

An aerial photograph of Whangaroa Harbour, New Zealand. In the foreground, a large, grey, craggy rock formation sits atop a green hillside. The harbour water is a mix of light blue and green, with a marina full of boats on the right. The background shows rolling green hills under a cloudy sky. A large, faint, decorative circular graphic with scrollwork patterns is overlaid on the image, framing the central text.

**BUILDING A FOOD
SECURE AND RESILIENT
WHANGAROA**



*Pupū te kokohu
Tōtō te taura tangata
Whitia te āniwaniwa
Ka hikitia ko Whangaroa*

As the mist rises
so to the binds of kindship
and with the shining prismatic light -
Whangaroa appears

*Kei ngā ihoiho o ngā maunga whakahī e tū kāwekaweka mai nā i tō tātou whenua
taurikura i Whangaroa. Tāmaua, ki te mata o te tai, ki te ākauroa!*

*Kia whakaraupeka ake i ngā mahara ki ngā Tōtara o Te Wao Nui a Tāne ā ki ngā
paringa o Tai nui o Tai roa.*

*Mokori anō i te rerenga o wēnei mihi ki te kāhui tāngata i kaha nanaiore ngā kupu
puiaki, ngā kura huna hei raukura mō te iwi.*

Thank you to all those that have shared their stories with us. Your knowledge and experiences are a gift that have allowed us to learn more deeply about food security and resiliency in Whangaroa.

Thank you to those organisations and people that have been part of this learning journey. Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.

Thank you to Whangaroa Health Services for having the vision, heart and leadership to explore and understand the needs and strengths of their community.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou.



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BACKGROUND

In March 2020 the world shifted unexpectedly into the unknown. The pandemic caused everyone to question the way globalisation and the neoliberal economic model serves us as we experience the fastest ever decline in international flow, including trade, foreign investment and travel.

Here in Whangaroa, our food supply and transportation appeared suddenly vulnerable to shock and our local social service organisations were sent into overdrive trying to access food for many in our community. One colleague described a time spent hours queuing at the supermarket, just to make sure that the food parcels had sufficient kai for distribution. In Whangaroa, over a seven week period, 1,621 kai and 300 hygiene packs were delivered to 1,413 household contacts.

Many questions were raised following that first lockdown. How well will we withstand this shock or overcome others such as natural disasters? Will our current systems serve to keep us secure with a safe accessible supply of food? As a small rural community, crisis or no crisis – does our food system meet our needs? Do we need to improve our food systems to increase food security and resilience? And critically, could improved food resilience help our community to thrive?

Since that initial lockdown, these questions have been at the forefront of many groups in Whangaroa. Through a local initiative known as Tupu Tahi - Whangaroa Growing Together, led by Healthy Families Far North and supported by others, including; Whangaroa Health Services, Mahitahi Hauora PE, Far North District Council, Te Runanga o Whaingaroa, the wider community were provided an opportunity to start engaging with these questions and exploring solutions together.

A Food Hub at the Koru Centre? An opportunity for rethinking our local food system

Among the many ideas surfaced through the Tupu Tahi workshops, was the idea of a food hub. This idea was, that this would be a place where people could bring surplus produce for distribution, a place to teach, and place to support the building of small scale farms and businesses.

Whangaroa Health Services (WHST) have been exploring what this could look like, and they have a unique opportunity to transform an unused building, the Koru Centre, into a Food Hub and a dedicated space to support food security and resiliency across Whangaroa.

WHST recognised the need to further explore this idea with the lived experience and realities of those who live and grow in Whangaroa - to better understand how to best meet the community needs through the space at the Koru Centre. In particular, WHST wanted to understand the communities rich experience of food security and resilience and uncover the strengths and challenges of those most affected by food insecurity.

This report provides an insight into the challenges and strengths of those living in Whangaroa and provides a starting point to further explore the role of the Food Hub itself. This report will help WHST to reframe how a food hub might operate and what role it can play to further support food security and resilience in Whangaroa. More broadly, this report can help us think differently about the ways we can support our food system in Whangaroa and how we might draw on the innate strengths and wisdom of the community.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY FOOD SECURE AND RESILIENT?

A food-secure community has reliable access to affordable, healthy locally grown fruits and vegetables and is available to the people regardless of income while supporting small and mid-sized farms. A food resilient community has the ability for all households to meet their food needs, at the same time, the food system can withstand external shocks such as natural disasters, economic challenges, and upheavals.

