

The WAIKATO
RANGATAHI
opportunity



Waikato
wellbeing
project | Hinonga
toiora o
Waikato

YOUTHINK you know...

Case
for

Change



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The Waikato awa is our source of life.

With the Waikato awa being a source of sustenance for our bodies, it is also the name of our region, our people and provides a sense of belonging and hence, responsibility.

Like the awa ebbs and flows, twists and turns, this can also be likened to the journey of our young people.

Each twist or turn is a barrier that our young people have overcome. Each ebb or flow is the support or learning our young people have received.

The awa is our representation of our young people's stories.

“I am the awa,
and the awa is me.”

- Sir Robert Mahuta

Acknowledgements

To our rangatahi, we thank you for the taonga you have provided in sharing your experiences so openly and lovingly with us.

Thank you for sharing your aspiration, your strengths and supporting us to understand what is required to create a thriving future. Your mana, uniqueness and strengths are celebrated.

The Rangatahi Opportunity team also would like to thank all of our advisors who contributed to this work. Your guidance and wisdom has enabled us to capture the perceptions and reality of rangatahi living in Kirikiriroa and the system that supports our young people and whānau.

We acknowledge that many of our rangatahi are well supported and on a positive pathway, yet this is not the reality for all young people. Our research aims to provide insight and recommendations on how we, as a collective, can begin to create an environment for change that enables all of our young people to be on a positive pathway to many life options.

This document will evolve as our region continues on this journey. The focus of our mahi to date has been within Hamilton | Kirikiriroa, we believe that the relevance of our findings can provide inspiration and focus for those working with our young people across the Waikato Region and beyond.



Our Rangatahi

Through our face to face interviews, we spoke to many rangatahi, hearing their firsthand accounts of life.

Each person's story is precious, personal and unique, and we have protected their privacy through the process.

As we listened, themes emerged which were common to many of those we spoke to.

We have captured these insights using personas - three of which are shown below as examples of the lived experience of many rangatahi in Kirikiriroa | Hamilton in 2022.



Rangimarie

Age: 16 years old

Family Status: Sole parent, 3 younger siblings

Education: Year 11

Background: Parents are divorced, father is not in picture, I am the eldest in a Māori family of 4

Hobbies: I love skating

Technological Capabilities: I have a mobile phone but unstable internet connection

“I feel like I don't get to be a “normal” teenager because of the situation I am in. I just don't care about my future as much.”



Goals: I want to be able to support my family financially, to become a positive role model to younger people, to provide a safe home for my siblings.



My Reality: I have to stay home to look after my younger siblings while mum is at work, I don't feel like I get enough attention and care from my family and find myself acting out in ways that bring me a sense of belonging and acceptance from peers.



Ibrahim

Age: 20 years old

Family Status: Parents are together and have 3 other children

Job: Currently unemployed

Location: Kirikiriroa Hamilton

Education: Left school at 17 (year 12) and went to complete tertiary education

Background: Former refugee

Hobbies: Futsal

Technological Capabilities: I have access to internet and a device

Opinions: The education system is not tailored for all learners, assimilating into NZ culture is hard, employers can be racist

“I want to be in spaces and places where my identity is fully acknowledged and I am able to express myself without feeling bothered.”



Goals: I'd like to finish University, provide for my family, give back to my community, be happy and play futsal a lot!



My Reality: I don't feel like I belong in the wider community, I often experience racism and feel like my language is a barrier to being included.



Sina

Age: 22 years old

Family Status: Parents are together, parents have 6 children

Job: Full-time employment

Location: Kirikiriroa Hamilton

Education: Finished University with a bachelor's degree

Background: My parents are immigrants from Sāmoa – blue-collar workers, we live in a household with parents, siblings and grandparents

Hobbies: I love to read and hang out with friends

Technological Capabilities: I have access to internet and devices

Opinions: The education system does not provide an environment for rangatahi to thrive while also holding onto their culture

“I want to see more representation of Pacific people everywhere. I have seen my parents work tirelessly to make a safe environment for their kids but the system does not support them.”



Goals: I want to be able to support my family financially, buy my parents a home and eventually land a job within senior leadership to represent my pacific community



My Reality: I've seen my parents leave everything behind and work really hard to provide a better life for us, I have suffered racism and discrimination for being a person of colour and a woman. The education system did not serve me properly.



Waikato wellbeing project | Hinonga toiora o Waikato

The Waikato Wellbeing Project

The Waikato Wellbeing Project is a regional initiative to hear our people and transcend their future through positive impact.



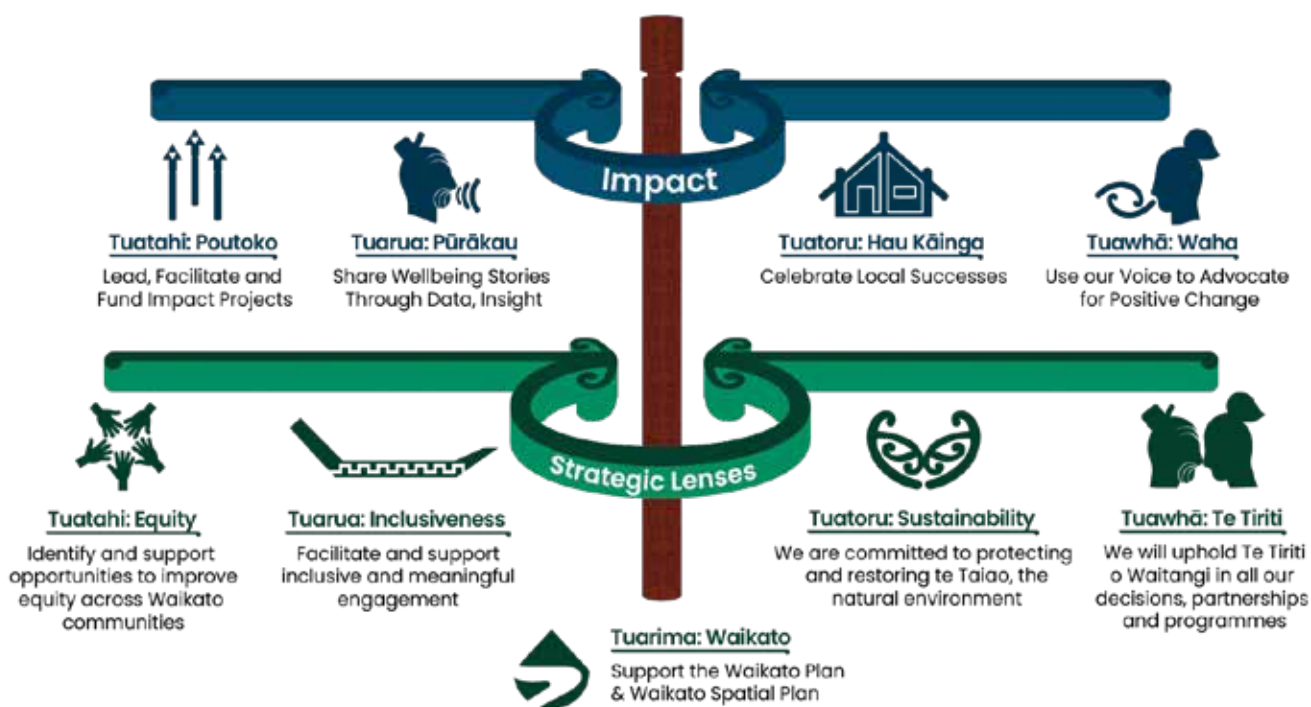
Our Vision:
Our mokopuna are thriving.



Our Mission:
To hear our people and transcend their future through positive impact.

Whakaarotau: Our Priorities

The way we will work to facilitate insight and breakthrough, contributing to our Vision and Mission



This report is focused on Kirikiriroa, Waikato yet the insights and opportunities stated are present across Aotearoa. Utilising our kete of innovation tools the Waikato Wellbeing Project aims to accelerate impact through uncovering insights and breakthrough thinking.

www.waikatowellbeingproject.co.nz



About Us

The Rangatahi Opportunity is an initiative led by the Waikato Wellbeing Project and supported by partners and collaborators within the Waikato.

Our Vision: All of our young people are on a positive pathway and thriving.



Our Values

- Ngākau Aroha - Empathy
- Āroharoha - Compassion
- Hāponotanga - Authenticity
- Whiwhita - Passion
- Hononga - Connection
- Akoranga - Learning



Guiding Principles

- We are Rangatahi-led and Rangatahi-focused
- We Listen to Understand
- We Learn by Doing
- We Draw on Mana-enhancing Practice
- Place-based - Kirikiriroa | Hamilton
- We work with others

Our Role



Amplify the voices and experiences of our rangatahi



Combine research, data and the lived experiences of rangatahi to create insights



Communicate and make our research available for the use of the wider sector



Facilitate opportunities for people and organisations to come together to develop ideas and actionable solutions



Support the development of solutions, alongside collaborators



Present a Case for Change to central and local government, funders and key organisations for systems change to occur



Seek pathways for adoption of solutions

Waikato Rangatahi

The Waikato region is home to 506,000 people, around 10% of the total New Zealand population. The region is geographically diverse with 13 territorial authority (TA) areas.

