



Rātā
Foundation



CONNECT FUNDING AREA REVIEW

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EMPOWERED TO THRIVE

By The Knowledge Institute Limited

CONTENTS

i Executive Summary

- i Understanding social cohesion and community resilience
 - ii The current state of social cohesion and community resilience in Aotearoa New Zealand
 - ii The populations that would most benefit from an emphasis on social cohesion
 - iii Supporting social cohesion and community resilience and a shift from surviving to thriving
 - iv Alignment of current Rātā Connect funding with the evidence
 - v Recommendations
-

1 Introduction

2 Methods

3 Findings

- 3 Understanding social cohesion and community resilience
- 3 There is no universally accepted definition of social cohesion and community resilience
- 4 Context and culture are critical to understanding social cohesion and community resilience and what they mean for different cultures and communities
- 6 Social justice and equity are crucial elements of social cohesion and community resilience. It is no longer enough to ‘bounce back’; the intent is now to ‘put back better’
- 7 Social cohesion and community resilience are intricately connected, with cultural capital and identity essential to both
 - The current state of social cohesion and community resilience in Aotearoa New Zealand
- 8 International influences on social cohesion and community resilience
- 8 National influences on social cohesion and community resilience
- 11 Specific influences on social cohesion and community resilience in the Rātā rohe
- 11 The populations that would most benefit from an emphasis on social cohesion

-
- 13 Supporting social cohesion and community resilience, and a shift from surviving to thriving
 - 13 Supporting social cohesion and community resilience for Māori requires a te ao Māori approach
 - 15 Supporting social cohesion and community resilience more generally requires an equity approach
 - 19 Summary
-

20 Alignment of current Rātā Connect funding priorities with the evidence about social cohesion and community resilience

25 Recommendations

- 26 Recommendations for the wider Rātā funding environment to support social cohesion and community resilience
 - 27 Recommendations for the Connect funding area to support social cohesion and community resilience
-

30 References

31 Appendix A: Factors clusters and component factors that influence social cohesion: An international lens

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Executive Summary

Rātā Foundation strives to support those in need, helping to build an equitable and sustainable society. Te Tiriti o Waitangi underpins the work of Rātā Foundation, and they draw on tikanga Māori values of: manaakitanga, kotahitanga, kaitiakitanga and whanaungatanga. In line with their goals Rātā fund five key areas: Learn (Ako), Support (Tautoko), Connect (Tūhono), Participate (Whai wāhi mai) and Sustain (Ukauka).

This review focuses on the Connect | Tūhono Funding Area, which intends to build social cohesion and community resilience. Through Connect Funding, Rātā wants:

People to feel connected to, supported by and involved in their community so that we can help reduce isolation and build resilient communities. Healthy communities have opportunities for people to connect with people, place and culture. (Rātā Foundation Website)

The three priority areas under the Connect fund include:

- Strengthening communities by supporting connections to people and place in areas of need
- Enhancing or maintaining places where people gather such as marae, community centres, and hubs in areas of need
- Fostering a sense of belonging, diversity, and cultural connection.

This review explores how Rātā funding and support can best contribute to building community resilience and social cohesion by undertaking a literature and evidence review. Our approach reflected a Te Tiriti partnership, with tangata whenua and tangata Tiriti consultants working together, one focusing on te ao Māori worldview and the other on Western worldviews. The review drew on a broad range of literature, with initial findings shared with Rātā to make sense of the critical messages together.

Understanding social cohesion and community resilience

Four pivotal themes emerged from the literature that framed our understanding of social cohesion and community resilience for this review. These themes were:

1. There is no universally accepted definition of social cohesion and community resilience.
2. Context and culture are critical to understanding social cohesion and community resilience and what they mean for different cultures and communities. Within te ao Māori focusing on the wellbeing of, and relationships between, whānau, hapū, iwi and hapori Māori is critical.
3. Social justice and equity are crucial elements of social cohesion and community resilience. It is no longer enough to 'bounce back'; the intent is now to 'put back better'.
4. Social cohesion and community resilience are intricately connected, with cultural capital and identity essential to both.



The current state of social cohesion and community resilience in Aotearoa New Zealand

Historically, Aotearoa New Zealand was considered a united and resilient society by international measures (Larsen, 2014). However, more recent local research has revealed that Aotearoa New Zealand faces significant challenges to its social cohesion and community resilience (MSD, 2022b).

From a Te Ao Māori worldview, social cohesion and community resilience are impacted by Te Tiriti o Waitangi, colonisation and the subsequent intergenerational social, political and economic injustices experienced by Māori.

Social influences on social cohesion and community resilience were: increasing inequities and persistent disadvantage, increasing diversity, an ageing population and minority populations feeling marginalised. Decreasing trust and increasing political polarisation are also influencing cohesion.

Community resilience is also impacted by environmental factors such as Aotearoa New Zealand's risk of natural disasters and people's experiences of recent disaster events. The increasing impacts of climate change are also affecting resilience.

Digital inequities reinforce social inequities and influence social cohesion and community resilience. However, social media and the rapid rise of dis/misinformation online contribute to polarisation in our communities.

The populations that would most benefit from an emphasis on social cohesion

The literature emphasises the importance of equity and context for social cohesion and community resilience. Therefore, initiatives to support social cohesion must be undertaken with the appropriate framing of that population group. Further, the equity imperative of social cohesion indicates that those who would most benefit are those currently experiencing inequities based on:

- Isolation from their culture
- Systemic barriers
- Lack and loss of social capital – knowledge, communication, and participation
- Persistent disadvantage and the cumulative intergenerational disadvantages for Māori.



Supporting social cohesion and community resilience and a shift from surviving to thriving

Supporting social cohesion and community resilience for Māori requires a te ao Māori approach.

Indigenous principles help to grow social cohesion and community resilience. More specifically, kaupapa Māori approaches promote social cohesion and enhance the wellbeing and resilience of Māori communities. A tino rangatiratanga approach supports social cohesion and community resilience as Māori.

Supporting social cohesion and community resilience more generally requires an equity approach.

Social justice and equity approaches enable the development of social cohesion and community resilience.

- Cultural context is crucial. In Aotearoa New Zealand this means two things:
 - Centring te ao Māori in approaches and programmes.
 - Considering other cultural lenses such as Pasifika, Asian, refugee and migrant populations and the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Addressing systemic barriers and providing resources are essential components of an equity approach.
- Programmes and approaches must be multi-faceted and long-term, working collaboratively with trusting partnerships between organisations, funders and communities.
- Empower and resource communities to develop and action their own solutions.
- Strengthening the capacity and capability of the community sector to grow their own leaders and an effective community network.
- Strengthening ties and connections between people and communities is a mainstay of supporting social cohesion and community resilience, as is enabling a sense of identity and belonging and celebrating the diversity of our communities.



Alignment of current Rātā Connect funding with the evidence

This review has focused on the Connect fund, which seeks to improve social cohesion and community resilience. However, given the complex nature of social cohesion and community resilience, other Rātā granting will also support social cohesion and community resilience because of the many overlapping connections between the purposes of different funding categories and types.

This review identified that granting approaches that support social cohesion and community resilience underpin all Rātā Foundation funding. Contributing to the Foundation's work on social cohesion and community resilience is the cultural journey that Rātā has been on for the past seven years. We recognise the relationships Rātā hold with local iwi, hapū and whānau and the way they work in partnership with Māori to understand Māori aspirations and how Rātā can enable these aspirations to be achieved. However, we believe that more could be done to make the Foundation's te ao Māori approach more visible and explicit in their work.

The priorities of the Connect Funding Area are well-aligned with the evidence about how to support social cohesion and community resilience. According to the literature, community connections are the foundation of social cohesion and community resilience. Additionally, places that bring people together are vital for social cohesion and community resilience. Moreover, a sense of belonging, identity and respect for diversity are crucial for social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand's diverse society. We identified that Rātā is funding many kaupapa Māori organisations within Connect. However, this review did not observe any explicit Te ao Māori framed approaches for social cohesion and community resilience in the information we accessed about the Connect fund.



Recommendations

This review has identified the need for equitable transformative change as a crucial mechanism for supporting social cohesion and community resilience. However, equitable transformative change takes time and requires a joined-up, multi-faceted approach to funding. Nevertheless, responsive funding that helps community organisations to support connections in their communities is necessary to support social cohesion and community resilience.

Recommendations arising from this review for the broader Rātā funding environment are:

- For Rātā to work with their Māori partners to explore the possibility of using an indigenous principles framework that provides te ao Māori framing for Māori-focused funding.
- Make funding of communities experiencing inequities, such as Māori, Pasifika, LGBTQIA+ and refugee and migrant communities, more visible so people can see themselves in the work of Rātā.
- Continue approaches that prioritise partnering, high-trust relationships, and multi-year funding.
- Continue to grow the capability and capacity of the community sector.

Recommendations for the Connect Funding Area to support social cohesion:

- Continue to target Connect funding towards those in need and remain focused on connection, belonging, diversity and cultural identity and the supporting infrastructure.
- Start funding more programmes that encourage connections between different groups.
- Look for opportunities to fund ongoing programmes within the fostering a sense of belonging, diversity and cultural connection priority area.
- Stay informed about upcoming recommendations for programmes that combat misinformation and disinformation and promote positive social discourse. Support these where possible.



Introduction

Background

Rātā Foundation is one of 12 Community Trusts nationwide and the South Island's largest philanthropic funder. Each year, they grant around \$20 million, investing in community organisations throughout Canterbury (Christchurch, Waimakariri, Selwyn and Hurunui districts), Nelson (Nelson and Tasman districts), Marlborough (Marlborough and Kaikōura districts), and Chatham Islands.

