



**Eastern
& Central**
Community Trust

Transformational Change Report

**Putting Equity into Action across
Eastern & Central Trust Communities
2024–2025**



Ngā kai o roto

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Executive Summary

Over the 2025 financial year, Eastern & Central Community Trust (ECCT) has provided philanthropic funding across ECCT regions, supported more than 350 community led initiatives, delivering tangible and impactful change for thousands of people across Tairāwhiti, Hawke's Bay, Tararua, Manawatū, Horowhenua, and Wairarapa.

These grants supported ECCT priority communities of Māori, Pasifika, tamariki and rangatahi, people with disabilities, communities living rurally or in isolation, and high deprivation areas, suburbs & communities. Funding strengthened emergency response, improved access to healthcare and education, reduced food insecurity, stabilised housing, revitalised culture, and restored the natural environment.

This reflects a shift from short term transactional funding to relationship philanthropy, embedding ECCT pou of Mana Taurite | Equity, Tū Māori Mai | Māori aspirations, Kaitiakitanga | Environment, and Hononga | Partnerships to encourage and support community designed solutions at every level.

What is Transformational Change?

Transformational change can be defined in the context of community development and is an approach to community development that aims to bring about comprehensive and sustainable change in a community. It goes beyond traditional models of development, which often focus solely on economic indicators, and instead takes a holistic approach that addresses social, economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions of community life.



The key principles of transformational community development include:

1. Participation and Empowerment:

Transformational community development emphasises the active participation of community members in decision-making processes. It seeks to empower individuals and communities to identify their own needs, set their own goals, and take ownership of the development process.

2. Sustainability:

Transformational community development aims to create long-term, sustainable change by considering the environmental, economic, and social aspects of development. It promotes practices that are environmentally friendly, economically viable, and socially just.

3. Social Justice and Equity:

It emphasises the importance of addressing social inequalities and promoting social justice within the community. This involves ensuring equal access to resources, opportunities, and services for all community members, regardless of their socio-economic background, gender, ethnicity, or other factors.

4. Collaboration and Partnerships:

Transformational community development recognises the value of collaboration and partnerships between community members, local organisations, government agencies, and other stakeholders. It encourages the sharing of knowledge, resources, and expertise to achieve common goals.

5. Cultural Sensitivity:

It respects and values the cultural diversity of communities, recognising that cultural identity plays a significant role in shaping development processes. It involves engaging with and respecting local traditions, customs, and beliefs.

Overall, transformational community development seeks to create positive and lasting change by working in partnership with communities, empowering individuals, and addressing the underlying causes of poverty, inequality, and social exclusion. It aims to foster sustainable development that improves the quality of life for community members and promotes their overall well-being.¹

¹ Community Transformation Trust. (n.d.) What is Transformational Community Development. Retrieved December 18, 2025, from <https://ctt.org.nz/what-is-transformational-community-development/#:~:text=Transformational%20community%20development%20is%20an,environmental%20dimensions%20of%20community%20life>

ECCT Strategic Plan

In 2023 ECCT launched a new strategic plan which provided a new direction “to accelerate courageous transformational change, that creates vibrant, more sustainable, and equitable communities”.

This vision is underpinned by four pou which are:

1. Mana Taurite | Equity

- a. Supported communities are enabled to deliver local benefits

2. Tū Māori Mai

- a. Māori aspirations are supported

3. Kaitiakitanga | Environment

- a. Biodiversity, ecosystem, land and water stewardship
- b. Energy, emission reduction and circular economy

4. Hononga | Partnerships

- a. Coordinated and integrated funding and support
- b. Work alongside community groups to create transformational change



Through this strategic plan the following priority communities are also supported