The Waikato region like most other regions across New Zealand is growing. As well as growing, the region is also becoming older and more diverse.

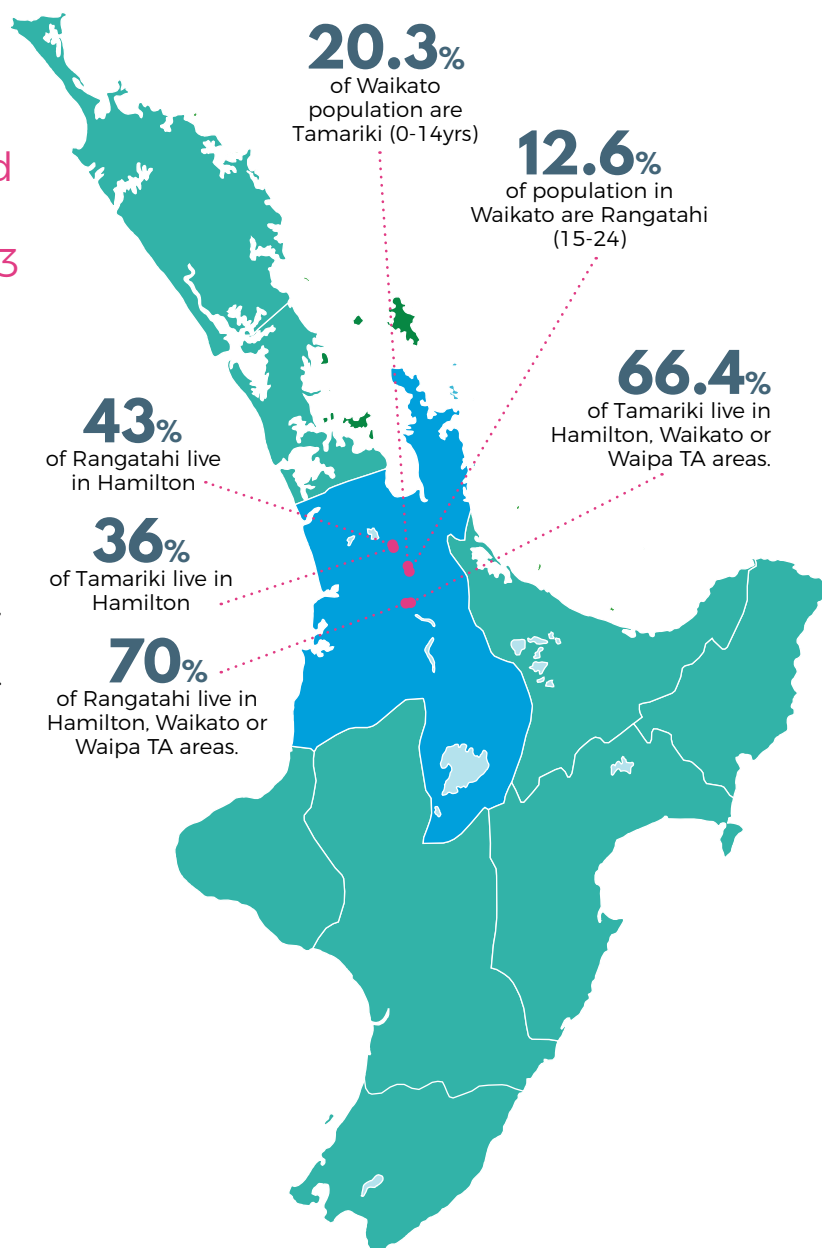
However, this overall increase conceals sub-regional population decline in some rural areas, and rapid growth in urban areas, especially in the northern growth triangle between Hamilton, Auckland and Tauranga. Projected changes will result in 'structural cross-overs' - fewer labour market entrants than exits, more elderly than children and the shrinking of the reproductive population, especially in rural areas.

Over the next two decades, the majority of Waikato region's growth is concentrated at older ages with tamariki and rangatahi experiencing (relatively) a much smaller overall increase. The numbers of tamariki and rangatahi are likely to decline sub-regionally.

As a region, we've experienced an increase from 8,000 to 8,300 rangatahi who are not currently engaged in employment, education, or training ("NEET"), with Māori and Pacifica are disproportionately represented within those statistics. As at 2022 (Q2) 18.7% of rangatahi were not in education, employment or training**

It is also noted that COVID has potentially had an impact in the increase from 2019 to 2020.

We also know that 19,345 or 30.5% of our rangatahi live in areas of high deprivation and, according to the Vodafone Explorer Data tool, 22,716 (28%) of rangatahi are experiencing exclusion and disadvantage*.



There is a wealth of data available on youth outcomes, yet not necessarily in a format that provides an understanding of why and how rangatahi experience barriers in transitioning from education to employment, further study or training.

By combining quantitative data and lived experiences we will be able to create deeper insights and understanding of the root causes and learn fresh perspectives from our rangatahi on what would have the greatest positive impact.

*OHI Data Navigator

**Stats NZ

Our Journey

Building on the work of the Waikato Wellbeing Project a number of individuals, and organisations, have come together to understand how we might work collectively to advance towards our vision.

To date we've received input from 110+ representatives from across social agencies, education, iwi, sports, arts, community, council, philanthropy and tourism. There is a great deal of energy, initiatives and mahi underway supporting youth to better navigate and transition through education, training and employment, and we are certainly seeing positive outcomes and success stories.

There has been a collective agreement that a broader focus is required, and that energy needs to be invested earlier in age, for our rangatahi to thrive. Yet, we don't currently hold the deep insights around root cause to fundamentally transform the system that will deliver greater outcomes for rangatahi, whānau and our wider community.



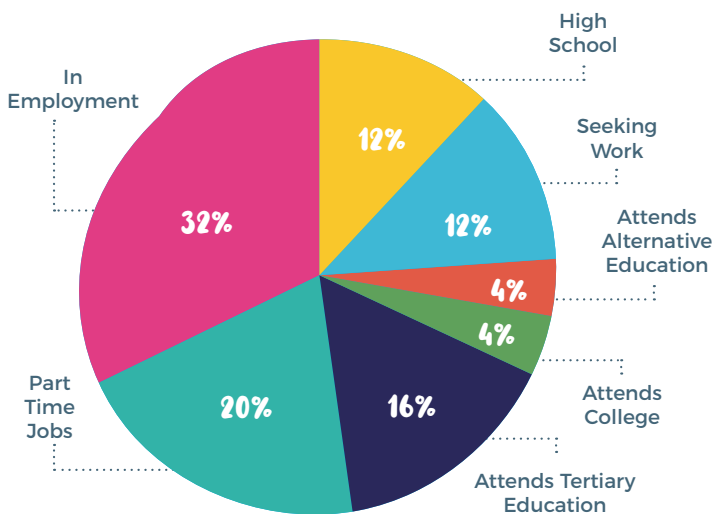
Our Aim

Our research aims to understand the perspectives of rangatahi to identify the opportunities and actions we can take, within the Waikato to create opportunities for young people to be on a positive pathway to have many life options.

Participants

- 25 rangatahi from diverse backgrounds
- 12 Advisors working directly with Rangatahi
- Co-Design Hui with 50+ Rangatahi to capture ideas, concepts and lived experiences
- Input from 95+ Collaborators working with Rangatahi across our Co-Design and Research Sharing Hui

Activity at time of interview



Ethnicity of Participants

16%
Pākeha

56%
Māori

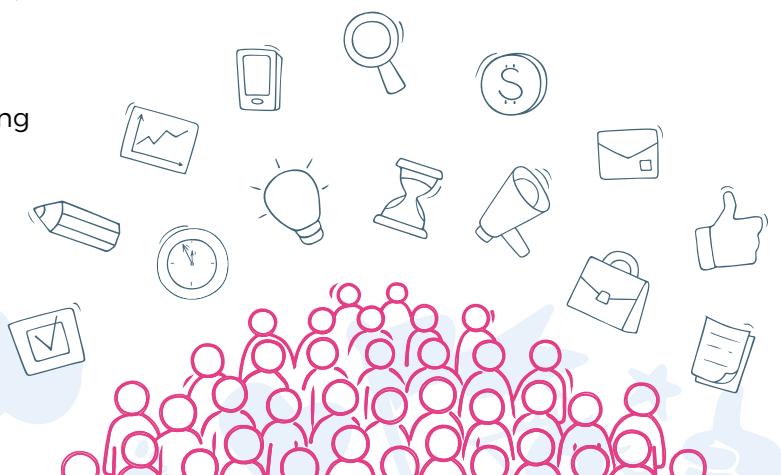
12%
Pasifika

20%
Ethnic

Ages 14-18 **40%** **60%** Ages 19-21

COVID restrictions inhibited our ability to capture the voices of vulnerable rangatahi, which we will continue to seek at a later point.

To protect privacy and elucidate empathy, personas were developed to represent the stories of our rangatahi and individuals working with rangatahi as well as form the emerging insights within this document.



Our Approach

Step 1 - Framing, the basis of our opportunity

“How can we create opportunities for our young people to be thriving and on a positive pathway?”

We sought to understand;

- Why and where are our rangatahi experiencing barriers to successfully transition from education to further study, employment and/or training?
- Where should our collective energies be focused to make the greatest impact for our rangatahi?
- What solutions or ideas would make the greatest difference to our rangatahi and their whānau?
- How might we involve whānau, rangatahi and employers to create insight and breakthrough?
- How might we collaborate with young people, whānau, schools, the community and each other to identify which initiatives to scale for impact that lead to our rangatahi being on a positive pathway to have many life options?

Step 5 - Weaving Together and Moving Forward

Bringing together our learnings, collaborators and community to implement actions and define how we can continue to work together to achieve our collective vision.

Step 2 - Listen To Understand

Our Youth Innovators conducted empathy interviews to understand perspectives and lived experience. Quantitative data, existing research and the lived experiences of our rangatahi were combined to uncover insights on what would have the greatest impact for our rangatahi and their whānau.

Step 3 - Share & Prioritise

Our insights were shared with collaborators who supported us to prioritise our areas of focus for the Co-Design.

Step 4 - Action Through Co-design

Our series of Co-Design Hui brought together rangatahi, whānau, schools, tertiary institutions, local government, innovators and anyone working with young people to develop actions and initiatives.

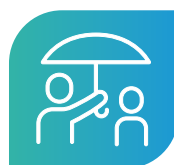
Emerging Insights From Our Interviews

From our one-on-one interviews with rangatahi and advisors we have identified the following emerging themes of what rangatahi need to thrive.



The lives of rangatahi are enhanced when a kaiārahi supports them to navigate life, not just as a one-off, but along the journey.

Rangatahi talked about the various influencers in their lives. Whilst most referenced whānau as a core influence and support, we also heard of examples where teachers, mentors and sport coaches played a key role in supporting rangatahi to navigate through life and make positive decisions. Many spoke about the positive role of a Youth Mentor or Coach at critical points in their life when faced with adversity.



Rangatahi want to give back to their whānau, community and future generations.

Rangatahi are seeking work aligned to purpose. Our rangatahi hold a desire to give back to their whānau, local and global community.



Rangatahi feel unprepared when leaving school.

The (lack of) careers guidance, connections to the real world of work and the inability to contextualise learning did not adequately prepare rangatahi for life after school. This was further supported by interviews with advisors who commented on a disparity between youth and employer expectations.



Rangatahi need a strong sense of belonging to thrive.

For some of our rangatahi, environments such as school and work, were often not culturally affirming. Many feel their environment doesn't reflect their culture and/or identity. These environments weren't places/spaces where rangatahi felt a great sense of belonging. In many cases we heard that school and work were often experiences which did not empower them. Some rangatahi felt the need to dissociate from who they are and where they come from in order to "fit in" to the cultural norms of school.



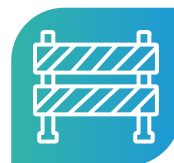
Rangatahi want their strengths + cultural identity to be recognised and supported.

Rangatahi need more opportunities and guidance to understand their strengths, passions, values and identity to help inform what to pursue after school.



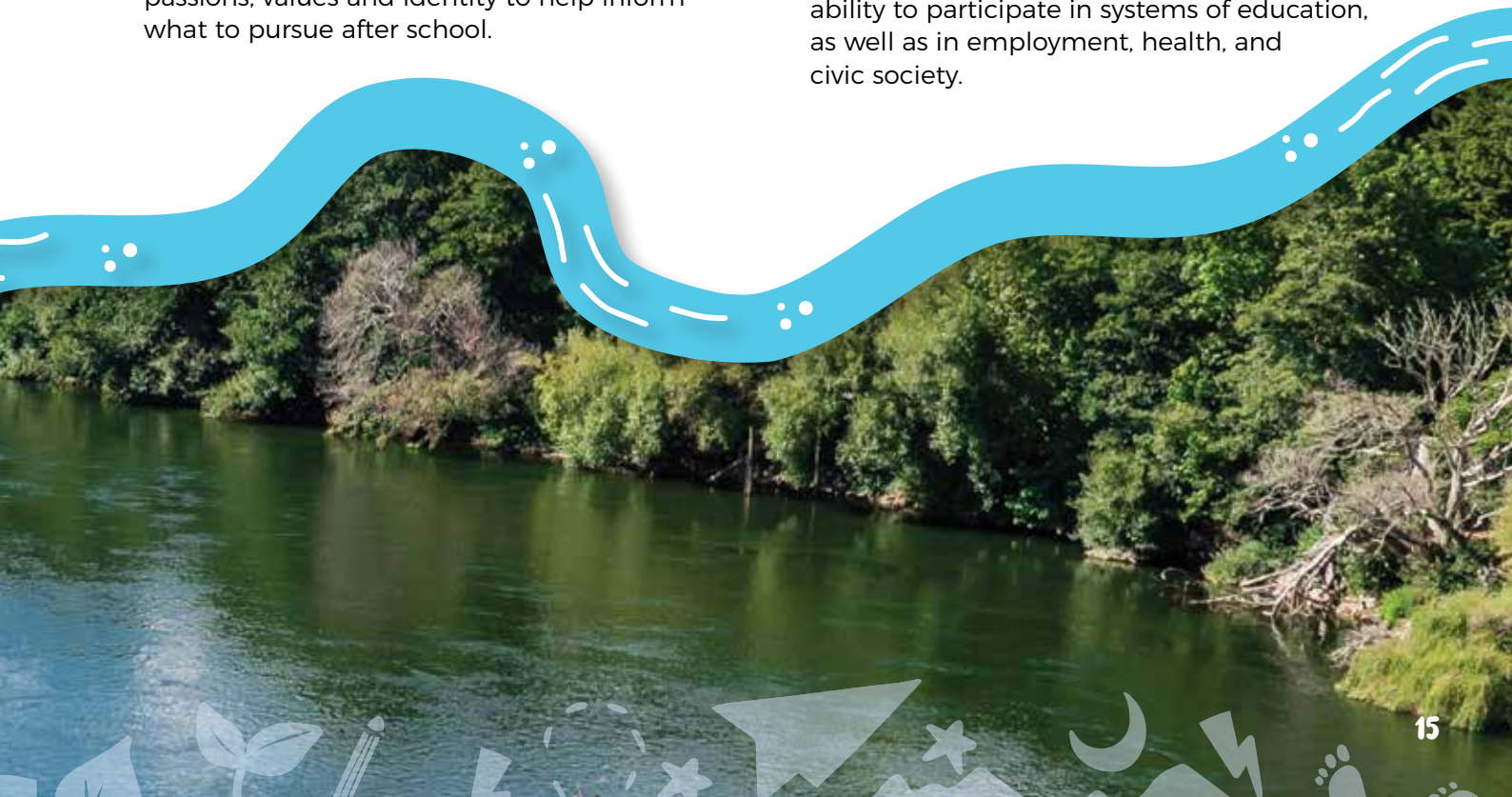
Rangatahi need more support for their emotional and mental wellbeing.

The majority of the rangatahi we spoke with had experienced, or were still experiencing, symptoms of anxiety and depression. These experiences inhibited their ability to perform in school or transition successfully into a work environment. National data has also found that more of our rangatahi and tamariki are experiencing anxiety and self-harm incidences, in particular since the COVID pandemic.



Rangatahi experience barriers because of the effects of structural inequities.

Rangatahi spoke of experiencing racism within education, social systems and employment. Our research found that structural inequities reduce young people's ability to participate in systems of education, as well as in employment, health, and civic society.



A Deep Dive Into Our Insights

The lives of rangatahi are enhanced when a kaiārahi supports them to navigate life, not just as a one-off, but along the journey.

There is ample research showing that rangatahi thrive when they hold positive relationships, inside and outside of their whānau, that support them to navigate life, during and after school. This is the role of a kaiārahi. A person(s) who is able to guide, nurture and connect rangatahi to the wider world.

Rangatahi talked about the various influencers in their lives. Whilst most referenced whānau as a core influence and support, we also heard of examples where teachers, mentors and sport coaches playing a key role in supporting rangatahi to navigate through life and make positive decisions. Many spoke about the positive role of a Youth Mentor or Coach at critical points in their life when faced with adversity.

We discovered that positive relationships for rangatahi exist in various places and spaces, from within the home to the sports field.

Many say that having a role model or mentor keeps them engaged and 'on the right path'. For rangatahi living in high deprivation or within toxic households, the role of a kaiārahi was amplified to provide an alternative future to their current reality.

When rangatahi have a range of positive relationships in their lives, these relationships act as protective factors and enable rangatahi to thrive.

We learned that without these positive relationships, or a kaiārahi, rangatahi may experience feelings of being unloved, lost and hold a lack of belonging. This potentially leads to antisocial behaviour or lack of direction.

Kaiārahi - a guide, counsellor, mentor.

For rangatahi Māori, having healthy and supportive whānau connections has been shown to build cultural efficacy, positive cultural identity development and promotes educational achievement.

In relation to learning environments it was found that "adults who foster positive stable relationships help to inspire them and make it easier for rangatahi to learn" (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020).

These relationships between peers and with teachers are also a key influence in the successful transition within the educational environment, such as from intermediate to high school, by helping rangatahi to find their place (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020).



"I don't know where I would be without the mentor support"

Relationships in the community can also build strong connections and awareness of the world of work, further supporting rangatahi to seek a pathway to meaningful employment and/or study options.

We spoke with a number of advisors working directly with rangatahi from mentoring support to leadership and within education. From our interviews we discovered that the greatest areas for opportunity to enable rangatahi to thrive through kaiārahi are;

- Kaupapa Māori principles which provide a strong sense of belonging and identity for rangatahi Māori
- Ensuring whānau are directly included as part of the mentoring process
- A shift in our existing funding models from competitive to collaborative would enable organisations to work together, providing a stronger support system for rangatahi
- Community-based organisations know and understand how to respond and self-organise, we require a shift in how initiatives are supported
- The transient nature of Youth Mentor/Development Roles
Key issues frequently raised include low pay, complex contracting and procurement processes, low job security and low trust models
- Gap in providing youth mentors where they are most needed

“Connection with coaches or mentors helps rangatahi to build an understanding of positive societal experiences including the world of work, this is especially true for rangatahi who do not have access to similar role models in their own lives”

Auckland co-design lab, 2017

“Some research describes that the experience of having stable and responsive relationships is the single most important factor for healthy development”

The Southern Initiative, 2017

“When young people are adequately supported to engage in authentic participation, service and leadership opportunities, they benefit. They are capable – and not just the high achievers. Adults need to relinquish some of their power and expect more of young people for authentic youth participation to be effective.”

Ngā Tikanga Whānaketanga
– He Arotake Tuhinga (2019)

Rangatahi experience barriers due to the effects of structural inequities.

The Southern Initiative's Early Years Challenge (2019) identified that the first 1,000 days of a child's life is critical in shaping future outcomes being of priority. Work by Koi Tū at the University of Auckland has shown these effects begin at conception are deeply affected by maternal mental wellbeing. There is a large body of evidence of how structural inequities reduces a young person's ability to participate in education, as well as in employment, health, and civic society. The Early Years Challenge found that income inequality is a significant factor driving exclusion and disadvantage. In addition, young people's pathway to study and employment are at greater risk when they experience adverse circumstances early and over a sustained period. These impacts are both social and structural, for example in relation to neurological development in the first 1000 days.

The five most common risk factors for vulnerability for households with two-year olds are

- Living in deprivation
- Income tested benefit
- Crowded households
- Highly stressed by money problems
- Maternal depression

19,345

Waikato Rangatahi live in areas of High Deprivation

Structural inequalities span across generations with intergenerational links to income inequity, associated with systems failure for Māori and Pacific whānau. For example mothers receiving a benefit increases the likelihood of rangatahi receiving a benefit themselves.

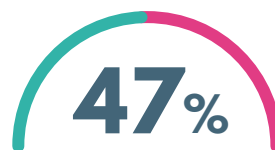
Impacts of High Deprivation on education

Inequitable experiences of poverty have a negative influence on rangatahi engaging with their education in a sustainable way (*Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020*).

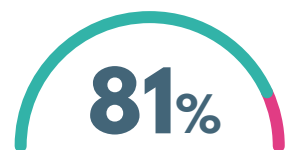
Impacts being:

- Attendance and engagement with learning and school (*Ministry of Education, 2020*)
- Increased risk of frequent changes of school, ill health, inadequate food and clothes, and limited access to other resources required for wellbeing.
- Excluded and disadvantaged* young people are more than twice as likely to attend low decile schools, where they may receive fewer opportunities
- Fewer than 1% of excluded and disadvantaged rangatahi go on to complete tertiary study in their early twenties in Aotearoa
- School leavers from the most socioeconomically disadvantaged schools are more likely to leave school with no or lower qualifications."

WAIKATO ACHIEVED NCEA LEVEL 3



School Leavers from Decile 1 & 2 Schools



School Leavers from Decile 10 Schools

In turn, tertiary educational achievement is often expected now by employers across a wide range of sectors and businesses, therefore rangatahi from disadvantaged circumstances experience inequitable access to low-paid, casual and insecure employment opportunities with little ability to develop skills, qualifications, and increase their salary (*Auckland Co-design lab, 2017; Vodafone Foundation NZ, 2021; 2019*).

Impacts of High Deprivation on Cognitive Development

It is also well understood that living in deprivation increases exposure to and experiences of toxic stress and trauma. Both are known to impact cognitive development by affecting executive functioning such as the ability to learn, plan and focus, which means children find it difficult to interact and learn early in their education journey (*Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020; The Southern Initiative, 2017*).

Exposure to 'sustained and severe stress' as a result of living in deprivation can also affect executive functioning in terms of how we understand problems and the ability to reason, set goals, navigate challenges and to regulate emotions (*Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020*)

Addressing the structural inequities that influence the deprivation and experience of exclusion for rangatahi and their whānau would make the greatest difference to the wellbeing, opportunities, and outcomes of our rangatahi.

“If we want to create a more equitable thriving society for rangatahi we must invest in the early years and support young parents to interrupt ongoing cycle of exclusion and disadvantage”

Vodafone Foundation
New Zealand, 2021

Solutions lie in addressing equities at their source, including racism and systems failures (*The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019*). **Lack of resources for whānau undermines efforts at systemic change and creates negative impacts for the whole of society.**

It is imperative that everyone has at least “enough to meet their basic needs around food, housing, health, clothing and social/recreational participation” (Vodafone Foundation NZ, 2021, p.20). Improving access to material goods through lifting rates of benefits to an adequate level, supporting a living wage, ensuring equitable access to adequate, safe, healthy and affordable housing will make the biggest impact to the wellbeing of rangatahi living in deprivation.

Even taking measures to reduce one stress factor for whānau earlier on in the lives of rangatahi “can impact on children’s outcomes” (*The Southern Initiative, 2017, p.18; Vodafone Foundation NZ, 2021; 2019*).

While risk reduction is one aim addressed through attention to specific determinants such as income, stress and housing; thriving and succeeding (according to rangatahi aspirations) should be the primary focus, and this requires a whole-of-system focus on equity.

“We exist in a world where if you are born into a low socioeconomic class it is very hard to get out of it. It’s very disabling”

Miranda



“The failure of the education system has led to low expectations for Māori and Pacific performance and achievement, practices such as class streaming, has denied opportunities for Māori and Pacific rangatahi to participate in meaningful career pathways. In essence, the education system still “carries a racist legacy where Māori culture is seen as a barrier to success and Māori are channelled into unskilled labour.”

-The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019

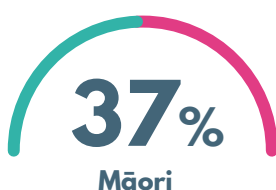
Structural Inequities in Education

Research has found that students who were thriving were “proud of their Māori culture, and identities, could “be Māori as ākonga, rather than having to leave their culture outside to succeed”
(Webber and Macfarlane, 2018 as cited in Ministry of Education, 2020, p.17).

Māori learners thrived when tutors recognised Māori strengths and were understanding, affirming and passionate about their learners succeeding
(Te Pūkenga, 2021).

Rangatahi supported in their development of their cultural identity and self-concept are then better able to buffer systemic challenges to thriving (including experiences of discrimination).

ACHIEVED NCEA - WAIKATO *(Census NZ 2018)*



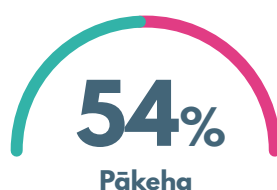
3 in 4

Pacific students left school with NCEA L2



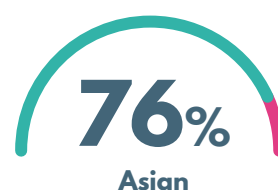
1 in 5

Māori students left school with no qualifications (2020)



2 in 3

Māori students left school with NCEA L2



Rangatahi feel unprepared when leaving school.

Through our empathy interviews we learnt that many rangatahi feel that high school does not provide enough opportunities to prepare for life after school.

This was due to a lack of access to:

- High quality and relevant career guidance in school
- understanding what employment was available and the subjects needed to enter further education or employment
- inability to conceptualise how what is being learnt in class is relevant to life outside of the classroom
- no understanding or experience of what to expect from the world of work.

Within ever changing social, cultural economic and economic landscapes, Rangatahi felt that it was often too challenging to make key decisions around subjects without knowing what would be waiting for them after high school.

Our research found that “there is lack of responsibility, accountability, and coordination amongst the multiple players in the education to employment journey (Auckland co-design lab, 2017)” and that a key challenge for employers and young people was “a complex clash of norms and expectations”. This being due to employers and rangatahi having vastly different behavioural norms, expectations, cultures, and generational differences, which is widened by the lack of early understanding and exposure of young people to work opportunities.

“(Teachers) None of them talked about the workforce, they never really gave any opportunities for us to ask anything they mostly just talked about the subjects they were teaching.”

“We need key people to act as kaitiaki to change rangatahi journeys through education and employment. Teachers, educators, employers, and people working across our public institutions can work together to keep our tamariki in their flow and reach their dream careers.” (Auckland co-design lab, 2017)

Literature highlighted how rangatahi and their whānau need to gain a better understanding around tertiary education (including its value) and pathways into employment. Findings from the Ka Awatea project showed that “when whānau, Iwi and the wider community were invested in education, positive school behaviours and a Māori student commitment to school completion, success improves” (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020, p.19). Because rangatahi identify that their whānau often has the strongest influence on their choices, collaboration with whānau has the potential to provide critical improvement in journeys through education to employment. (Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020)

Rangatahi expressed a need to be exposed to career guidance earlier, such as in intermediate school, be provided with more opportunities to experience various work environments and roles, gain knowledge around how learnings in class were relevant to different roles/sectors, hands-on learning opportunities and support to identify their own purpose, values and strengths.

“I don’t have a clue of what meaningful employment looks like”

“Never got a chance to have a kōrero about employment/future training at school”



“It’s really hard to feel like you fit in in a classroom when everyone around including the teacher is Pakeha and limited amount of POC.”

“Being Polynesian and intelligent doesn’t coexist so you have to let one of your identities go or dissociate from that identity.”

“You go home and Mum’s barely there, single Mum and works 5 jobs. He’s craving Mum’s attention - they’re missing a sense of belonging and love - They need a sense of belonging, that’s where they gravitate to.”


Rangatahi need a sense of belonging to thrive

Culturally affirming environments ensure rangatahi want to engage with education and/or work because they know they are valued and cared for, especially for Māori. “A strong sense of culture and identity is a key mechanism through which education and work environments can give opportunity to and invest in rangatahi” (*The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019, p.11*).

Within spaces of learning, taking a strengths-based approach and having meaningful cultural intelligence is fundamental to supporting rangatahi to thrive (*Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020*).

Similarly, within the world of work, awareness of cultural differences supports the integration of rangatahi. Young people want to be accepted for who they are, free from bullying, discrimination, and violence which make life difficult. This acceptance must also be present in the services provided to them. Participants articulated how their wellness is dependent on the wellness of their whānau and communities and this means more than just meeting the bare minimum standard of living. Rangatahi supported in their development of their cultural identity and self-concept are then better able to buffer systemic challenges to thriving (including experiences of discrimination).





Rangatahi want to give back to their whānau, community and future generations.

Rangatahi place great importance on giving back to their whānau, how their desire to succeed centres around being able to help whānau, community and future generations (*Auckland co-design lab, Ministry of Education & The Southern Initiative 2020*).

In particular, for rangatahi whose families were facing significant adversity, giving back to whānau who had themselves sacrificed much to provide for them was a key aspiration for success.

In a large study of over 2,000 respondents released earlier this month, researchers found that

“for the first time, we see a generation prioritising purpose in their work.”

(The Change Generation Report, 2017).


Our rangatahi participants shared that they held aspirations to work in areas of passion and purpose, and that they sought organisations and work that reflected their values. For many they also shared need to experience and share aroha at work. For many of our participants they spoke about not feeling equipped at school to discover their strengths, values and passions leading them to seek work which was not fulfilling.

For employers, this means placing a focus on purpose driven outcomes, creating space and support to nurture strengths and alignment between personal and corporate values.

One major way in which Gen-Z workers are distinguishing their preferences from those of other generations is with a very values-driven approach to their careers and job prospects. - *Forbes, How Gen-Z Is Bringing A Fresh Perspective To The World Of Work, 2021*



“I want to be in the spaces to promote diversity and listen to experiences of Polynesian kids”



“(I want to) have the power to make as many changes in the world as I can”

“Mental health is a long struggle”

“My anxiety is there 24/7...
In my stomach and palms...
When I get anxious
I get sweaty...”

It is always there”



Rangatahi need more support for their emotional and mental wellbeing.

The majority of the rangatahi we spoke with reported experiences of anxiety and depression as well as the impact of youth suicide within the community. Rangatahi reported feeling anxious and overwhelmed due to pressures to perform academically, needing to support whānau with the care of younger siblings, the uncertainty of life after school, pressure to make life-long decisions during high school, lack of whānau and financial support.

When accessing support services, rangatahi experienced confusion around where to go to seek support as well as barriers to accessing services due to cost.

30.3%

Waikato rangatahi reported an unmet need for accessing primary health care, due to cost or transport.

19%

respondents in the Youth19 Survey (conducted in 2019) had difficulty getting help for emotional concerns.

From our interviews, many of our non-pākeha rangatahi reported experiencing social anxiety and depression due to racism within the school environment. Unicef published ‘The State of the World’s Children’ Report, 2021, which stated that ‘suicide and depression have been linked to experiences of racial discrimination among Māori young people’.

Unicef reported the prescription rates for antidepressants for children, younger than 19, are estimated to have increased 78.3% in New Zealand between 2008 to 2016 .

In addition, the report commented on how “the costs are not only financial. For example, a study that followed a cohort of 7-year-olds found that the children with the most severe conduct problems experienced worse life outcomes 18 years later.

These adverse outcomes included: an 11-fold risk of being arrested or convicted; a greater chance of being a teenage parent; increased chance of being on welfare; a risk of being unemployed for more than 12 months; and a greater incidence of attempting suicide”.



COVID-19 has further impacted the mental and emotional wellbeing of young people. In a recent article, Health Minister Andrew Little acknowledged that mental health services are in crisis, with “huge pressure” as young people struggle to get the help they need.

“In the past decade there has been a 177% increase in the number of young people taken to hospital emergency departments because of a mental health incident.”

- NZ Herald, 30th May 2022.

The shortage of qualified clinical psychologists and psychiatrists further compounds the challenge around providing accessible support to young people experiencing mental and emotional distress.

This is a growing area of concern where there are many initiatives aimed at addressing this complex challenge.

Given our team are not qualified mental health professionals, we were unable to fully explore the extent and impact of mental and emotional wellbeing for rangatahi. This is a growing area of concern.

“In Aotearoa, mental distress among youth has increased significantly over the last decade and around 21% of adolescent boys and girls aged 10-19 live with a mental disorder. Support for their well-being must continue to be prioritised and it will require a whole of society approach to ensure all children and whānau get the support they need.”

**Michelle Sharp,
UNICEF Aotearoa New Zealand CEO**

Our Co-Design

Throughout our journey it became clear that in order to work towards sustainable change we would need to address systemic barriers, create a greater sense of belonging and identity for rangatahi within education and employment, as well as ensure rangatahi are supported by a kaiārahi to positively navigate through various points of transition.



Our series of Co-Design Hui brought together rangatahi, whānau, schools, tertiary institutions, local government, innovators and anyone working with young people.

We were able to unearth a range of existing and new actions focused on “Preparedness for Life after School” and “Creating a strong sense of belonging”.

The team conducted rangatahi focused Co-Design events at Melville High School, He Puaawai at Fraser High, Western Community Centre and the Refugee Orientation Centre.



Opportunities to Action

Where should our collective energies be focused?

Our learnings to date have guided us to two priority areas and eight major opportunities to action:

The here and now:

1. Including the voices and lived experience of whānau, rangatahi and employers.
2. Addressing Equity in Education.
3. Partnering with Māori at all levels of decision making.
4. Support and scale programmes that provide access to coaching and mentoring for young people.

Creating transformation for the future:

1. Improving access to holistic services that focus on enhancing mental and emotional wellbeing for rangatahi.
2. Re-imagining the funding model to encourage collaboration.
3. Supporting and scaling innovation across schools, businesses and the community to support rangatahi and their whānau.
4. Addressing systemic barriers for tamariki and whānau in the early years.

THE HERE AND NOW

Including the voices and lived experience of whānau, rangatahi and employers.

To create wellbeing outcomes for rangatahi, we must provide whānau, rangatahi and employers the conditions that enable systemic reform and transformational change.

Central to enabling systemic reform is honouring the voices of those who are excluded, stigmatised and disadvantaged by the current systems. This expertise must be promoted into positions of power and influence within the decision-making spaces of “government, philanthropy and service providers” (*Vodafone New Zealand Foundation, 2021, p.21*).

This involves actively increasing diversity around the ‘board table’ and deliberately including those whose communities will be impacted in decision making processes. Within government, what this can translate to is taking concrete action on the recommendations and rulings of advisory groups and other experts, and similarly aligning the research imperative.



Addressing Equity in Education.

“Equity in education is key to their (rangatahi) journey and a crucial catalyst for transforming outcomes” (The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019 p.6).

Achieving equity in education needs to involve input from a range of key stakeholders across the system. Our rangatahi want their environments to be more holistic and want their learning experience to be based on and reflect their real-world experiences.

Key insights:

- We need to address racial and systemic biases through cultural training mandated right across the education sector;
- We need to encourage teachers, and other members of society that they engage with, to actively weave students' everyday lives into their learning, and to value their existing knowledge base;
- Māori rangatahi also want to see themselves reflected in the environments they are engaged with, such as the workforce, learning spaces, curriculum and institutional events. In the education sector, rangatahi Māori want learning environments to acknowledge the valuable skills, competencies and experience they bring to the table (Te Pūkenga, 2021).
- We need to further integrate holistic support services to proactively work with rangatahi who are/have experienced systemic barriers or inequity, such as mental wellbeing and Youth Mentorship support;
- We need to include the experiences and voices of rangatahi when redesigning the school experience, to encourage attendance and engagement;
- We must continue to challenge racial biases that direct rangatahi Māori and Pasifika to follow more trade-oriented pathways;

- We need to increase the opportunities for all rangatahi to learn and engage with the world of work from Intermediate (Yr 9-10) School upwards.

Te Pūtahi-a-Toi School of Māori Knowledge (Massey University) found that Māori children located in mainstream schools are often alienated from their culture and identity, impacting negatively on their level of success 'The high levels of truancy, absenteeism, low attendance and stand-down rates in mainstream schools are not there in kura kaupapa; a clear indication of what works for Māori. Furthermore, kura kaupapa Māori students tend to achieve higher NCEA results than students from decile 9 and 10 schools. Unfortunately, most Māori children are located in mainstream schools, where they are most at risk. There aren't enough kura kaupapa and the sector still has a problem with teacher supply, which is one of the reasons why our two programmes were set up.'

“Māori graduates of kura kaupapa are more likely to go on to higher education than their contemporaries coming out of mainstream schooling. 'The high levels of truancy, absenteeism, low attendance and stand-down rates in mainstream schools are not there in kura kaupapa; a clear indication of what works for Māori.'” - PROFESSOR HUIA JAHNKE, Māori education that works, Te Pūtahi-a-Toi School of Māori Knowledge

The Ministry of Education has recently released an Attendance and Engagement Strategy (June 2022) with a focus on parents, caregivers and whānau ensuring their 'ākonga are enrolled in school and attend school every day'. Our research has shown that there is a deeper need to ensure the learning environment is culturally affirming, safe and reflects the real-world experience of rangatahi.

Action through Policy

The 'He Awa Are Rau - A Journey of Many' research identified how policy settings to keep Māori (and Pacific) rangatahi engaged in learning.

These include:

- Designing policy to drive the shift from punitive to restorative behavior management practices.
- Focusing on policy that encourages growth in Māori (and Pacific) teachers and which weaves cultural competencies into teaching practices and appraisals, ensuring that culturally responsive professional learning is mandated.
- Ensuring educators are equipped to utilise te ao Māori and grow their cultural competency.
- Provide opportunities for English medium schools to redesign their teaching and learning practices so that they work for Māori.

“Māori language and culture needs to be genuinely valued, seen and heard in the classroom” (The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019).

A similar approach is required to foster outcomes for Pacific rangatahi, recognising the ethnic diversity of our rangatahi communities in Aotearoa.

“If we want to create a more equitable thriving society for rangatahi we must invest in the early years and support young parents to interrupt the ongoing cycle of exclusion and disadvantage” (Vodafone Foundation New Zealand, 2021, p.14).

There is a great deal of energy and mahi in the transition space for ensuring rangatahi are supported post high school. Addressing the structural inequities that influence the deprivation and experience of exclusion for rangatahi and their whānau would make the greatest difference to the wellbeing, opportunities, and outcomes of our rangatahi.

Solutions lie in addressing inequities at their source, including racism and systems failures (The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019).

- Improving access to material goods by lifting rates of benefits to an adequate level, supporting a living wage, ensuring equitable access to adequate, safe, healthy and affordable housing will make the biggest impact to the wellbeing of rangatahi living in deprivation. Even taking measures to reduce one stress factor for whānau earlier on in the lives of rangatahi “can impact on children’s outcomes” (The Southern Initiative, 2017, p.18; Vodafone Foundation NZ, 2021; 2019).

Risk reduction is one aim addressed through attention to specific determinants such as income, stress and housing; . According to rangatahi aspirations thriving and succeeding should be the primary focus, and this requires a whole-of-system focus on equity.

Partner with Māori at all levels of decision making.

Our interviews have predominantly focused on rangatahi Māori and Pasifika, as well as learning from advisors who adopt a kaupapa Māori model. In order to address systemic barriers and inequities in education partnering with iwi, kaupapa Māori based organisations, rangatahi Māori and whanau must be an ongoing commitment.

The Vodafone Foundation found that 'In Aotearoa New Zealand, we have consistently failed to follow through on significant system reforms required to deliver outcomes on tax, care and protection, welfare and education. Reforming the systems that support all New Zealanders and their wellbeing, and that achieve equity, requires working in genuine partnership with whānau, hāpu and Iwi'

True systems reform requires us to work genuinely and authentically with whānau, hāpu and iwi across all levels of decision in honouring our responsibility to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Support and scale programmes that provide access to coaching and mentoring for young people.

Most rangatahi in New Zealand have been raised in a stable home, with loving and supportive parents, healthy meals every day, a warm house with good friends who lived close by. Many rangatahi growing up

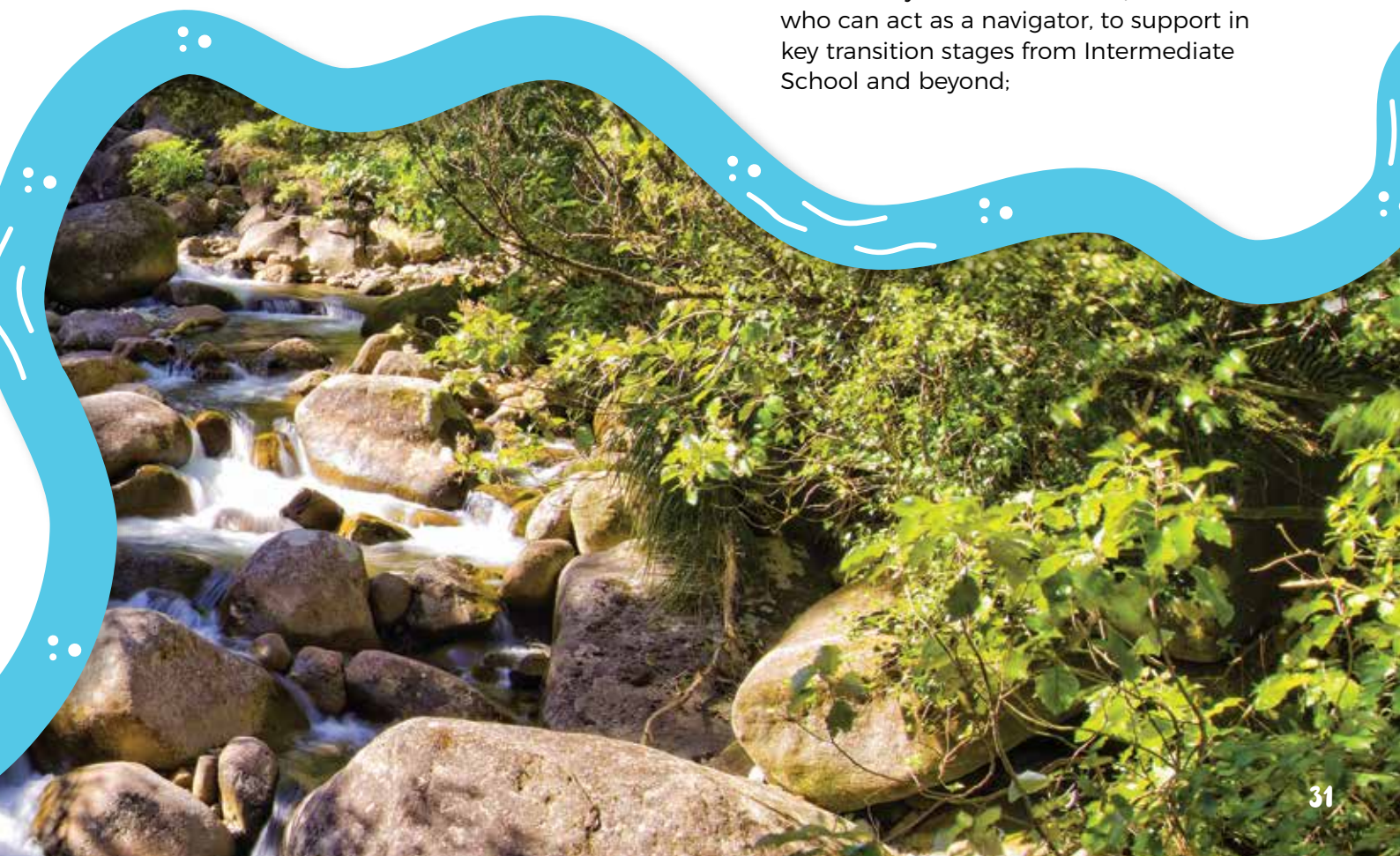
in Aotearoa have fortunately never needed the support of a youth service organisation or needed access to youth payment, whānau support or a youth coach.

