

Just Change: A learning circle of doers and donors

At a glance ...

Just Change is an initiative to explore a more effective, more authentic and more relational way of supporting grassroots change, led by the people seeking the change.

The core concept is to connect a group of innovative, grassroots community initiatives from the Wellington region with a group of people concerned about social justice and have a moderate amount of money to donate, and for everyone to learn together about what works.

Just Change is an initiative from Te Hiko, the Centre for Community Innovation based at [Wesley Community Action](#) (WCA) in Wellington.

Background

Over many years WCA has learnt that the most effective change comes from grassroots initiatives created and led by the people seeking the positive change, and with stable support available. However these innovative projects are also often the hardest to find funding for. They may they lack a formal legal structure; they often don't fit the standard funding tick-boxes; they are frequently located in low-income communities; they are usually led by people who are less "visible" and "connected" to key support systems, and they usually involve taking risks.

This lack of support for grassroots community change needs to be addressed, particularly as the global pandemic and economic down-turn has shown us just how important locally led solutions are. A pure charity response will not help change the systems that deliver inequitable outcomes. We need to build on the existing skills, passions and capacity in our local communities.

During the Covid-19 lockdown, with supply chains, businesses, schools, employment and other infrastructure disrupted, we saw first-hand the need for local food security, for isolated and vulnerable people to be supported, and for finding ways to better connect and share our skills and resources. Community-driven initiatives provided resilient, adaptable, effective and necessary solutions to these needs during the crisis. They also demonstrated that the 'economy' and the 'community' are actually one integrated human system dependent of the natural environment.

This forms the starting point of Just Change, which is about exploring a more effective, more authentic and more relational way of supporting community-led change. Just Change draws from the insights and wisdom offered by three focus groups involving potential donors (people who can provide funding and other resources) and doers (people involved in grassroots, community-led change initiatives). It also incorporates new and different approaches to philanthropy, including aspects of Participatory Philanthropy, Angel Investment and Giving Circles.

Who is Just Change for?

Just Change involves the following groups:

- **Doers:** These are people involved in initiatives developed in local communities to address the root causes of poverty, inequality, violence and ecological destruction. Initially these initiatives

are connected to Te Hiko, WCA's Centre for Community Innovation. Examples include: local food cooperatives; Good Cents financial wellbeing initiatives; savings and loan pools; local leadership courses for Māori women; Gang whānau camps (this builds on previous positive camps that promote positive family connections) and ageing well networks for vulnerable older people. Criteria for initiatives joining Just Change include:

- based in the Wellington region
 - active leadership from the people seeking the change
 - open to measuring impact, keen to learn and adapt
 - endorsed by Te Hiko as making innovative and effective community change or having good potential to do so.
- **Donors:** These are people who care about positive effective change and have money and other skills they can contribute to grassroots initiatives. Donors are invited to contribute financially to Just Change, with a suggested contribution of between \$5,000 and \$15,000 per year, for an initial period of two years. Donors may also wish to offer their skills and expertise. Criteria for donors joining Just Change include:
- non-judgemental and open to learning
 - able to develop honest, reciprocal relationships
 - value a social justice stance that seeks solutions and initiatives driven by the people seeking the change
 - As noted in the focus group feedback below, not being “paternalistic, overbearing, fake or obnoxious”!
- **Te Ara Tangata and the Māori Caucus of Wesley Community Action:** These groups oversee and support WCA's journey as a Kaupapa Te Tiriti organisation, and will provide guidance to help ensure that Just Change embodies the spirit of partnership, respect and reciprocity that underpins Te Tiriti.
- **Facilitation:** The Just Change Project is facilitated by Wesley Community Action, who will vet doers and donors, host the matching process, oversee finances and facilitate learning together. Key people are the director David Hanna, WCA Director, Kena Duignan, WCA Community Innovation Lead and Kate Frykberg, independent facilitator
- **Time banks:** Time banks are community-run entities that turn volunteered hours into tradeable time-credits. All contributions to Just Change by non-paid WCA staff will be recorded in the timebank credited to the person offering their services. Our purpose here is to move beyond charity and volunteering and help create a local economy that facilitates the exchange of skills and time. Donors can choose to join the Porirua, Hutt or Wellington time banks, and time credits can be donated on if they are not required.

How will Just Change work?

The first stage of Just Change will be a two-year pilot involving co-creation, learning and adapting as we go. Here is the first cut of how things might work.