**Māori
Pasifika**



Communities living rurally or in isolation



Persons with disabilities



Tamariki & rangatahi



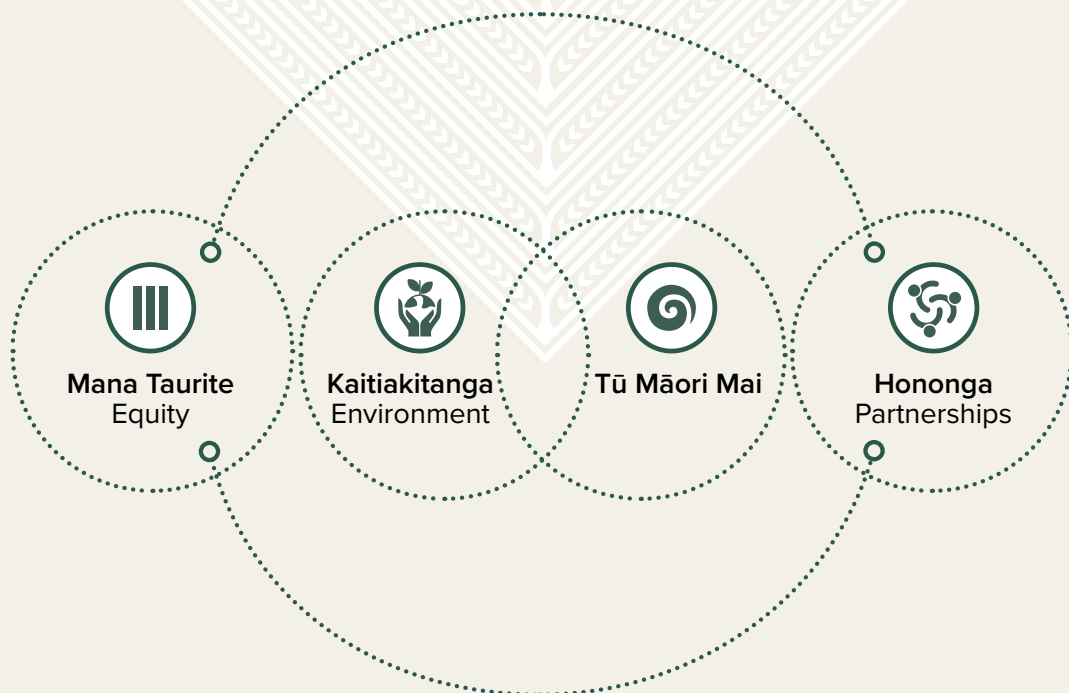
**High deprivation areas, suburbs
& communities across our
regions, notably:**

- Tairāwhiti
- Wairoa
- Tararua
- Horowhenua

Ngā Hapori Mātua | Our Priority Communities



Ngā Pou | Our Pillars





Mana Taurite | Equity

ECCT has a strong focus and commitment to support an equitable community. ECCT supports the PWC definition of equity which is:

“Equity is the quality of being equal or fair. Like fairness, equity is an ethical concept based on a model of justice where distribution of resources ensures everyone has at least their minimum requirements. It does not necessarily mean that resources are equally shared but acknowledges and takes into account individual differences and recognises that ‘one size doesn’t fit all’. This entails adjusting approaches to individuals to ensure that everyone can reach the same goals, even if it means working differently to address their unique needs”.²

Deprivation levels³

To help inform ECCT of areas that have a high deprivation level, information was obtained from the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment (MBIE) dashboard which records the Deprivation Index of territorial authorities around New Zealand.

Table one takes a regional look at areas within the ECCT region. For Hawke’s Bay the deprivation level is the average of Hastings and Napier. Manawatū is the average of Palmerston North and Manawatū. For Wairarapa it is the combination of Carterton, Masterton and South Wairarapa.

Table 1

ECCT Regions	Deprivation Level	Population
Tairāwhiti	7.4	52,700
Wairoa	9.1	8,940
Hawke’s Bay	5.9	154,700
Central Hawke’s Bay	5.6	15,950
Tararua	7.2	18,950
Manawatū	5.4	124,500
Horowhenua	7.4	38,400
Wairarapa	5.0	56,500

Table two has each territorial authority listed separately with the deprivation level and population.

Table 2

Territory	Deprivation Level	Population estimate 2025
Gisborne	7.4	52,700
Wairoa	9.1	8,940
Hastings	5.9	88,300
Napier	5.8	66,400
Central Hawke's Bay	5.6	15,950
Tararua	7.2	18,950
Palmerston North	5.7	90,500
Manawatū	5.0	34,000
Horowhenua	7.4	38,400
Carterton	4.7	10,300
Masterton	6.0	28,900
South Wairarapa	4.3	12,200

Key Themes

Funded initiatives show a clear and practical approach to Mana Taurite I Equity. Instead of treating equity as just an idea, these programmes put it into action through how they design and deliver services. The focus is on removing barriers, creating fair access to opportunities, and helping people build the skills and support they need to thrive.

