

# STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE IN NELSON AND TASMAN

Mā pango, mā whero  
e oti ai te mahi.

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by Brigid Ryan



# FOREWORD

In March 2017 the annual meeting of the Nelson Tasman “Community and Whānau” group identified a number of areas for development and collaboration. One of these was building capacity in local community governance. This had earlier been identified in Rātā Foundation’s Social Services Scan, 2015.

Following the Community and Whānau meeting a working group was set up to better understand the needs of governance at a community level across the region. This group included Nelson City Council, Rātā Foundation, Volunteer Nelson and the Department of Internal Affairs.

With a partnership approach, the steering group commissioned qualitative research to understand community governance in Nelson Tasman. A confidential approach enabled people to speak openly about their needs and issues.

A community engagement process shared the initial research findings with the wider not-for-profit sector and enabled more people to be involved in identifying issues and actions.

An action group is now in place to drive forward the shared priority action plan aimed at strengthening capacity of not-for-profit governance. This is based around the themes of People, Resources, Learning and Collaboration identified in the research.

The intention is to maintain community participation and ownership of the actions across the Nelson / Tasman region, as the project develops.

Thanks must go to Brigid Ryan and Esmé Palliser from Ryan & Rienhoff Associates, for their success in creating safe environment for people to share their thoughts and enabling deep insights.

Thanks also to local artist, Motiv8, for visualising the initial findings and the ideas arising from the community engagement process.

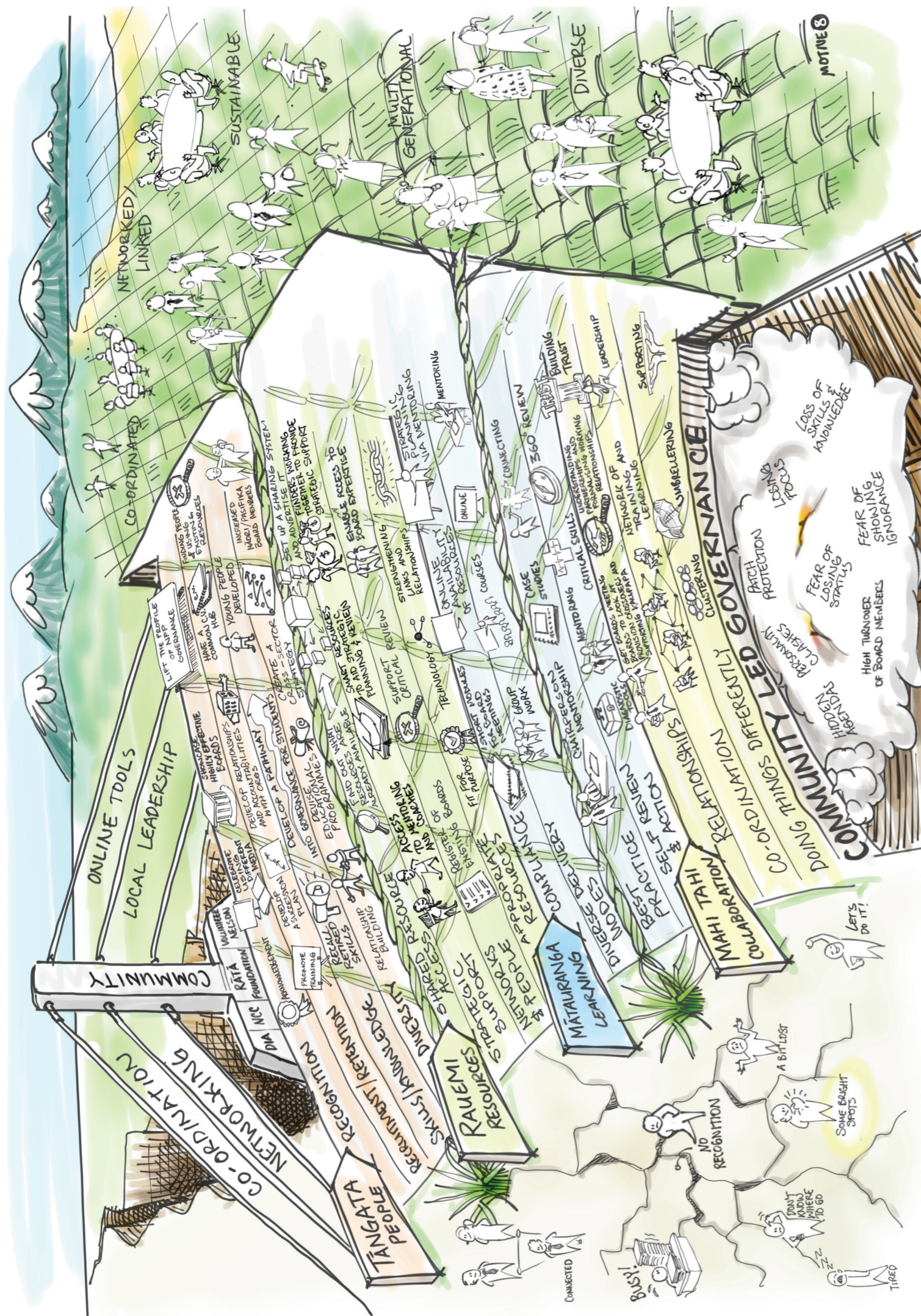
Most importantly, thanks are due to the community for the overwhelming interest and participation in this process.

## Mā pango, mā whero e oti ai te mahi. *With red and black, the work will be complete.*

This whakataukī expresses the importance of bringing all levels and all parties within the community to work together towards a common goal. It refers to co-operation, sharing the task, where if everyone does their part, the work will be completed, enabling the people to move forward and prosper.

As with Māori tradition, the colour red signified chiefly rank. Prestigious cloaks worn by rangatira included red kākā feathers to identify this status. The ‘whero’ can represent leadership, governance and those with the vision for the community. The whakataukī calls to this group of people, to contribute to the workload ‘on the ground’ and muck in so to speak.

The colour black metaphorically refers to the many heads drawn from the clan or tribal group to do the job. This black can represent the people, the importance of collaboration and drawing on all resources within the community in working towards the common goal.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was commissioned by Rātā Foundation and Nelson City Council to gather information on how to support not-for-profit leadership and governance in Nelson. Interviews were held with the Chairs and managers of twenty agencies around Nelson Tasman in August 2017. This research was conducted following a workshop that took place at the Nelson/Tasman Community and Whānau meeting of 15 March 2017. It had also previously been identified by the social services sector environmental scan, commissioned by Rātā Foundation in 2015.

A steering group including Rātā Foundation, Nelson City Council, Department of Internal Affairs and Volunteer Nelson (as holders of the Community and Whānau meeting) guided the research. Other members of the Nelson Tasman Community Funders Network may also be involved at a later stage.

## THE INFORMATION GATHERED WILL BE USED TO:

1. Facilitate a partnership approach to building governance within Nelson and Tasman.
2. Inform development of a shared priority action plan to be co-created with members of the community and voluntary sector.
3. Build on existing provision, and it would value the expertise in the sector.

### METHODOLOGY

The identity of participants and organisations was kept totally confidential with any identifying information only available to the researchers. Groups were selected from a wide pool of agencies to reflect the diversity of the community and included groups from education, church, sport, arts, older persons, health, social services, youth, kaupapa Māori, ethnic diversity and community development. Thirty two of the interviews were held face to face with the remaining eight conducted over the phone.

## THE THEMES FELL INTO FOUR MAIN CATEGORIES:





# PEOPLE

Tāngata

“I enjoy the organisation but have limited experience and skill level. I’m trying to get experience. I need a mentor to help with a strategic plan for the Board. I’m not really aware of what I have to do. I would like some clarity between governance and hands on”

There is a significant, mainly voluntary workforce engaged on boards throughout the region. While most board members mentioned significant challenges in their roles, 90% also indicated that they enjoy the role and see this as a way to make a valuable contribution to the organisation and the wider community. Boards often felt pressure to recruit new members to have “enough” people while further discussion revealed the real need was to recruit for particular skills.

Many board members would like their boards to better reflect the changing demographics of the region with better representation of gender, age and diversity on boards with special mention of involvement of Māori and Pasifika. The current representatives are often asked to be involved in so many groups and are under huge pressure. Many boards would appreciate the input of young people with new ideas and more familiarity with social media and new technology. They noted new highly skilled people are moving into the region and there is also an excellent pool of young people who could bring a new perspective to the board member role.

