

# Collective Communities Leadership Model

## COLLECTIVE COMMUNITIES CASE STUDY: TUARUA

### INSPIRE

Collective Community leadership models are partnership models involving multiple organisations working together to achieve a collective community focused outcome, driven from governance structures and processes.

Models that are currently successfully operating include:

- “Uber” boards created through mergers of organisations who have decided to work collaboratively to achieve greater community impact
- ‘Umbrella” boards created when clusters of organisations decide to align their strategies and then delivery
- “Partnership’ boards where the board and organisational leaders collaborate with other community leaders across the business and government sector
- Distributed leadership, where boards actively draw on their community to support decision making (this aligns to many decision-making structures and principles of Māori governance)

The focus of this case study is to showcase examples from other not-for-profits that collective community leadership models are not only possible, but are already enabling many organisations and communities, locally and globally, to thrive. Where possible, providing a framework that not-for-profit organisations can use to adopt a collective community approach.

This case study is a series of “koha” that we have developed to share knowledge and encourage courageous conversations at the board table.

### Collective Communities

The world is facing a time of unprecedented change and challenge. With the current model of working, many businesses and community organisations are trying to tackle big problems and are trying to do it alone. Each are individually investing time and resources yet collectively looking to achieve aligned outcomes.

Challenges such as Covid 19 have demonstrated to many organisations the need for collective solutions. This, combined with an increasing expectation of businesses being more engaged with their communities, calls for a new way of doing things. A collective community leadership model is about partnering between those seeking to achieve the same outcomes and working collectively to achieve these. This case study is part of several initiatives Community Governance Aotearoa deliver. This **case study** demonstrates the value of connecting with your local community and valuing relationships.

Enjoy!

## About Tasman Environmental Trust and local community groups

### A collective governing approach to restoring important environmental areas

Tasman Environmental Trust (TET) works with local community conservation groups to raise their profile, expand their reach, and access specialist skills and resources. TET helps link individuals to projects, and projects to like-minded organisations.

Having built up a vast network of connections spanning local and central government agencies, iwi, and funding organisations, TET's goal is to transform and safeguard the future environmental health of the Nelson Tasman region.

### TET started with goals of achieving biodiversity and environmental gains

When TET first started in 2000, it worked with the public to support biodiversity work on private land. Tasman District Council were instrumental in the beginning. Initially, TET focused on the administration of the Cobb Mitigation Fund and other small projects around the Waimea Inlet.

### The focus of TET changed to offer practical support to community groups

Before joining TET, the current Chair was living on the Waimea Inlet and was working with a community group who wanted to apply for some funding to initiate a project. They didn't want to have to set up a legal entity and seek charitable status — it was a practical problem. She knew of TET and asked whether the group could apply for funding under the TET's umbrella.

TET has grown from there. In 2016, TET took a strategic decision to provide that type of umbrella support to groups wanting to do community conservation projects but didn't want to set up their own legal entity and all the systems and processes involved. Over the last 5 years, TET has developed a model of setting up the organisational infrastructure required to support community groups that have identified a project or initiative that they want to do.

### TET offers a flexible approach to meet the needs of each project

The type of projects that TET support varies greatly. Small-scale projects might have a few thousand dollars to achieve a goal. Larger projects have millions of dollars of government funding to work with hundreds of landowners to achieve a landscape-scale outcome.

TET have systems set up so that they can work alongside and offer support according to the needs of each group. Some groups have strong organisational and committee structures in place where they are taking leadership of their group and programmes. Others like more input from TET. These groups would rather get on the ground and ask TET for help with committee meetings. This flexible approach to collective leadership sets TET apart.

*'We can adapt our support. We are quite flexible according to the way the group wants to work and the level of support or involvement that they want from us. Sometimes it can be a very tight partnership, other times it's a light touch. There are obviously some bottom lines especially when funding is involved.'* — Sky Davies.

Many groups want TET to take on the responsibility for the financial management of their project. If a group gets a grant, TET is officially the grant holder so is responsible for tracking all the spending and helping with the reporting.

When it comes to money and accountability, TET needs to be structured with their processes because TET is ultimately accountable to the funder for the delivery of the projects and milestones. In this case, TET forms a close partnership with the group. In terms of the organisational leadership and decision making, it's about supporting the way that the group wants to work.

### TET's strong relationships across sectors gives people a sense of community

The collaborative nature of TET's work originates between them and the community group and extends further to connecting individuals, projects, and organisations. TET has strong relationships with Council, DOC, government agencies, and funders. They also now have a broad network of connections across the community and with community groups.

Part of TET's work involves fostering the learning and connections between different community groups and providing opportunities for training, learning, and sharing ideas. TET recognised the need to connect isolated groups working on their own and give them a sense of community. Once a month they have an informal morning tea for all the project managers. This provides an opportunity for people to connect with others who are working on similar projects or encountering similar challenges. It's also a place where they can share exciting developments.

Sky Davies shares her thoughts 'It's about creating a networked community and supporting relationships between the different agencies, iwi groups, and community. We're holding lots of relationships so it's trying to support where we see opportunities or create a space where those connections can be made.'

### Building collaborative relationships takes awareness

TET is committed to building solid, trusting, and collaborative relationships that are supportive and don't take away the autonomy or individual aspirations of each group. It's a balancing act between being a platform of support and enabling groups to achieve their goals, but not to threaten their leadership. TET have found that being an umbrella organisation can be threatening to some groups that may think TET will take away the autonomy of the group.

'As we grow and take on more and bigger things, the perception of this risk probably increases for groups that join. It's a tension that we always must be aware of and keep checking in on. We need to address it proactively and constructively when it comes up' Sky Davies from TET.

### Pathway to success

- Relationships are key to success, invest in meeting regularly and build trust to form a sense of community and to support communication between groups invested
- Getting on with local projects doesn't have to mean lots of paperwork and red tape
- Responsibility for good management and governance in place means having good policies and financial policies in place.

As TET demonstrates operating with good trust-based relationships and regular connection means the aspirations of land, people and place can be achieved together.

## Community Governance Aotearoa Resource Hub

We share a helpful Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) template to act as an agreement if your organisation is asked to be an umbrella organisation.

**Top Tip:** remember to minute the action taken and agreement as part of good practice.

These case studies are critical thought pieces designed to share new ways of working in a governance space.

Published by Community Governance [communitygovernance.org.nz](https://communitygovernance.org.nz), this case study was written by Rose Hiha-Agnew with input from Social Good and Erica Mather.