One of the biggest themes is making it easier for people to access services. Many programmes reduce costs by offering free or low-cost support, and they reach into rural or isolated communities through mobile or local services. They also provided support with things like transport and digital access, recognising that these everyday barriers can prevent people from getting help. At the same time, there is a strong focus on prioritising those who need it most, including Māori and Pasifika communities, people in high-deprivation areas, those with disabilities, and whānau facing hardship.

Another key focus is giving people access to essential services and opportunities that improve their long-term wellbeing. This includes healthcare, mental health support, education, and employment pathways, as well as chances to take part in sports, recreation, and community life. Many initiatives take a wrap-around approach, offering multiple types of support together, like housing, food, health, and education, so they can respond to the full reality of people's lives rather than just one issue at a time.

There is also a strong emphasis on building long-term capability. While programmes meet immediate needs, they also help people develop skills, confidence, and independence through things like financial literacy, parenting support, and job readiness. Services are often designed to be welcoming and respectful, with flexible access and culturally safe, trauma-informed approaches. Many are led by local organisations, which helps ensure they are trusted, relevant, and tailored to the community.

Across the board, a few consistent patterns stand out including a balance between meeting immediate needs and building long-term resilience, strong targeting of priority groups, and a focus on early support before problems get worse. Many programmes also align with Māori-centred approaches, which strengthens their impact. Overall, the most effective initiatives combine access, respect, and skill-building to create lasting, positive change for individuals, whānau, and communities.

2 PWC. (November 2023). Why strive for equity over equality. Retrieved April 16, 2026, from <https://www.pwc.co.nz/services/equity/why-strive-for-equity-over-equality.pdf>
3 <https://webrear.mbie.govt.nz/theme/deprivation-index/map/timeseries/2023/new-zealand?right-transform=absolute>

Equity in Action: Who was supported

With the funding that was distributed throughout the ECCT region, we can demonstrate various ways through which ECCT funding has contributed towards achieving equity and transformational change. While we are early in our journey, qualitative data that has been received through post grant reporting is highlighting the impact that ECCT funding is contributing positively towards social issues.



Highlights include:

- CONNECT Youth & Community Trust helped 632 people pass practical driving tests in Central Hawke's Bay, many referred through Police or the justice system, directly increasing employment access in a region where driving is essential.
- Horowhenua District Health Transportation Trust provided 8,000+ free medical transport journeys, ensuring rural residents could attend dialysis, cancer treatment, rehabilitation and specialist appointments in Palmerston North.
- Te Whare Ora o Eketahuna Health Centre delivered counselling services to a small rural population, supporting up to 60 patients despite workforce shortages, reducing isolation and unmet mental health need.
- YMCA Hawke's Bay reached rangatahi through 1,300+ youth meet attendances and its Y Ki Waho Play Trailer, with over 75% Māori participation, providing safe spaces for connection and wellbeing.
- Levin Riding for the Disabled and Tararua Riding for the Disabled provided therapeutic riding to children and adults with disabilities, supporting physical development, confidence, and social connection.
- Brain Injury Association Hawke's Bay supported 102 clients and their whānau with navigation through complex ACC, health, and housing systems, while raising awareness with 5,000+ community members.
- Life Flight Trust upgraded air ambulance aircraft, enabling 1,704 patients, including critically ill babies and kaumātua to receive urgent, life saving care regardless of location or income.
- Huringa Pai Charitable Trust offers free fitness classes to combat diabetes in vulnerable groups. Huringa Pa supported approximately 4,000 individuals over the course of the year. By removing financial barriers, they empower Pacific Island, and Māori community members to lead active lifestyles.
- King Street Artworks provided a free, non clinical mental wellbeing space with over 7,000 recorded visits, removing barriers related to cost, referrals, and stigma.

Mana Taurite | Equity Case Study

Adaptive Whakauru Tahī Charitable Trust

Adaptive Whakauru Tahī Charitable Trust uses movement as a tool to enhance quality of life, independence, mobility, and build confidence for people with disabilities. This programme supports high-need communities and reducing barriers such as cost and transport through a koha-based model. As one of the only programmes of its kind in the region, it provides tailored classes including adaptive fitness, swim, dance, seated movement, and programmes for tamariki and kaumātua.

In the past year, the Adaptive Whakauru Tahī has delivered 814 classes, including 470 community sessions, supporting over 300 participants aged 5-90 to the Hawke's Bay community. Demand continues to grow, with participation in some classes increasing by over 50%. The programme improves mobility, independence, confidence, and mental wellbeing, while fostering social connection and community inclusion.

