

THE PETER MCKENZIE PROJECT

Reducing the number of children and families living in poverty and hardship, so that Aotearoa New Zealand is a place where all children and whānau flourish.

~ an initiative of the JR McKenzie Trust ~



The Peter McKenzie Project (PMP) is part of the JR McKenzie Trust (JRMT). It was named in honour of Peter McKenzie who established a fund in 1996. Fifteen years later, Peter seeded the idea of spending it down over a 20-year period on a single issue that could make a substantial difference to the lives of New Zealanders.

In 2012, Peter passed away. It is Peter's legacy and vision that has driven PMP.

Making a difference to whānau wellbeing

In 2017, PMP called for ideas that could have a game-changing impact on child poverty and the wellbeing of children and their whānau. The Committee were particularly interested in bold and creative ideas which moved away from ameliorating the effects of poverty, and towards "systems change" or "upstream" solutions that would have a significant and enduring impact on the reduction of poverty. In addition to considering

the idea, the Committee were looking for people with integrity, who were courageous, curious, reflective, and adaptive. The Committee were open to investing in initiatives long term as they recognised it would take time to substantially reduce child poverty and improve whānau wellbeing.

Resourcing courageous changemakers

PMP currently resources eight Kaikōkiri – people and organisations who champion, promote, advocate and lead change. Other Kaikōkiri are in the pipeline. These initiatives were identified as offering an audacious vision and strong theory of change. While each initiative has a different focus, they are aligned with the overall vision of PMP. The current ngā kaikōkiri PMP flotilla are:



Tokona Te Raki is a Ngāi Tahu-led collaboration established to increase Māori participation, success and progression in education and employment.



Uptempo is a project of The Southern Initiative (with a South and West Auckland focus) in which Pasifika 'aiga (whānau) determine their own economic futures, increasing wellbeing, mana and agency, incomes, high-quality jobs, and reducing stress and burden. The initiative draws on Pacific knowledge, co-design including 'aiga (whānau), partnerships and systemic change. Key partners include The Fono, Oceania Career Academy and First Union.



ActionStation Aotearoa have a mission "to tautoko (support) and whakamana (uplift) everyday New Zealanders to act together in powerful and coordinated ways to create what they cannot achieve on their own: a society, economy and democracy that serves all of us - everyday people and Papatūānuku, the planet we love." A lot of the organisation's outreach, collaborations and campaigning are done on-line.



The Workshop is focused on offering people more accurate and compelling stories that explain family poverty and its solutions in a different and more cohesive way, drawing attention to evidence.



Muaūpoko Tribal Authority (Taitoko/Levin) and **FinCap** (nationwide focus) have collaborated to combine an iwi-led collective approach to poverty reduction in Levin/Taitoko with a national organisation taking the local issues and voices to central government and building the capability of, and connections between social change agents.



Te ohu Whakawhanaunga is a New Zealand Alliance (Auckland) comprised of community, union, faith, and other relevant groups from across civil society. Its purpose is to reduce child poverty by addressing the causes of poverty in families and communities, so the City of Auckland flourishes.



Community Housing Aotearoa (CHA) is the peak body for community organisations providing social housing. Through The Shift initiative, CHA aims to play a catalyst role, leading a collective approach to improve the functioning of the housing system to increase the supply of adequate, affordable housing, especially for low-income families.



Whyora aims to ensure the Taranaki health workforce is responsive to the needs of Māori through developing and increasing the Māori health workforce in Taranaki, thereby both reducing inequalities in health outcomes and enabling more Māori to get into jobs with prospects for progression. Their focus is extending beyond health into the education sector.

THE PETER MCKENZIE PROJECT: FUNDING UPSTREAM OR 'SYSTEMS CHANGE' WORK

Upstream, or systems change work, designed to impact the cause of poverty is an emerging area. Philanthropic funding has tended to be directed towards short-term projects with a clear story and measurable outcomes. In contrast, the Peter McKenzie Project (PMP) funds untested ideas of how complex, multi-generational factors that hold people in poverty might be tackled. This is the story of what we have learned about the conditions that support groups to be successful.

