, and the sprint process was tweaked so that it was more appropriate for the Challenge Statement and sprint members.

A facilitator with expertise and knowledge of te ao Māori was engaged to lead the process, with support from the previous sprint facilitator. Someone with the appropriate mana (respect and authority) and knowledge of tikanga (cultural practices) needed to lead and guide the process.

The sprint process was changed so that a collective was used for a persona instead of an individual (to acknowledge the importance of collective decision-making), te reo Māori (the Māori language) was used throughout the process, and the Code of Conduct incorporated Māori concepts. The use of personas resonated with the Sprint Team as it emphasised the importance of working for others and the greater good.

Discussions about the broader context (the impacts of colonialism and the movement towards decolonisation) were important, but the time spent on such discussions frustrated some sprint members who were focused on identifying tangible activities and actions.

The Sprint Leader reported that the importance of preparation cannot be underestimated, especially time spent preparing for sprints (conversations between facilitators and Sprint Leaders to ensure roles are clear and the process is smooth) and with participants beforehand so that they understand the process and the commitment needed. This includes supporting any kaumātua (respected leaders) who may struggle with technology and anticipating any issues before the sprints.

Building trust is something that is not easy to do online, so investing in doing this is critical. Taking more time to share personal stories could have enhanced our process.

In the feedback provided by the sprint participants, they shared their enthusiasm for the process. They enjoyed the connections and working with sprint members who had a wide mix of skills and perspectives. They also enjoyed the creativity the process allowed to identify new solutions. They, too, emphasised the importance of preparation and of being clear about the problem definition, challenges, processes and expectations. They endorsed the actions identified in the sprints and looked forward to seeing them implemented.

### **Reflection**

- Preparation, preparation, preparation. A sprint will only be as good as the time and energy invested in the planning (right process, right people, right topic) and the connections (building trust, shared expectations and enthusiasm) generated beforehand.
- Working online was more efficient, inclusive and effective, but it involved even more preparation to ensure success.

## 4 Running the Sprints

In this section we share details about the process used in the sprints, how we facilitated them and the post-sprint follow-ups.

### **The Sprint Process**

Our Sprint Teams had 9-15 members, and most did not know each other. Our Challenge Teams were of a similar size. They came from a diverse range of backgrounds (corporate, government and community organisations, rural and urban environments, and different sectors) but all had a shared interest in improving community governance.

### ***Introduction sessions***

We began each session with a karakia from the Sprint Leader as our host, and an explanation of the housekeeping logistics and emergency procedures. Our first introductory exercise involved each participant introducing themselves by sharing their reasons for volunteering for the project, what they would contribute, and what success looked like for them.

In the face-to-face sprint, a second introductory exercise involved asking people to draw on large sheets of paper with concentric circles what their first experiences of community governance were, what their current connections were and what they wanted for the future. For those working online, the second introductory exercise involved them sharing images of what community governance meant to them.

We then discussed the Code of Conduct and the mindset needed for the sprint to be successful, and reviewed the process for the two days. The Challenge Statement was then reviewed to ensure it was agreed as a good starting point.

### ***Developing Personas***

Before the sprint the facilitator prepared at least four personas based on research. These represented the people we were designing actions for, or the end-users or customers. Any actions we identified needed to work for a wide range of board and committee members, so we needed to understand the needs of those we were working for. Using personas also ensured that the actions identified were not designed to suit the needs of the people in the room (who did not represent the diversity of end-users).

The personas were based on research and data. They represented and gave personalities and human faces to the issues and challenges that needed to be addressed by each sprint. Throughout the sprint process the ideas generated were tested against the personas by participants asking, “Does this work for our personas?”.

Sprint Team members broke into small teams, with each focusing on one persona. Their role was to further develop their persona by identifying and recording their needs, challenges and pain points. They were encouraged to sketch an image of their persona to fully bring it to life.

Several interactive templates were provided to guide their decisions in each of the sessions (appended as part of Appendix Four).