Board members also highlighted the importance of being appreciated and acknowledged by their organisation and the wider community. Managers appreciate the commitment of board members and the time they give. However, board members are often not aware of how small changes in how the boards operate would make things so much easier for managers. These include: regular attendance at meetings; meetings chaired well in a timely manner; reading material that is distributed prior to meeting; action points recorded and followed up; decisions affecting management are made in a professional and timely manner.

## WHAT YOU SAID WOULD BE USEFUL:

- Continue to explain the difference between governance and management.
- Develop guidance on how to recruit and retain board members.
- That managers are made aware of the importance of clear communication for managers reporting to boards, knowing what to report and how to report it.
- That Volunteer Nelson holds CVs for prospective board members and actively recruits potential board members from Māori and Pasifika.
- That board membership is promoted as good skill development for young people and thereby develops a future pool of governance members.
- That funders and media acknowledge the contribution that board members make.
- That training is offered for people in similar roles e.g. Chair, finance, secretary.



## KEY IDEAS

Diversity  
 Young People  
 Recruitment  
 Retention  
 Skills  
 Knowledge  
 Recognition





# RESOURCES

Rauemi

“I need a template or information about reporting to boards. We lost our financial person so I’ve been doing financials – but boards are supposed to do policy & procedure updates – aren’t they?”

Many of the board members felt they needed an induction manual and generic resources that could be modified for each organisation rather than every board having to start from the beginning to get one together. This was just one of the resources suggested that could make boards work better.

Regular review of policies and procedures eliminates many potential problems, but many managers commented about the lack of time for board members to engage in this process. However, good policies about finance, recruitment, health and safety, conflicts of interest and more were seen to be a very effective use of time to prevent problems in the long term.

For example one board was just learning about the cost of financial obligations and had not budgeted for auditing costs. Both board members and managers asked for New Zealand based online templates that were created for the NGO sector. They also suggested that the time people have on a board is time-limited, rather than open-ended, since reasons for being on a board and the passion for it can change over time.

## WHAT YOU SAID WOULD BE USEFUL:

- Develop a central point where templates for policies and procedures, recruitment processes and other resources are held.
- Develop generic resources which could include, an induction package; a start-up checklist for new organisations; a sample set of policies and procedures; role descriptions for board members detailing what the responsibilities are.
- The importance of sound financial management and expertise for boards is recognised.
- Acknowledgment of the pressure on resources both on funding and human resources because of the number of NGOs in Nelson Tasman.
- Enable access to people who can advise about the particular needs of organisations.
- Emphasise the importance of a strategic plan that informs annual plans and management of the organisation.
- Develop skills within the community to help with succession planning.



## KEY IDEAS

Access  
 Shared  
 Resources  
 Strategic  
 Support  
 Networks  
 People  
 Appropriate  
 Resources  
 Tailored



# LEARNING

Mātauranga

“We have conducted a skills matrix across the Board and senior staff. We need to monitor areas of expertise and if a member leaves then we must ensure we replace the skill set.”

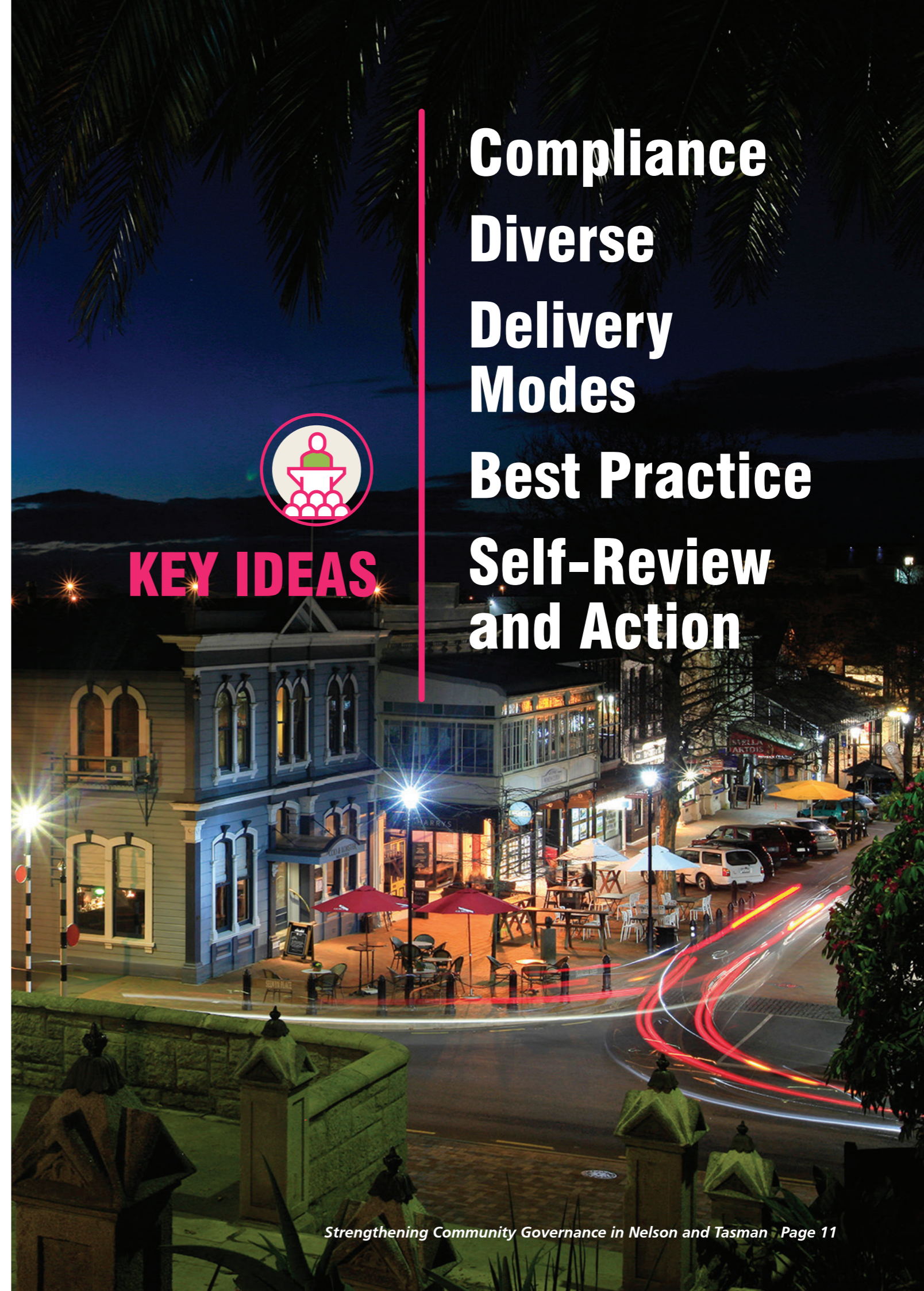
“It would be good to get this training at the start – instead of just winging it”

The interest in training was considerable with 90% of Board members and 80% of managers expressing interest in a wide range of training options. Board members and managers felt it was important to increase diversity and recognized the role of training and development in reducing barriers to participation. Both board members and managers felt that training should be held for similar sized organisations and have a not for profit focus. The most popular form of training was through workshops and networking with many suggesting brief online modules that could be incorporated into board meetings.

A quarter of board members had never been in this role before with a similar number of managers never having had previous experience of reporting to a board. There was almost 100% support from board members and managers for training on development of board members and for managers to work effectively with boards.

## WHAT YOU SAID WOULD BE USEFUL:

- Funders and agencies should work together to coordinate training and support for boards and managers in the region to provide governance and management training.
- Some training could be provided as online modules of learning that could be used as part of board meetings.
- Training programmes should be available including, modules/training around legal obligations including health and safety; Vulnerable Children’s Act; strategic planning with development of annual plans to guide work programmes; financial management and how to read budgets and profit and loss statements.
- Highest rated areas of training for boards were sustainable funding; accountability; financial management; health and safety; managing risk.
- The most popular forms of training for boards were workshops; online courses; guidebooks/toolkits and networking.



## KEY IDEAS

Compliance  
 Diverse  
 Delivery  
 Modes  
 Best Practice  
 Self-Review  
 and Action



# COLLABORATION

Mahi Tahī

“Not having sat on a board I don’t really know their function. I would be interested to sit at another board meeting to observe. Who do I go to in Nelson, independent from funders, to find out about getting such mentoring around the manager/governance balance? I’d also like more information of what portfolios other boards use.”