Strong partnerships with over 20 organisations, including health providers and disability services, ensure continuity of care and broad community reach. School-based programmes support ākonga to build confidence and engagement, with measurable outcomes including improved participation and aspirational achievements.

By removing participation barriers and delivering services directly into high-deprivation areas, Adaptive Whakauru Tahī significantly reduces inequities and creates inclusive opportunities for Māori, Pasifika, and people with disabilities. Their impact and leadership have been recognised through national award finalist placements in equity, diversity, and inclusion.

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By removing participation barriers and delivering services directly into high-deprivation areas, Adaptive Whakauru Tahī significantly reduces inequities and creates inclusive opportunities for Māori, Pasifika, and people with disabilities.

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Kaitiakitanga | Environment

As a philanthropic Trust, we support communities across our six regions to understand and mitigate climate change impacts. ECCT commits to practicing kaitiakitanga to protect and improve our natural environment for future generations. This means we support:

- Programmes or initiatives that seek to address climate change implications, including cultural change, leadership and awareness
- Community-led initiatives
- Activities that support communities to sustainably manage their natural resources

For ECCT, increasing our focus on environmental funding has been a strategic shift, and we are already seeing strong positive impacts. In the 2025 financial year, we have supported 28 organisations through environmental grants, including four multi year commitments, with total funding of \$1,111,696.

Key Themes

Effective environmental support relies on community participation in a wide range of initiatives, including protection, sustainable management, and stewardship. Across projects, there's a strong focus on practical action through planting natives, restoring wetlands, protecting biodiversity, and managing pests. The key theme here is doing, not just talking. Communities are not just learning about the environment, they are actively improving it and seeing real results.

Another major theme is learning by doing. Many initiatives use hands-on experiences like field trips, outdoor education, and restoration projects to teach environmental care. These programmes often blend science with mātauranga Māori, helping people build a real connection to nature. The emphasis is on growing understanding and responsibility early, so caring for the environment becomes a natural part of life.

There is a strong thread of culture and identity woven through this work. Environmental care is closely tied to te ao Māori values, where concepts like kaitiakitanga and whakapapa highlight the relationship between people and the land. This means the environment is not seen as a separate being, it is part of who people are. This highlights that caring for the environment can be seen as a cultural responsibility, not just a practical one.

A further pattern is the importance of community-led action and shared ownership. Many projects are driven by local groups, iwi, and volunteers, with people working together towards common goals. These initiatives focus on making nature accessible to everyone. The concept is that when people feel included and connected, they are more likely to care and stay engaged.

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The environment is not seen as a separate being, it is part of who people are.

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Finally, these initiatives take a big-picture, long-term view, linking environmental work to sustainability, climate resilience, and wellbeing. They promote everyday actions like reducing waste, while also building awareness about climate change and preparing communities for the future. At the same time, they support physical and mental wellbeing and bring people together. Underpinning it all is a focus on future generations, growing the next group of kaitiaki and making sure this work continues well beyond today.

Kaitiakitanga in Action: Who was supported

With the funding that was distributed throughout the ECCT region, we can demonstrate various ways through which ECCT funding has contributed towards improving the environment and transformational change. To have positive impact in environmental projects, they often need to occur over a long period of time. With the introduction of multi-year funding, there is hope that this can support the longevity of a project. While we are early in our journey, qualitative data that has been received through reporting is highlighting the impact that ECCT funding is contributing towards environmental issues. Highlights include:

- Longbush Ecological Trust established a functioning wetland and a pā harakeke featuring 20 named Tairāwhiti varieties, strengthening biodiversity and protecting rare indigenous species. The site now operates as a living classroom, embedding mātauranga Māori and science through the Wild Lab Tiaki Taiao programme reaching over 1,000 tamariki and whānau each year.
- Ruamahanga Restoration Trust led a catchment wide restoration approach combining native planting, predator control, climate education, and iwi led mātauranga Māori across more than 24 schools. This shifted engagement from one off activities to long term rangatahi leadership and shared guardianship of the awa.
- Te Kura o Mata re centred learning around whenua, taiao, whakapapa and local histories through a tikanga based curriculum supported by a new digital learning tool. The approach reduced geographic and socio economic barriers while strengthening Māori identity, whānau connection, and mokopuna agency as kaitiaki of place.
- SuperGrans Tairāwhiti transformed food support from crisis response to a mana enhancing model focused on kai sovereignty, skills, and rescued kai upcycling. The shift reduced foodbank reliance by 20% while protecting Papatūānuku and building long term whānau capability and resilience.
- Tairāwhiti Environment Centre operated as an environmental hub supporting eight grassroots projects, delivering recycling services, trap libraries, and environmental education to thousands of residents annually. This model embedded everyday kaitiakitanga at scale by building practical capability across the wider community.
- Ngahua Wild Bird Rescue provided free rescue, veterinary care, and rehabilitation for injured and orphaned native birds, ensuring equitable access regardless of ability to pay. The service strengthened community responsibility for taonga species while delivering tangible environmental protection outcomes.