Sprint Team members (still in the same small teams) were then asked to think about the ideal scenarios for their personas in three to five years. In this process, called future-casting, they identified what excellence would look like for each persona. When the teams had written short statements about the ideal scenarios, we asked them to work out the steps that would be needed to get their personas from where they currently were to the ideal scenarios. We provided another template with five steps to guide their thinking. These steps are called the ‘user journey’ (appended as part of Appendix Four).

By developing the personas as examples of real people and encouraging Sprint Teams to empathise with their pain points and identify ideal future scenarios and the steps needed to get to these ideals, we laid good foundations for identifying actions.

### ***Brainstorming***

After lunch we connected back with our Challenge Statement to check that, after our work with personas, we were still happy with how we had defined the questions we were working on. We then broke into different configurations of small teams (so that each team had members who had worked on different personas) and started brainstorming ideas that could address the challenge question.

Members were asked to brainstorm individually then share their ideas with their small teams, building on others' ideas. Small teams were asked to identify their three top ideas and flesh them out.

Bringing all groups together, we discussed all ideas collectively, selecting the ones we all agreed were worthy of further development. These ideas were then tested with the first session of the Challenge Team. The Challenge Team had been briefed that the ideas shared with them were in their infancy and that their questions should look to explore and help develop the ideas.

After the challenge session, the session closing Day 1 involved a confirmation of the ideas going forward and check-ins with all participants before they left. Providing them with time overnight to process and think more about the ideas was valuable.

### ***Prototyping***

After a check-in and warm-up exercise, and further confirmation of the ideas that were progressing, each small team was assigned an idea to prototype. Teams were given a template to guide their discussions, which asked them to define and describe the ideas, relate the ideas to the needs of personas, consider who would benefit from the ideas, and describe the high-level attributes or components of the ideas (appended as part of Appendix Four).

### ***Challenging and Testing***

The prototypes were then tested by Challenge Teams in their second sessions. The Challenge Teams were briefed that the ideas were now more defined, so their questions could focus on how the ideas would work for them and their communities.

Depending on the outcomes of the challenge session, teams may have needed to complete other prototype templates to refocus or further clarify their ideas or move to implementation.

### ***Implementation***

The final session focused on how the ideas would move from paper to reality. Small teams were created based on the participants' interest in the ideas. Teams were provided with another template that focused their discussions on who was needed to make the actions happen, who needed to be influenced, what resources were needed, and who would supply those resources. They were also asked to consider how the implementation would be organised and sustained (appended as part of Appendix Four).

The sprint closed with all teams sharing their implementation plans and commitment to the work plans they had created. We encouraged those interested in seeing their plans implemented to arrange to meet again soon to help progress the idea.

Closing remarks and blessings were offered.

## **Digital First: Going Online**

Following the Aotearoa New Zealand Government's decision in late March to restrict all movement, we moved the sprint process online. The first online sprint was held during Level 4 of the COVID-19 response framework, when all travel was prohibited.

As most sprint participants were already working from home using video-conferencing tools, most were confident and comfortable in taking part in an online forum and had the basic tools needed to do so. Participants with access needs could also take advantage of being in their usual home environments.

To ensure best engagement, the facilitator rang all sprint members the week before the sprints. The purpose of these calls was to gauge the participants' comfort in video-conferencing and the quality of their WiFi connections, as well as prepare them for the two days and the mindsets needed to be effective. Sprint members were initially worried about being expected to be online for two solid days, and it was important to assure them that the time would be well managed, with consideration given to pacing outcomes against wellbeing.

This was a time-consuming, unplanned step in the project, but it was critical to build rapport between the participants and the facilitator. This step also supported participants to approach the sprints in a positive frame of mind.

## **Facilitating Online Sprints**

Working online makes it hard to build connections and trust among those working together. The opportunities for conversations that build connections in a face-to-face setting, such as over morning tea, are not there.

Included in our online sprint timetables were two 'team-building' exercises. In total we spent 25% of the total time of the sprint on building connections. It is critical that everyone knows of their fellow sprint members' skills and experiences and that there is an easy rapport built quickly so that honest, critical conversations can happen.

