



Wayne Francis Charitable Trust and Leadership Lab: an ecosystem approach and 'showing up differently'

The kaupapa of Wayne Francis Charitable Trust and Leadership Lab

The Wayne Francis Charitable Trust is a family foundation based in Ōtautahi Christchurch, established by Wayne Francis in 1999. The trust's vision is for "all tamariki and rangatahi to develop to their full potential, make a successful transition to adulthood, and achieve lifelong health and well-being through positive youth development". The trust has never operated a contestable fund and instead develops opportunities to direct its financial and non-financial resources through relationship building. The trust primarily supports grassroots projects that have a 'systems change' focus and seek to address root causes of societal issues that impact young people.

A key partner to Wayne Francis Charitable Trust, Leadership Lab is a network of people that cluster together to work collectively on projects across Aotearoa New

Zealand that contribute to "thriving and equitable communities". Projects span sectors including education, health, and community, are multi-year, co-designed with communities, and involve funding partners from across local government, central government, and philanthropy.

Both Wayne Francis Charitable Trust and Leadership Lab were involved in the creation of leadership development programme, the Leadership in Communities (LinC) Project. Launched in 2014, the LinC Project was created in response to both the burn-out of grassroots community leaders in Christchurch post-earthquake, and the systemic inequity of access to leadership opportunities for Māori, Pasifika, rainbow communities, people with disabilities, and other communities that experience exclusion. Today, LinC has supported over 300 physical communities and communities of interest throughout Canterbury.

Puāwai was established in 2019

as a key programme component of LinC, offering an annual nine-month leadership experience for around 40 rangatahi aged 15-18 years. It is designed to build the next generation of community leaders, “connecting and developing a diverse network of peers, innovators, disruptors, and drivers [and] enabling them to contribute to their community”. The programme is co-designed with rangatahi, and involves individual and group coaching, small and whole rōpu meetings, and youth-led projects. It is actively rooted in a kaupapa Māori framework and is deliberate in its consideration of equity, inclusion, and intersectionality. As a kaupapa, Puāwai exemplifies many of the key themes in The Philanthropic Landscape – including equity and inclusion, a focus on systems change, shared decision-making and power sharing, and decolonising practice through a kaupapa Māori approach.

Whakapapa – the journey of LinC Puāwai

Wayne Francis Charitable Trust operates as a proactive relational funder forming relationships instead of having application forms. To support this approach and ensure board decision-making could be informed by positive youth development approaches, a youth advisory group was established in about 2005. In 2011, this advisory group worked with the trust to develop Positive Youth Development Aotearoa (PYDA), a framework for positive youth development approaches and

practices, designed collaboratively by researchers, youth development experts, and rangatahi. The PYDA framework was informed by national and international evidence of best practice as well as the experiences of rangatahi in Aotearoa New Zealand. Although the PYDA was developed as an internal document to guide the trust funding and decision-making, it has since become widely used across the youth development sector as a navigator for good practice and a training tool. The PYDA was refreshed in 2021 to reflect change in youth development practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Youth Development Champions Project (YDC) was launched concurrently to support training around the PYDA framework and enable skills sharing across a community of practice of youth development practitioners.

The process of developing the PYDA was critical in underpinning the trust’s relational way of working alongside its communities. Dr Chris Jansen, Director, Leadership Lab, reflects that both Wayne Francis Charitable Trust and Leadership Lab routinely adopt this way of working across their respective initiatives. It looks like “community providers and funders being on the level, designing stuff together, rather than [taking a typical] hierarchical process [to decision-making]...You’re around the table as equals trying to scope an issue and find solutions to usually quite complex social problems”.

While the relational approaches were in place before the 2011 Christchurch

earthquake, both Chris and Jenn Chowaniec (Wayne Francis Charitable Trust General Manager), reflect that the earthquake acted as an urgent accelerator to more collective, collaborative, and relational ways of working on intractable issues in the city. Chris reflects that the earthquake precipitated ways of working that were “counter-cultural to how most government funding – and quite a bit of the philanthropic funding – operated at the time”.