Rātā strives to support those in need, helping to build an equitable and sustainable society. Te Tiriti o Waitangi underpins the work of Rātā Foundation, and they draw on tikanga Māori values of; manaakitanga, kotahitanga, kaitiakitanga and whanaungatanga. In line with their goals, Rātā fund five key areas: Learn (Ako), Support (Tautoko), Connect (Tūhono), Participate (Whai wāhi mai) and Sustain (Ukauka). This review focuses on the Connect | Tūhono funding area.

Connect funding seeks to improve social cohesion and community resilience. Social cohesion is “essential to our collective well-being and that of individuals, groups and communities” (Gluckman et al., 2021. P2.). Social cohesion is an integral part of thriving communities and an enabling factor for communities that work for the benefit of those within them. In recent times, the social cohesion of many communities has been put under significant pressure through international, national, and regional pressures. Community resilience is essential because it is a protective factor, enabling communities to respond to adverse events effectively. Supporting community resilience is seen to strengthen communities. Through Connect Funding, Rātā:

We want people to feel connected to, supported by and involved in their community so that we can help reduce isolation and build resilient communities. Healthy communities have opportunities for people to connect with people, place and culture. (Rātā Foundation Website)

The three priority areas under the Connect fund include:

- Strengthening communities by supporting connections to people and place in areas of need
- Enhancing or maintaining places where people gather, such as marae, community centres, and hubs in areas of need
- Fostering a sense of belonging, diversity, and cultural connection.

The review

Since the Rātā Foundation Connect funding priorities were identified, key trends and experiences of social cohesion and community resilience have shifted and been put under pressure with recent events. For example, Covid-19, climate change, deepening societal inequities, the impact of technology and misinformation in day-to-day life have all impacted social cohesion in recent years (Gluckman et al., 2021).

Therefore, reviewing the Connect funding area is timely and contributes to the evidence base about how philanthropic funding and support can foster community resilience and social cohesion.



Methods

Review design

The research team engaged in whakawhanaungatanga hui in the planning and design phase with Rātā via Zoom. These meetings enabled relationship building and clarification of the review purposes.

The review reflected a Te Tiriti partnership process, with tangata whenua and tangata tiriti senior consultants leading the work; one paying specific attention to te ao Māori understandings and expressions of social cohesion and community resilience and the other more focused on Western world views of social cohesion and community resilience. These two world views were woven together where it was agreed they should be and sometimes stand separately. Attention was given to te ao Māori understandings and expressions of social cohesion and community resilience. Literature on social cohesion and community resilience is mainly from a Western worldview. The review provides a Māori perspective, focusing on kaupapa Māori and mātauranga Māori.

Key review questions

The following key questions guided the review:

1. What do we mean by social cohesion and community resilience from te ao Māori and Western worldview perspectives?
2. What is the current state of social cohesion and community resilience in Aotearoa, New Zealand - what got us here and what is emerging?
3. Who are the populations that would most benefit from an emphasis on social cohesion and community resilience?
4. What supports social cohesion and community resilience, and a shift from surviving to thriving?
5. To what extent do Rātā's current Connect funding priorities align with the evidence about social cohesion and community resilience?

Literature review

The review drew on a broad range of data sources, including:

- documentation received from Rātā Foundation
- peer-reviewed journals
- grey literature, e.g., government papers, reports etc.
- Other relevant literature.

Analysis and reporting

Collated documentation from Rātā and the literature searches were reviewed and analysed for trends and themes. A brief data review of current Rātā Connect funding was also conducted to provide context about where Rātā funding has been invested. This synthesis of information was then presented in a sensemaking session with Rātā. Rātā and the review team made sense of the findings together and further developed the ideas. Agreed findings formed the basis of the draft summary report, which Rātā reviewed before final changes were made.

Findings

Understanding social cohesion and community resilience

To understand social cohesion and community resilience, it is helpful to consider how these concepts have been defined, discussed and developed. However, it is also the case that concepts like social cohesion and community resilience can be challenging to understand because they mean different things to different people, and cultural, social, and individual perspectives influence them.

Four pivotal themes emerged from an exploration of the literature, including:

1. There is no universally accepted definition of social cohesion and community resilience.
2. Context and culture are critical to understanding social cohesion and community resilience and what they mean for different cultures and communities.
3. Social justice and equity are crucial elements of social cohesion and community resilience. It is no longer enough to ‘bounce back’; the intent is now to ‘put back better’.
4. Social cohesion and community resilience are intricately connected, with cultural capital and identity essential to both.

This section will explore these themes in more detail, drawing insights from te ao Māori and Western viewpoints on social cohesion and community resilience.

There is no universally accepted definition of social cohesion and community resilience

The existing literature has no accepted definition of social cohesion or community resilience. Typically, **social cohesion** definitions range from emphasising trust as a critical indicator to discussing belonging and inclusion and referencing social and economic equality. In contrast, **community resilience** definitions have traditionally focused on acute crisis events such as natural disaster responses and recovery, with more recent shifts towards including socio-ecological stressors and trauma.

Despite no universal definitions of social cohesion or community resilience, it is possible to see some alignment across schools of thought and authors. For instance, Larsen (2014) defines social cohesion as *“the belief held by citizens of a given nation-state that they share a moral community, which enables them to trust each other”* (p1). In comparison, Spoonley et al. (2020) used a broad definition of social cohesion to explore how COVID has influenced social cohesion; *“the presence of high levels of trust, a sense of belonging, a willingness to participate and help others, and policies that ensure social and economic inclusion”* (p8). These examples prioritise trust as a critical indicator of social cohesion and promote belonging and inclusion.

Governments worldwide have also sought to define social cohesion to measure and improve it. In 2021, New Zealand’s Treasury developed the Living Standards Framework. It defined social cohesion as *“the willingness of diverse individuals and groups to trust and cooperate with each other in the interests of all, supported by shared intercultural norms and values”* (The Treasury, 2021, p.16). The Ministry of Social Development (2022) has recently created and adopted



a strategic framework for social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand – Te Korowai Whetū. They define social cohesion as *“All people, whānau and communities connect and feel a sense of belonging, are able to participate, are recognised and respected, are equitably included and have trust in others and in government organisations.”*

Internationally, Patel et al. (2017) failed to identify an agreed definition for community resilience as part of a systemic review. Instead, they identified nine commonly agreed core elements in all definitions. These elements were local knowledge, community networks and relationships, communication, health, governance and leadership, resources, economic investment, preparedness, and mental outlook.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, government definitions of community resilience focus primarily on disaster response. For example, the Ministry of Social Development commissioned a rapid evidence review about strengthening community resilience in Aotearoa New Zealand, in the face of COVID (MSD, 2021). The rapid review used the definition of resilience from the 2019 National Disaster Resilience Strategy: *“The ability to anticipate and resist the effects of a disruptive event, minimise adverse impacts, respond effectively post-event, maintain or recover functionality, and adapt in a way that allows for learning and thriving.”* (Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management, 2019).

However, with community resilience more recently focusing on socio-ecological stressors and shocks such as unemployment, inadequate housing, and other inequities (Koliou et al., 2019; Payne, 2021), the literature highlights the importance of including relationships, connections, and community participation between individuals and groups in definitions. Adams-Hutcheson et al. (2019) advise that community resilience should primarily focus on building social capital, including bonding, bridging, and linking relationships between neighbours, whānau, communities, and institutions.

Context and culture are critical to understanding social cohesion and community resilience and what they mean for different cultures and communities

How we, as individuals and communities, come to understand social cohesion and community resilience is intricately linked to personal experiences, cultural background, societal standing, available resources, and our ability to communicate and participate more broadly (Rameka, 2018). However, most definitions are typically generated from Western ideas, norms and values and do not capture the full spectrum of experiences across cultures and communities (Adams-Hutcheson et al., 2019; Henry et al., 2019).

Therefore, context and culture are essential when defining social cohesion and community resilience because they are not universal concepts that can be applied in a one-size-fits-all approach.

In general, social cohesion and community resilience definitions and frameworks fall short of capturing and addressing the experiences, values and specific needs of Māori. Colonisation and historical trauma have profoundly influenced the lived experiences of Māori (Durie, 2009a; Rameka, 2018; Gooder, 2018), and the enduring presence of discrimination and systemic racism have acted as persistent barriers for whānau, hapū, iwi and hapori Māori (Gooder, 2018; Jackson,



2016). Generally, the concepts do not adequately encompass the aspirations of indigenous peoples to move beyond survival and toward self-determination (Penehira et al., 2014; Dunlop et al. 2023). Within te ao Māori, focusing on the wellbeing of whānau, hapū, iwi, and hapori Māori is critical - *He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata he tangata he tangata*.

For example, whakapapa fosters connection, identity and belonging through informal associations and integrating relationships and networks of whānau, hapū, iwi and hapori Māori (Rangiwai, 2018; Moeke-Maxwell et al., 2014). These relationships form the bedrock of the community for Māori, and the community, in turn, comprises extended relationships with whānau, hapū and iwi (Robinson & Williams, 2001).

In contrast, from a Western perspective, the emphasis is often placed on networks beyond the family unit, and it is the role of community organisations or networks of civic engagement that provide opportunities for interaction of social cohesion and community resilience (Robinson & Williams, 2001).

Literature also cautions against adopting the language of resilience, as it risks silencing the stories of indigenous success and adversity. This caution underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding that recognises the agency and empowerment inherent in Māori resilience and survival stories and the historical and structural forces in play (Boulton & Gifford, 2014; Penehira et al., 2014).

The term “resistance” may be a more fitting descriptor of Māori experiences over decades of resisting and thriving (Waitoki & McLachlan, 2022). Resistance conveys the experiences of withstanding or actively opposing external pressures and threats. It implies a deliberate and proactive effort to navigate adversity while asserting strength and autonomy. In contrast, resilience implies adapting and absorbing challenges and mitigating adverse effects. This differentiation highlights the disconnection between resilience and the broader systems of social power that significantly shape the lives of Māori (Boulton & Gifford, 2014; Penehira et al., 2014; Dunlop et al., 2023).

Penehira, Green, Tuhiwai Smith and Aspin (2014) discuss a continuum of strategies, behaviours and outcomes that could be used to construct a resilience continuum framework to build an understanding of the effort required by indigenous peoples to achieve their goals of self-determination. This continuum framework is multi-layered and presents resilience as only one of several interconnected, interdependent factors.

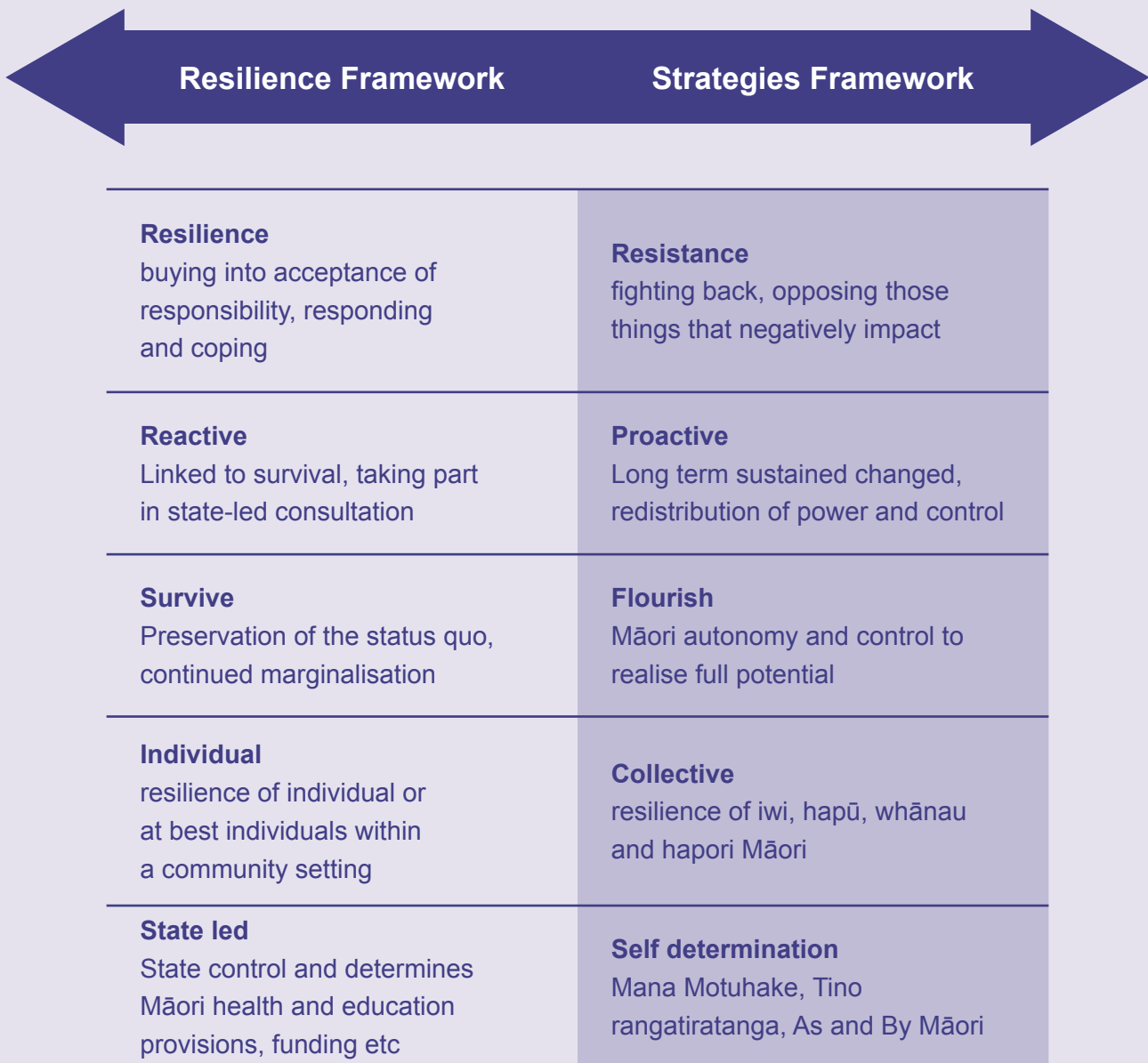


Figure 1. A resilience framework, continuum of strategies, behaviour and outcomes.

Social justice and equity are crucial elements of social cohesion and community resilience. It is no longer enough to ‘bounce back’; the intent is now to ‘put back better’

There has been a noticeable shift in social cohesion and community resilience framing in recent years. They have evolved from traditional ‘bouncing back’ approaches to return homogenous communities to the status quo towards more progressive perspectives that encompass the challenges of diverse and interconnected societies (Penehira et al., 2014; Grant & Langer, 2021). New approaches address contemporary issues and dynamics, emphasising the importance of inclusivity, equity, and resilience in building cohesive communities (Goldstein, 2015). They seek to respond to past inequalities and inefficiencies to achieve something better (Grant & Langer, 2021;



MSD, 2021). Boston et al. (2022) also confirm that current frameworks prioritising the privileged over marginalised communities are no longer sufficient. Instead, definitions and frameworks must explore equitable paths incorporating social justice and equity.

Specific to Māori, 'bouncing back' risks preserving existing social, cultural, political, and economic barriers. The literature highlights the importance of understanding and defining cohesion and resilience in the context of the ongoing impacts of colonisation on Māori through intergenerational trauma, income disparity, poverty and the housing crisis. In short, interventions that assume a Western definition of social cohesion and resilience may continue a pattern of disconnection by failing to address the broader aspects of what is essential to Māori (Lawson-Te Aho et al., 2019).

Social cohesion and community resilience are intricately connected, with cultural capital and identity essential to both

Social cohesion and community resilience are intricately connected; as shown throughout the literature, their definitions overlap and share common aspects. Both concepts emphasise the importance of belonging and inclusion within the community, and their definitions are concerned with the well-being of communities. Trust and solidarity are also fundamental to both concepts as they enable communities to come together (Larsen, 2014).

Cultural capital is also key to understanding social cohesion and community resilience. Cultural capital revolves around shared cultural identities, values, traditions, and practices central to a community's sense of self (Durie, 2009; Durie, 2017). Preserving cultural identity is critical to social cohesion, and building connections and networks is instrumental in community resilience (Penehira et al., 2014; Dunlop et al., 2023).

Existing literature points to the importance of defining social cohesion and community resilience in culturally grounded ways that reflect the experiences of differing cultures and communities. For Māori, this means defining and giving meaning to social cohesion and community resilience from a te ao Māori perspective, inclusive of tikanga Māori values, principles, and practices. Boston et al. (2022) identified five fundamental Māori values that helped to define resilience, including mātauranga (knowledge), kotahitanga (unity), kaitiakitanga (guardianship), whakawhanaungatanga (relationships) and manaakitanga (extending love).

The current state of social cohesion and community resilience in Aotearoa New Zealand

This section provides a snapshot of the current state of social cohesion and community resilience in Aotearoa New Zealand. It discusses current international and national influences on social cohesion and community resilience and what is likely to influence them in the future.



International influences on social cohesion and community resilience

The most comprehensive recent exploration of aspects influencing social cohesion internationally and in Aotearoa New Zealand was by Gluckman et al. (2021), who gathered a group of international experts in 2020 to explore factors that are influencing social cohesion. The factors influencing social cohesion have been grouped into 'factor clusters' described below. In Appendix A, the full description of 'component factors' for each of the clusters is listed.

- Environmental change
- Technological change
- Inequalities
- Identity and demography
- Economic insecurity and instability
- Economic policies
- Influence of foreign and nongovernment institutions
- Information and public disclosure
- Social boundaries and norms
- Psychological states and stressors
- Trust in institutions of government
- Perceptions of unfairness
- Inclusion and community
- Polarisation and extremism.

Given the interdependencies between social cohesion and community resilience (both focus on community connection and social capital), the above factors will likely influence community resilience. More specifically, the recent increase in natural disasters and extreme weather events has led to ballooning recovery efforts that governments alone cannot meet (Bach et al., 2014). This has led to increasing interest in developing community resilience. In times of crisis, communities that are resilient enough to mobilise and help themselves are often more able to cope in the immediate aftermath and recovery phases (Seadon & Bach, 2014).

National influences on social cohesion and community resilience

Historically, Aotearoa New Zealand, has been widely recognised as a united and resilient society. Various international and Western measures of social cohesion, such as trust in institutions and people, suggest that the country has maintained a relatively high level of social cohesion over time (Gluckman et al., 2023; Larsen, 2014; Spoonley et al., 2020). However, recent local research has revealed that Aotearoa New Zealand faces significant challenges to its social cohesion (MSD, 2022b).