There was obvious goodwill toward collaboration, and noting many sectors with like-minded organisations are working with the same client group. Many members of high performing boards offered to mentor and support groups who were starting out, or groups that were having difficulties. Some board members asked how they could have the experience of seeing an actual board meeting take place while other very experienced Chairs offered to mentor new Chairs. Key business sectors such as the seafood industry were identified as a potential source of people skilled in strategic management, marketing and human resources and financial management.

Many managers and board members identified ways to access local and national resources which can be templates for organisations. These included policies and procedures, recruitment policies for staff and board members, induction packages and more.

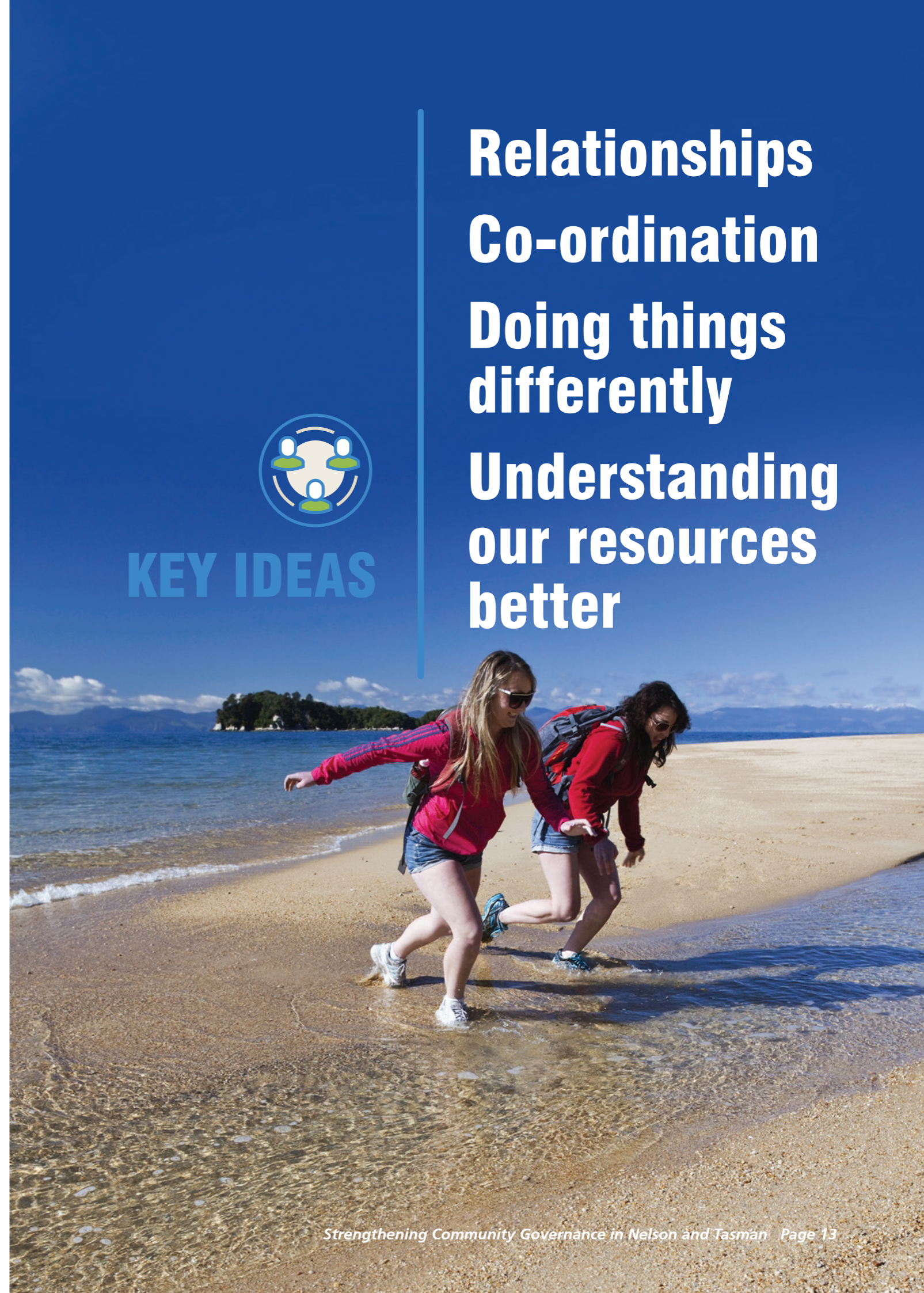
## WHAT YOU SAID WOULD BE USEFUL:

- Identify organisations with the required professionalism and skilled personnel on both board and management to model excellent governance and management. Some groups have indicated they are willing to take on a mentoring role with groups setting up or needing a period of support.
- Investigate the possibility of Volunteer Nelson adding to its volunteer database to identify people who are interested in being board members and helping them to match an organisation suitable to their skills.
- Coordinate training within the region with combined resources from key funders and an annual calendar of training opportunities developed each year.
- Develop clusters of like-minded organisations.
- Explore establishing employment sponsored volunteering for corporate and social services sector to support social development within the region. This could involve councils, government organisations and businesses contributing people and resources.
- Support the sector to explore whether “umbrella boards” could provide stronger and more supportive models of governance for smaller NGOs.



## KEY IDEAS

Relationships  
 Co-ordination  
 Doing things differently  
 Understanding our resources better



# SHARED PRIORITY ACTION PLAN

The following action plan prioritises specific actions that have been identified through the research and engagement phase of this project. It is expected that the short term actions will strengthen community governance in Nelson Tasman with outcomes being seen in the medium and long term.

This action plan was developed with the action group, including community organisations and local partners.





## IDENTIFIED KEY PROJECTS - SHORT TERM

Board database of current chairs and Board Members including identifying strengths.

Deliver a local leadership programme which develops the capacity of people with experience and expertise.

Link the need for developing opportunities for young people in governance with NCC Youth Strategy and maximise synergies.

Intergenerational connection - Board members buddy together across generations to encourage and increase reciprocal learning.

Increasing Māori participation in NFP boards - a mapping of Kaupapa Māori board training programmes takes place with pilot training programme for new / interest board members.

## MEDIUM AND LONG TERM OUTCOMES

The NFP governance community are acknowledged for their wealth of experience and expertise and there are regular opportunities to share learning from these local experts both in person and through innovative use of technology.

Peer to Peer learning and mentoring is fostered encouraging a culture of mentoring and other peer learning within the Not for Profit Governance community in Nelson Tasman is evident.

More young people participate in local boards.

Māori participation in boards increases.

NFP boards are more diverse across Nelson Tasman.

## IDENTIFIED KEY PROJECTS - SHORT TERM

Map existing resources and templates available to NFPs

Increasing communication about good resources - begin sharing ideas / good resources regularly.

Scope the development of a centralised community governance platform – to include how the information on this platform might be shared more effectively / sustainably / easily

## MEDIUM AND LONG TERM OUTCOMES

Useful resources, templates and examples of good practice are easily accessible and are regularly shared. A portal is available which provides access to all.

## IDENTIFIED KEY PROJECTS - SHORT TERM

Networking and Governance bites - providing networking and learning opportunity in short, informal sessions.

Governance training - in depth sessions delivered by a variety of local providers.

Develop a Calendar of Learning and development opportunities.

Create access to online navigator and other diagnostic tools.

## MEDIUM AND LONG TERM OUTCOMES

Boards learn to utilise diagnostic tools to strengthen governance capability and organisational mission.

Learning and development opportunities are easily accessed by individuals and organisations.

Learning opportunities are collaborative, i.e. people learn alongside peer, there are continuous opportunities throughout a calendar year.

## IDENTIFIED KEY PROJECTS - SHORT TERM

What works and why? - Mapping existing clusters and seek to understand why certain clusters have endured.

What's out there? - Map existing services and funding streams.

Early adopters - two clustering initiatives identified by the Action Group are initiated and supported.

## MEDIUM AND LONG TERM OUTCOMES

Organisations understand the strength of clustering around common themes, issues and opportunities. How to form successful clusters and partnerships is better understood across the NFP sector in Nelson and Tasman.

Stronger links are established between public, private and not-for-profit sector to strengthen not-for-profit capability, business opportunities and contributing towards community outcomes.

Organisations naturally cluster and partner around common themes, issues and opportunities. Resources are more attuned and supported to enable clustering and potential umbrella activities.



# STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE

Mā pango, mā whero e oti ai te mahi.

# INTRODUCTION

This report was commissioned by Rātā Foundation and Nelson City Council to gather information on how to support third-sector leadership and governance in Nelson/Tasman. Interviews were held in August 2017 with a total of forty Chairs and managers of twenty agencies around Nelson Tasman. The need for this research was identified through the needs assessment undertaken at the Nelson/Tasman Community and Whānau meeting of 15 March 2017, and was previously identified by the social services sector environmental scan, commissioned by Rātā Foundation in 2015.

A steering group including Rātā Foundation, Nelson City Council, and Department of Internal Affairs. Volunteer Nelson, as holders of the Community and Whānau meeting, guided the research. Other members of the Nelson Tasman Community Funders Network may also be involved at a later stage.

The list of participants and their responses have been kept totally confidential, with any identifying information being available only to the researchers involved and not the commissioning organisations or steering group listed above. Key themes will be taken from the responses, and further steps recommended for building governance capacity.

Response to this research was 100% positive, with participants showing a high level of enthusiasm and commitment to making time for giving thoughtful responses. Many voiced their gratitude to Nelson City Council and Rātā Foundation for funding this opportunity to talk about concerns that are impacting on them as individuals and how this affects their agencies and the sectors of the community with whom they are working.

## THE INFORMATION GATHERED WILL BE USED TO:

1. Facilitate a partnership approach to building governance within Nelson and Tasman.
2. Inform development of a shared priority action plan to be co-created with members of the community and voluntary sector.
3. Build on existing provision, and how it would value the expertise in the sector.

# METHODOLOGY

The identity of participants and organisations was kept totally confidential, with any identifying information available only to the researchers and not the commissioning organisations or steering group. Groups were selected from a very wide pool of agencies to reflect the diversity of the community and included groups from education, church, sport, arts, older persons, health, social services, youth, Kaupapa Māori, ethnic diversity, and community development. Thirty-two of the interviews were held face to face, with the remaining eight conducted over the phone.

For the purposes of the research –

## GOVERNANCE IS DEFINED AS:

The Governance Board sets the vision and the strategic direction of the organisation. It monitors and enables the manager or chief executive to effectively operate the organisation. Members of the Governance Board have a legal responsibility to ensure there are adequate controls in place to manage risk and ensure the organisation thrives and is sustainable.

## LEADERSHIP IS DEFINED AS:

Leadership is done in collaboration with others. It enables people to work towards a shared purpose. It sets a direction for the future of the organisation and the community.

The information from this report will be made available to Community and Whānau networks, Councils, government agencies, and funders. A presentation of key findings will be held in November 2017.

The information from this report will be made available to Community and Whānau networks, Councils, government agencies, and funders.

## BOARDS

Twenty agencies were interviewed, including twelve Chairs and eight other Board members. Board members had been in their positions for an average of 5.5 years, with a range of service from one to nineteen years.

Fifteen had had previous experience and five had none. On average each Board had 6.5 members, with 1.2 full-time staff, 1.4 part-time staff, and 3.15 volunteers per organisation. There was an average of 0.85 contractors per organisation (on a casual basis).

Staffing ranged from permanent volunteers as sole staff to 15 full-time equivalents.

Experience varied from own business, community organisations, national organisations, iwi, boards of trustees, sports clubs, and national boards of government organisations, churches, and kindergartens.

## MANAGERS

Twenty managers/coordinators were interviewed. Managers had been in their positions for an average of 11.5 years, with tenures ranging from one to eighteen years. Staffing ranged from one to thirty, with an average of seven staff per organisation. Fourteen had reported to a Board in a previous role and six had not. Ten were current Board members of other organisations and others had held this role in the past.

# FINDINGS FOR BOARD MEMBERS

About a third of Board members had been recruited while already on a committee and were then asked to be Chair, while almost a third were approached to be Chair. The remainder were self-nominated, answered an advertisement, or were previous users of the service.

Ninety percent said they enjoy the role, being committed to the kaupapa of the organisation and getting satisfaction from seeing its success. Some talked about coming into the role with limited experience, needing help in developing a strategic plan and getting clarity between governance and a hands-on role. Some also thought it was time to move on from the Board but wanted to do this in a way that did not impact negatively on the organisation.

### WAYS IN WHICH A BOARD IS SEEN TO BE WORKING EFFECTIVELY:

- Clear distinction between governance and management and willingness to delegate responsibilities to staff.
- Clear strategic plan, with milestones delegated to members.
- Professional management of financial and accounting service. One had developed a separate Business Advisory Board (minutes are sent to Trust Board) which has financial/opportunity focus rather than strategic.
- Engaged Board members who communicate well with staff and each other.
- Members have a good range of expertise relevant to their positions and are open to new opportunities.

### WAYS IN WHICH A BOARD COULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE:

- Clear distinction between governance and management.
- Better participation, with reports read prior to meeting, regular attendance at meetings, and better accountability for completing actions under their portfolio.
- Recruitment of people with required skills; e.g., financial skills, strategic planning, legal knowledge,

and governance experience.

- More diverse representation of gender, age, ethnicity.
- Training for new members, especially in governance and financial management.
- Allocate time outside of meetings for strategic planning.
- Regularly review policies and procedures.
- Establish strategic relationships with key organisations, including funders and local and central government agencies.

### WHAT ARE THE ISSUES AND CONCERNS?

A small number of boards had some issues and concerns around a lack of clarity about roles of manager and the Board, with Board members taking on a day-to-day involvement in management, resulting in confusion and frustration for both parties. They were also unsure of where to go for sound, confidential help. In other situations, internal dynamics caused problems where the motivation for a Board member getting involved was unclear. This highlighted the importance of declaring any conflict of interest for new Board members being recruited. Successful boards identified the specific skills needed prior to approaching new Board members and also offered some training where the individual had a skill gap but many other good skills to offer.

Some boards were operating without a current strategic plan, so there was no plan for expenditure, staffing, and training needs, with decisions made on an ad hoc basis with no real future planning. This led to heightened stress levels and was a potentially unsafe practice for boards and managers. Boards with expertise in legal and financial management were much more confident about their future and tended to retain Board members who could provide governance support, knowing those matters were taken care of.

### OTHER CONCERNS:

- Meeting both legal and cultural obligations.
- Regular contact with funders, not just during funding rounds.
- Leadership from Board.

- Better financial management, with appropriate level of expertise.
- Pressure on remaining Board members and staff when Board membership changes, as managers can find themselves in a “hand-holding” role.
- Board members being exhausted – holding full-time jobs as well as Board roles.

## RECEIVING REPORTS FROM A MANAGER

Most Boards have a straightforward requirement for the manager’s reports, financial reports, reporting against strategic and annual plans, and general operations. However, some boards get very little of this information from the staff, and often the information supplied is difficult to understand.

## WHAT REPORTING DO YOU NEED TO HELP MAKE BETTER DECISIONS?

*“We need the manager’s operational report but need to be able to predict/plan better to be looking forward, too. I.E. we are financially restrained but there has never been an equipment replacement plan”.*

- Monthly reports from staff members on operations, reporting against strategic plan/annual plan. Manager’s report with statistical information/issues and problems arising/any staff issues/reviewing previous decisions.
- Financial reports including Profit and Loss – graphs of how things are trading for different divisions, funding and grants.
- Health and Safety reporting.
- Any problems with volunteers.
- Monthly report with data, activities, what’s working, what’s not.
- Challenges and celebrations.

## WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF USEFUL INFORMATION THE MANAGER GIVES YOU?

- Possible new initiatives.
- Report to national organisation at annual AGM.
- Upcoming issues, often around staff management.
- Information from update at a brief monthly meeting with manager.

- No-surprises policy – if it’s difficult, bring it up for discussion.
- A Māori viewpoint on service delivery.
- Identifying potential problems.
- Reports from contract workers.

## CONCERNS

- Coordinator does not have the time or the money to provide sufficient information.
- No real reporting system in place.
- Meeting every three months might not be sufficient to deal with emerging issues or risks.
- Wants to improve management reports but not sure how.
- Financials are reported but present system is so complex that it can’t be understood.

## WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE THE BOARD NEEDS IN RELATION TO CAPABILITY OR CAPACITY BUILDING?

- An induction manual and generic resources that could be modified for each organisation, rather than every Board having to start from the beginning to get one together.
- Reports on how solvent we are, our successes and risks.
- New training on financial reporting, governance, and management each time Board membership changes.
- Strategic planning and an Annual Plan.

## WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE BIGGEST RISK FOR YOUR ORGANISATION IF YOUR BOARD ISN’T GOVERNING WELL?

Good financial management was seen as a priority, with many also mentioning that they would like help with strategic planning so that management and Board were heading in the same direction.

- We need good governance to ensure staff has clear direction.
- Excellent financial management means we spend within our budget and remain viable – risk is to expand service and create community expectations that we cannot fulfil.

- There is no room for financial error – if we overspend we have a serious problem.
- Expanding our service beyond key roles and jeopardizing the whole operation.
- Synergy between what Board wants and what manager wants.
- Resigning and finding a suitable replacement.
- Health and Safety, especially when working with youth and children under Vulnerable Children’s Act.

## OTHER RISKS IDENTIFIED INCLUDED:

- Conflict of Interest – general policy of declaring conflict of interest as well a policy that precludes Board members also being employed by Board.
- Sustainability – these include the challenges of short-term funding contracts, finding volunteers and Board members, and carrying on as reserves dwindle.
- Competition – the risk that someone else provides the same/more services than we do. We must focus on what is needed, not what we have done in the past.
- Health and Safety – if just one aspect of our delivery goes wrong, it affects our reputation and ongoing operation.
- Diversity – we must keep focused on celebrating difference, not just one culture.
- Policies and Procedures – we are in a financial and professional mess. We need a risk-and-hazard management plan.

## WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS TO BECOMING A BOARD MEMBER, OR CONTINUING AS A BOARD MEMBER IN YOUR ORGANISATION?

Currently a limited pool of people is called upon to be involved in boards, so many very competent Board members are involved in several boards and are also called upon in an advisory role for others. Several Board members talked about the advantages of relationships with business sector where people have “hard skills” such as human resources and financial management but also have a heart for the community. The challenge is to identify suitable people.

## ISSUES IDENTIFIED:

- Time and burnout – Boards often attract busy people, but some members have trouble managing commitment.

- Suitable meeting time – people have different family/work commitments.
- Concern about personal liability on Board – reluctant to have financial responsibility and other liabilities like Health and Safety and fraud.
- Challenges of the role – often a lack of understanding about what’s involved prior to coming on the Board.
- Demographic mix – we want youth but they often move away and are transient.
- Business model applied to NGO sector is often a difficult fit and there is almost a new “Trust” language to learn.
- Geographical location – limited pool of people available, although have had Board members attending via Skype.
- Need for induction and orientation for new Board members to help keep people on the Board.

## ONCE ON THE BOARD, CAN YOU IDENTIFY ANY BARRIERS PREVENTING EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION?

Board members take on their role with goodwill and a desire to contribute to their community and to be involved in a particular organisation. However, other commitments in their life may severely impinge on their availability. Their own circumstances or the needs of the organisation could change significantly and limit the time they can realistically give to the role.

## ISSUES IDENTIFIED:

- Conflict with dominant personalities on Board.
- Some people go for “prestige” of being on Board but don’t have the right skills.
- Not being valued or appreciated, being taken for granted as volunteer.
- Time pressure, especially if person is employed full time.
- Chair needs to draw everyone out – needs to be mindful of other life commitments of Board members.
- Keeping up to date – reading everything and keeping up with politics and policy decisions by local and central government.
- When meetings are badly run – have an agenda and stick with it. Long meetings deter participation and attendance.
- Board members don’t really understand the Constitution.

- Members need to fully understand and accept their responsibilities.
- Important for Board to look for specific expertise they need.
- Ensure equal speaking rights.

## DO YOU SEE A NEED FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF BOARD MEMBERS?

Yes (18) No (2)

## DO YOU SEE A NEED FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF MANAGERS TO WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH BOARDS?

Yes (18) No (2)

## WHAT TOPICS WOULD BE USEFUL TO LEARN MORE ABOUT AND WHO SHOULD LEARN?

TRAINING TOPIC	BOARD	MANAGERS
Financial management	12	6
Managing risk	11	7
Determining purpose	9	7
Sustainable funding	16	10
Accountability	14	8
Health and safety	11	6
Communication	9	4

Recommendation was that training should be for similar-sized organisations and also have a not-for-profit focus.

### OTHER TRAINING SUGGESTED WAS:

- Difference between Governance and Management – expectation and responsibilities.
- Understanding legal acts for Boards; e.g., Charities Act.
- Reviewing Trust documents.
- Policy development templates; e.g., fraud.
- Develop a checklist for start-up.
- Strategic vision/analysis.

## IF SO, WHAT STYLES OF TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT WOULD BE USEFUL AND WHO WOULD RECEIVE IT?

There was huge interest in training opportunities, with the reservation and concern about availability of Board members to attend this training. Most assumed Manager would also attend Board training. Agencies requested workshops specific to their organisation, or similar organisations with an external person to provide training. They also requested templates, such as for Strategic Plan for Charities Commission. Mentoring would be preferred from outside the Trust and from not-for-profit sector.

TYPE OF TRAINING	BOARD	MANAGERS
Networking	6	4
Workshops	7	13
Board Buddy	2	6
Online Courses	7	7
Guidebooks/ toolkits	7	11
Health and safety	11	6
Communication	9	4

## WHAT TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT HAVE YOU USED IN THE PAST?

Many boards have accessed formal training. Others have brought in external facilitators to work with the Board, especially for strategic planning. Some boards have used only the expertise of their own Board members or staff. They have also taken the opportunity to attend conferences and have used internet programmes but want these to be in a New Zealand context.

### SOME SOURCES OF FORMAL TRAINING:

- Governance training
- Community-led development
- Mentor
- CommunityNet Aotearoa
- Exult
- Volunteer Nelson/Canterbury
- Internet-based programmes
- MYOB and website management

- Creative NZ/Access Aotearoa
- Health and Safety
- Inland Revenue
- Training from an accountancy firm

## ANY COMMENTS ON WHAT WAS HELPFUL/UNHELPFUL?

The training sources mentioned as helpful were:

- Ministry of Social Development (MSD) training on governance and management
- Kiwi Consulting Services
- Mene Solutions
- Individual Board training – Because our training was specific to our organisation with an excellent presenter, we are now functioning well and achieving more

### OTHER COMMENTS:

- Would be helpful for Board and staff to train together.
- Our Board is expecting our organisation to grow therefore we expect that Members will gain skills needed.
- Covering staff time when she (manager) is training is a problem.
- Training together helped to work out how Board members worked together.
- Sensitivity around treatment of volunteers.

## IN OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY, FROM WHOM COULD YOU LEARN ABOUT GOVERNANCE?

- Mentor (many local suggestions given)
- Volunteer Nelson (practical help and tailor-made information)
- Internal Affairs
- Not-for-profits with extensive experience and success
- Skilled members on Board
- Peer learning
- MSD training – Governance and Results Based Accountability
- Community Health programmes
- Nelson Angel Women's Loan Fund
- Salvation Army

## OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

- On our Board we have members with wide national and international governance experience. Is it possible to develop a not-for-profit arm of NZ Institute of Directors? The region has a big resource of local councillors with long governance experience; e.g., Gail Collingwood.
- Hold a Vision Day.
- Hear about local successes.
- Using teleconference to connect people nationally.
- Keen to meet with someone from another Board.
- Learn how to communicate with people in the regions and engage with regions.
- Get real-time experience examples. I don't know enough about how other groups work. Would want them to be working extremely well.
- We are doing well. We are looking for opportunities, not role models.
- Very capable, skilled people are out there. Never discussed bringing anyone in to facilitate a session – something new.
- We could learn something from most community organisations.

### PLEASE ELABORATE

- National Office offers training in Wellington but no one has time to attend.
- We need training at right level in regional context for Nelson/Tasman.
- Basic principles are same but relate it to local experiences. Different from professional business
- It is good to have professional business experience filtering over to voluntary experience.
- Wonder about strategic plan linkages for smaller organisations all struggling to meet the same liabilities. Could larger organisations act as umbrellas for similar organisations that are working in the same sector?
- Heard others using a skills matrix for their Board, but often we just need to get 'bums on seats'.
- Would welcome any assistance as to how we can reach more in the community.
- We are happy to share our skill matrix/act as a role model for other organisations – see it as giving back. Currently we have a reputation as being successful but it hasn't always been that way.

