

December 2003

Focus On Improved Relationships

In its first few months the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector has focused on refining its role and determining how best to carry out that role.

Establishment Director Sue Driver says the primary focus is to strengthen relations between government and the community and voluntary sector. "Our role is to work with government departments and the sector to identify the way in which relationships can be improved," she says.

"The work of the Office is seen in two parts – policy development and relationship management. Both parts are inter-related. Policy development on its own will not contribute significantly to strengthening relations between

government and the sector. It needs to be supported by and informed through good relationship management, communication and support to both government and the sector."

The Office's work programme, which has been further developed



At the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector's 'office warming' were from left to right: Helen Dawick (Wellington City Council), Alan Birrell (Rotary), Jenny Cochrane (Volunteering NZ), Cath Wallace (Environment and Conservation Organisations) and Karen Roberts (IHC).

since the Office opened, takes into account the priorities identified through the community-government relationship work that has been ongoing for the past three years.

Four major workstreams have been identified – resourcing and accountability, participatory processes, relationship management (government and the community and voluntary sector) and special projects such as research, volunteering, risk and liability.

Sue says the work of the Office is also running parallel to the work of the Community Sector Taskforce and Te Wero, which are focused on strengthening the sector. "We will continue to support them in this work," she says.

Case Studies Provide Examples Of Good Practice

When Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC) wanted to learn about the state housing needs of the Fordlands community in Rotorua, it tried a new process called participatory appraisal (PA).

In July 2002, HNZC organised a three-day workshop for its Rotorua staff and eight community volunteers, which was facilitated by a PA specialist. The workshop enabled participants to survey Fordlands residents about their perceptions of their community as a place to live.

Having attended the workshop, participants spent two days interviewing residents door to door and at a stall set up in the local

shopping centre. More than 260 people were interviewed or surveyed. The data was then collated and evaluated. Lessons learned and ways the data would be used in the future were also discussed.

According to the housing officials and the community people involved, the strength of PA was its simplicity and the practical and easy way of gathering useful information.

The consultation with the Fordlands community is just one of a number of case studies on consultation with communities published on the website www.goodpracticeparticipate.govt.nz.

Other case studies look at partnership, community decision-making and engaging specific population groups.

The online resource is designed to help public servants engage successfully with community, voluntary and tangata whenua organisations when decisions are being made.

The Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector is responsible for ongoing development and management of the website.

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For The Community, By The Community

In its report, 'He Waka Kotuia: Joining Together on a Shared Journey', the Community-Government Relationship Steering Group recommended the establishment of two groups that were community based and community driven. They are now operating as the Community Sector Taskforce and Te Wero (called Action Group (Māori) in He Waka Kotuia). A report on their work follows.

Te Wero

The quality and effectiveness of Treaty-based engagement between tangata whenua and government departments will be the focus of Te Wero's work over the next six months.

Te Wero Chairperson Enid Leighton says one of the main tasks Te Wero has set itself is to build a comprehensive picture of what is happening in the variety of arrangements that exist between government agencies and iwi and Māori organisations.

"We have been struck by the ad hoc and inconsistent approaches being used. We want to address the fact that despite numerous attempts by government to improve responsiveness to Māori, the capability of many government agencies to respond remains limited.

"Once we have an idea of existing relationships, we want to develop resources that will provide support and direction for tangata whenua when engaging with government agencies. This resource will include material on Treaty-based practice with models and guidelines of good practice," Enid says.

A series of hui next year will ensure that urban Māori and iwi have a chance to contribute to Te Wero's report, which is to be presented to the Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector, Tariana Turia, in June 2004.

Community Sector Taskforce

Since the start of this year, the Community Sector Taskforce, a community driven group, has been developing projects that will contribute to community, voluntary and tangata whenua organisations that are informed, connected and able to do their work.

Taskforce Chair Gill Genet reports that planning for the three major projects is almost complete. "We were delighted with the enthusiastic responses to our call for expressions of interest and this has helped us to identify starting points both regionally and nationally. We have now engaged some key organisations to help us complete our tasks.

"One project consists of a series of outcome-focused strategic forums at regional and sector levels, leading to a national forum at the end of April 2004.

"We are also aiming to establish information networking projects in two regions and a technology-based national networking and communications framework.

"The final project is a resource that the sector has asked for – a resource pack on Treaty-based practice. This will use the journeys undertaken by community organisations to show how the Treaty can be incorporated in a practical and appropriate way," Gill says.



Te Wero and Community Sector Taskforce members. Left to right, back row: Sandy Morrison, Gill Genet, Weng Kei Chen, Peter Glensor, Sam Sefuiva (all Community Sector Taskforce - CST). Front row: Tina Reid (CST), Darrin Haimona, Atareta Poananga (Te Wero). Absent: Donna Matahaere-Atariki (Te Wero), Enid Leighton and Pat Seymour (both members of Te Wero and CST).

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