OUR VISION

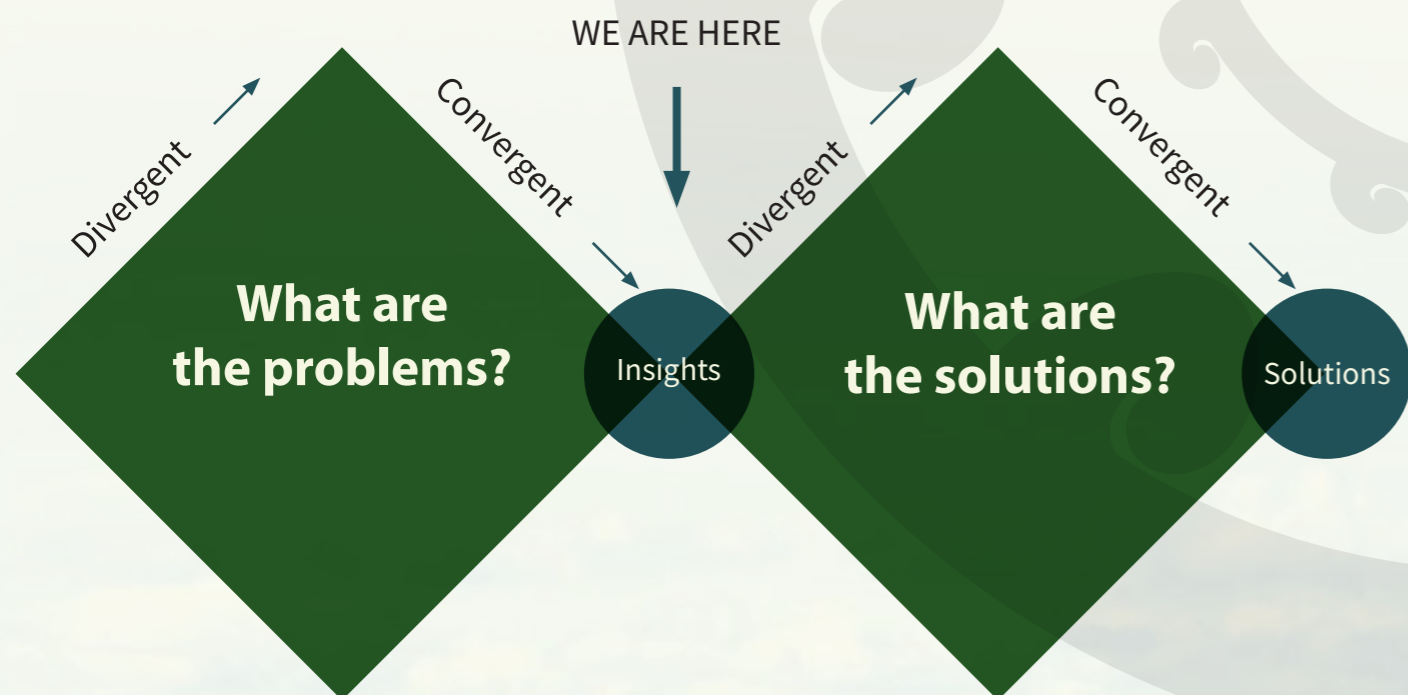
We hope to build a community of people that works together to increase our local food security and resilience across the Whangaroa region. We want to bring together farmers, growers, businesses and whānau as part of a movement that links, supports, networks and empowers each other towards the vision of a food secure Whangaroa.

WHAT WE DID: A CO-DESIGN PROCESS

Led by the Healthy Families Far North team, we set out to understand people's experiences of the food system in Whangaroa. To help us do this, we used a co-design process. Using co-design has many benefits, including:

- it can help us to understand and identify the needs (including the needs that are often difficult for people to pinpoint or articulate)
- it can help us to identify the strengths of the community, including the way that people are already getting their needs met
- it brings the voice of the people most affected (by food insecurity in this example) closer to the table of decision makers
- the insights generated can provide a platform for innovative solutions, particularly when those most affected are part of the problem solving process.

A co-design process in its simplest form has two phases. The first is about identifying the problem - what are the needs and strengths of the community? What are the insights that we can uncover? This helps us to reframe 'the problem'. The second part is about working with the community to identify solutions (based on our learnings and insights from the first phase). This report takes us to the end of the first phase. There is more work to occur to help us move forward to solutions.



AN OVERVIEW OF OUR PROCESS

BUILDING A TEAM

We brought together a team of people from different organisations to develop a core design team. This included people from Whangaroa Health Services, Mahitahi and our Healthy Families Far North Team.

GETTING CLEAR ON OUR VISIONS AND LEARNINGS

Together the core design team got clear on what it was that we wanted to learn through the co-design process. We also got clear on the vision that we were working towards.

RECRUITMENT - WHO WILL WE TALK TO AND HOW?

The core design team spent time thinking about who can best help us answer our learning questions. We wanted to capture the stories of people with a range of experiences.

TIKANGA-LED ETHICAL PRACTICE

The team used the core principles/tikanga from whānau centred design practice to build a shared ethical practice when connecting with our community.

EMPATHY INTERVIEW TRAINING

The team spent time training and practicing the skills needed to carry out empathy interviews.

KŌRERO WITH COMMUNITY

- 10 empathy interviews were carried out with people across Whangaroa.
- 24 surveys were completed with growers and business across Whangaroa.
- 10 kuia and kaumatua were invited to wananga

STORYTELLING

Once all empathy interviews were completed, the team got together and shared the kōrero they heard.

INSIGHT MINING AND SYNTHESIS

The team then found patterns and themes across all the stories. These were visualised into six key insights that are represented in this report.

CHECKING BACK IN

We invited people to gather feedback and check in that what we were learning resonated. We talked to staff from Whangaroa Health Services as well as some of the people that we had interviewed.

The core design team, led by Healthy Families Far North, went on their own learning journey as they built capabilities in innovation and co-design. This includes:

- developing a tikanga-led ethical practice
- learning the importance and practice of empathy interviewing
- storytelling practices and Insight mining
- insight development and gathering whānau feedback

WHO WE SPOKE TO

EMPATHY INTERVIEWS WITH WHĀNAU

What we set out to learn:

- What is currently supporting or preventing food security and resiliency for whānau living in the Whangaroa rohe?
- What is the current experience of the food system for whānau living in the Whangaroa rohe?

WHO DID WE TALK TO:



SURVEYS WITH GROWERS AND LOCAL BUSINESSES

What we set out to learn:

- Understanding the needs, motivations and current capacities of growers and businesses in the Whangaroa rohe

WHO DID WE TALK TO:



WĀNANGA WITH KAUMATUA AND KUIA

What we set out to learn:

- Exploring local matauranga, tikanga and practices associated with food security and resiliency
- Understanding the types of food that were gathered and grown in the Whangaroa rohe

WHO DID WE TALK TO:



THE WHANGAROA REGION

We took our lead from Te Rūnanga o Whaingaroa when defining the boundaries of the Whangaroa region for this exploration. For the rūnanga, the Whangaroa region covers both land and coastal boundaries. Areas where the various hapū exercise mana whenua and mana moana. The land boundary begins at the mouth of the Oruaiti river in the north moving south and encompassing Puketi forest. From there, it moves across towards the Tākou river. The coastal boundary begins again at the mouth or Oruaiti and directly out to sea. It then follows the coast south to the point at Purapura (Needles).

- The Whangaroa region has a rich food history. Pupuke is well known for its fertile soils, Kaeo for their fresh water mussels (known as Kaeo) and the coastal region, including Whangaroa harbour continues to be a bountiful place for kai moana.
- The Whangaroa region includes 17 marae and 42 different hapū
- According to statistics NZ, there are approximately 1,191 people living in the Whangaroa region
- Māori make up nearly 51% of the Whangaroa region (compared to 17% for the rest of Aotearoa, NZ)

WHAT WE HEARD ABOUT FOOD SECURITY AND RESILIENCE IN WHANGAROA

The following six insights illustrate what we heard and learnt from whānau living and growing in Whangaroa about their experiences of the food system. They demonstrate a synthesis of all the stories we heard.

THE SIX INSIGHTS

1. Making Something From Nothing
2. The Sharing Economy
3. The Flipped Model
4. Whangaroa's Fridge
5. Remembering Kai
6. Growing Sustainably

MAKING SOMETHING FROM NOTHING

Many of the whānau we spoke to described times in their lives that could be defined as moments of food insecurity. However, whānau rarely thought of their own experiences from this scarcity perspective. Rather they talked about their resourcefulness, their ability to make something from nothing, to hustle up a feed, and to utilise the resources from the world around them.

Whānau walk a fine line between these moments of food insecurity and crisis and they recognise the difference. Other research about food insecurity tells us when people spend more time thinking about and finding ways to access food, it leaves whānau feeling stressed and with little bandwidth to thrive.

However, what was common amongst all those that we spoke to, there was a strong desire to live in a self-sustainable manner by reducing waste and passing on the lessons of resourcefulness to the next generation.

Food Security

Everyone at all times has adequate access to nourishing safe and nutritious kai.

Line of food insecurity



SOMETHING FROM NOTHING

"Once, I only had an onion in the cupboard and a few herbs in the garden. It was all good! Onion soup, pesto and toast."



STAPLES

"If you've got flour and eggs, you'll be right. You can always make a meal."



COVER UPS

"Our parents never let us see or know the stress they were under to provide kai for us."

Line of food crisis



TAMARIKI HUSTLE

"When I was a kid and we had no food I'd go get a feed of pipi and take them to the kaumatua that liked me. I knew they'd always give me some baking or a sandwich."



DANDELIONS

"I knew when things were tough when we were having dandelions for dinner."



FOOD PARCELS

"In hard times we didn't go to the supermarket for weeks. We had to manage on food parcels."



TAKE A SHEEP

"When shit gets real and there is nothing for the kids or the dogs we know how to take a sheep, kill it and cut it up."










THE SHARING ECONOMY

The food economy of Whangaroa is largely based on a system of reciprocity and sharing. In this economy of sharing, whānau feel both a deep sense of responsibility to contribute and a willingness to receive - a state described by our kaumatua and kuia as ngākau atawhai. This enables a relational transaction that enhances the mana of all those involved. The sharing economy is informal and relies on the existing relationships and kinship ties. It exists during times of abundance and scarcity.



A FORMALISED APPROACH TO SHARING

There is an emerging number of sharing initiatives growing across Whangaroa. These formalised mechanics provide ways for people share, learn and build relationships.

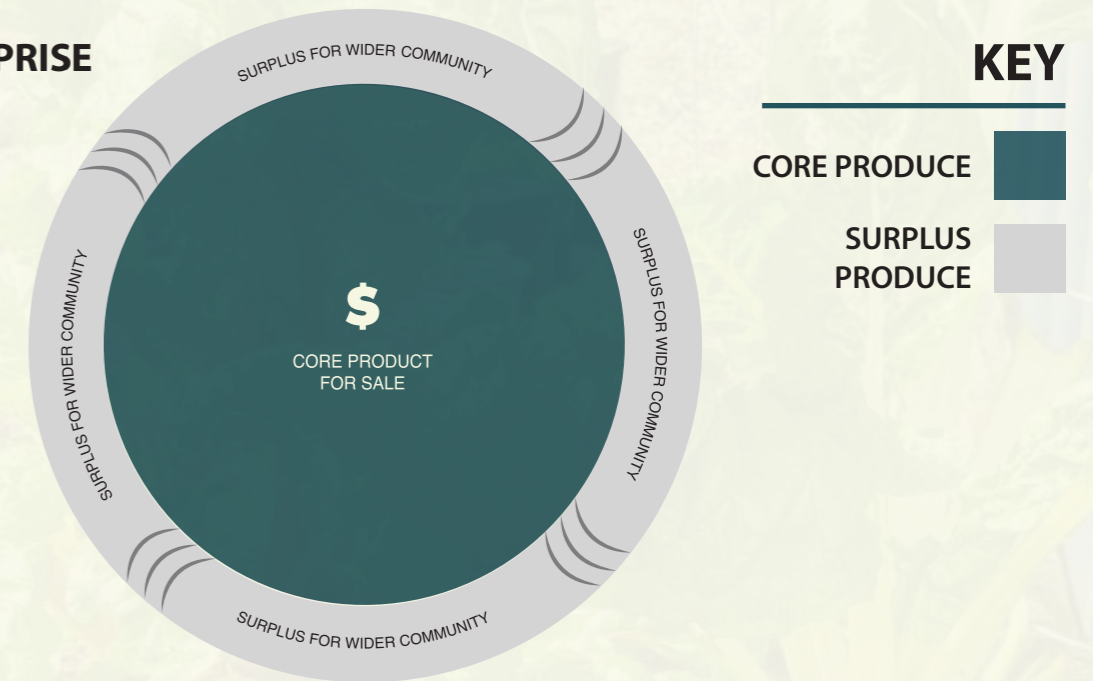
- 
COMMUNITY RESILIENCE NETWORK
- 
TIME BANKING
- 
COMMUNITY GARDENS
- 
KAEO ECOHUB
- 
EDIBLE WEEDS FORAGING
- 
CROP SWAP
- 
PERMACULTURE WORKSHOPS
- 
TRANSITION TOWNS
- 
GARDEN NINJAS

THE FLIPPED MODEL

The sharing economy of Whangaroa permeates into large scale growing operations too, flipping our idea about what happens to surplus produce. In a standard enterprise, profit and sales sit at the heart of the business model. This usually means the best produce is sold to the international market, followed by a local market. Surplus (or seconds) may be given away to the wider community.

