

TOP OF THE SOUTH

CASE STUDY (PART 1 OF 2)

IMPROVING YOUTH WELL-BEING THROUGH A COLLOBORATIVE AGENCY APPROACH

HOW THIS CASE STUDY MIGHT HELP YOU

This case study shares the process and initial outcomes for an inter-agency process focussed on youth well-being. It may help you if you are:

- thinking about ways to codesign with young people
- considering how to partner with other agencies to improve youth well-being.



ABOUT THE TOP OF THE SOUTH IMPACT FORUM



Sport NZ were keen to support Sport Tasman on this journey. We could see the potential of capturing a story around the power of using insights in a local context, and an authentic approach to hearing the voice of young people in the Top of the South through co-design. We also were interested to see if play, active recreation or sport were raised as vehicles to improve youth well-being”

- BRENT THAWLEY
REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP MANAGER, SPORT NZ



Sport Tasman sees the urgent need for us all to do more for our precious rangatahi. We are passionate about doing our part to help them be active, healthy and connected. To achieve this, it is critical to hear our young people so they can help lead actions and thinking. It is also vital that agencies work more closely together and are prepared to listen to this youth voice”

- NIGEL MUIR
CEO SPORT TASMAN

The Top of the South Impact Forum (the Forum) is a regional inter-agency group in the Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough regions. It exists to improve social outcomes for the community by improving collaboration and reducing duplication between agencies.

In early 2018, the Forum identified four focus areas. Three of these were about pressing challenges: methamphetamine, family violence and housing. As a result of advocacy from Sport Tasman the Forum also added “young people” as a focus area as it was felt this would enable the agencies to work at the top of the cliff on prevention initiatives.

Recognising that physical activity contributes to the broader concept of well-being, Sport Tasman and Sport NZ saw this as an opportunity for agencies to collaborate with young people to address the challenges of youth well-being in the region. Nigel Muir, Chief Executive of Sport Tasman, volunteered to lead the young people focus area on behalf of the Forum.

The first stage of this project had a focus on meaningfully engaging with and empowering young people to understand their challenges and create solutions.



GETTING STARTED

Establishing an Oversight Group

The first step was to formulate an Oversight Group. Representatives from Nelson Marlborough Health, Ministry for Education, Nelson City Council, Marlborough District Council, Tasman District Council, Ministry of Social Development and Police all elected to be included.

An initial meeting of the Oversight Group was held to determine the best way forward. At this meeting it was highlighted that historically most agencies working with young people had a top down approach to service delivery. While in some cases this involved “consultation” with youth, there was no evidence of shared leadership models. For instance, one official said “I can’t remember the last time we asked them [young people] what they wanted.” Another said “There’s a complete disconnect between how agencies and young people operate.”

As such it was agreed that the process needed to involve genuine engagement with young people to shape the priorities and solutions as well as build on existing agency and community efforts to reduce duplication and support local solutions.

To ensure they were able to achieve this, the Oversight Group contracted Paul McGregor, a youth engagement specialist from Business Lab, to facilitate a youth engagement process.

Business Lab proposed the following collective impact process:

Identifying challenges for young people in the region

The first step in the co-design process was identifying individuals who could help clarify what the challenges for young people are. Paramount in selecting these individuals was a recognition that they should already have strong existing relationships with young people in the region so we could leverage off their existing insights and networks. Ten different government officials and youth workers, and three youth groups were identified and subsequently interviewed by Business Lab.

Thematic analysis of these conversations highlighted the following high-level challenges for young people in the region:

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

TRANSPORT AND ISOLATION

INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING

TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT

YOUTH-FRIENDLY SPACES

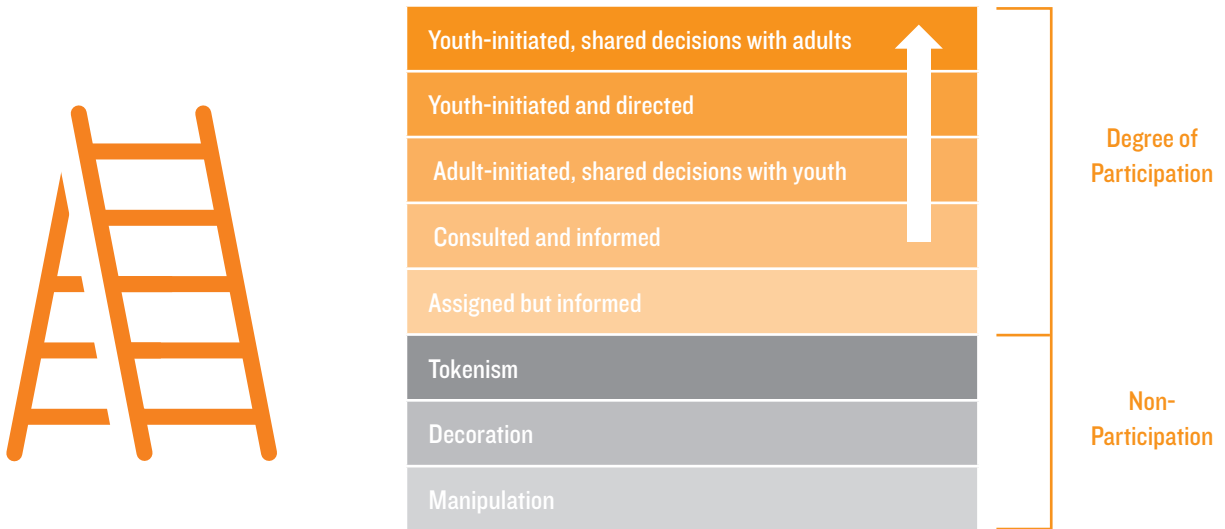
ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERFORMING ARTS

TURNOVER IN THE YOUTH SECTOR

The interviews further reiterated that while some organisations have mechanisms for involving young people in decision-making, others focussed mainly on consulting and informing young people about youth services. This showed there was an opportunity for agencies to shift from “delivering to” young people to “working with” young people.

Ladder of Youth Participation



Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

“

It's actually really different because it's more collaborative here than other places”

“

Today I came into this meeting thinking it was going to be a very long few hours of sitting at a table talking, but once we got into it, it was a really exciting atmosphere. I really enjoyed connecting with everyone and sharing our ideas and what we think needs to be done”

Identifying opportunities with young people

A hui in October 2018 brought a mix of 40 young people, government officials and youth workers together for a full day in Nelson.

Paul from Business Lab facilitated the session. Paul's skills and the overall kawa (guidelines) for the day were critical in creating an environment where the young people felt welcome, valued and respected as equals. To establish whakawhanaungatanga (relationship building) Paul began with some activities to allow everybody to introduce themselves and say what they needed to ensure they had a productive day.

In small groups the attendees were then asked to identify some of the challenges young people face around the four key themes identified in the previous session (mental health and well-being, drugs and alcohol, transition to employment and spaces and community). To facilitate this process, Paul offered a mixture of magazine images and post-its for attendees to share their ideas.

The group collected the ideas together into themes. Paul then facilitated an active prototyping session for groups to create and test potential solutions.

[This video](#) talks through the active prototyping process used, along with some youth participants speaking about how supported they felt by the adults in the room.

Focusing on solutions

At a second hui in December 2018, the same group came together to narrow their focus. They split into small groups to discuss the project ideas generated at the first hui. Each group then placed a card on the matrix below based on the potential impact and effort of each project. The facilitator then hosted a group discussion to help people decide which project they would most want to contribute to.

The participants then chose the one project they would most want to contribute to, resulting in these four opportunities:

- 1. Improving teacher-student communication about well-being
- 2. School camps focused on well-being (including physical activity)
- 3. Community centres as youth support hubs
- 4. Outdoor adventure-based activities as alcohol and other drug programmes

Watch this video to hear from some of the participants at the second hui about how they want to make the Top of the South a great place for young people.



THREE IMPORTANT SUCCESS FACTORS

1. Getting buy in from multiple agencies

Buy in and commitment to the process from all organisations involved was crucial to the success of this initiative. Getting agencies to invest in the initial process was challenging. Many of the agency officials felt uncertain about the process and whether young people would identify opportunities relevant to their organisation.

It was helpful that this collaboration emerged out of a cross-sector group that contained the regional leaders of government agencies. This provided a mechanism to ask agency leaders to direct their staff to participate.

Identifying agency champions to support and drive this project was important. Nigel Muir was able to play an important role as a champion to support the facilitator and seek funding and participation from other agencies. One-on-one conversations with agency officials to clarify how the process could build on agencies' existing effort was also crucial to build momentum and buy-in for the process.

The value became much clearer after they had participated in the hui and experienced the contributions young people could make. Examples of the value these organisations gained from being involved in this process could be used to help engage others in the future.

