

ENABLING CHILD RICH COMMUNITIES

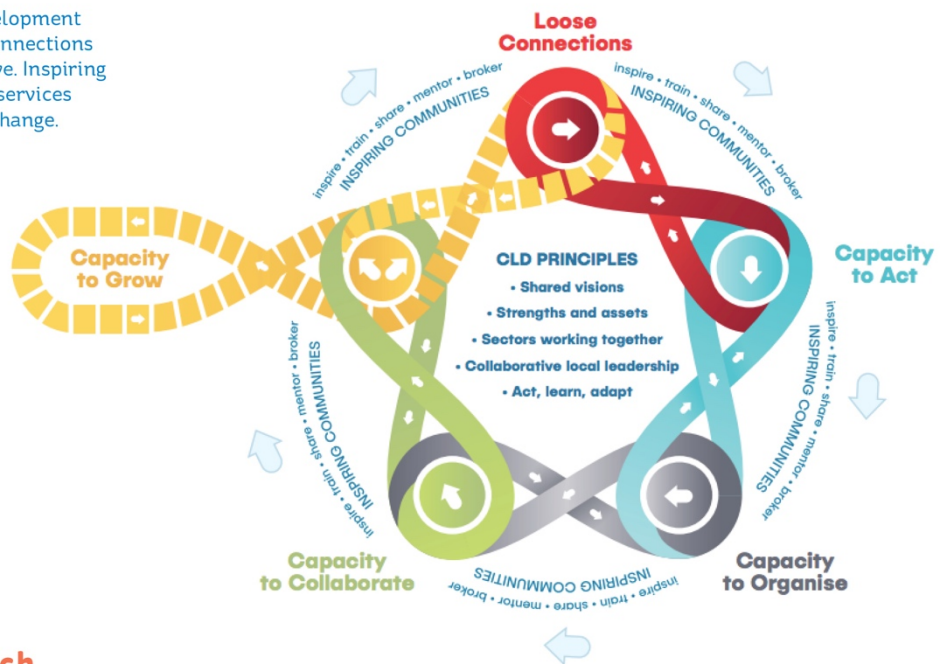
Our Theory of Change

A Child Rich Communities (CRC) approach focuses on enhancing wellbeing outcomes for local children, families and communities by working in community-led ways.

Inspiring Communities’ community-led development (CLD) Theory of Change shows how the process of CLD works to make a difference locally. It begins with the understanding that all communities have the ability to thrive and that outcomes for children, young people, families and communities are all interconnected. We understand that effective change is dynamic and enabled through a development process— there is no perfect ‘straight line’ plan to achieving outcomes. One thing frequently leads to another – often involving steps forward and back.

Our Theory of Change

Community-led development strengthens social connections so communities thrive. Inspiring Communities offers services that help accelerate change.



With the right support and investment in critical phases, loose connections between those with aspirations and ideas to make positive change for children and young people can build into something much more. The ‘who’ doesn’t matter – it could be local parents and whānau, iwi or community leaders and community groups, or local business owners, or organisations and institutions such as local government and schools. But the ‘how does.’ Moving from shared aspirations and doing something practical together builds relationships, trust and confidence, key ingredients for stepping into bigger, bolder collaborative action involving more people, partners, and possibilities.

The Child Rich Communities Project builds on this rationale, seeking to support and connect local people, parents, places and organisations working in community-led ways so that they can learn, share and be inspired by each other. We believe that the emergence of child-focused, community-led approaches in many more communities will improve child wellbeing nationally by encouraging community action on issues that local people care deeply about and are in the best position to address.

Our Theory of Change

This theory of change illustrates how sustainable change happens using a Community-led Development approach.

The starting point is the premise that **all communities have the ability to thrive**. So much shapes the vitality of a community, from economic to social factors. The relationships and trust between local people is vital to negotiating the complex challenges they face.

Citizens, individual or groups, respond to a crisis or address a local issue because they see possibilities for how things could be better. They **harness loose connections and help grow a capacity to act**, and in doing so form a shared vision.

Using community-led development (CLD) principles increases the ability of individuals and groups to realise the potential of their community. It involves **identifying existing community strengths** and connecting with other communities that have addressed similar issues. They begin to make plans and take action around emerging vision.

Sometimes this throws up more challenges and complexities, but reflecting on these enables insight into how to sustain positive change. The process is **seldom linear, there are ebbs and flows with related joys and frustrations**. It takes time but future success is built from these foundations.

As momentum builds there is more activity—initiatives move from one-off actions to substantive organising, using skills, and experience from outside their community. This **extends the influence, bringing more people and organisations to the table**, which requires developing more local leadership skills to ensure the shared vision remains on track.

This cumulative process tends to evolve from a focus on organising to a capacity to collaborate. The ability to **engage with groups who have different views and approaches is critical** to the transition and unlocks the capacity for diverse groups and sectors to work together. It is vital in this phase that the local leadership formed during the earlier phases continues to be central to the process.

Guiding the transition between these phases are the disciplines of **measurement, reflection, learning and adaption**. The change is dynamic, it acknowledges there is no perfect plan and understands that small steps contribute to larger transformational change.

This theory of change has evolved from what Inspiring Communities has learned from the collective wisdom in **communities across New Zealand**. Inspiring Communities inspires, trains, mentors, and brokers groups—transitioning around the theory of change—growing and sharing local wisdom.