In contrast, the Whangaroa model flips this idea. Instead, whānau sit at the heart of the model with the core (and often best) produce being given away to an ever-widening group. Here, it is the surplus that is sold, used for trade or bartered.

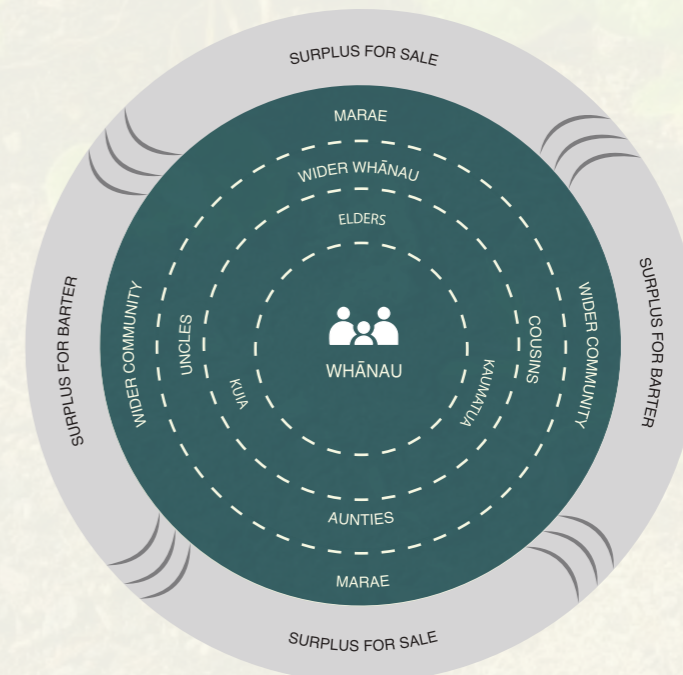
STANDARD ENTERPRISE MODEL



KEY

- CORE PRODUCE
- SURPLUS PRODUCE

THE WHANGAROA SHARING MODEL



WHANGAROA'S FRIDGE

Many people in Whangaroa think of the environment like a 'fridge'. Unlike a conventional fridge, this fridge provides more than just kai. Whangaroa's fridge provides whānau a sense of belonging, a space to connect - to each other, to their tupuna and to ancient knowledge. It provides a place to learn, to exercise, to share and to grow together. Gathering food from this fridge provides multiple outcomes beyond sustenance. However, we also heard, that for some whānau, this fridge isn't always accessible. This might be from a lack of knowledge around harvesting, or from a disconnection to the whenua or moana.

"We made spears to catch eels and flounders. It's an important part of our kids learning."

"We went to get paua for that tangi the other day as a koha for the whānau pani."

"It's a bit of a hike to get the mussels - but that's okay cause we need the exercise."



"We don't waste any of it! We even keep the eyes from the pupu to decorate my daughters whare."

"We go out to get kai-moana as a whānau. I want to teach my moko the old ways to keep them safe."

"Just knowing that I'm getting kai from the exact same place as my tupuna. That's when I'm at my best."

REMEMBERING KAI

Our kuia and kaumatua described different kinds of kai that they used to gather and eat. For many of our kaumatua and kuia, their early food memories of foraging are closely connected to their memories of play.

Many kinds of these kai are no longer a regular feature in the lives of the younger generations. This is likely a result of a lack of understanding, through disconnection from whenua or are a direct result of pollution or pests.

The foods described below are not an exhaustive list of the kai harvested or foraged by our kaumatua and kuia but they do provide a glimpse into the array of traditional foods and ways of processing that are not as common as they once were.

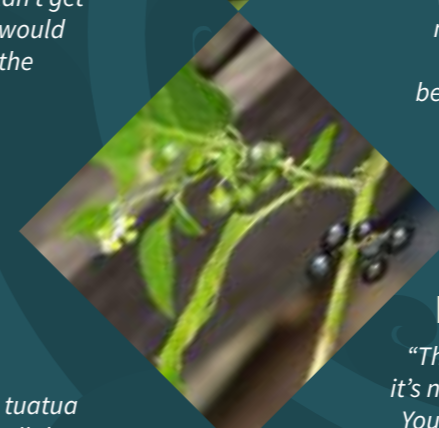
KIEKIE

"We would go up to Puketi to plait the kiekie so the rats wouldn't get them. Later we would go and harvest the fruit."