For the facilitator, the need for clear signposts became clear. These are short instructions and recapping comments that ensure sprint participants know what is coming next and why it is coming. Investing in this meant there was little confusion about what participants should be doing, and with whom and where.

Each of the steps in the sprint process became a module of work. Some groups worked more quickly than others, so when they finished they would leave the session to return at a specified time. Those who needed more time worked through. This meant the process was agile and better met the needs of those involved. Some ideas took longer than others to work up and some groups' discussions took longer.

However, on average, the online sprints took approximately three hours less than the face-to-face ones. Working online, we observed, tends to be more focused.

We found that break-out groups of three or four worked perfectly. There was enough energy, ideas and diversity to create high-quality work. As the groups got larger (over six) they tended to slow down, get bogged down and not create such good work. This was reiterated by feedback from sprint participants; they enjoyed the small group size as it led to in-depth, productive discussions.

We used 'hands-up' tools with the Challenge Teams as the Zoom calls included up to 30 participants. When we were working as a Sprint Team (9-15 participants) we used the gallery view so we could see all faces and if people wanted to talk.

One of the challenges of holding the sprints during the pandemic lockdown was that many participants had multiple demands on their time (such as home-schooling and urgent work meetings). Because we were working online for two days, some participants stepped offline into other meetings and activities for periods of time. Because of the modular design of the sprints, we were able to weave them easily in and out of the process. This

level of distraction might not have occurred if the circumstances had been different or we had been working face to face.

One of the strengths of every sprint was that we achieved consensus on every decision, especially those around what ideas would be progressed. We had built safeguards into the process (such as the pre-agreed role of the Sprint Leader in making a casting vote if needed), but we did not need to use them. Setting the expectation that we would work collaboratively and facilitating accordingly meant we could work this way.

An unintended benefit was that those involved were able to experience the sprint methodology delivered online and used in an effective and inclusive way. Participants reported that it gave them more confidence in using such methods in their own work.

Participants also reported that, as we were working online and the Sprint Teams were drawn from around the country, they were able to build and strengthen their networks nationwide. The opportunity to engage widely created many unexpected and ongoing connections.

Sprint participants reported being very tired, particularly after the first day. We are unsure if this tiredness was created by intense collaboration or the online environment, as those who were part of the face-to-face sprint said the same.

### **Reflection**

- Working online allowed more people to contribute, which meant we had more diverse perspectives co-designing.
- Allow for decent breaks for the Sprint Team. The process is intense and demanding, and being able to stop and walk around the block makes a lot of difference.
- Online Sprint Team participants found it more difficult to ringfence the two days than if they had flown somewhere and had been in a room. However, through a relaxed approach to facilitation and the modular design of the sprints, we were able to weave people in and out of the process easily.
- Building connections and trust online is possible, but we needed to work hard at it.

## 5 Turning Ideas into Action

Each of the actions has a working group who have volunteered to implement it. Most working groups are doing further scoping of their ideas and helping to prepare funding proposals.

Through encouraging ongoing connections among those who were engaged in developing the actions in the sprints, we have been able to make progress towards implementation quickly.

The implementation will be managed in phases. It makes logical sense to accelerate some actions, as they support and underpin other actions and/or have momentum behind them and different lead times. Others need more development, or it makes sense to implement them later. Some actions may not make it through to implementation.

Implementation will involve a series of steps:

- Scoping and developing the actions: Working groups from the Sprint Teams will undertake the task of further developing their ideas, including more testing with networks and potential community users, and more detailed costing and project planning.
- Seeking funding for the actions: Most actions will need people who are resourced to develop and implement them. Funding will initially be sought as packages for the first phase.
- Working collaboratively to implement the actions: As the actions reinforce each other, they will be developed using a programme and team approach. This will ensure we maximise our impact; for example, we could consult on multiple actions at one time rather than going to community leaders individually, and share skills and knowledge across the projects.
- Measuring and monitoring progress and impacts: As actions are implemented, the processes for reviewing, measuring and monitoring their impacts will be established. This will occur for each action but also for the National Strategy as a whole.