The following discussion will begin by identifying primary social cohesion and community resilience influences from a Te Ao Māori perspective. The social, environmental, and technological changes identified in the literature that affect social cohesion and community resilience in Aotearoa New Zealand will then be discussed.



Many of these changes have been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its response. Therefore, while COVID-19 has impacted social cohesion and community resilience, it is not separately listed as a factor because it has done so by exacerbating other influences, both positive and negative.

From a Te Ao Māori worldview, social cohesion and community resilience are impacted by Te Tiriti o Waitangi, colonisation and the subsequent intergenerational social, political and economic injustices experienced by Māori.

One of the most enduring influences on social cohesion and community resilience for Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand has been colonisation and the ongoing struggle to have Te Tiriti o Waitangi recognised. The impact of colonisation on Māori has led to intergenerational trauma and overrepresentation of negative markers of well-being. Furthermore, the resulting systemic racism and barriers have significantly impacted Māori access to the determinants of well-being, participation in society, and engagement with te ao Māori, affecting their social cohesion and community resilience.

The Crown's responsibility to Māori under Te Tiriti has recently been somewhat acknowledged. There are also some indications that Aotearoa New Zealand is trying to become a more bicultural society. This is affecting some people's sense of belonging and identity. The process of recognising and addressing post-colonial and indigenous grievances creates contention and a potential outlet for racism and bigotry (MSD, 2022b).

Increasing social, educational and health inequities and persistent disadvantage stop people from accessing the necessities

Social cohesion and community resilience are degraded if people struggle to get the necessities. In Aotearoa New Zealand there are increasing inequities between the rich and poor (Wallis, 2017). These are complex and wicked problems that take more work to solve. The specific aspects discussed most commonly in the literature as influencing social cohesion and community resilience are the housing crisis (Resilient Greater Christchurch Plan, 2015; Winstanley et al., 2014), persistent disadvantage and childhood poverty (Gluckman et al., 2021, 2023; New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2023) and the impact of chronic illness and access to healthcare (Gluckman et al., 2023; MSD, 2022; Resilient Greater Christchurch Plan, 2015).

Changing demographics, increasing diversity, and an ageing population create diverse communities that can reduce peoples' sense of connection

Social cohesion is supported by strong social networks and feelings of belonging. This means that demographic shifts can influence social cohesion because they can change how connected people feel to those around them (Peace & Spoonley, 2019). Changes in demographics that are likely to be influencing social cohesion now and into the future are the aging population (Gluckman et al., 2021, 2023; Greater Christchurch Resilience Plan, 2015), increasing diversity and migrant populations (Gluckman et al., 2021) as well as recognition of intersectionality in identity (MSD 2022).



Decreasing trust in institutions and democracy and increasing political polarisation contribute to societal divisions

Connections and feelings of trust in each other and the institutions that govern us are essential determinants of social cohesion and community resilience. Aotearoa New Zealand, like many places overseas, are experiencing a reduction in trust in public institutions and democracy (Greater Christchurch Resilience Plan, 2015; Gluckman et al., 2021, 2023; MSD, 2022). At the same time, there is increasing polarisation of views and political stances and increasing division (Gluckman et al., 2021, 2023).

Many people, particularly minority groups, are feeling ‘othered’ within their communities

Community consultation by MSD (2022) identified a range of negative experiences undermining people’s sense of inclusion in their communities. For example, hatred and racism, rural isolation, discrimination based on religion, LGBTQIA+ experiencing rejection, and systemic discrimination within government agencies. As a result, many of these people have lost their sense of fairness and feel ignored and that their voices are not being heard by their communities, decision-makers, and those in power (Gluckman, 2023).

The heightened risk of natural disasters in Aotearoa New Zealand, and recent natural disasters have negatively influenced community resilience and also created the impetus to build resilience

The increasing focus on developing community resilience has arisen from a desire for communities to respond more effectively to natural disasters. In disaster events, we look to friends, family and local neighbourhoods in the first instance (MSD, 2021). Aotearoa New Zealand has recently experienced several major natural disasters and is at risk of more in the future. The primary risks for natural disasters in Aotearoa New Zealand are seismicity, flooding and tsunami. In some areas, volcanic activity is also a risk (Centre for Disaster Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction, 2017). These events negatively influence community resilience, particularly ongoing events like the Canterbury Earthquake Sequence (Wilson, 2013). On the other hand, for each of these events, community leaders have emerged, lessons have been learned, and the impetus to build community resilience has increased (Grant & Langer, 2021).

The impacts of climate change are being felt in our communities, and these impacts will continue to grow through changing weather patterns and the structural changes (and trade-offs) implemented to cope

Climate change is already impacting the social cohesion and community resilience of communities in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the impact will continue to grow (Gluckman et al., 2021). Evidence to date shows that those with more resources will be more able to more easily adapt to the structural changes that are likely to happen to mitigate climate change. As a result, the impacts of climate change will be unevenly spread across different parts of our community, potentially further degrading social cohesion and community resilience (Gluckman et al., 2021).



Digital inequities reinforce social inequities and influence social cohesion and community resilience. However, social media and the rapid rise of dis/misinformation online contribute to polarisation in our communities

Those experiencing digital inequity (they cannot access digital technology because of physical access or limited digital skills) are more likely to experience social inequities (van Dijk, 2020). Recent technological change has meant that more of our lives are accessed through technology, including education, health and employment. Therefore, the digital divide influences social cohesion and people's ability to live and interact with their communities (MSD, 2021). However, digital access and social media have played a key role in spreading misinformation and disinformation and contributed to the polarisation and societal division that negatively impacts social cohesion (Gluckman et al., 2021; 2023).

Specific influences on social cohesion and community resilience in the Rātā rohe

The Upper South Island has recently experienced significant natural disasters that have influenced community resilience and highlighted the importance of cohesive and resilient communities. For example, earthquakes and the subsequent rebuilding (Canterbury, Kaikoura and Marlborough), cyclones and flooding (Tasman, Nelson and Marlborough), as well as drought and wildfires (Canterbury and Tasman). Finally, the mosque terrorist attack uncovered the racism and discrimination experienced by the Muslim community in Aotearoa New Zealand and subsequently, action to support social cohesion has been prioritised.

The populations that would most benefit from an emphasis on social cohesion

Some populations experience more barriers and experience disconnection from their culture because the mainstream society they live in does not necessarily reflect their culture and values. These population groups are more likely to benefit from an emphasis on social cohesion and community resilience.

However, it is important to note that supporting social cohesion and community resilience is not just about targeting specific population groups with existing programmes. More important is ensuring that any work done to support social cohesion and community resilience is undertaken with the appropriate framing to that population group, for example, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, equity, strengths-based and Whānau Ora framing.

In general, the literature (Gluckman et al., 2012;2023; MSD, 2021; 2022; Spoonley et al., 2020) indicates that those who would most benefit from an emphasis on social cohesion and community resilience are those who are experiencing:

- Isolation from their culture
- Systemic barriers
- Lack and loss of social capital – knowledge, communication, and participation
- Persistent disadvantage and the cumulative intergenerational disadvantages for Māori.



The Rātā Foundation identifies in their Community Investment Principles, Priorities and Programmes (CIPPP) (Rātā Foundation, 2023, p.9) that barriers to access or need may be experienced by people based on the following:

- Low socioeconomic status
- Gender or sexual orientation
- Disability/accessibility/chronic health conditions
- Mental health challenges, including people with addiction
- Culture or ethnicity
- Isolation – for example, rural or other isolation
- Age – in most cases, this will be the under 25s and those over 65
- Any other specific vulnerability or disadvantage where there is evidence of need.

We conclude that how Rātā defines need aligns well with the literature about the populations that would most benefit from a social cohesion and community resilience approach.



Supporting social cohesion and community resilience, and a shift from surviving to thriving

The following section shares evidence from the literature on how social cohesion and community resilience can be supported from a te ao Māori perspective and more generally.

Supporting social cohesion and community resilience for Māori requires a te ao Māori approach

While partnership, trusted relationships, collective/systemic approaches and strengthening ties generally support cultures and communities, te ao Māori can provide insights into specific ways of working and thinking that will help to support social cohesion and community resilience for whānau, hapū, iwi and hapori Māori.

Indigenous principles help grow social cohesion and community resilience within cultures and communities.

A strong message throughout the literature is the importance of grounding funding and programme approaches within indigenous principles, including but not inclusive of:

- Mana Motuhake – participating and decision making
- Whakawhanaungatanga – connection and relationships
- Kotahitanga – unity and togetherness
- Manaakitanga – caring and compassion
- Whakapapa – belonging and identity
- Kaitiakitanga – facilitating understanding through nurturing, caretaker role
- Tino rangatiratanga – self-determination and control over self and resources
- Mātauranga a iwi, hapū, Māori – knowledge and skills (Penehira et al. 2014; Henry et al. 2019).

These tikanga Māori principles and practices have been used successfully by Māori to build social cohesion and community resilience, drawing on the expertise of whānau, marae, hapū and iwi. Applying indigenous principles helps to ensure that attention is given to experiences of disconnection, lack of belonging, and vulnerabilities specific to Māori and embeds self-determination and an equity-based framing (Boston et al., 2022).

Examples from the Rātā takiwa include:

- The Māori response to the 2010 and 2011 Canterbury earthquakes' impacts on Ōtautahi involved tikanga around manaakitanga and whanaungatanga, highlighting how this tikanga Māori-based approach supported all communities in need (Lambert et al., 2012; Kenney & Phibbs, 2014).
- The establishment of Ipu Ohotata emergency containers at Waikawa Marae and Hauhunga Marae as part of the Te Tauihu o Te Waka-a-Māui Emergency Strategy.