Kaitiakitanga | Environment Case Study

Tolaga Bay Inn Charitable Trust

The Slash for Cash is a social enterprise, supported by the Tolaga Bay Inn, is a community-led environmental and socio-economic initiative delivered across Uawa / Tolaga Bay and Wairoa. The project focused on addressing the environmental impacts of forestry debris ("slash") left behind after Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle. This debris increased risks of flooding, erosion, and land instability, while also contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. The project combined climate action, sustainable land management, and workforce development to restore the environment and strengthen community resilience.

To address these challenges, the project implemented a circular economy model that transforms slash waste into valuable environmental resources. Using mobile carbonisation kilns, slash was converted into biochar fertiliser and smokeless charcoal, reducing waste while creating products that support land regeneration. This approach enabled the removal and repurposing of harmful debris, while also contributing to climate change mitigation through carbon sequestration and reduced emissions.

The project delivered strong environmental benefits, with 1.28 tonnes of garden slash processed to lock away an estimated 5.52 to 8.28 tonnes of carbon dioxide, and a further 18 tonnes handled through controlled burns preventing around 36 to 54 tonnes of emissions. At the same time, using biochar improved soil fertility, boosted water retention, and increased resilience, helping to restore damaged land while reducing the risk of erosion and flooding. Overall, these results show the project is making a practical, long-term contribution to environmental sustainability.

The project also embedded environmental education and community engagement. A total of 200 tamariki and 20 teachers across 10 schools were trained in biochar, soil health, and climate resilience, alongside 15 community members in a community garden programme. In addition, 12 unemployed participants were trained in environmental management and biochar production, gaining skills for employment in emerging green industries. Overall, 301 people were directly impacted, with an estimated reach of around 500 individuals across the wider region.

With a total project cost of \$400,300, including a \$100,000 contribution from ECCT, the initiative fully utilised the funding to deliver both environmental and community outcomes. The project aligns strongly with kaitiakitanga principles by promoting environmental stewardship, sustainable resource use, and community-led solutions grounded in mātauranga Māori. Its long-term vision includes scaling biochar production, expanding land restoration, and continuing to build a local circular economy that supports both the whenua (land) and the wellbeing of the community.



Tu Māori Mai | Māori Aspirations

ECCT is committed to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi. As an organisation, we are committed to upholding the principles and intent of Te Tiriti through our everyday practice, governance, and relationships. This commitment is expressed through alignment with the Tū Māori Mai pou, which guide how we embed te ao Māori within our work.

Key Themes

Tū Māori Mai initiatives show that culture sits at the centre of what works. Projects actively use te reo Māori, tikanga, and Māori knowledge in everyday delivery. This can include events, programmes, or physical spaces, which can help strengthen identity, pride, and connection for communities.

A clear theme across the applications supporting Tu Māori Mai is a strong focus on whānau. Rather than targeting individuals, many initiatives are designed to support whole families and bring different generations together. Tamariki, rangatahi, adults, and kaumātua all benefit, and there is a strong emphasis on sharing knowledge and building connections across generations.

Supporting rangatahi is another key priority. Many programmes help young people build confidence, leadership skills, and a stronger sense of who they are. They also create pathways into education, work, and cultural roles. At the same time, Māori-led design is valuable. There is benefit for projects which are shaped and delivered by iwi, hapū, and local communities, ensuring they are relevant and trusted.

Wellbeing is approached in a holistic and practical way. Initiatives often combine support across health, housing, education, and social services, recognising that these areas are all interconnected. Making services easy to access is also important, with many programmes removing cost barriers and creating safe, welcoming environments that work for Māori communities.

Finally, many projects link people back to the environment and strengthen community resilience. Environmental work is often tied to cultural identity, while investments in marae, housing, and community spaces help people come together and recover from challenges. Overall, the strongest initiatives combine culture, community, and practical support to create long-term, positive change.