To date the National Strategy has been co-designed with members of boards of community organisations and those who wish to support board members. Personas were developed in each sprint to focus on those whom the actions will serve.

The implementation will follow this approach by focusing on the practical needs of the probably 500,000 volunteers who are in governance positions in the community sector now and will be in the future.

### **Sustaining Momentum**

Creating a systemic lift in the governance of a sector is an ambitious goal. It will not be achieved quickly. While we are focused on implementing a series of actions, we are mindful that while it may be difficult to initiate a new programme, sustaining one for the medium term is often harder.

For each action, a plan to sustain was developed in the initial sprint and will be a key feature of the project planning going forward.

The Steering Group is also focused on the medium-term sustainability of the National Strategy and will collaborate with several partner organisations to collectively steward it for the next three to five years.

## 6 Final Thoughts

What would be our advice to you if you are contemplating using co-design? It would be a qualified, go for it.

From our experience, using co-design sprints meant we could develop a national strategy that drew on the expertise, experience and passion of hundreds. We were able to do it with a minimal budget, during a global pandemic, and in the course of two months. We were able to be inclusive and deliver positive experiences for those involved, and as a result we have created a community and a movement, as many of us are now vested in seeing the actions we developed implemented.

But we would qualify this. A series of key ingredients made this project a success.

**The people who volunteered**, who gave more than 1,000 hours of their time because they too wanted support in place for those serving on our community boards and committees, were critical. Without them there would have been no sprints and no actions developed. So the topic or cause needs to resonate with many for a project to be successful.

**The project infrastructure was critical.** Without a strong base, it would have been nearly impossible to manage the logistics. These included a committed steering group with the mana to lead, a competent backbone organisation, funders with aligned values and skilled facilitators.

**A clear kaupapa (vision) from the start** is what guided the project through its rocky start and COVID-19 pivot. The vision – that all community organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand are well governed, and that the 500,000 of us who serve on boards and committees in our communities have the support we need to succeed in our roles – drove the project and galvanised support. And it will continue to do so as we move to the implementation phase.

# Appendix One: Community Governance Steering Group Terms of Reference

## Community Governance Steering Group

### Terms of Reference

#### 1. BACKGROUND

The Community Governance Coalition was formed in late 2018 by people and organisations interested in developing and supporting good governance practices in Aotearoa New Zealand's NGO and community sector. The Coalition has now formalised into the Community Governance Steering Group (Steering Group) and has been meeting to implement a national project with the aim of developing a national strategy for NGO and community governance, specifically focusing on Tier 3 and 4 organisations (those with annual OPEX under \$2m/yr).

The infrastructure to develop a national strategy is now in place, including:

- A backbone organisation – the Centre for Social Impact (CSI) – to co-ordinate and facilitate the national strategy development and to act as fund-holder and contract manager. The relationship between CSI and the Steering Group is set out in a Memorandum of Understanding
- Funding secured for the costs of this project, including for employing a Project Manager.

#### 2. DIRECTION

**Vision:** All community organisations in Aotearoa are well governed.

**Mission:** To develop and implement a National Strategy for Community Organisation Governance.

**Principles:**

- We will support and amplify the work that already exists, rather than duplicating.
- We will meet community organisations where they are.
- Actions will be practical and tangible.
- We will be inclusive of community/grassroots voices.
- We are committed to the collective good of the sector and working together in a spirit of openness and generosity.
- All members commit to bringing resources to the Steering Group and the National Strategy.

#### 3. STEERING GROUP ROLE AND PURPOSE

The purpose of the Steering Group is to provide strategic guidance and advice for the development of the National Strategy, and to troubleshoot where necessary.