Kaupapa Māori approaches promote social cohesion and enhance the wellbeing and resilience of Māori communities.

Kaupapa Māori approaches like Whānau Ora (the government policy that places whānau Māori at the centre of funding, policy and services) play a supporting role in social cohesion and community resilience (Boulton & Gifford, 2014). These approaches emphasise self-determination, allowing Māori communities to make decisions and set priorities aligned with their needs and aspirations. Self-determination strengthens community (Māori) resilience by fostering a sense of control over their lives (Rameka, 2018).

Unlike existing definitions within the social cohesion and community resilience literature, kaupapa Māori approaches seek to address the disparities and inequalities that Māori communities face, working towards building a fairer and more cohesive society (Henry et al., 2019).

Kaupapa Māori programmes, such as Tokona te Raki Māori Futures Academy, Ruia and the Whitiara Centre centred in te ao Māori, build intergenerational leadership and self-determination.

Whānau Ora recognises the importance of whānau and collective wellbeing. It promotes and supports outcomes for whānau to self-manage, live healthy lifestyles, participate fully in society and te ao Māori, and become economically secure, cohesive, resilient, nurturing, and responsible stewards of their environments. Whānau ora and the resilience literature both acknowledge that trauma, risk, and adversity exist for specific groups within the population. Both recognise that whānau, families, collectives and communities can overcome adversity, and both recognise that it is up to whānau, families, collectives and communities and the government to provide the resources to support wellbeing (Boulton & Gifford, 2014; Boulton & Gifford, 2014a).

Together, social cohesion, community resilience, and kaupapa Māori approaches mutually reinforce one another, and this alignment can help to guide and shift responses for Māori towards a more self-determining set of practices that align with iwi, hapū and whānau perspectives on social cohesion and resilience/resistance.

A tino rangatiratanga approach supports social cohesion and community resilience as Māori

When considering social cohesion and community resilience activities and solutions, it is possible to draw parallels with an ‘as and by’ response, where te ao Māori community experiences, expertise and knowledge are privileged over government authority.

Wehipeihana (2019) describes that when services are provided ‘as and by Māori’, Māori providers (including hapū and iwi), rangatahi, whānau, and the community have ownership over the service delivery to meet their needs. This can also be described as an equity approach with Te Tiriti-based foundations where “Indigenous peoples have control, and indigenous knowledge and science are the norms. The legitimacy and validity of indigenous principles and values are taken for granted. It does not exclude Western methods but includes them only as far as they are considered useful.” (Wehipeihana, 2019, p. 381).

Supporting social cohesion and community resilience more generally requires an equity approach

A clear message in the literature is that an equity approach is essential to any action to improve community resilience and social cohesion. (Gluckman et al., 2021; 2023; MSD 2021; 2022; Productivity Commission, 2023).

Taking our lead from this message, our discussion of the evidence about what works from a Western worldview reflects an equity-informed approach where those who experience inequities are placed at the centre of initiatives to support social cohesion and community resilience. The following points highlight evidence about what supports social cohesion and community resilience more generally across all approaches and programmes, including those centring on te ao Māori.

Partnering approaches are critical to improve social cohesion and community resilience

Working in partnership with iwi is an imperative grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Working in partnership with kaupapa Māori organisations, hapū, and whānau enables work that responds to the needs and interests of Māori communities. Philanthropy in Aotearoa New Zealand recognises the need to share power and work in partnership to enable the well-being of indigenous communities (JR McKenzie Trust, 2019).

Further, the ability of Māori to support their communities during COVID-19 showed the infrastructure within the relationships in Māoridom that supports “rapid and effective mobilisation” (McMeeking & Savage, 2020, p.40). This highlights the ability of Māori to create social transformation through a strengths-based approach that leverages their resources, capabilities, and potential. All of which are grounded in te ao Māori and tikanga.

More generally, local community organisations understand and can create solutions specific to the needs of their communities. Therefore, an approach that enables strong partnerships between community organisations and their funders and decision-makers also supports community resilience and social cohesion (Spoonley et al., 2020). This includes other culturally embedded community organisations such as those that support Pacific aiga, LGBTQIA+ and other minority groups.

Trusted relationships enable locally-led, whānau-centred approaches

“People-centred programmes that empower community members and strengthen their capabilities are positively associated with trust, accountability and responsibility” (MSD, 2021 p34).

Social cohesion and community resilience are complex and context-specific. Having locally led, whānau-centred approaches that are co-developed and co-produced are more likely to improve social cohesion and community resilience (MSD, 2021; Spoonley et al., 2020; Thornley, 2015). However, for this to occur, communities need to be engaged and trust in their ability to make a difference.



Further, they must trust that the government and other institutions will support their actions (MSD, 2021, Productivity Commission, 2023). This highlights the importance of trusted relationships in any funding approach to improve social cohesion and community resilience. Recently, there has been increasing interest in enabling more citizens to contribute to local decision-making through citizen juries and electronic consultation (Gluckman et al., 2023; SFU Centre for Dialogue, 2022). Increasing participation is seen as a way of increasing trust and decreasing political polarisation.

Collective/systemic approaches are needed as part of an equity approach

The equity approach needed to improve social cohesion and community resilience centres on those experiencing persistent disadvantage as those who would most benefit from a social cohesion and community resilience approach. The recent New Zealand Productivity Commission report (2023) identifies the need for joined-up and holistic approaches to combat persistent disadvantage. This means breaking down competitive silos between community organisations and enabling funding opportunities that encourage working together more effectively to support people.

Another critical approach to combat persistent disadvantage is to shift systems and policy settings that have discriminated against particular groups (Gluckman et al., 2023; MSD, 2022; New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2023). This means addressing power imbalances and systemic approaches that ensure equitable access to determinants of well-being, particularly for those for whom systemic barriers exist. Approaches to funding that enable transformative system change need to be long-term and multi-faceted.

Strengthening ties within and across communities

The types of programmes evidenced in the literature that support the development of social cohesion and community resilience are programmes that strengthen ties within and across different communities. This was strongly stated in the MSD evidence review about what works to support community resilience (2021).

The primary focus should be on building social capital – the relationships, connections, and community participation that occurs on-the-ground between individuals and groups. These connections provide a foundation which enables people to support each other and respond to adverse events. Social capital and social connections are mostly place-based and shaped by the character and context of places” (MSD, 2021. P2)

Five main types of programmes are identified in the literature that support social cohesion and community resilience through strengthening ties within and across communities. These are:

- Foster strong neighbourhood connections
- Support community groups that encourage people to undertake activities together
- Support the creation of connections between different groups
- Support urban planning and infrastructure that creates ‘bumping places’
- Enable reliable communication channels



Foster strong neighbourhood connections

Connections within our neighbourhood, with friends and family, are the ones that support us when things get tough. Strong neighbourhood connections enable faster response times when disaster strikes (Centre for Disaster Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction, 2017) and support action by understanding local challenges and what could be done (MSD, 2021; Thornley, 2015).

Many examples of this were seen during the COVID-19 response (McMeeking & Savage, 2020) and through natural disaster events (Grant & Langer, 2021; Thornley, 2015). In these examples, communities with strong local connections could help other locals cope in the initial aftermath and remain connected through challenging times and the post-recovery phase.

Support community groups that encourage people to undertake activities together

Creating ties and connections with others happens through shared experiences and having the opportunity to connect with others and be active in their community (MSD, 2021). Having opportunities within communities for people to come together and participate in a positive activity (e.g., sports, social groups, etc) is beneficial for creating social connections and trust (Gluckman et al., 2023). Similarly, “Encouraging and facilitating positive interactions within and across diverse groups” and ‘Supporting and facilitating participation’ are critical themes for achieving social cohesion (MSD, 2022).

Support the creation of connections between different groups

Whilst connections within neighbourhoods and communities are essential, connections between different communities are also meaningful (Blakeley, 2016). Relationships between different groups help expand networks and enable access to new information and resources (MSD, 2021). They are also crucial for addressing discrimination and supporting social inclusion (Gluckman et al., 2023), another of MSD’s key themes for achieving social cohesion (MSD, 2022). More often than not, programmes that support connections between different groups are intentional and organised rather than happenstance. Therefore, they often need infrastructure to support them to run, for example, buildings, hire rooms, equipment, and coordinators, which requires intentional funding.

Support urban planning and infrastructure that creates ‘bumping places’

‘Bumping places’ are places within the community where people come together formally or informally. They may be a community garden (Shimpo, 2019), a community centre, a library or natural spaces such as parks, rivers, walking tracks, etc (MSD, 2021). All these places are hubs for people to socialise and ‘bump’ into neighbours. This means they are places where people could potentially create connections (Resilient Greater Christchurch Plan, 2015).

In addition, people’s sense of belonging and identity is linked to the places they go, local geographical features and the natural environment around them (MSD, 2021). Highlighting and emphasising good-quality natural spaces and supporting infrastructure that enables community gathering can help to strengthen and maintain community connections and a sense of place (MSD, 2021).



Enable reliable communication channels

Reliable communication channels can facilitate community connection and strengthen ties by helping people stay connected (Blakeley, 2016). However, they can also be a vehicle to share and discuss different viewpoints and celebrate diversity (MSD, 2022). Communication channels could be physical, such as newsletters, noticeboards and local newspapers or digital, such as neighbourhood forums and, in some instances, social media (MSD, 2021). However, as already mentioned in this report, social media is a significant source of misinformation and disinformation and is a mechanism for polarisation (Gluckman et al, 2021). Ensuring that communication channels are reliable and fit for purpose will be necessary.