Tu Māori Mai in Action: Who was supported

- Nōna Te Ao supported 330 rangatahi Māori across 13 kura, centring identity, leadership, and self determination. The programme lifted secondary retention to 87% (well above the national Māori average) and increased NCEA achievement and tertiary or trades pathways through culturally grounded, iwi connected support.
- Wharariki (Flax) Trust repaired nine intergenerational homes in a highly isolated Māori community, benefiting 17 adults and 25 tamariki. The work reduced mould and dampness, improved health and safety, and restored whānau pride and mana through warm, dry, healthy whare.
- Wairoa Young Achievers Trust delivered holistic, Māori centred programmes supporting life skills, leadership, and tuakana- teina transitions. High completion rates and improvements in confidence, school engagement, and future aspirations show durable impact for rangatahi in a high need rural community.
- Ātea a Rangi Educational Trust delivered free, tikanga based Matariki workshops (including te reo Māori delivery) to tamariki from low decile, predominantly Māori and Pasifika schools impacted by COVID and Cyclone Gabrielle. The kaupapa strengthened cultural identity, whānau engagement, and intergenerational learning connected to te taiao and the maramataka.
- Eastern Institute of Technology supported 17 rangatahi Māori as co designers of youth led research guidelines, culminating in a wānanga that centred rangatahi voice and lived experience. The kaupapa modelled rangatahi mana motuhake and had national reach through widespread dissemination.
- Te Poho o Rawiri Marae enabled marae based resilience through mobile water stations used for emergencies, daily marae operations, and community events post Cyclone Gabrielle. The project supported Māori aspirations by strengthening marae self sufficiency, wellbeing, and preparedness.
- Trust Tairāwhiti installed solar and battery systems at 22 rural marae alongside roof and wiring upgrades and maintenance wānanga. This reduced energy insecurity, supported kaitiakitanga, and strengthened long term Māori autonomy in high deprivation, remote communities.



Tu Māori Mai | Māori Aspirations Case Study

Kaitoki Marae Committee

The Kaitoki Marae Ablution Project redeveloped facilities that had been in use since 1980 and were originally built by whānau. Over time, the ablution block had significantly deteriorated and no longer met basic health, safety, or accessibility standards. This decline created barriers to use the marae. The project aimed to modernise the facilities and restore a safe and respectful environment.

Kaitoki Marae serves as a key cultural, social, and educational hub for Ngāti Pakapaka and the wider Dannevirke community. It hosts a wide range of events, including tangihanga, weddings, wānanga, kapa haka practices, and community gatherings.

The redevelopment delivered a comprehensive upgrade, including new plumbing and septic systems, modern fixtures, and improved accessibility features in line with current standards. The result is a clean, safe, and welcoming ablution block that enhances comfort and restores dignity for all users. The improved facilities now better support the marae's diverse functions and high visitor numbers.

Community involvement was central to the project's success. The Marae Committee engaged hapū through hui, workshops, surveys, and social media to ensure the design reflected shared aspirations. Volunteers, including local tradespeople, contributed labour and expertise, while partnerships with schools, iwi organisations, and government agencies reinforced the marae's role as a community hub. The upgrade also strengthens its capacity as a Civil Defence emergency centre.

Since completion, the project has delivered clear benefits, improving wellbeing, safety, and accessibility while enabling larger gatherings and more frequent events. Over 300 people have already benefited, including participants in major celebrations and ongoing bookings. The project helps reduce inequities by providing inclusive facilities, supports cultural revitalisation, and strengthens resilience in a rural community. Overall, it represents a long-term investment in the marae's future as a place of connection, identity, and support for generations to come.

“Community involvement was central to the project's success. The Marae Committee engaged hapū through hui, workshops, surveys, and social media to ensure the design reflected shared aspirations.”

Hononga | Partnerships

For ECCT, Hononga | Partnerships is a way of working. The outcomes associated with partnership approaches are significant. Partnerships consistently enable increased reach and scale. They improve access to services, particularly in underserved areas, and contribute to better health, wellbeing, and social outcomes. There is strong correlation of reduced isolation, increased confidence, improved engagement in education and employment, and stronger community connections. Collaborative delivery also strengthens community cohesion, bringing diverse groups together and fostering inclusion and shared identity.