2. Facilitation from an independent youth engagement specialist

Building the right environment for young people to participate is critical and there are unique skills required to achieve this. The youth engagement specialist (Paul) was able to create an interactive and safe environment. This enabled everybody to contribute as equals, and encouraged young people to return to a space where they felt valued.

Many of the young people spoke about how they felt well supported and listened to by the adults at the hui. They felt this process was different to other experiences where either, adults have listened and then done all the work themselves, or where young people have worked together and lacked momentum or resources.

The facilitator achieved this by spending one third of the first hui on whakawhanaungatanga (relationship-building) and by:

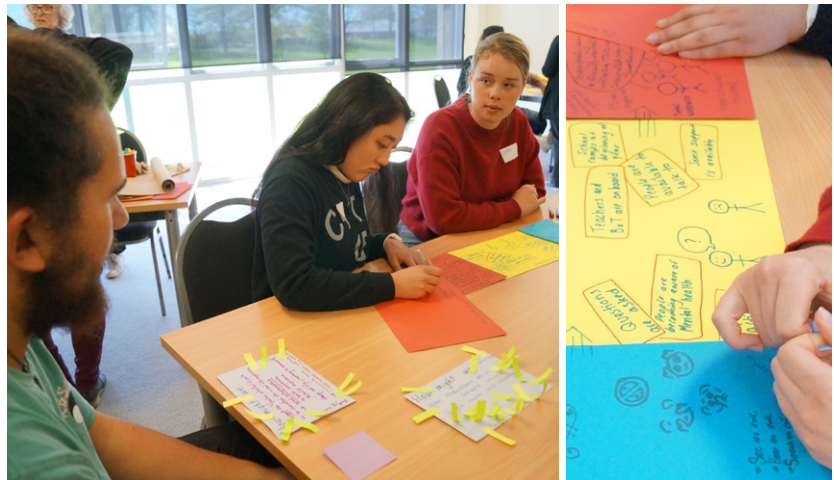
- Meeting young people and youth groups before the hui to understand how to create an environment that would suit them.
- Setting aside a "safe creative space" at the venue where young people could hang out on beanbags and play with tactile materials.
- Incorporating te ao Māori tikinga into the hui, including the use of karakia to open the hui and bless food.
- Using a check-in circle to give people a chance to introduce themselves using a paper worksheet as a prompt.
- Facilitating several active exercises designed to validate people's individual experience they were bringing with them.
- Co-creating some kawa (guidelines) with the participants at the hui.

Youth engagement and facilitation is an important skill for any organisation wanting to engage with young people. While a youth engagement specialist was engaged to support this project it was also important to involve as many front-line staff in the workshops as possible.

3. Use existing networks and youth workers to invite youth participation

One of the challenges organisations often find when first starting with youth engagement is finding young people who might want to participate. The Business Lab team recommended focusing on distributing the invite through youth workers as young people are more likely to attend if they are invited by somebody they trust.

To make this approach successful required the facilitator meeting 1:1 with the leaders of local youth groups to explain the process. Almost all of the young people who participated in the hui were invited by a youth worker or other adult who they already knew.



INITIAL OUTCOMES

“

I've been to quite a few of these youth hui type things and I was not really expecting a lot from it. But I was actually really pleasantly surprised by this one. We got to interact with a wide age group and meet lots of people from different backgrounds. I'm actually really inspired from this one so I hope others can experience what I've felt today as well”

As of February 2019, the process is only part-complete. However, the process has already resulted in some positive changes in agency behaviour and practice.

- Organisations involved in the hui to date are taking a proactive approach to ensuring the voice of young people is heard and acted on, for example Nelson Marlborough Health has created a new role called the Youth Consumer Advisor to bring the youth voice into its service delivery.
- Sport Tasman are considering how they might bring a youth voice onto their board, develop a child and youth focused future strategy and accept Kiwisport applications from organisations working alongside young people on Top of the South projects that include sport or active recreation.
- Most notable has been the positive feedback from the young people involved so far who have spoken highly about what they have learned, with six young people expressing an interest to join the inter-agency Oversight Group, a great leadership opportunity for them and a 'win' for the group.

In 2019, the group has plans for several hui to further progress these ideas and to engage with a broader range of young people and adults whose work involves young people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sport NZ would like to express special thanks to the organisations that developed these initiatives, for their willingness to share their stories, and for supporting more communities to benefit from sport and active recreation in Aotearoa.