Another purpose is to champion community governance in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Steering Group will work in partnership with CSI to:

- Ensure that the National Strategy is developed and implemented
- Ensure that the principles of the Steering Group are upheld in the development and implementation of the National Strategy
- Secure ongoing funding for a sustainable strategy
- Provide oversight and stewardship of future funds and contracts entered into
- Provide support and guidance to the Project Manager
- Liaise with stakeholders, partners, advisers, influencers, potential funders and any other relevant parties

- Champion and help to build buy-in for the National Strategy within our own organisations, sectors and networks.

### ***Decision-making***

The Steering Group will seek to make decisions that are based on:

- Transparent and timely sharing of relevant information
- Consideration and respect for each other's experiences and perspectives
- A willingness to find agreement and consensus.

## **4. MEMBERSHIP AND CHAIR**

The Steering Group will comprise up to 12 members and will be made up of individuals who:

- Have experience in and a sound understanding of community sector governance
- Represent organisations that have interests and roles in supporting good governance in the community sector in Aotearoa
- Reflect the diversity of the community sector in Aotearoa and can share the perspectives of their communities.

A Chair will be selected by the Steering Group. The role of the Chair will be to:

- Prepare the agenda for meetings
- Chair meetings
- Be the main contact for CSI, the Project Manager and other relevant parties.

## **5. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

It is understood that Steering Group members may have a number of roles and associations within the community and governance sectors, and potential conflicts of interest may arise.

In the interests of transparency Steering Group members will:

- Declare their interests, which will be documented in an Interests Register
- Declare any potential conflicts of interest and/or duties as they arise.

The Steering Group will agree on how to manage any potential conflicts of interest.

Any disputes or concerns should be directed to the Chair.

## **6. COMMITMENT**

The Steering Group will generally meet monthly or as/when required. Meetings are in person in Wellington and by video (e.g. Zoom) or telephone for ex-Wellington members.

Steering Group members will pay for their own travel to and accommodation for meetings if required, as part of their contribution to the Steering Group.

Steering Group members will also contribute their time, skills and experience.

If members representing an organisation are unable to attend meetings, they may send suitable delegates in their place.

When members representing organisations or sectors need to step down or be replaced, the Steering Group will discuss it with those organisations/sectors and agree on suitable replacements.

## **7. REVIEW**

The Steering Group will be reviewed (membership and tenure etc) at the completion of the National Strategy (expected to be July 2020).

## Appendix Two: MoU CSI and Community Governance Steering Group

### Memorandum of Understanding

between

**Centre for Social Impact**

and

**Community Governance Steering Group**

for the

**National Strategy for Community Governance**

This Memorandum of Understanding together with all annexures (MoU) is made on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of January, 2020.

BETWEEN the

Centre for Social Impact (CSI)

and the

Coalition for Community Governance Steering Group (Steering Group) (the Parties).

WHEREAS:

- A. The members of the Steering Group and CSI hold the shared vision that all community organisations in Aotearoa are well governed. A project has been created to develop a National Strategy for Community Governance to identify actions and work towards this vision (the Project).
- B. The Steering Group has formed from representatives of organisations and individuals committed to advancing this vision and to provide strategic guidance to the project. CSI will be the backbone for the development of the National Strategy for Community Governance.
- C. The Objective of this MoU is to outline the partnership between the Steering Group and CSI. This MoU provides the Parties with a framework to identify and work co-operatively on the project to achieve the shared vision.
- D. MoU Period refers to the six (6) month period beginning from the date the last Party signs this MoU.