## ANY OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ENSURING YOUR BOARD FUNCTIONS EFFECTIVELY?

*“The challenge is to find good Board members with appropriate skills and then retain them. It is important to be realistic about what Board members can really do and avoid burnout. It is important to keep the passion alive and keep a clear sense of purpose and direction. Strategic planning and developing and adhering to annual plans can help this”.*

Having clear policies and procedures helps to avoid a lot of problems. It is also very important to acknowledge the work of the Board members who are, with the exception of one group interviewed, doing this in a voluntary capacity.

Several Board members would value an opportunity to work more closely with a similar organisation at a staff/Board level.

Some Board members wanted more information about the current social needs in the region. They suggested that resource people within the local and central government might provide this.

Many mentioned the importance of a good relationship between manager and Chair.

## ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD TO THIS GOVERNANCE CAPACITY SURVEY?

Many people expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to be part of this research

- Grateful to be part of this survey.
- This is a great initiative/should provide evidence how organisations can extend their reach. Maybe with more alignment? Like to think we were part of a community going forward.
- Great that Rātā Foundation and NCC are asking these questions – we definitely need more support. There was a divisive issue previously.
- Look forward to some actions out of this – e.g., bring Chairs together – share some learning. Bring managers together, too, but separate from Chairs and Board members.
- It’s good that a funder and local Council are doing this and not someone looking for business.

- Really worthwhile to have this project – chance to relook at Governance and what funders require.
- A lot of commercial sector are more au fait with governance – exciting for the sector.
- Applaud the initiative to undertake this research.
- Please convey to NCC & Rātā Foundation that we appreciate the effort they take to care for us as ‘volunteers’ in community. Good that they have the intention to look after us.



# FINDINGS FOR MANAGERS

*“Not having sat on a Board, I don’t really know their function. I would be interested to sit at another Board meeting to observe. Who do I go to in Nelson, independent from funders, to find out about getting such mentoring around the manager/governance balance? I’d also like more information of what portfolios other Boards use”.*

*“Organisations go through periods of challenge. This can lead to improvement with the right support. Board is well advised. Know their boundaries”.*

*“When staff is happy, Board is happy, and then there is an effective organisation”.*

*“Time – people shouldn’t be on a Board ‘forever’ – should be time-limited rather than open-ended (reasons for being on a Board and passion can change)”.*

## WHAT EXPERIENCE DO YOU HAVE OF WORKING WITH BOARDS?

Five people had no experience and six were on more than one Board. Three were Chairs of boards and four had reported to a Board but never been a member of a Board. Two had been part of business leadership teams.

## IN WHAT WAY DO YOU THINK YOUR BOARD IS WORKING EFFECTIVELY?

A trusting relationship between the Chair and manager and staff was seen as critical. It is also important for them to have an understanding of community work and the NGO sector and be effective and encouraging in their role. Almost all mentioned having someone with financial expertise gives security to the rest of the Board.

The majority of managers said a Board working effectively:

- Meets regularly
- Reads reports beforehand

- Has a good range of skills
- Has portfolios allocated
- Has a good knowledge of community
- Sets strategic direction

They also mentioned having portfolios or sub-committees with particular focus or roles; e.g., marketing, governance, employment very helpful. Managers saw this support and expertise as essential in difficult situations such as employment issues with staff. They also wanted Board members to have strategic relationships with funders and key stakeholders.

## HOW COULD YOUR BOARD BE MORE EFFECTIVE?

While many managers mentioned it was good to have an induction process for new Board members as well as an induction manual, most did not actually have this. Many referred to difficulties because of the blurring of governance and management, but said there was often some resistance from Board members about attending training to correct this. Board members are often very busy so the managers would like to be clear about what time commitment they can reasonably expect from Board members. Several thought that a mentor outside of governance would be helpful in giving an impartial view.

Some managers were frustrated that Board members did not put much importance on policy and procedure updates, but noted that these are of critical importance if the organisation has to meet audit requirements. Similarly, keeping up with Charities Commission’s requirements is not always given the necessary attention.

Understanding the importance of policy and procedures and the updates to this documentation were seen as of critical importance if the organisation has to meet audit requirements. Similarly keeping up with Charities Commission’s requirements is fundamentally important to support the management of these.

Managers recommend efficient time management of Board meetings to better use the precious resource of Board members’ time. In some cases, managers thought the Board should meet more regularly. Keeping the meetings energized and positive was seen as best practice and most effective.

Managers see that Board members lose motivation or get tired after years of involvement, so having a fixed time on the Board can provide opportunities for new people with new energy. Several managers talked about wanting to improve their skills with engaging with Māori and would really like their representation on boards.

## WHAT DO YOU WANT/NEED WHEN REPORTING TO THE BOARD?

Some managers want to report in relation to their strategic plan, while others are working without one. All managers wanted accurate, timely financial information relating to annual budgets. Updating policies and procedures was another priority.

Managers wanted to represent all the different projects or services that they were responsible for and need staff reports and data relating to each area. They were worried when the Board suggested things that were going to significantly impact on workload when it was not scheduled in the work programme.

Managers want the confidence of the Board and acknowledgement of workloads and expectations. They also want to draw attention to any upcoming issues of challenges.

## WHAT TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT HAVE YOU UNDERTAKEN AROUND WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH BOARDS?

*"I need a template or information about reporting to boards. We lost our financial person so I've been doing financial – but boards are supposed to do policy & procedure updates – aren't they?"*

*"I had to learn to limit information for the Board – not too much information".*

*"The Board can be intimidating".*

*"Most important for me is a clear split between governance and management".*

Around a quarter of managers interviewed had no previous experience of reporting to a Board before they took on their role. Some felt very alone and were unsure about where to go for support. They felt pressure from the start to access funding for the organisation, but they were often unclear about how to do this and what would make their funding applications successful.

Around 25% had had no formal training in recent years. The training undertaken by the remaining 75% in recent years included:

- NZ Institute of Directors training (funded by MSD) – all Board members and management of one organisation accessed this training specific to that organisation. Day-long training with 2-hour Skype session follow-up.
- Governance training x 8 provided by Volunteer Nelson, Internal Affairs, and Institute of Directors.
- Results Based Accountability through Ministry of Social Development.
- Exult training on financial management.
- Colin Gunn – community development.
- Volunteer Nelson – a range of courses.
- Charities Commission.
- Health and Safety – NGO training.
- Chris Mene from Christchurch.

## WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE BIGGEST RISK FOR YOUR ORGANISATION IF YOUR BOARD ISN'T GOVERNING WELL?

*"We can lose funding and miss out on contracts – we would fall over! It's essential they have their finger on the pulse".*

*"We work in a very political sector – not easy to attract sponsorship – no 'feel good' factor. We need to be strategically positioned to respond to central government".*

*"Board members lose interest if they are not really engaged".*

*"They need to take care of financial accountability".*

*"They need to ask the hard questions about sustainability".*

Many managers talked about how they rely on boards to guide them through strategic planning and looking to the future and societal trends to keep the organisation relevant for the community. They also rely on them to be responsible for setting policy around health and safety, financial stability, and employment matters. Most managers believed the stability of the Board and good communication with the Board was

essential for viability of the organisation. This meant that they wanted succession planning because if one person with a particular skill set left, then it could make the whole organisation vulnerable.

Most managers thought that Board members wanted to do more than what the budget covered, so requests need to be manageable. Several managers of organisations that are now service providers with government funding believed it was essential that Board members respect the accountability process and the responsibility of having that funding. Several also mentioned the risk of boards wanting to apply for funding that meets the needs of the funders more than the organisation. Conversely, when day-to-day funding is very tight, operations have to be tailored to meet the funder's needs.

Almost all stated there needed to be more clarity about the roles of governance and management, and some mentioned the problem of Board members being too involved in operational areas. Several managers thought that the Board members lacked the relevant skills but found it difficult to convey this tactfully to someone who their employer is effectively. Some also identified that without good guidance from the Board, they could go off track and in a direction that was not sustainable. Several talked about difficulties working with their boards and how this put its reputation and the viability of the whole organisation in jeopardy. Many managers saw this as a risk both to the organisation and to the community they serve.