UPSTREAM WORK REQUIRES A DIFFERENT FUNDING APPROACH

On a practical level the PMP Committee believes addressing the causes of poverty and hardship, and supporting whānau to flourish requires a different funding approach, including:

Longer-term, multi-year resourcing: A longer-term funding commitment is needed as it is going to take time to understand, identify and shift the root causes of poverty.

Resourcing courageous and experimental ideas:

Untested ideas can struggle to secure funding from other sources.

SEVERAL CONDITIONS HELP SUPPORT SUCCESS

PMP believes the risk of failure is mitigated by the following conditions.

A strong relational approach between staff, the Committee and ngā Kaikōkiri:

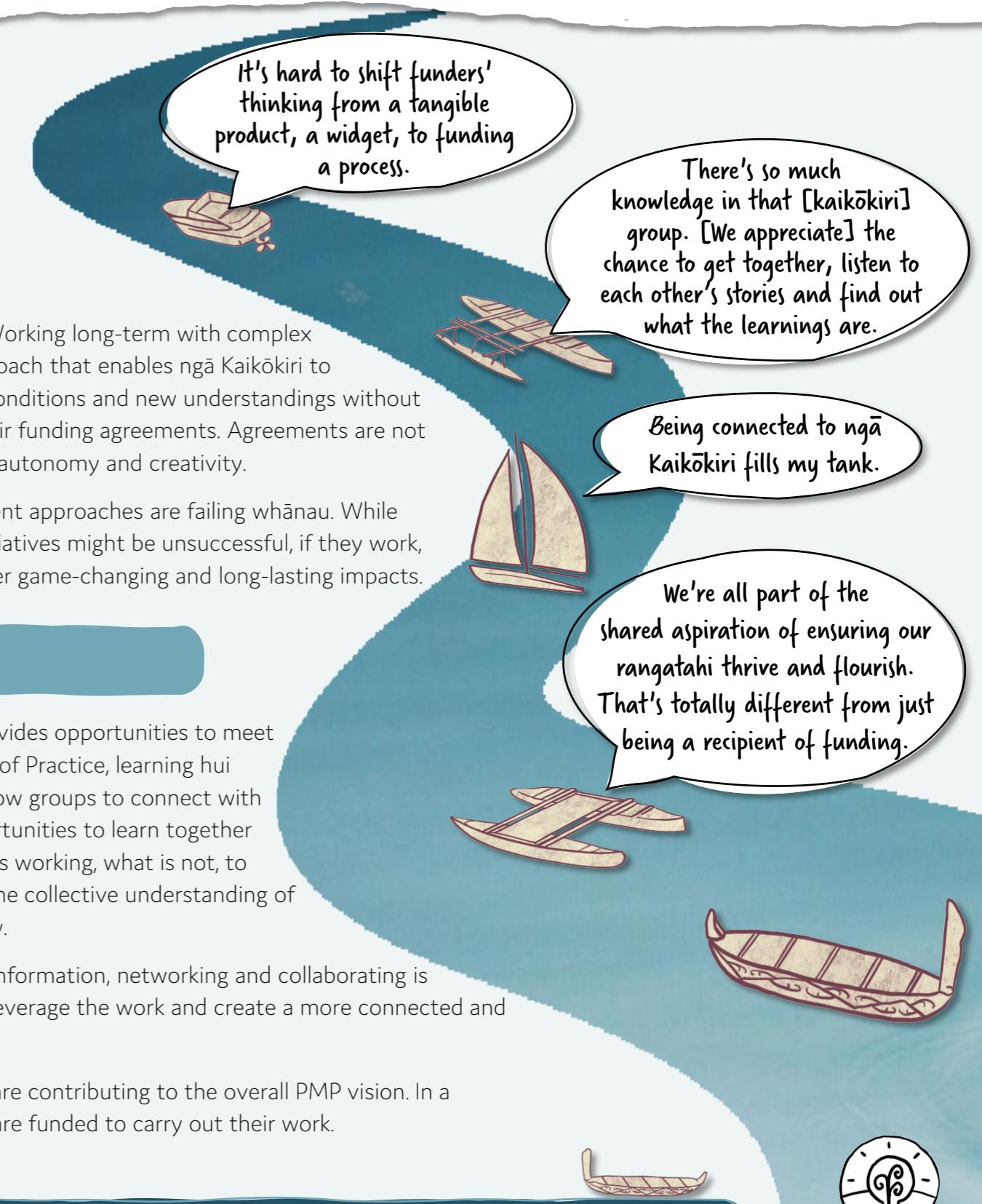
Transparent and honest conversations between ngā Kaikōkiri and funders are an effective form of risk management. The approach, including long-term funding agreements, builds trust.