Key Themes

Grants from the 2025 financial year have clearly demonstrated that working in partnership and collaboration are key elements of achieving transformational change. Across the data, organisations commonly work in collaborations which often involves shared delivery, referrals, and co-designed initiatives.

A key theme is that partnerships are community-led and locally grounded, enabling initiatives to respond directly to local needs. Many organisations act as connectors or facilitators, bringing together multiple services and stakeholders to create integrated solutions. These collaborative approaches support ECCT's goal of "communities enabled to deliver local benefits," as they build local ownership and strengthen community capability while ensuring services are relevant and trusted.

Partnerships are also strongly linked to Mana Taurite | Equity outcomes. Collaborative models are deliberately designed to reach priority communities, including Māori, Pasifika, people with disabilities, those in rural or isolated areas, and individuals experiencing hardship. By working together, organisations reduce barriers such as cost, transport, and access to information. Examples include transport services enabling participation, free events and programmes reducing financial barriers, and outreach models bringing services directly into communities. These partnerships therefore play a critical role in improving equitable access and ensuring that services reach those who need them most.

Another important theme is the role of partnerships in supporting Tu Māori Mai | Māori aspirations. Some initiatives demonstrated collaboration with iwi, marae, and Māori organisations, embedding cultural values, te reo Māori, and kaupapa Māori approaches into programme design and delivery. These approaches can enhance the effectiveness of programmes by ensuring they are culturally responsive and aligned with the needs and aspirations of Māori communities.

The impact of collaborative services, where partnerships enable wraparound support across health, social services, education, and community development has a positive impact on community. Organisations frequently act as navigators, helping individuals and whānau move through complex systems and connect with the services they need. Multi-agency collaboration, including shared planning and information exchange, leads to a more coordinated and holistic approach.



Hononga | Partnership Case Study

Nourished for Nil

The Nourished for Nil Programme is a comprehensive food rescue and food security initiative operating across Hawke's Bay and surrounding regions. It integrates rescued food distribution, food banks, and social supermarkets to address food insecurity while reducing food waste. With support from ECCT funding, the programme has sustained essential operational costs, enabling it to support between 1,200 and 1,500 families each week. Its services include both open-access food distribution and targeted support through referral systems, making it a critical component of the regional food security network.

The programme aligns strongly with ECCT's Mana Taurite | Equity and Kaitiakitanga | Environment pou by ensuring fair access to food while contributing to environmental sustainability. In 2024, Nourished for Nil rescued over 1,024 tonnes of surplus food, significantly reducing landfill waste and emissions. Nourish for Nil deliver an open access model ensures inclusivity, particularly benefiting communities in high-deprivation areas such as Flaxmere, Camberley, Maraenui, Hastings, and Napier. This dual focus on social and environmental outcomes reflects a holistic approach to community wellbeing.

Working in partnership is central to the programme's success and directly supports ECCT's emphasis on collaborative delivery. Nourished for Nil works closely with key partners including Hastings District Council, the Salvation Army, the Ministry of Social Development, and Te Taiwhenua o Heretaunga, alongside a wide network of growers, supermarkets, and food manufacturers. These relationships enable a consistent supply of food, coordinated service delivery, and effective referral pathways to reach those most in need.

The organisation also plays a leadership role within a wider national food rescue network, redistributing surplus food to groups such as Gizzy Kai Rescue, Just Zilch, and Whakaora, and acting as a regional food hub. Locally, partnerships with over 40 referral agencies and the support of approximately 200 volunteers strengthen community connections and extend the service reach. This collaborative ecosystem enhances efficiency, reduces duplication, and ensures a coordinated response to food insecurity across multiple regions.

Through its integrated and partnership-driven approach, Nourished for Nil is delivering transformational change. Innovations such as the social supermarket model and the merger of local food banks have improved service quality and dignity for users. In 2024 alone, the programme supported tens of thousands of people, with an independently assessed social return of \$8.80 for every \$1 invested. This demonstrates how strong partnerships can deliver lasting, equitable, and sustainable impact for communities.

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Biodiversity Hawke's Bay

The Environmental Enhancement Contestable Fund demonstrates a partnership-led model that aligns strongly with the ECCT Strategic Plan, particularly the pou of Kaitiakitanga | Environment, Hononga | Partnerships, Mana Taurite | Equity, and Tū Māori Mai | Māori aspirations. Delivered by the Hawke's Bay Biodiversity in collaboration with Hawke's Bay Regional Council (HBRC) and other regional partners, the programme combines contestable funding with operational support to enable community-led biodiversity action across Hawke's Bay.