One manager said that because they are a national organisation, the Board's focus seems to be very Canterbury-focused since the earthquakes.

## WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS TO BECOMING A BOARD MEMBER, OR CONTINUING AS A BOARD MEMBER IN YOUR ORGANISATION?

*"Culture of meetings can deter people, especially Māori".*

*"Members must be skilled – Passion on its own isn't enough".*

*"Honoraria help to recruit/retain people although then some people come on Board for wrong reasons".*

*"Time – all our Board members work, and its possible people are working longer now. We*

*can't pay. Skilled people sometimes become available when they retire but don't meet our organisational brief".*

*"An unhappy Board creates barriers – word spreads quickly in the community".*

Some managers talked about the difficulties of recruiting, while others were able to pick and choose and vet people for their suitability. The managers of Boards having difficulty recruiting cited that people were too busy or didn't have the right skills. One mentioned there was not much for a Board to do when paid staff do everything. Another asked how a prospective Board member can stand out as the most suitable person to be on a Board. There was also the issue of how the new Board member would fit in with the existing Board. One manager said that they had enough Board members and that the organisation seemed quite popular, but wasn't sure that they had the right skills on the Board.

Maintaining enthusiasm and active participation on the Board is seen as fundamental, though it can waver over time. One manager mentioned that the Board had some internal issues and lost a lot of very good members. The manager thought that training on governance might help to bring them together. While these difficulties are happening, the manager needs to keep the organisation running or it may actually fold. The role of the Chair is seen as critical in a successful organisation. Several managers talked about feeling unsure who they could get support from when issues arose with the relationship between management and governance.

## ONCE ON THE BOARD, CAN YOU IDENTIFY ANY BARRIERS PREVENTING EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION?

Four responded they had no problems, with one commenting:

*"We have an open, transparent culture". Another said, "This was a problem in the past but since we did some training together things have really improved".*

*"Good rapport is a good basis for hard work".*

Several managers talked about Board members who are not really interested in governance but want to get involved in actual projects. They don't understand



what the role of the Board is. One manager talked about the challenge of keeping Board members working at a level which supported the strategic direction of the organisation.

Other barriers were the length of the meetings, and one manager is not invited to attend Board meetings at all. Several managers mentioned they would like to get young people involved and have their new energy, skills, and possibly be from more diverse backgrounds.

### MANAGERS IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING BARRIERS:

- Lack of Board knowledge, and management not meeting their expectations
- Lack of time
- Agendas of individual Board members
- A small group dominating the Board
- Chair dominating plans/thinking – lack of listening to other Board members
- People’s personal life can change their behaviour on a Board so that stress in their personal life can flow into commitment to their Board responsibilities
- People are desperate for Board members so take on people who may not have the right skills
- Good relationships are required to deal with difficult situations and difference of opinion
- Lack of expertise in specific areas; e.g., finance, HR
- Controlling behaviour of some members – not sharing information
- The need for a common vision for Board strategic plan
- Geographical spread of Board members /childcare/ time
- Board members need to feel valued – each person has something to give

### DO YOU SEE A NEED FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF BOARD MEMBERS?

Nearly 75% managers thought that Board members needed training and development. Many Board members came to the role without prior experience, and most organisations did not have a formal induction process to ensure new members received the information and support for taking on the role.

*“They need to understand finances – a lot don’t want to. Not all understand budgets and spreadsheets. A Board needs someone*

*to identify risks. They accept financial reports without really understanding”.*

### DO YOU SEE A NEED FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF MANAGERS TO WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH BOARDS?

Eighty percent of managers saw the need for training and development about how to work effectively with Boards. This relationship between Board and manager is seen as critical for the successful operation of organisations, and many wanted help to make this work as well as possible.

*“We need Beginners to Master Class”.*

*“It would be good to have this at the start – instead of just winging it. Clarity around roles”.*

*“This could be useful if Board is not approachable. It’s good to be clear about boundaries”.*

### WHAT TOPICS WOULD BE USEFUL TO LEARN MORE ABOUT?

Managers were presented with a list of possible training options and were then invited to suggest other training. This section shows what interest there is in seven key training areas as well as suggestions of other training and support that would be helpful.

TYPE OF TRAINING	BOARD	MANAGERS
Networking	6	4
Financial management	9	1
Managing risk	11	5
Determining purpose	12	3
Sustainable funding	10	3
Accountability	12	3
Health and safety	11	4
Communication	12	0

### OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAINING ARE LISTED BELOW:

TOPIC	BOARD OR MANAGER	SUB TOPICS
Governance and management	Both	Expectations of Board members that should be reported
	Managers	Training from Board of Directors for managers to deal with boards
	Both	Difference between governance and management, and expectations and responsibilities Legal implications Board expectations
Legal acts we must operate under	Both	Charities Act, Vulnerable Children’s Act, Health and Safety
Reviewing Trust documents	Board	
Policy and Procedures templates	Board	Fraud
New Trust	Both	Develop a checklist for start-up
Strategic vision	Both	Strategic vision and analysis
Computer skills	Both	Some Board members want paper-based reports – not on email
		Improve computer skill level of some managers
Funding applications	Both	How to write a successful funding application
Board recruitment	Both	How to engage with Māori and Pasifika

Note: Training should be for similar-sized organisations – also have a not-for-profit focus

### WHAT STYLES OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT WOULD BE USEFUL?

Managers were asked about the best style for delivering training. The majority opted for workshops but there was also interest in the other options listed below. They generally preferred mentoring from the not-for-profit sector rather than from someone with a business background. Several suggested that online courses could be done in modules at Board meetings.

TYPE OF TRAINING	BOARD	MANAGERS
Networking	4	7
Peer learning	1	3
Workshops	7	8
Board buddy	4	5
Online courses	4	2
Accountability	12	3
Guidebooks/ toolkits/ templates	1	5

### WHAT TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT HAVE YOU USED IN THE PAST?

*“Training is coming up soon but Board don’t want to go – budget and time”.*

While there is a high level of interest in doing training, there is also concern about taking time out from a manager’s workload to attend training. Similarly most managers were concerned about how much time Board members would be able to dedicate to training. Many stated that the training needs to be very relevant to NGO sector and provide targeted information for the organisations involved.

Below is a summary of training and development previously accessed by the twenty organisations.

BY WHOM?	TOPIC	HELPFUL?
Volunteer Nelson	Governance	yes
Chapman Employment Relations	Health and Safety	yes
Sport Tasman	Governance	yes

*continued >*

BY WHOM?	TOPIC	HELPFUL?
Exult	Funding models	yes
St John New Zealand	First aid	yes
Commerce Commission	workshops	yes
Ministry of Social Development	Results Based Accountability	yes
	Governance (no longer available)	yes
Inspiring Communities	Community-led development	yes
Nelson Tasman Business Trust	Lunch and learn	yes
Business Development Company	Leadership/Time management	yes
Charities Commission	Legal frameworks for churches	yes
Crowe Horwath	Accountants and legal advice	yes
Barbican	workshops	yes

### OTHER TRAINING UNDERTAKEN INCLUDED:

- Funding workshops
- Marketing
- Working with a mentor (from not-for-profit sector)
- Board training
- Human resources
- Bachelor of Commerce and management papers
- Health and safety

### ANY COMMENTS ON WHAT WAS HELPFUL/ UNHELPFUL?

*“We don’t require all Board members to become experts in financial management, but it’s important to focus on vision and meeting community need”.*

### WHAT WAS HELPFUL?

- Understanding language around governance and trusts
- Sport-sector governance training provided a clear understanding of reporting/roles and
- Responsibilities/Board meetings, protocols, etc.