For many rangatahi that do however need a support structure different to what exists in mainstream education, and may not be present at home, the evidence overwhelmingly points to one thing. A trusting, consistent and capable relationship with a kaiarahi, youth coach/mentor, who can build rapport and a connection with rangatahi and their whanau, where the needs, dreams and aspirations of every rangatahi is placed at the centre of all they do.

Our advisors commented on the current challenges with recruiting and retaining high quality Youth Coaches. Funding for current programmes is short term, insecure, low trust and insufficient to meet actual demand.

Key insights:

- We need to support initiatives and programmes that connect rangatahi to a kaiārahi;
- We need to ensure the availability and accessibility of Youth Coaches/Mentors, who can act as a navigator, to support in key transition stages from Intermediate School and beyond;



- We need more Youth Coaches who are relatable, adopt a culturally affirming approach, are strength-based and consider the 'whole picture of a rangatahi' to include whānau;
- Youth Coaches need to be integrated into the learning environment, acting as a bridge between education, employment and training providers as well as with other support organisations, to meet the needs of rangatahi and their whānau;
- We need to shift the funding model from short-term output focus, i.e. annual contracts, to a longer term FTE focus that enables sustainable employment opportunities for Youth Coaches as well as retaining consistency for rangatahi engaging with coaches.

CREATING TRANSFORMATION FOR THE FUTURE;

Improving access to holistic services that focus on enhancing mental and emotional wellbeing for rangatahi.

Due to the impacts of systemic barriers, toxic household stress and/or trauma-induced events there was a clear indication that for our rangatahi to thrive there needs to be a consistent approach to providing access to holistic services for our rangatahi, both within and outside the school environment.

Key insights:

- Support programmes and initiatives that reduce the travel barriers and costs associated with accessing primary health care services for rangatahi;
- Support early-intervention programmes that focus on rangatahi hauora, self awareness and resilience;
- Ensure services and programmes are culturally affirming, whānau-centric and integrated within the learning environment;

- Prioritise services and initiatives that incorporate the Māori and Pacific peoples' perspectives on wellbeing.

Re-imagine the Funding Model to encourage collaboration.

Feedback from our collaborators indicated that the current funding model encourages competition, discourages collaboration and is a low-trust model.

Community-based organisations know and understand how to respond and self-organise. To further succeed requires a radical shift in how initiatives are supported. Smaller organisations, doing excellent mahi, reported having limited capacity to identify potential funders and that funding applications often require a high volume of administration time, taking key personnel away from actual service delivery.

Key insights:

- We need to support the mahi of organisations, such as the Waikato Plan - Youth to Employment Training Working Group, to facilitate organisations and funders to come together to re-imagine the funding model;
- We need to support the development of a grass-roots led funding approach that is high-trust and allows a community to respond to the changing needs of rangatahi;
- We need to actively support the government's focus on improved social services commissioning, holding them accountable to achieve the key principles and relational approach set out in this initiative.



Supporting innovation across schools, businesses and the community to support rangatahi and their whānau.

There is a need to grow, support and reward genuine and lasting partnerships and connections between local schools, whānau, community, education providers and businesses. Such partnerships should either support whānau to increase their own capabilities or increase the visibility, awareness and opportunities for education to employment pathways. In this way, communities can lead change for themselves.

There are significant rewards from nurturing, low stress engagement that frees up capacity for “the development of problem-solving skills including planning, goal setting and self-regulation”

(The Southern Initiative, 2017, p.21).

Key insights:

- We need to support initiatives and organisations that bring together the wider community to define innovations, actions and existing best practices, that support rangatahi to thrive;
- We need to expand the focus to include rangatahi wellbeing instead of the current focus on education to employment pathways only;
- We need to include schools and educators from Primary and Intermediate schools to ensure a proactive approach is being taken;
- We need tools, knowledge and support that strengthens community and whānau leadership, to drive the actions and initiatives that work best for them;

- We need to support schools to create and build relationships with local employers to support rangatahi with contextualising their learning, creating an awareness of the various pathways available and connect to future work opportunities.

“We need key people to act as kaitiaki to change rangatahi journeys through education and employment. Teachers, educators, employers, and people working across our public institutions can work together to keep our tamariki in their flow and reach their dream careers. Policy makers can enact a suite of upstream policies that support the needs of a ll rangatahi and their whānau that continue throughout their learning journey.”

(The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019, p.18)

In addition to supporting innovation there is a need to take more of an active role in supporting rangatahi and their whānau to gain a better understanding around pathways options post high schools.



Learnings from a kaupapa Māori approach

Findings from the 'Ka Awatea project' showed that "when whānau, Iwi and the wider community were invested in education, positive school behaviours and a Māori student commitment to school completion, success improves"

"Bringing the different parties together and building understanding of and empathy for one another's point of view helps to collapse the gap"

(Auckland co- design lab, 2017, p.6).

Rangatahi identify their whānau as having the strongest influence on them, yet often whānau are not fully informed of all the options around tertiary, vocational study and pathways to employment.

By bridging the gap between understanding and awareness, whānau can take a more informed approach to supporting their rangatahi with decisions.

Key insights:

- We need to involve whānau more directly in careers and advice around job-seeking (*Auckland co-design lab, 2017; The Southern Initiative & Waikato Tainui, 2019*).
- We need to provide whānau with access to, and the means, to share information, data, technical tools and skill, and to equip them with wide advice on how career pathways might be navigated or achieved.
- We need to foster relationships built on whānaungatanga and manaakitanga with staff, better connections with employers, and sharing ideas with mentors and tuākana.
- We need to support connections with mentors and individuals, working within roles in the community for rangatahi to develop better understandings of the different pathways that they could take, as well as and learn how to take advantage of early opportunities to build long- term employment plans (*Te Pūkenga, 2021*).
- We need to support employers to gain cultural safety and competence in order to integrate and support rangatahi and their whānau into the workplace. By establishing shared values, employers can increase their understanding of, and capability to, manage and support an increasingly diverse workforce (*Auckland co-design lab, 2017*).



What's Next?

This is an invitation for rangatahi, whānau, iwi, schools, tertiary institutions, local and central government, business, innovators and anyone working with young people to join us in continuing the mahi in creating more equitable outcomes for our Rangatahi.

This report is freely available for everybody to use and to build on with their own specific and local insights.

It can be used as a **strategic business case** supporting front-line rangatahi wellbeing organisations to secure the funds and resources they need to succeed. This will save each organisation the cost of creating their own insights and evidence base, reducing the administrative barriers often created by funding systems and the need to produce good localised evidence.

It might also be used as a **guide for policy makers** when assessing where to intervene and what sorts of interventions to support. When this is the case, our recommendation is to support actions which have the greatest leverage, maximising benefit to the greatest number of rangatahi, in ways which get closest to the root cause of our

rangatahi wellbeing challenges. While there is great urgency in the here and now- in the long run we need to change the to that our rangatahi can thrive.

It might also serve as a **resource for funders** who are motivated to make a difference, and are keen to know where to get the best “bang for their buck”. By referring to this case for change and the evidence it contains, funders are able to augment the voices of those who have the means and the capability to seek support from them, and to also seek out the quiet voices in the background- whose needs and potential are just as great and just as deserving.

..and lastly we hope this is a source of inspiration, hope and pride for our rangatahi. We want our young to know that when we say they are our future - we mean it!





**Waikato
wellbeing
project** | Hinonga
toiora o
Waikato

What We Will Do

- The Waikato Wellbeing Project

This work was the first step of our journey to understand how we might create opportunities for all of our rangatahi to thrive in the Waikato.

Through our participatory research we've uncovered core insights to help define how we can collectively work together.

As part of our kaupapa, to ensure our Mokapuna are thriving, we will continue to work within our strategic framework to support the continuation of The Rangatahi Opportunity.



Tuatahi | Poutoko
- Lead, Facilitate and
Fund Impact Projects

We have completed the "You think you know rangatahi - Case for Change" to provide insight on root cause and ways we can work together to achieve our wellbeing goals. We want this report and the resources we have made available to be used by everybody with a stake in the rangatahi wellbeing space, in ways which create value for them. Our hope is that by undertaking and sharing this work, more support and resources will flow to front-line organisations which work directly with rangatahi.