The programme addresses a key barrier facing many community groups: limited capacity to manage funding applications, administration, and reporting. By acting as a central hub, Biodiversity Hawke's Bay removes these constraints and enables a wide range of groups, including non-incorporated, rural, and volunteer-led initiatives, to participate. This approach directly supports Mana Taurite | Equity by ensuring fair and inclusive access to funding and resources, allowing communities to focus on delivering on-the-ground environmental outcomes.

Partnership is central to the programme's success. Biodiversity Hawke's Bay works collaboratively with HBRC, the Department of Conservation, Pan Pac Forest Products Ltd, iwi and hapū organisations, councils, and community groups, supported by formal agreements and aligned funding processes. This collective approach reflects Hononga | Partnerships by reducing duplication, strengthening coordination, and enabling shared delivery of regional biodiversity priorities.

Through the Environmental Enhancement Contestable Fund, the programme funded 27 projects in 2025, supporting initiatives such as wetland restoration, predator control, and native planting. These projects delivered measurable outcomes for ecosystem health and climate resilience, aligning with Kaitiakitanga | Environment, while also strengthening cultural connections to te taiao and supporting whānau involvement, contributing to Tū Māori Mai | Māori aspirations.

Overall, the programme represents a highly effective, collaborative model that leverages co-investment and shared expertise to deliver regional impact. By connecting stakeholders and enabling community-led action, Biodiversity Hawke's Bay is fostering a coordinated "network of networks" that enhances biodiversity and builds community capability.



Transformational Change: What This Adds Up To

Taken together, this investment has:

Improved access to essential supports and opportunities by reducing financial, geographic and social barriers to healthcare, education, safe and affordable housing, kai security, transport connectivity, and participation in arts, culture and creative expression. These improvements have enabled people to meet basic needs while also engaging in activities that support wellbeing, learning and aspiration across the life course.

Reduced longstanding inequities for priority populations, including Māori, Pasifika, rural communities, disabled people, and those living in areas of high deprivation. By resourcing culturally grounded, locally responsive services and removing systemic obstacles, the investment has contributed to fairer access, better outcomes, and greater self determination for groups that have historically been underserved.

Strengthened local leadership and social infrastructure through supporting community led governance, volunteer networks, and whānau capability. Communities are better equipped to identify their own priorities, mobilise local knowledge and relationships, and sustain initiatives that reflect their values, aspirations and lived realities.

Shifted systems away from reactive, crisis driven responses toward earlier, preventative and dignity enhancing models of support. This includes addressing root causes of hardship, intervening earlier, and designing services that are strengths based, trauma informed and centred on mana, dignity and long term wellbeing rather than short term fixes.

Built community resilience and adaptive capacity in the face of increasing pressures such as climate related events, cost of living challenges, and social isolation. Communities are now better connected, more resourceful, and more able to respond collectively to shocks and stresses while maintaining social cohesion and wellbeing.



Closing Reflection

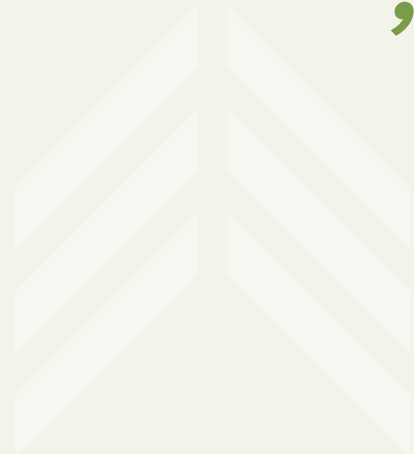
Transformational change is not achieved through a single project or initiative, rather, it emerges from the cumulative impact of many deliberate, targeted actions working together over time. These actions are most effective when they are shaped and delivered by communities themselves, for their own people, reflecting local knowledge, values, and aspirations. By prioritising approaches that are culturally grounded, equity-focused, and community-led, ECCT has helped ensure that support is not only accessible but also meaningful and responsive to those it is intended to serve.

This way of working recognises that lasting change depends on building trust, strengthening local capability, and empowering communities to define and drive their own solutions. As a result, the outcomes extend well beyond immediate outputs or short-term gains. ECCT's investment has contributed to systems of support that are more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable reaching those who need them most and continuing to deliver benefits long after the initial funding period has ended.

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