Jenn adds that other subsequent major events in the Ōtautahi Christchurch region – including the 2017 Port Hills fires, the 2019 Christchurch mosque attacks and COVID-19 – created a continual “urgent need for people to collaborate”, and a sense of shared experience that has helped to further breakdown elements of hierarchical power between funders and communities in the region. The local community and philanthropic sectors have learned to prioritise practices that centre on trust, responsiveness, and relationship. For Jenn, the unique levels of collaboration and partnership seen in initiatives like LinC and Puāwai are rooted in this whakapapa.

How The Philanthropic Landscape key practices present in the partnership of Wayne Francis Charitable Trust and Leadership Lab

For Wayne Francis Charitable Trust, the relational and power-sharing approach that underpins initiatives like Puāwai is a deliberate one rooted in ideas of equity and impact. Jenn shares that “we are very clear that we have some tools and resources, but we don’t have all the

knowledge and we are never the expert in the room on the issue we are discussing. We might have some views and opinions about it, but we have to learn to a greater extent about what it is we are talking about so that we can be part of the conversation about what to do next. That approach is pretty universal [for us].”

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Chris also underlines the importance of funders being part of – rather than just alongside – the ecosystem of stakeholders trying to impact systemic issues like the equity concerns underlying LinC and Puāwai. This looks like being around the table with communities to identify an issue, co-designing solutions, trialling different ways of doing things, learning about what works, and sticking around for long enough to see and understand the impact. For Chris, the collaborative mindset and relational approach are vital for leveraging the most value possible from the philanthropic potential. Moving forward, a key part of Leadership Lab’s work is championing this type of ecosystem approach in other regions and sectors. Leadership Lab has developed an approach called “Showing up differently” that guides this.

For funders wanting to engage in complex systems issues, Jenn underlines the importance and value of funders being “much more deeply involved in the conversation to understand the issue and what you can bring [to it]”. This means funders seeing themselves as part of the

system they're trying to influence; actively connecting and brokering opportunities, going out to "find the money, find the doors we want to knock on, open doors in advance, leverage the relationship that we have with other funders in different ways. We've got to stop thinking of the two sectors [community and funding] as entirely separate".

Although Wayne Francis Charitable Trust is no longer a financial contributor to Puāwai, the trust still sees itself as a key part of the Puāwai ecosystem, and actively contributes to the kaupapa through staff time, expertise, advocacy, and connections. Jenn notes that it is important to acknowledge what this work offers in terms of reciprocal ongoing value back to the trust – enabling knowledge gathering on key youth and regional issues, building community connections, and maintaining trusted relationships that support the Trust's work in other areas. A key consideration with this relational way of working – particularly when there is no longer any direct financial support attached – is ensuring that the relationship value is made tangible and communicated to trustees so that they continue to understand the value of staying highly engaged and maintaining the critical operational investment via staff time.

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Looking forward, Jenn and Chris both underline the important role of mana whenua and tangata whenua in co-design processes and the development of

ecosystem responses to systemic issues. Jenn reflects that decolonising practice and “supporting the aspirations of mana whenua and tangata whenua is something that [philanthropy] needs to continue to progress in.”

Chris reflects on his own personal journey, and Leadership Lab's organisational journey, around what it means to be tangata Tiriti. He shares that Leadership Lab now doesn't move forward on a project unless it is in partnership with mana whenua. As part of new work being developed by Leadership Lab with Queenstown and Lakes District Council, Chris shares that “we couldn't go in there without that [objective for partnership with mana whenua]. Our very first conversation there was with kaumatua. We need to be clear that this isn't tick box stuff, it is for real [...] The Tiriti o Waitangi framework is the first thing you develop, and co-design and everything else then needs to sit within that”.