We are mindful that, due to COVID-19 our work was limited to Kirikiriroa | Hamilton, and that the lived experience of rangatahi in other parts of the region might be quite different. If invited, we are open to partnering with other wellbeing leaders to look deeply into rangatahi wellbeing in other parts of the region.



Tuarua | Purakau
- Share Wellbeing
Stories Through
Data, Insight

We will continue to capture and share relevant data and insights through the proposed Te Ara Poutama | Waikato Wellbeing Project Centre of Knowledge to support initiatives and inform what is needed moving forward.

The purpose of the Waikato Wellbeing Project Centre of Knowledge includes:

- Providing open access to wellbeing data and insights for all organisations and communities
- Platform for addressing gaps and collecting new bottom-up data
- Thought leadership and knowledge generation to inform action and influence behaviours
- Network facilitation connecting researchers and improving access to tools and resources
- Preparing community and topic specific insights and reports
- Producing regular state of the region report and dashboards of key indicators

Now we have created a strong database of key rangatahi wellbeing indicators for the Waikato, we will ensure that these are kept up to date and available for everybody to access and use. We are currently working with our regional wellbeing knowledge stakeholders to establish Te Ara Poutama.



Tuatoru | Hau Kainga - Celebrate Local Success

We will continue to capture and share the successes and stories of our rangatahi, whānau and our wider community who are doing great things to enhance rangatahi wellbeing. We are commencing He pakipūmeka | Lots of Little Fires to capture stories of well being told first hand through the voices of those doing the mahi. Our aim is to capture those stories and voices which don't always make it to mainstream media, but whose everyday lives show what is possible when people at the flax roots get on and make things happen.

We heard from many rangatahi and youth wellbeing organizations while undertaking research for the Rangatahi Opportunity, and we aim to capture and share as many of these through He pakipūmeka over the next 1-2 years.



Tuawha | Waha: - Use Our Voice To Advocate For Positive Change

We will continue to work with local and central government to advocate for systems change with a focus on equity. In the next phase we will be engaging with the Productivity Commission to understand how we can identify opportunities to work together in response to the recently published Fair chance for all inquiry.

In addition, we will also be advocating for:

- the increase of preventative youth coaches in schools and community that support rangatahi from yr 9-13;
- we are also advocating to increase well being within secondary schools via Smart Waikato's Careers Hauora programme
- shifting the funding model from competitive to a community-led model



Tuarima | Waikato - Support the Waikato Plan and Waikato Spatial Plan

We will continue to work with regional leadership such as the Regional Skills Leadership Group, Te Waka, Waikato Plan, and other organisations, to create a unified approach to rangatahi wellbeing.

We will also continue to support the Waikato Plan Youth Training and Employment workstream with their strategic focus on funding and the systems that underpin how youth and education to employment services are resourced.

Our Youth Innovators

- Reflections and Learnings

Our Youth Innovators have been leading the mahi with support from the wider Rangatahi Opportunity Team. Recognising that our rangatahi bring with them an unique perspective, skills and strengths was critical to ensuring the success of this project.

We're proud to have provided the opportunity for our Youth Innovators to lead and in turn a safe space for rangatahi to share their experiences and story.

"As a rangatahi myself, I heard many rangatahi stories and their experiences. However, being part of this research has made things very clear and exposed me to rangatahi from various backgrounds that come with their own lived experience. By listening to the first-hand experience of the rangatahi we interviewed, I learnt that the context a young person grows up in influences the way they develop. Every young person we spoke to had a unique story and their own set of challenges that they faced."

"One simple action that we as a team did and I am super proud of is the fact that we just listened. We listened to the stories of our young people. We held space for people to narrate their own journeys and experiences.

Then we used it as the core of this project as we navigated through the research and phases. We always go back to the voices of our rangatahi as they guide us through this journey.

I have added every bit of knowledge I have gained from this research into my Kete as I know that it will shape how I engage with young people and what I can do to support them through this developmental stage. I am very grateful to have been part of this journey along with other amazing rangatahi that I got to meet along the way. Their stories have inspired me and continue to give me hope for the future." - Rana Arif, Youth Innovator

“This project has really emphasised the power of rangatahi led engagement, the team throughout this project have developed meaningful relationships which has led to breakthrough insights. This mahi has changed the trajectory in which I want to utilise my skills. I am currently studying towards a Law Degree and with this I want to continue to advocate for change and taking advantage of my legal knowledge for this to be a vehicle of it.

In an ideal world Covid would have been a distant memory however it was something that we had to combat, the early part of our project did not see as much face to face contact as I would have liked. It was quite clear to build trust and connection with rangatahi face to face communications are the correct course of action to take. Another key learning that was paramount as a part of this project was that the issues that rangatahi face do not sit in a vacuum. Often youth clumped together and people working in these spaces are having to navigate a whole plethora of different issues, issues that in other systems are split up.

Hearing through our empathy interviews our rangatahi are facing real world challenges, the same as what other people are. The Cost of Living, Housing Crisis, Poor Mental Health, Structural Barriers, Accessibility to Healthcare are all things that Rangatahi are facing.

I want to thank the team for supporting and believing in this project. I am really proud of the insights we have made. Though this is the first step in a long journey, I am grateful that we were on the same waka for this phase”

- Charlotte Mitchell, Youth Innovator



Provide your Feedback

We would love to hear your feedback on the Case for Change and What's Next to achieve our region's vision.

Scan the QR Code or visit www.waikatowellbeingproject.co.nz



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Tuihana Ohia
KAIĀRAHI - WELLBEING

Acknowledgements

The Waikato Rangatahi Opportunity Project Team and Waikato Wellbeing Project would like to thank the rangatahi, advisors and collaborators who have contributed to this mahi.

Our thanks to our partners, sponsors and supporters. We look forward to continuing the mahi to ensure all of our young people are engaged, thriving and are learning or earning a livelihood, their mana is enhanced, and they are on a positive pathway to have many life options.



Our Manu Taki

We would like to thank our Manu Taki for their guidance and support.

Mary Jensen, CEO Smart Waikato

Smart Waikato is a charitable trust formed in 2009 with the purpose to empower youth and employers through real education to employment pathways.

Joe Graham, National Manager, NZ Blue Light Ventures

Blue Light is a charity organisation that delivers and supports a multitude of youth programs nationally and has been doing so for over 30 years.

Rachel Karalus, CEO K'aute Pasifika Trust

K'aute Pasifika Trust is a charitable trust based in Hamilton where we provide health, education and social services to Pasifika communities and all other ethnicities who wish to access our services.

Rosie Spragg, Industry & Sector Development Manager | Kaihautū Rāngai Tūmataiti. Te Waka

Te Waka is a business-led and governed organisation established to drive economic growth in the Waikato.



About this Document

This document provides an overview and summary of our mahi to date, as part of the Waikato Rangatahi Opportunity Project. Within this document you'll learn why we have chosen to focus on this opportunity, our approach and learnings to date.

It is important to note that this document will evolve as we continue on our journey in creating more opportunities for our rangatahi to thrive. The focus of our mahi to date has been within Hamilton | Kirikiriroa and we hope our learnings provide inspiration and focus for those working with our young people in the Waikato Region.

The data and research mentioned in this document has been drawn from two pieces of work undertaken by Te Ngira. Full Reports and data sources can be found at www.waikatowellbeingproject.co.nz/insights/.

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Te Ngira Research

Our thanks to Te Ngira who provided a comprehensive Literature Review and Sociodemographic Profile of Rangatahi living in the Waikato.

The Te Ngira scope of work included NZ Census data as well as other bodies of youth focused research in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

- Thriving Rangatahi – Literature Review (*Vodafone Foundation New Zealand 2019*)
- Thriving Rangatahi – Data Driven Perspectives Report (*Vodafone Foundation New Zealand 2021*)
- The Attitude Gap (*Auckland Co-design Lab 2016*)
Know Me, Believe Me (*Auckland co-design lab*)
- Ministry of Education and The Southern Initiative (2020) He Awa Ara Rau (*The Southern Initiative in collaboration with Waikato Tainui 2019*)
- The Early Years Challenge (*The Southern Initiative 2017*)
- Te Rito – Insights from Learners (*Te Pūkenga 2021*)

Supporters

A special thanks to the following organisations that supported our ability to connect and learn from rangatahi and advisors.

- He Puaawai, Hamilton
Fraser High School
- Rototuna High School Careers
- Smart Waikato
- Youth Employability
- Waikato Plan
- Ministry of Education
- Young Workers Resource Centre –
Whare Kaimahi Rangatahi (YWRC)
- Melville High School, Hamilton
- Western Community Centre
- ZEAL
- Smart Waikato
- Te Wānanga o Aotearoa
- NZ Police
- K'aute Pasifika
- YWRC
- Hamilton City Council
- COMET

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Futures

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