An evaluative approach centred on reflective practice: Ngā Kaikōkiri are encouraged to undertake an evaluative approach useful to their organisation in which accountability faces towards the communities they are working with. They are also encouraged to take a developmental evaluative approach which focuses on learning, being nimble and adapting. The approach works well in emergent and fast-changing situations as it is highly adaptive.

There is evidence the PMP approach is supporting outcomes; that this high trust model actually lowers risk. While it is early days for some Kaikōkiri, others are reporting significant changes which are emerging from their work.

Their mahi is making a difference.

Source: PMP Outcomes Mapping report, June 2021.)



Peter McKenzie
Project

THE PETER MCKENZIE PROJECT: PARTICIPATORY PHILANTHROPY IN ACTION

~ an initiative of the JR McKenzie Trust ~



Peter McKenzie
Project

BACKGROUND TO THE APPROACH

In 2021, PMP decided to move towards a more participatory philanthropic model in which ngā Kaikōkiri and the Committee could share power and work together to make decisions about strategy, resourcing and grant-making.

Conversations showed that most participants favoured ngā Kaikōkiri and the Committee working more closely together on strategic decisions. There was strong interest in ngā Kaikōkiri joining with the Committee to decide on the areas and aspects of upstream work to focus on, the selection and implementation of proactive and joint projects, and ways of building capacity and bringing other voices on board. They were interested, too, in deciding how to leverage more resources for this work. There was also interest from ngā Kaikōkiri in deciding on grant-making criteria, and some involvement in decisions around grant making selection, approval and evaluative processes.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATORY PHILANTHROPY

While it was acknowledged the outcomes of moving to a participatory approach would develop fully over time, several initial benefits were identified:

Sharing power: Both ngā Kaikōkiri and the Committee members, expressed a strong interest in "sharing power."

Te Tiriti o Waitangi based philanthropy: A participatory approach aligns with Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles and partnership obligations.

Enhanced decision-making and a better use of resources: Bringing the considerable expertise and experience of both the PMP Committee and ngā Kaikōkiri together was seen as a way to identify gaps, emerging issues, creative and innovative courses of action and adapting or evolving quickly in a changing environment.

Improving the funding process: For ngā Kaikōkiri, sharing the knowledge what good support looks like helps reduce power differentials and potentially enhances the experiences of applicants and those funded.

It increases ownership and accountability: While ngā Kaikōkiri contribute to the PMP vision and goals, participating in strategic decisions strengthens their sense of ownership of the project.

It is the right thing to do: Participatory approaches to decision-making promote diversity, equity and inclusion. It is evidence of PMP authentically shifting power by "walking the talk."

It broadens knowledge and connections: Ngā Kaikōkiri have different networks and connections, which will help PMP to identify new initiatives.

CHALLENGES

Several challenges have also been identified, and we are learning that:

Authenticity: Participatory philanthropy requires more than lip service, and ongoing attention will need to be paid to the authentic sharing of power.

Who might participate: Consideration will need to be given to the voices of those with lived experience, including how they might be engaged and supported.

Conflicts of interest: Mechanisms will need to be in place to deal with conflicts of interest.

Resource intensive: Active contribution required by participatory philanthropy can require greater time, emotional and intellectual commitments, particularly for those already undertaking challenging, time-consuming work.

Speed of decision making: There are times in which agility and the ability to make timely decisions is required.

Lasting approach: The approach will need to be embedded in the funding structure so that it can withstand changes to committee membership or personnel.

CONCLUSION

A participatory funding model can potentially improve funding processes and decision-making. It is noted that any changes will need to be evaluated to ensure that the process works well, is not too onerous, enhances outcomes and responds to the findings.

The next step in the PMP journey is for ngā Kaikōkiri and the Committee to work out how to further strengthen this mahi.



It was acknowledged that while our work around participatory philanthropy is at a welcome starting point, the structure and how it might be implemented is evolving and there are still questions which will need to be considered in progressing this work.