The Parties agree as follows:

1) Areas of co-operation

For the purpose of working together to achieve the shared vision, the Parties agree that:

- a) They will work collaboratively on the Project and will contribute as appropriate for their organisations as detailed below.
  - i) CSI will:
    - (1) Provide Project co-ordination and management
    - (2) Seek and hold the funding for the Project and manage expenses, contracts and reporting to funders
    - (3) Engage the Project Manager and any other staff
    - (4) Undertake risk management processes for the Project
    - (5) Lead communications about the Project.
  - ii) The Steering Group will:
    - (1) Provide strategic advice
    - (2) Champion the strategy with its networks
    - (3) Undertake specific actions to support the Project, as agreed and in collaboration with CSI.
  - iii) The Steering Group and CSI will work collaboratively on the following activities:
    - (1) Seeking to ensure the Project is sustainable and completed to time and budget
    - (2) Developing a forward strategy for the Project
    - (3) Communicating key messages about the Project.
- b) Each Party will appoint a relationship manager (Relationship Manager) who will act as a point of contact between the Steering Group and CSI. The Relationship Managers will be Mele Wendt (Chair, Steering Group) and Monica Briggs (CEO, CSI).
- c) The Relationship Managers and the Project Manager (Jo Cribb) will meet at least monthly to discuss progress on the Project.
- d) The Steering Group will meet monthly to provide advice and support for the duration of the Project and will receive progress reports from CSI at these meetings.

2) Review and amendments

- a) This MoU will be reviewed six (6) months after signing.

3) Confidentiality

If information shared between the Parties is identified by one Party as being confidential, the Parties agree to keep the information strictly confidential, unless the disclosure of the information by a Party is required under law or the order of any court of law, in which case such Party shall inform the other Parties before disclosing the information.

4) Termination

This MoU may be terminated immediately by any Party at any time by notice in writing to the other Parties specifying an effective date of termination; otherwise this MoU shall terminate automatically at the conclusion of the MoU Period.

5) Continuing obligation

Upon the termination of this MoU none of the Parties shall have any obligations to the other Parties under this MoU save and except that the obligations described in Articles 3 and 4 above shall survive any termination or expiration of this MoU.

6) Not legally binding

It is the intention of the Parties that this MoU is not legally binding or legally enforceable (other than Article 3), but rather it is created to show the Parties' mutual aims in working together to achieve the Objective.

This MoU has been duly signed by the Parties:

**Centre for Social Impact**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorised signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Position

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Coalition for Community Governance Steering Group**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorised signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Position

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix Three: Background documents for Sprint Teams

# The National Strategy for Community Governance

Supporting governance in community organisations



In collaboration  
with the **Community  
Governance Steering Group**

## National Strategy for Community Governance

### Team Roles

#### Facilitator

- Works with the team to establish the ground rules for working together.
- Upholds the ground rules.
- Keeps the team to task, process and time.
- Supports the team to work to consensus.

#### Sprint Leader

- Brings networks, resources and knowledge willingly into the process.
- Ensures Sprint and Challenge Team members are well briefed on processes for and expectations of working together.
- Makes decisions if gridlocked and consensus cannot be achieved.
- Is responsible for the quality of the end prototype.
- Is responsible for the ongoing implementation of the prototype.
- Champions the end prototype.

#### Sprint Team

- Brings networks, resources and knowledge willingly into the process.
- Works collaboratively to create a high-quality end prototype.
- Contributes to the ongoing implementation of the prototype.

#### Challenge Team

- Brings networks, resources and knowledge willingly into the process.
- Constructively challenges and tests the ideas.
- Asks, “Will this work in my context?”.
- Contributes to the ongoing implementation of the prototype.

# The National Strategy for Community Governance

Supporting governance in community organisations



In collaboration with the **Community Governance Steering Group**

## National Strategy for Community Governance

### Co-design Sprints Code of Conduct

We are all committed to supporting NGO and community boards and committees and their members and working towards the vision that ‘all community organisations in Aotearoa are well governed’.

Co-design sprints provide an effective and inclusive way of working together, focused on action.

They allow for a group of people with a diverse range of skills and experiences to come together to collectively problem-solve and create solutions and plans.

All attendees are expected to show respect for and courtesy to other attendees. All of us have much to offer.

We commit to working together with a spirit of generosity, bringing open minds and an interest in listening to the ideas of others.

We are focused on our collective aim, not on our specific needs and wants. We will bring our knowledge and expertise and passion into the room but commit to leaving our organisational hats at the door.

All our communication and interactions will be professional, and of course harassment in any form will not be tolerated.