Programmes that increase access to resources and opportunities support social cohesion and community resilience

Lack of resources and opportunities are significant barriers to social cohesion and community resilience (Gluckman et al., 2023). Conversely, having equitable access to the determinants of well-being supports the development of social cohesion and community resilience (MSD, 2022; New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2023).

Programmes that support providing resources and opportunities to those experiencing barriers to equity will help social cohesion and resilience. At the more complex end of the spectrum, some examples from the literature are supporting stable housing (Winstanley, 2015), supporting access to education, learning and employment (Resilient Greater Christchurch Plan, 2015; MSD, 2022), access to healthcare and wraparound support for those experiencing persistent disadvantage (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2023). Some more straightforward examples of access to resources are some of what has already been talked about in this section. For example, access to community gardens as a source of food and connection (Shimpo, 2019), access to community venues and public transport to encourage connection (MSD, 2021)

Capability and capacity development

Programmes that strengthen the capability and capacity of the community and not-for-profit sector, as well as community leaders, will support the development of social cohesion and community resilience (Grant & Langer, 2021; Resilient Greater Christchurch Plan, 2015). Local solutions are more likely to support social cohesion and community resilience. As mentioned, local community groups and community leaders are uniquely placed to understand the needs of their communities and find solutions. Handing over resources and power to community groups and leaders to enact solutions for their own community supports social cohesion and community resilience (MSD, 2021)

As mentioned, community groups often work in isolation from other community groups because of competitive funding structures. Supporting community groups to band together, talk about what they are doing and complement each other's work supports social cohesion and community



resilience (MSD, 2021; Thornley, 2015). An intentional strategy to build organisational capacity and capability to make this happen is more likely to succeed than expecting it to happen organically.

At an individual level, Grant and Langer (2021) identified that local community leaders were catalysts for response and recovery efforts when earthquakes and wildfires struck in Aotearoa New Zealand. Ensuring these leaders can act during a crisis and longer-term recovery supports community resilience, particularly in isolated and rural communities. Two specific examples of programmes that could support the capability of community leaders are leadership programmes and opportunities to meet and work with other community leaders and larger organisations that can support and fund community leaders to do their work.

Longer funding cycles improve the chances of transformational change

The literature indicates that improving social cohesion and community resilience requires long-term action, which means long-term funding is required. This is particularly apparent when seeking to fund systemic and collective approaches grounded in equity and seeking to reverse persistent disadvantage (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2023).

Many community organisations get funded in year-long cycles, and funding for a programme or person is only guaranteed for the year. This leads to a focus on outcomes that can be achieved in a year. As a result, longer-term outcomes are not prioritised, and programmes cannot scaffold progress and achievements over time (MSD, 2021).

Summary

The literature identifies various approaches and programmes supporting social cohesion and community resilience and shifting people from surviving to thriving. The key themes that have emerged are:

1. Cultural context is crucial. In Aotearoa New Zealand this means two things:
 - a. Centring te ao Māori in approaches and programmes.
 - b. Considering other cultural lenses such as Pacific, Asian, refugee and migrant populations and the LGBTQIA+ community.
2. Social justice and equity approaches enable the development of social cohesion and community resilience. Addressing systemic barriers and providing resources are essential components of an equity approach.
3. Programmes and approaches must be multi-faceted and long-term, working collaboratively with trusting partnerships between organisations, funders and communities.
4. Empower and resource communities to develop and action their own solutions. Strengthening the capacity and capability of the community sector to grow their own leaders and an effective community network.
5. Strengthening ties and connections between people and communities is a mainstay of supporting social cohesion and community resilience. As is enabling a sense of identity and belonging and celebrating the diversity of our communities.



Alignment of current Rātā Connect funding priorities with the evidence about social cohesion and community resilience.

In this section, we discuss the alignment of the Rātā Connect funding with the evidence about social cohesion and community resilience. We start by locating the Connect fund within the wider Rātā Foundation funding environment. Then, we explore how Rātā funding aligns with drivers of social cohesion and community resilience. Finally, we discuss what the evidence suggests can make a difference in social cohesion and community resilience.

Locating the Connect fund within the wider Rātā Foundation funding environment

This review has focused on the Connect fund, which seeks to improve social cohesion and community resilience. However, given the complex nature of social cohesion and community resilience, other Rātā granting also supports social cohesion and community resilience because of the many overlapping connections between the purposes of other funding categories and types.

Rātā Foundation states its purpose as “We strive for an equitable and sustainable society under the korowai of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.” (Rātā Foundation, 2023)

Rātā has a grant-making philosophy that says:

- We believe in the rōpu/organisations we support and operate in a pono/high-trust model
- Whanaungatanga/relationships are key, and we are present in hapori/communities - kanohi ki te kanohi
- We are respectful, clear, and whakamana/empower organisations
- We strive to use an evidence base and be a learning organisation – Me ako tonu
- We take a lead from the rōpu/organisations we serve about their knowledge of their hapori/community
- We whakanui/elevate and tell the stories of the rōpu/organisations we support
- We strengthen and manaaki/support rōpu/organisations to deliver better outcomes for the hapori/community
- We don't achieve outcomes on our own – we enable and work in partnership - kotahitanga

The Foundation's community investment approach has three funding programmes: Responsive, Proactive, and Strategic and Innovation. Within these funding programmes are several different types of grants – small or large grants, building projects, multi-year funding, strategic funding and strengthening the sector.

Underpinning all Rātā Foundation's funding programmes is their Māori Engagement Strategy. This strategy was created after a period of māramatanga between Rātā Foundation and iwi, hapū, whānau, and stakeholders across the rohe of the Rātā Foundation. This set Rātā on a journey



of whakawhanaungatanga - making connections and relationships with Iwi, hapū and whānau to better understand and support those aspirations for a shared future. The strategy includes providing increased kanohi ki te kanohi support for applicants, funding a capability-building programme to invest in human capital in the Māori community, providing cultural capability training for the staff at Rātā Foundation, and investigating collaborative long-term partnerships.

The Connect fund is one of five Rātā Foundation funding areas. The others are Learn, Participate, Support and Sustain. Connect grants primarily align with the Responsive funding programme, meaning that the purpose is to respond to community needs with flexible funding. Rātā has created the following to describe the purpose and priorities of the Connect fund:

We want people to feel connected to, supported by and involved in their community so that we can help reduce isolation and build resilient communities. Healthy communities have opportunities for people to connect with people, place and culture.

Our priorities are:

- Strengthening communities by supporting connections to people and place in areas of need
- Enhancing or maintaining places where people gather such as marae, community centres, and hubs in areas of need
- Fostering a sense of belonging, diversity, and cultural connection

In the first six months of the current fiscal year, 10% of grants approved have come under the Connect funding area. Three-quarters of the Connect grants approved this year fall under the small grants category, meaning that each grant is less than \$20,000.

Granting approaches that support social cohesion and community resilience underpin all Rātā Foundation funding. However, more could be done to make the Foundation's te ao Māori approach more visible and explicit in their work. This review identified approaches and programmes that support social cohesion and community resilience:

- Use an Indigenous principles framework.
- Focus on partnering.
- Prioritise the development of trusted relationships that enable locally-led, whānau-centred action.
- Seek to influence collective and systemic change as part of an equity response.
- Provide longer funding cycles to improve the chances of transformational change.

The overall purpose and granting philosophy of the Rātā Foundation echo nearly all these points. The Foundation focuses on equity, and the granting philosophy prioritises partnering approaches, trusted relationships, and privileging local knowledge. The Strategic and Innovation Programme seeks to work with partners to effect system change, and the multi-year funding is the second largest funding programme after large grants, indicating the prevalence of longer funding cycles. The granting philosophy identifies the principles for how Rātā assesses funding applications. For example, when looking at an application, Rātā assesses how the community is involved with the organisation and if they follow good practices. Further, Rātā keeps abreast of local needs and



aspirations by remaining connected to communities and ensuring their granting is evidence-based by undertaking regular reviews.

Rātā Foundation has been on a cultural journey over the past seven years to give honour to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This journey has taken a whanaungatanga approach and continues to be highly relational. As a result, Rātā has strong and honest relationships with local iwi, hapū and whānau and has spent time listening to understand their needs, aspirations, and priorities. For example, priorities for local Māori are housing, education, and the environment, and these have become pou for the Strategic and Innovation funding programme.

Working in partnership with local iwi, hapū and whānau to develop and implement funding approaches that honour te ao Māori is a priority for Rātā. Rātā seeks to be accountable to Tiriti partners and ensure that any steps to support te ao Māori are taken with their iwi and hapū partners. We understand that the agreed approach with partners to date is to have a funding approach that aligns with the intent and spirit of te ao Māori principles but does not have a specific indigenous principles framework. For example, the grant-making philosophy reflects the values of an indigenous principles' framework – but more could be done to integrate a te ao Māori approach. However, Rātā needs to work on this together with their partners.

The Foundation's Connect, Support, Participate, Learn and Sustain funding areas are similar to the Resilient Greater Christchurch Plan (2015) goals, indicating that more than just the Connect fund will support social cohesion and community resilience. Exploring the extent to which other funding programmes align with the evidence about social cohesion and community resilience is out of the scope of this review. However, this review has identified the importance of access to education, which the Learn fund is likely to provide, and access to resources and opportunities, which is the intention of the Support funding area. Finally, environmental factors influence community resilience and the Sustain funding area targets local environmental action.