1. Open this process to review and refinement from focus group participants and Te Hiko and Ara Tangata teams in WCA.
2. Identify a first cohort of Just Change doers and donors, probably starting with 5 to 7 initiatives and 10 to 20 donors. Doers and donors will be identified by word of mouth and will be a good fit to the criteria above.
3. Host a workshop and shared meal for doers and donors in Waitangirua. This is an opportunity to meet and learn more - about each other, about community aspirations, about the community innovation process and about the Just Change initiative. This “relationships before resources” approach provides donors and doers a chance to explore whether this feels like a good fit before becoming more involved. It is also an opportunity to check and confirm the values and way of working.
4. Donors who wish to commit to Just Change would then be asked for the first of two annual donations into the Just Change Fund, with the aim of creating a shared funding pool of at least \$100,000. Contributions would be paid into a separate Just Change account, administered by WCA. The total amount in the Just Change Fund and how it is used will be transparently available to both donors and doers, however the amount of each individual donation would be private. Donors may also choose to be anonymous if they wish. Additionally, 10% of the fund will be used for shared services, for example communications, admin, impact measurement and evaluation.
5. A matchmaking and funding evening would then be held. This may involve:
 - A mutual pitching process – what are we doing, what do we want and need, what can we offer?
 - Decisions on how the Just Change Fund should be shared between the Community Change Initiatives, based on each initiative providing a high - low estimate of how much money they need, and the group then deciding how the total pool should be split.
 - A matching process so that each initiative is paired with 2 to 3 donors with aligned interests and skills.
6. We will then arrange regular, optional learning circles, possibly quarterly, where doers and donors connect, learn together, and facilitate any non-financial support that might be available and useful. These catch-up sessions would combine a large group updates with time in small groups where the donors and doers can connect more deeply on the initiative they are partnered with. There may also be zoom meetings or other communications in between times.
7. Everyone involved will record their time spent in Just Change in a timebank, e.g. the time spent by a donor attending workshops would result in time credits, which could then be used either personally or donated to other timebank users.
8. Just Change will involve on-going learning and adaptation. In particular, after one year there will be a process to reflect, review, adapt, recommit and grow Just Change.
9. Just Change is committed to transparently sharing everything learned. Assuming Just Change proves useful, it is hoped that the concept will grow in the Wellington region and can also be adopted and adapted by communities, Iwi, organisations and regions nationwide.

Next steps

- Review and refine the plan above
- Register your interest in becoming involved by contacting:
 - David Hanna (dhanna@wesleyca.org.nz)
 - Kate Frykberg (kate@thinktank.co.nz).
- Hold first workshop in October 2020

Appendix One: Guiding principles – Te Ara Wēteriana / The Wesley Way



**Wesley
Community
Action**



TE ARA WĒTERIANA

The Wesley Way

Te Ara Wēteriana brings out the best in people.
The following principles guide all our engagements:

RANGATIRATANGA:
Being in control of your own journey

ĀHURUTANGA:
Creating and maintaining a safe and comfortable space

KAITIAKITANGA:
Seeing people's abilities and supporting them to achieve their potential



MANAAKITANGA:
Showing respect, generosity and care for people

We give effect to these by:

Viewing people as experts of their lives

Using the Treaty of Waitangi as the base for our work

Calling out and challenging injustice

Seeking and using feedback to guide our relationships

Focusing more on what's working

Being as courageous as those we work alongside

Acknowledging our power and sharing this

Striving to be our best by being open to learning and new ideas

KĀORE MĀ TE WAHA ENGARI MĀ TE RINGA Don't tell me, show me




Appendix Two: Key points from Focus Groups

Question	Donors	Doers group 1	Doers group 2
1. Matchmaking process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why not turn the process on its head and have the doers choose us? • People were not keen on a panel process and preferred more of an open marketplace approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The “relationship is in the middle”, honesty is vital • Donors and doers need to know themselves first • You do your pitch then we do ours then the match should happen naturally • No form filling! • Transparent, easy, low barriers to entry • Need to have shared values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maybe have a workshop first so we can educate people about communities • We want to be able to explain our passion face to face, and for them to share what is in their mind • Not begging for money, not having to use their language and framing (eg “hard to reach”)
2. Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity, mutuality and honesty - a walking alongside experience • Respectful storytelling and mutual accountability • Going to see things rather than getting a report, opportunity to learn • Multi-year funding so there is some certainty • Need to manage expectations both directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start small and go slowly so we can build honesty and collaboration • Regular contact to reduce formality build genuine relationships • Invite donors into the community, get them helping in the garden, share food • We’re able to talk openly about the evolution of a project • Be able to “hire a brain” ie tap into other skills donors might have 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible long-term funding that isn’t arbitrarily cut • Donors who are open to being educated, and are non-judgemental, people who “get it,” who come and participate and meet the whānau • We don’t want just a donor, we want people who people who have our backs and are in this with us - it’s like we are having a child together! • Robyn Scott is a good example - I can ask her anything, say anything, call her up. • Face-to-face reporting, and mutual feedback

3. What appeals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is courageous engagement and a values test for donors • Equity between donors and doers • Empowering other people's visions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful process for both donors and doers • Disrupts the status quo • Being outside our comfort zones can expand our thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like the thought of donors and doers in a learning circle • We're confident that David and Wesley can pull this off.
4. Doubts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid paternalism and being condescending • Do we yet need another fund started? • Might this be time-consuming for both donors and doers? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will be hard work and could suck lots of time • "Fake" or overbearing people would be problematic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid obnoxious or overly picky donors
5. Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential donors include well-heeled superannuitants, people who have benefited from capital gains, people who want to give where you live, "restaurant rich" with disposable income who care about social justice. Aligns with how women often like to share resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •