

# Building a Whānau Ora Alliance



Whānau Ora, a government initiative that started in 2010, is a radically different approach to delivering services to families in need. To understand the concept consider a needy family in a poor area that has a Housing NZ vehicle, a police car, truancy officer vehicle and district nurse car all parked in their driveway. Each agency has their narrow agenda and only considers the family from one perspective. Under whānau ora a Navigator or Kaiwhakaaraara would assess family needs in a holistic way and coordinate social and other services so they meet these needs. It is an inclusive approach that focuses on building the strengths of whānau as a whole – rather than focusing separately on individual members and their problems. It requires multiple government agencies to work together with families rather than separately with individuals.

The Ministry of Māori Development, Te Puni Kōkiri, and the Ministries of Social Development and Health have been responsible for joint implementation. It is driven by the following outcomes: that whānau will be self-managing; living healthy lifestyles; participating fully in society; confidently participating in te ao Māori (the Māori world); economically secure and successfully involved in wealth creation; and cohesive, resilient and nurturing.

In the Manawatu, Rangitikei and Tararua Regions the Te Tihi o Ruahine Whānau Ora Alliance has been set up and is flourishing.

It involves eight non-governmental home organisations:

- Two iwi health and social service providers – Best Care (Whakapai Hauora) Charitable Trust; and Rangitāne o Tamaki Nui a Rua Incorporated Society through its social service delivery arm Te Kete Hauora
- Two Māori health and social service providers – He Puna Hauora and Te Wakahuia Manawatu Trust
- Two iwi representative bodies – Nga Kaitiaki o Ngati i Kauwhata and Te Roopu Hokowhitu Charitable Trust
- Two branches of long-serving national Māori organisations – Rangitaane Māori Wardens and the Ngati Kauwhata and Rangitaane o Manawatu Branches of the Māori Women's Welfare League.

This mature group of Iwi/ Māori service providers together have more than 100 years' service in their communities. They already deliver a broad range of health, educational and social services across the Manawatu, Rangitikei and Tararua districts employing more than 100 people. In addition the alliance has an implementation team, which comes from the primary healthcare organisation, Central PHO.

Danielle Harris is the chair of the board of Te Tihi and CEO of one of the home organisations Best Care (Whakapai Hauora) Charitable Trust.

In early 2013 the Chair and the alliance investigated the use of alliance contracting to build their organisation rather than setting up a formal legal entity such as a charitable trust. In this structure the home organisations all second members to work in the alliance under the leadership of a joint Alliance Governance Group and an Alliance Manager directs the alliances work programme. Individuals continue to be employed by their home organisations but their day-to-day work is with the one-team that forms the alliance.

The board have found many advantages in the alliance framework for example all the home organisations wanted to retain their autonomy and sovereignty and this is a given within an alliance. This autonomy is directly aligned with the key Te Tihi alliance value of Tino Rangatiratanga – respecting the self-governance of each organisation and their control over their own destiny.

The alliance development process started with a series of education sessions for the governance and senior management of the home organisations. It quickly become clear to the Chair and the team that the alliance framework was perfectly compatible with how the organisation wanted to operate for example using Pūkengatanga – celebrating the strengths of each party, which stems from their diverse culture and identity.

The next development step involved the senior managers and CEOs jointly writing their own Alliance Agreement. This process started with the development of a common vision and purpose statement for the alliance. Again there was direct alignment with the alliance’s value of Kōtahitanga – developing and maintaining a unity of purpose and direction towards a shared vision. The Alliance Agreement also included the scope of service delivery, the principles on which the alliance operates, the performance measures, the commercial model and how the money would flow, the risk management process, the alliance structure and how a collaborative whānau-focused culture would be developed. The Chair was delighted with how smoothly the process flowed and how easily agreement was achieved between such a large and very diverse range of parties, given the fact that many other whanau ora collectives around the country have not been as successful.

Next the board appointed an implementation team who started the roll out of the alliance. This included appointing two individuals to job share the Alliance Manager role, a Kaiarahi or team leader and a series of Kaiwhakaaraara or Whānau Ora Navigators. These Kaiwhakaaraara have the key role of understanding the families in need and ensuring the right government and non-government agencies deliver the services the whanau (family) needs. In April 2013 the Alliance began delivering its comprehensive Programme of Action that sets out the pathway of transformation for whānau in the district.

Te Tihi is now progressing very well with this implementation plan.

In a recent Alliance retreat the board considered that Te Tihi was making excellent progress using a combination of their deeply held Iwi/Māori values integrated within a highly tailored version of an alliance contract. The Chair commented “Our name Te Tihi o Ruahine acknowledges the summit of our local Ruahine mountain range and the panoramic beauty and breadth of the district where the Whānau we serve dwell. Reaching for the summit of service for all our Whānau in need is the aspiration that drives us all.”

This radical Whānau Ora approach to delivering services to families in need appears to hold real promise when implemented in the form of an alliance.

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