The Connect priorities align well with the evidence about what sorts of programmes support social cohesion and community resilience from a Western perspective but not so well from a te ao Māori perspective

Strengthening connections is essential for supporting social cohesion and community resilience. The three priority areas of the Connect fund are all considered effective ways of strengthening connections. The literature identified that solid community connections are the foundation of social cohesion and an essential building block of community resilience. The literature also identified that having places that bring people together where they are doing things together is essential for social cohesion and community resilience. Finally, a sense of belonging and identity and an appreciation or respect for diversity are critical for social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand's diverse society.

Most Connect funding is given for operational costs, to fund staff or venues where people can connect. Connect funds provide resources for one-off events and long-term financial support for community organisations. Some grants are for capacity and capability development, which the literature also identifies as supporting social cohesion and community resilience.

Kaupapa Māori community groups are funded, and marae are supported to run programmes that



share and grow cultural learning for Māori. As stated, enabling social cohesion and community resilience takes a holistic approach. Rātā funds programmes that administratively sit under other Funding Areas that contribute to social cohesion and community resilience, such as housing, including papakāinga.

An indigenous principles framework is one example of what the literature says works. However, we would expect that an indigenous principles framework would more likely relate to all Rātā funding. Other examples of te ao Māori framed funding supported in the literature are strength-based approaches, Whānau Ora approaches and a 'By and as' tino rangatiratanga framework. Rātā's Māori Strategy underpins all its funding investment and actively funds kaupapa Māori organisations implementing a 'By and as' tino rangatiratanga framework. While there is evidence of implicit te ao Māori framed approaches at a high level, the Connect priorities do not visibly reflect a te ao Māori understanding of social cohesion and community resilience/resistance. This is an area that could be strengthened.

As a responsive fund, Connect aligns relatively well with the social drivers of social cohesion and community resilience, but more could be done from an equity perspective

The key drivers of social cohesion and community resilience discussed in this review were categorised into te ao Māori, social, technological, and environmental. This review identified that most Connect granting in the past three years aligns with the social drivers of cohesion and resilience from a Western perspective. There has recently been a shift towards focusing on communities of need in Connect funding, which aligns with an equity approach. However, ongoing work is needed in this area to achieve equitable granting.

Table 2 below shares a preliminary analysis of the key drivers impacting cohesion and resilience and how Connect granting has aligned with these drivers in the past three years. This analysis was based on the small amount of data we had for the Connect fund. Rātā may want to deepen this analysis using data from their broader funding that supports community resilience and social cohesion.



Table 1: Alignment of Connect granting (2020-2023) with drivers impacting social cohesion and community resilience.

Drivers impacting on cohesion and resilience	Alignment with Connect granting
Te Ao Māori – Te Tiriti o Waitangi, colonisation, and intergenerational inequities	<p>Grants are made to programmes and organisations that enable cultural connection and revitalisation. Rural and urban marae are being funded for building works as well as operational costs. Some one-off events enable rangatahi and others to engage in culturally grounded opportunities.</p> <p>However, there was no visible te ao Māori framing in the Connect granting that reflected a te ao Māori understanding of social cohesion and community resilience/resistance.</p>
Social – Increasing inequities	<p>Granting under the Connect funding is targeted for communities in need and those who experience inequities. Rural communities and areas of isolation are supported through Connect funding as well as some community groups that specifically target those experiencing significant inequities.</p>
Social – Changing demographics	<p>Operational grants are given to community groups where older people meet (e.g., RSA and kaumātua support groups) and some venues have been granted funding to support accessibility for older or disabled populations.</p> <p>Most of the granting tagged to the fostering a sense of belonging, diversity and cultural connection are for different ethnic groups to run events where their culture is celebrated or to run programmes that connect people to their own culture.</p> <p>Funding to enable deeper understanding of tikanga Māori for example kapa haka, carving, weaving is under the Participate Funding Area.</p>
Decreasing trust and increasing polarisation	<p>There were no grants identified that responded directly to this driver. However, two grants were given to support community radio that prioritises media content that reflects marginalised groups.</p>
Decreasing social inclusion	<p>Most of the funding is linked to this driver. Connect funds many organisations and roles that support people to come together. Connect also funds creative and arts programmes that share peoples' different experiences and perspectives. There were three grants for programmes that specifically tackle racism and prejudice.</p>
Risk of natural disasters and the impacts of climate change	<p>In the Connect area very few grants responded to this driver. Some grants were given to making buildings earthquake proof or for repairs associated with earthquake damage. Funding for climate mitigation and adaptation is through the Sustain Funding Area.</p>
Digital inequities	<p>Some funded community venues offer free computer use or training for the public about use of digital technology. Rātā funds this issue more directly under its Learn Funding Area for example Uru Mānuka Digital Futures</p>



Recommendations

This section shares recommendations for the Rātā Foundation funding based on the findings of this review. It summarises the main themes discussed in this report and then identifies the recommendations. Social cohesion and community resilience underpin much of the Foundation's funding. Therefore, whilst most recommendations are made about future Connect funding, some reflect the broader funding context.

Social cohesion and community resilience are complex concepts typically framed by mainstream Western worldviews. However, they are very context-specific concepts, so each culture and community have different interpretations of what social cohesion and community resilience mean for them. For Rātā, te ao Māori perspectives of cohesion and community resistance are essential to understand and act on from a Te Tiriti perspective. Equally, Rātā's funding will be supported by a deeper understanding of how other cultural groups, such as Pasifika and Asian populations in the Upper South Island, understand and express social cohesion and community resilience.

Social cohesion is foundational to a functioning society, where people feel a sense of belonging and look after and respect each other. Community resilience/resistance is necessary to respond to and recover from acute community shocks and chronic community stressors. It challenges people to include breaking down barriers to well-being and resolving inequities as part of the recovery phase. However, we live in times when social cohesion and community resilience are challenged by cultural, societal, technological and environmental influences.

In particular, social inequities and persistent disadvantage are linked to social cohesion and community resilience. If people cannot access the basic necessities and experience significant systemic barriers, they are more likely to struggle to achieve social cohesion and contribute to community resilience. Therefore, an equity approach to funding that supports transformative change is vital for social cohesion and community resilience.

However, equitable transformative change takes time and requires a joined-up, multi-faceted approach to funding. Rātā Foundation funds hundreds of community organisations each year, organisations that are reliant on Rātā to continue to operate and serve their people. So, whilst transformative system change is the ideal goal for the long term, in the meantime, responsive funding that helps community organisations to support connections in their communities is necessary.



Recommendations for the wider Rātā funding environment to support social cohesion and community resilience

To enable equitable and transformative change that supports social cohesion and community resilience, the following recommendations are made to Rātā Foundation's broader funding environment:

Explore with Māori partner the possibility of an indigenous principles framework that informs te ao Māori-focused funding

Current Western definitions of social cohesion and community resilience are inadequate to describe Māori experiences of historical trauma and their ongoing experiences of discrimination and systemic racism. Te ao Māori understanding of social cohesion and community resistance is underpinned by tikanga-based principles. The substantial evidence in this review about the importance of an equity approach to support cohesion and community resilience indicates the need for te ao Māori framed approaches. Furthermore, Aotearoa New Zealand's journey towards biculturalism, through growing recognition of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, suggests the timing for a te ao Māori framed approach is now.

Finally, without a deliberate te ao Māori framed funding approach, funding may amplify Western world views and alienate key populations who may benefit from a more culturally grounded understanding.

We acknowledge the partnership between Rātā and local iwi, hapū and whānau and how this informs Rātā practice. We recommend that Rātā work with their Māori partners to explore the possibility of an indigenous principles framework that drives funding for Māori across the entire Foundation. Exploring this opportunity together with partners is essential to honour the partnership between Rātā and their local iwi, hapū and whānau.

As part of this exploration, we recommend reviewing all Rātā funding areas and priorities to ensure te ao Māori worldviews are present. Specifically for the Connect fund, this would mean ensuring te ao Māori understandings of social cohesion and community resistance are present in the priorities. For example, highlighting the importance of whakapapa connections for social cohesion or reflecting the deliberate and proactive effort to navigate adversity while asserting strength and autonomy by Māori to support community resistance.

Make funding of communities experiencing inequities more visible so people can see themselves in the work of Rātā

This review identified that Rātā is funding communities that experience barriers, including Māori, Pacific groups and the LGBTQIA+ community. However, we could not easily see this work showcased. From a bicultural lens, while Rātā has a Hapori Māori section on their website, this does not reflect the breadth of mahi Māori organisations have received funding support for. Having a specific section of the website that shares information about te ao Māori funding would ensure Māori can see themselves in the work of Rātā. Equally, enabling other disadvantaged communities to see themselves more clearly in the work of Rātā would be beneficial. The website does showcase work with particular groups, but different cultural groups could be more clearly showcased.



We recommend that more work is done to make visible and share the work done with Māori and other minority and disadvantaged groups so they can more easily see themselves reflected in the work of Rātā, for example, by creating a specific section on the website about funding for Māori.

Continue approaches that prioritise partnering, high-trust relationships, and multi-year funding

This review highlighted the value of an equity approach to support social cohesion and community resilience that, over time, tackles the persistent disadvantage experienced by some groups. Using systemic approaches to create transformative change requires working in partnership, enabling trusting relationships, using joined-up approaches and providing long-term funding.