- Strategic Planning from Arts Access Aotearoa is very good
- Workshops also provide a good networking opportunity
- Volunteer Nelson is very helpful
- Funding Expo – Rātā Foundation, Pub Charity presentations are excellent
- Supervision
- Peer support from others in similar roles is helpful

### WHAT WAS UNHELPFUL?

- Volunteer Nelson courses are held only in Nelson, not around the wider region.
- The level Volunteer Nelson training was geared at. I felt I didn’t gain anything more
- CEO talked about himself – not relevant to not-for-profit sector – needs to be pitched at right level

### GENERAL COMMENTS

- NZ Institute of Directors is helpful but it takes time and depends on the business level of organisation
- We need tailor-made information for our organisation rather than general information because of time limitation

### FROM WHOM IN OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY COULD YOU LEARN ABOUT GOVERNANCE?

*“Governance is one of the hardest things to manage. In the NGO sector, the amount of work done above paid hours becomes an expectation. It’s OK to expect a lot for less. Demands on staff are high – but this also applies to boards”.*

*“We are currently looking at collaborating with other agencies who work in similar fields – this will provide opportunity to look at overall governance”.*

Managers talked about feeling isolated in their sector and how much they would value others’ insight. Many were able to identify people in the community they could learn from, and many of these were seen to be part of successful organisations that demonstrated how a Board could govern effectively.

### EXAMPLES MENTIONED INCLUDED:

- Safe Families Motueka and Victory Community Centre
- Managers of branches of national organisations: Barnardos, Presbyterian Services, Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS)
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Volunteer Nelson
- Barbican Training
- Some of the iwi organisations – collective vision/ethnic struggle
- Nelson Training Centre - Other ‘youth’ providers were seen as potential competitors
- Crowe Horwath
- Nelson Regional Development Agency
- Nelson City Council – health and safety
- ACC
- IRD
- Chairs of successful organisations
- Someone in same situation; e.g., affiliated to national organisation
- Mentors who have experience and the time to pass skills on

### PLEASE ELABORATE ON OTHER THINGS THAT COULD BE HELPFUL:

*“Sometimes it’s the basics – how to run a good meeting [not read all reports out loud when they have been circulated to all]”.*

*“It would be great if Volunteer Nelson kept a list of people with a range of skills needed who were willing to join or assist Boards”.*

Other suggestions of simple things that could make matters easier for the manager and the Board included having a buddy from another organisation and having Volunteer Nelson facilitate connecting people from similar-sized organisations. Meetings with other managers to discuss day-to-day issues like governance structure, staff management, and IT management were seen as helpful. Several said that community and whānau meetings could be helpful for this but see them as less relevant in their current format. Older people are a resource for mentoring, and one person suggested that the volunteer pool from Age Concern could be a resource for Board members.

One manager suggested that government departments could identify successful groups for other people to contact to share policies and procedures and receive mentoring.

### ANY OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR ENSURING YOUR BOARD FUNCTIONS EFFECTIVELY?

*“It’s difficult to find good members who have skills, time, and commitment. For our current 2-year vacancy, I don’t have a specific profile written up yet to attract the right person – but if I did I could maybe go to Volunteer Nelson. More time/energy!”*

Several managers thought there were too many NGOs in Nelson and suggested combining boards and sharing resources by forming a community governance Board. For example, four organisations overseen by an umbrella Board. Skilled people would be on the Board, with representation from each organisation. They could possibly share venue and office personnel, would increase productivity, attract good staff, provide comradeship, and be a sounding board for ideas.

One manager thought that their issues will be similar to other Trusts – administration of Board, resources, succession, capacity and capability building –

*“but we all ‘live’ in isolation doing the same thing. Why not have an overarching Board Structure? NCC or Volunteer Nelson could also hold a pool of people who are keen to work at governance level”.*

One manager said that too much governance resource was needed for each little group. That person had been asked to be on three boards over the last 12 months. The manager suggested that integrating services with the best of governance overseeing them would lead to better services with good governance. It could also reduce workloads for funding organisations.

### OTHER CONCERNS FOR BOARDS:

*“We would value knowing more about insurance to protect Board members – even if members leave the Board. We have public liability insurance but what is recommended?”*

*“We want Board members to be engaged using their specific skill and field of interest”.*

*"We value Board members' contribution as volunteers and recommend that this is acknowledged in Annual Reports and minutes".*

## RECRUITING BOARD MEMBERS

*"We need more sound experience on our Board – people with business knowledge. Be good to attract more males for a different perspective".*

*"We have a new Board but it would have been helpful to define a skills matrix before they were appointed".*

*"Being on a Board for a not-for-profit organisation is different to financially driven corporations. High risk and social profile can deter involvement – there is a balancing act and it is increasingly difficult to find good people willing to be on Boards".*

Many managers wanted more planning and thought put into how boards recruited new members. Recruiting Board members for skills as well as passion for the group's purpose was highlighted as a need. An overview of the total skill set required for the organisation would strengthen the strategic goals and areas needed for successful governance across the organisations. Help with succession planning for both Board and staff – people's lives change – and to be able to target those who have specific skills when recruiting for Board members.

Many wanted to recruit a broad range of people on a Board to reflect the diversity of the community and the range of skills needed for good governance. One manager said that Board members often come into the role without knowing fully what is required, both at organisation and individual level.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR PARTICULAR ORGANISATIONS IN NELSON:

### VOLUNTEER NELSON

One manager said it is imperative that the manager and Board chair function well. "I believe that Volunteer Nelson is in a good position to offer specific professional development for organisations". Another said, "I do all Board Administration – would love to see Volunteer Nelson train up a group of senior college students/youth to sit on a Board for maybe a year and

take minutes and gain invaluable Board experience while there".

### NELSON CITY COUNCIL

Several managers would like to be able to approach Nelson City Council staff for advice without jeopardizing their organisation. NCC advisors were seen as very helpful and a valuable resource for the community. One organisation has an NCC member appointed to its Board and mentioned how helpful it was to have the relationship with one person. One group mentioned a situation where they had an employment issue and were able to access NCC Human Resources. This saved money and resolved the situation much faster. Another said a Councillor had connection as a NCC buddy with their Board.

## FUNDING

*"People have to be protective of their small piece of pie - small grants 'breathe life into a dinosaur!' – some organisations have just had their time!"*

*"Funding is tight – blended funding models work best".*

The competitive funding environment was mentioned but managers did not dwell on this. Most were concerned that funding is being reduced from year to year. They were unhappy with the effort required to apply for very small grants which make little difference to the organisation but require accountability and progress updates. One manager mentioned how \$20,000 of general use funding can be very helpful to fill gaps and enable extra programmes that crop up during the year.

One organisation had a volunteer working as a manager for many years and that person had additional employment to be able to continue in the role. Another organisation mentioned how government departments accessed services for their clients but made no contribution to the funding of it. Another said,

*"We are squeezed for funding yet expected to do increasingly difficult work with less. We need to provide a safe environment and a sense of a different future for those who are vulnerable. Social trends/factors keep changing, and we feel politically vulnerable, so our Board walks a fine line in meeting need".*

## APPRECIATION

*"We need to remember to thank Nelson City Council at long-term plan time. – we appreciate and acknowledge support from Nelson City Council".*

One commented that some funding processes are just too difficult. For example, a \$5,400 grant required a progress report both midway and at the end of the project. These are the same requirements as for a \$50,000 grant.

## GENERAL

*"We need more sound experience on our Board – people with business knowledge. Be good to attract more males for a different perspective".*

*"It would be helpful to know what funders require. For example from Ministry of Social Development and Results Based Accountability".*

## ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD TO THIS GOVERNANCE CAPACITY SURVEY?

*"There has been a really good change in last two years with Nelson City Council and Rātā Foundation coming out into the community – even this survey is really appreciated. It's not all people sitting behind a desk!"*

*"Thank you for this opportunity – having done Board training this year I am so much more aware of good Board practice".*

*"It's a great idea to do this research. We believe more and more business skills are being expected by funders".*

*"We are impressed that Rātā Foundation has not just focused on funding but is keen to increase skills. Organisations may have 'things' to share with others – e.g., our Skills Matrix and agenda templates".*

*"We find Rātā Foundation good to work with. It would be good to build a relationship with the person who receives our application. Some funders you have to jump through hoops – almost pedantic – without being clear what/why they need".*

*"Rātā Foundation is an amazing foundation – all their time, energy, support, and empathy are appreciated".*





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many participants thanked Nelson City Council and Rātā Foundation for making this research possible. Groups who were approached to participate were 100% positive, and very busy people made time in their schedules to provide thoughtful responses to the questions asked. While the names of the participating groups will be kept confidential, they know who they are and can feel very proud of the contribution they have made to strengthening community governance in this region.

We would also like to thank Department of Internal Affairs | Te Tari Taiwhenua for their involvement with the steering group and the project.



# STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE IN NELSON AND TASMAN

**Mā pango, mā whero e oti ai te mahi.**  
*With red and black, the work will be complete.*