Our sprints will be action focused. Our ethos will be that ‘delivered and good is better than perfect’. We are prepared to follow the process and be focused on action.

If we have ideas that we seek to keep as our personal intellectual property (especially for commercial reasons), we will signal this. Otherwise all ideas shared are considered collective commons, to be used and developed as part of the sprint process.

# The National Strategy for Community Governance

Supporting governance in community organisations



In collaboration with the Community Governance Steering Group

## Example of a Challenge Statement:

### All governance group members have the basic skills and knowledge needed to do their roles well

#### Current state

Board members often put themselves forward (or are encouraged to apply) for board or committee roles because they are passionate about what the organisations are trying to achieve.

However, a consistent finding in research and surveys is that many board and committee members do not have the basic skills and knowledge to do their roles.

Key areas where gaps are found are: <sup>1, 2, 3, 4</sup>

- Financial literacy: The ability to read and understand an organisation's accounts
- Strategic thinking: Creating a vision, purpose and long-term plan for the organisation
- Differences between governance and management: An understanding of the governance function
- Personal liabilities: An understanding of the obligations and responsibilities of board and committee members, including an understanding of the organisation's constitution or trust deed
- Legal obligations: The law that applies, such as the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Vulnerable Children Act
- Being a good employer, including appointing and managing the performance of the chief executive, general managers or staff
- Managing conflicts of interest
- Managing risks
- Policy skills: Being able to review the organisation's policies
- IT and digital skills: An ability to use email/apps to get board reports.

Many boards do not invest in training. Boards and committees may assume new members will bring all the skills and knowledge they need<sup>5</sup> and that there is no time or resources available for training.

Support for board members to develop their skills and knowledge is variable. A recent review of what is available nationally and by region found that:

- There were some national funders of capability development for boards (such as the Department of Internal Affairs, Te Puni Kōkiri, Creative New Zealand and The Tindall Foundation)
- There were funders in some regions of capability development for boards (such as gaming trusts, community trusts and local councils)
- Some academic institutions offer formal qualifications in governance and Māori governance.

- Some regions have capability-building organisations that offer training opportunities for board members (for example, The Wheelhouse in New Plymouth, the LEAD Centre for Not for Profit Governance & Leadership, Auckland North Community and Development and some volunteering centres). What is offered is usually training sessions targeted at specific knowledge acquisition. These can be day, half-day or partial-day courses on general governance or specific topics. Many are low or no cost and face to face (but involve travel, although this may change post the COVID-19 pandemic).
- There is a wide range of resources available online for board members, including general governance guides (from Sport New Zealand, Creative New Zealand, Charities Services and CommunityNet Aotearoa) and guidance on specific issues (Community Law Centres, Auckland Community Accounting and BDO not-for-profit guidance).

### **Challenge**

What action/s can be taken to ensure all governance group members have the basic skills and knowledge needed for their governance roles?

Who will lead the action/s? How will it/they be resourced?

<sup>1</sup> Charities Service (2018) *Governance Survey and Responses from Governance Interviews*

<sup>2</sup> Rata Foundation, Nelson City Council, Volunteer Nelson (2019) *Strengthening Community Governance in Nelson and Tasman*

<sup>3</sup> Sport New Zealand (2015) *Governance Benchmarking Review*

<sup>4</sup> Centre for Social Impact (2019) *What is the Future for NGO Governance?*

<sup>5</sup> Cribb, Jo (2017) *Governing for Good: The Governance Capability of Social Service NGOs*

## **Appendix Four: Templates for Sprint Teams**

[NGO Governance - Co-design Sprint-PowerPoint presentation](#)

[NGO Governance-Co-design Sprint-TEMPLATES-Print version](#)

[NGO Governance-Co-design Sprint-TEMPLATES-Interactive version](#)

[Terms of Reference-TEMPLATE](#)

[Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)-TEMPLATE](#)

**SPRINTING FOR  
GOOD REPORT**

For more information:  
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| September 2020