Currently, this approach is present in the Rātā purpose and philosophy. In addition, we understand that Rātā is proportionately directing funding more towards their Proactive and Strategic and Innovation programmes and targeting funding within the Responsive Funding towards engagement with community organisations.

We recommend that this approach continues.

Continue to grow the capability and capacity of the community sector

Building the capability and capacity of the community sector and our local communities to respond are essential factors that support social cohesion and community resilience. Rātā has a fund dedicated to strengthening the sector, and in addition, some Connect grants were explicitly for the capability and capacity development of community groups and community leaders.

We recommend that Rātā continue to fund the capability and capacity of the community sector and community leaders as part of their overall funding approach.

Recommendations for the Connect funding area to support social cohesion and community resilience

To support the maintenance of local community infrastructure and programmes that support social cohesion and community resilience responsively, we recommend the following for future Connect funding:

Continue to target Connect funding towards those in need and remain focused on connection, belonging, diversity and cultural identity and the supporting infrastructure

Social cohesion and community resilience rely on access to the determinants of well-being. International, national and indigenous evidence all highlight the necessity of centring equity in any work to support social cohesion and community resilience. In the past three years there has been a shift within Rātā to direct funding to specific areas of need. Accordingly, they have defined a list of the populations they consider 'in need'. This list reflects literature evidence about the populations that would most benefit from a social cohesion and community resilience approach.

We recommend continuing to target Connect funding towards those in need (using the current Rātā definition) to ensure that granting positively influences social cohesion and community resilience by supporting communities experiencing barriers to accessing the determinants of well-being.



Current Connect funding priorities align well with what works to support social cohesion and community resilience from a Western perspective. Strengthening connections and social ties between people and communities is essential to support social cohesion and community resilience. As is enabling a sense of belonging and identity celebrating the diversity of our communities.

We recommend retaining the current Connect priorities to remain focused on these areas.

Start funding more programmes that encourage connections between different groups

Connections between different groups are valuable for social cohesion and community resilience. Each new group connection brings different perspectives and access to new knowledge and resources. The review of Connect funding identified that only some programmes directly target connections between different groups. We acknowledge that much of the operational funding is for community organisations catering to multiple groups within a community. Some of the one-off events funded are designed to bring diverse groups together. However, there is value in funding specific programmes that support different groups to come together for more than one-off events and create links.

Connecting different community groups and individuals from different communities intentionally over time would support the creation of connections between different groups. Enabling connections between different groups requires infrastructure to support programmes to run, for example, buildings, hire rooms, equipment and coordinators.

We recommend that Rātā looks to fund programmes that create connections between different groups and individuals. To reflect this approach in the Connect priorities, the strengthening communities could be slightly reworded to say:

- Strengthening communities in areas of need by supporting connections within and between different groups and to local places.

Rātā advisors look for opportunities to fund ongoing programmes within the fostering a sense of belonging, diversity and cultural connection priority area

Celebrating diversity and inclusion is vital to social cohesion for the sense of belonging and identity they can affirm. In addition, they are also helpful in reducing racism and discrimination because people can gain an appreciation for new cultures and communities. Rātā typically funds one-off events where different cultural groups can share their culture and perspective with others. Most of the longer-term programmes are focused on cultural reconnection and learning, which is important but does not necessarily discourage racism and discrimination in the same way.

We recommend that Rātā advisors look for opportunities to fund ongoing programmes within the fostering a sense of belonging, diversity and cultural connection priority area.

Stay informed about programmes that combat misinformation and disinformation and promote positive social discourse. Support these were possible

Current efforts focus on removing it from the online platform and reporting it. However, this treats the symptom rather than the cause, so it may not adequately resolve the issue. However,



community participatory decision-making may support more positive discourse. In Aotearoa New Zealand, strategies to combat disinformation are currently being investigated by a group of experts commissioned by the DPMC, with results to be available early 2024.

We recommend that Rātā keep abreast of emerging evidence in this area and look to fund innovative approaches to reduce the prevalence and impact of misinformation and disinformation and promote positive public discourse.



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Appendix A: Factors clusters and component factors that influence social cohesion: An international lens.

The table below comes from Gluckman et al., (2021 p.14-15)

Table 2: Major factor clusters that can affect social cohesion, as viewed through a global lens

Factor clusters	Component factors
1. Environmental change	<p>Future effects of climate change - concern about the real world effects, scale and Impacts of climate change, and what needs to be done to moderate its negative impacts.</p> <p>Eco-anxiety - growing concerns about the impacts of environmental degradation; feeling powerless to achieve change.</p>
2. Technological change	<p>Rapidity of change and technological emergence - ethical, regulatory and social frameworks not keeping up with technological development; emergence in relation to complex systems and synergistic effects of new technologies, leading to significant disruption and wide-ranging impacts.</p>
3. Inequalities	<p>Inequality based on wealth - Income and wealth Inequality resulting in greater socioeconomic divisions and power differentials.</p> <p>Inequality of Income - unequal flow of money: income earned by the rich has increased compared to most others;</p> <p>Inequality of opportunity - based on demographic factors such as family, gender, age, and access to education, health etc.</p>
4. Identity and demography	<p>Post-colonial and Indigenous Issues and grievances (In New Zealand the issues are reflected in the justified and only partially resolved grievances of many Māori and in the ongoing contention of what Te Tiriti now means in practice and how it is implemented.)</p> <p>Impacts of changing demography - ageing population, low fertility, changing ethnic/cultural mix, age-cohort differences, ageism.</p> <p>Formal migration</p>
5. Economic Insecurity and Job Insecurity	<p>Job Insecurity - changing labour markets, precariousness of work because of increasing rates of casualisation and automation.</p> <p>Housing quality/affordability in cities - jobs centred in cities but cities' liveability declining.</p> <p>Forced migration and reactions - International and refugee migration; cross-border movements that result in ethnic and religious co-location, sometimes in ways that escalate anxieties; increased flow of refugees displaced by climate change, war; destabilisation of neighbouring regions.</p>
6. Economic policies	<p>Impacts of government economic policies - taxation, redistribution; macro issues of wealth change within and between generations.</p>
7. Influence of foreign and non-government Institutions	<p>Power of non-governmental actors - Influence of wealthy political donors: influence of tech companies who control data; influence of lobbyists.</p> <p>Technocratic plutocracy and the Influence of organised disinformation</p> <p>Decreasing trust In knowledge Institutions - suspicion of knowledge elites, scepticism about scientific and other experts.</p> <p>Geopolitical stress - rising military tensions, economic and commercial disruptions, changing international relations, intra-state conflict.</p>



Factor clusters	Component factors
<p>8. Information and public discourse</p>	<p>Changing role of traditional media - decline in the Institutional role of the fourth estate; Increasing reliance on gut feelings over facts; preference to act on feelings over reasoning and logic or factual data.</p> <p>Social media Impacts - Impact on personal and group identity, narcissism, sense of opportunity, unrealistic expectations, change in expectations of transparency and accountability.</p> <p>Erosion of norms of discourse - the emergence of anonymity online, ad hominem in electronic discourse.</p> <p>Declining information reliability - destabilised information environments resulting in difficulty identifying reliable information.</p> <p>Information targeting and bias reinforcement - algorithmic identification of personal interests, Information targeting and creation of echo chambers.</p>
<p>9. Social boundaries and norms</p>	<p>Compliance with civic values - willingness to acknowledge and action shared values; respect for norms.</p> <p>Sense of collective responsibility - efforts to find group or local solutions; not assuming top-down solutions.</p> <p>Threats to rule of law - decreasing ability of society to uphold established laws that are deemed to be fair and just.</p> <p>New social group structures and group identity - Influence of online communities and world views to define individual and group identity, often in problematic ways.</p>
<p>10. Psychological states and stresses</p>	<p>Sense of personal security and safety - real or perceived criminality or threats; increased awareness of conflict via media.</p> <p>Emotional and psychological stress - societal and personal strains experienced as a result of modern lifestyles and work patterns; mental health status affecting the ability to adapt and recover from adversity.</p>
<p>11. Trust in Institutions of government</p>	<p>Trust In representative democracy - mistrust that democratic/electoral government processes are fair: declining public trust in government accountability and integrity; perceived lack of voice in process.</p> <p>Trust In government Institutions - public trust in government accountability and Integrity: trust in the justice system. In the agencies of central and local government, and that government will meet individual and community needs.</p>
<p>12. Perceptions of unfairness</p>	<p>Economic grievances and expectations - growth in anxiety and anger about changes to economies and labour markets: economic expectations not being met.</p> <p>Perceived corruption of power elites - decline of trust in elites as a result of perceived corruption and arrogance.</p>
<p>13. Inclusion and community</p>	<p>Perceptions of minorities - blame and stereotyping of 'out-groups': characterising defined groups in negative terms and problematising them.</p> <p>Strength of community groups - strength and availability of (non-state) institutions of communal support such as community social groups, sports clubs, religious groups.</p> <p>Sense of nationalism - trend toward populism and exclusion of the 'other'.</p>
<p>14. Polarisation and extremism</p>	<p>Support for authoritarianism - desire for order and hierarchy, desire for strong political leadership, loyalty to strongman leaders who protect from 'outsiders'.</p> <p>Political polarisation - Increasingly entrenched divisions between different political world views with little room for compromise.</p> <p>Normalisation of extreme views - shift of mainstream views - changes to what is considered 'normal': spread of extreme views, radicalisation.</p> <p>Perceived threats to group norms/values - sense that long-held societal/ group norms and values are under threat from actions for minority rights, gender. etc. (also known as cultural backlash).</p>



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