POROPORO

"We'd come back and all the nannies knew where we had been cause our mouths were black. You can only eat the black berries otherwise you'd get sick."



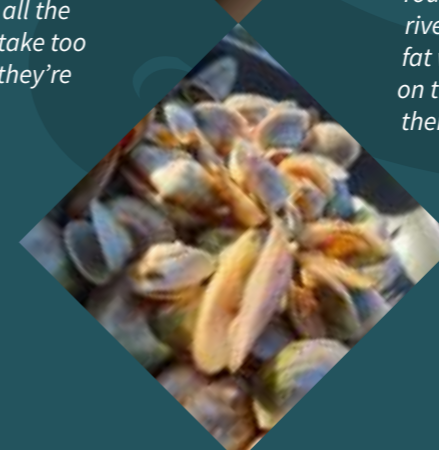
KAANGA

"The corn you get now is different to the kaanga, we had to make our own kaanga pirau."



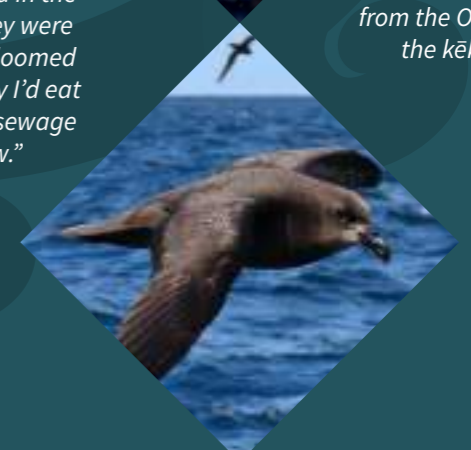
KAEO MUSSEL

"That's where Kaeo town got it's name from the Kaeo mussel. You'd get it in that bend in the river and you knew they were fat when the flowers bloomed on the maunga. No way I'd eat them now with all the sewage that's in there now."



OI

"We would use the hinu from the Oi to preserve our the kēkēwei and tuna."



GROWING SUSTAINABLY

We heard from whānau that there is a strong desire to move towards a sustainable way of living that includes growing kai. Some whānau are further along that journey than others. Overwhelmingly, we heard that this journey wasn't an easy one, and that there are a number of key factors that can either help or hinder.

THINGS THAT HELP WHĀNAU

"When we brought this whare, we didn't care about the house. We only looked at the garden."

"I hated gardening as a kid. But there is something special about growing kai on my own whenua where my tupuna grew their kai. It's the wairua there."

"I quit my job and went on the dole. It meant that I could put all my energy in the māra and our sustainable life."

"You have to find your people up here with the same values."

"When there's a bigger kaupapa than just the garden - that's when the gardener's really get into it and the garden thrives."

"We share seedlings and tools with our mate down the road."

"It's been a lot of failures, but that's how we've learn't. You have to get attuned to the environment around you and learn as you go."

"We were so lucky the old people showed us how to store kūmara the old way."

THINGS THAT HINDER WHĀNAU



WHENUA

"Being in a rental is so hard. It was devastating when we had to move last time and had to leave the garden. I don't know if I'll plant one at this new house."

"There are tensions with the trust around what happens on the whenua. Sometimes it's a battle of law vs lore."



TIME

"It took so long to get everything that we just had to buy our veges from the supermarket. That was gutting"

"I'm supporting two whare and working full time. Gardening is the last thing on my mind."



SUPPORT

"It's harder mahi for the whole family. Our girl has to milk the cow before school. She hates it."

"We had the community garden - but people just stopped coming and it all went to seed."



TOOLS & RESOURCES

"We had a great garden going until we ran out of water. I couldn't justify using water like that during the summer. So we gave up."

"I was impatient and wanted a tractor. We got a loan but it just all went to shit."



KNOWLEDGE MATAURANGA

"My whānau never taught me any of that stuff. They were too busy."

LEARNINGS FROM THE SURVEY

What we heard from growers and businesses in Whangaroa



The following learnings are taken from the survey that were completed by growers and local businesses in the Whangaroa region.



Commercial growers - a challenge to find

There was an initial assumption that there would be significant commercial growers in the Whangaroa region ready to support a food hub and distribution service. However, finding commercial growers was challenging. In fact, only one person identified as a commercial grower throughout the Whangaroa region.

People want to learn from and share with others. They also want a space to experiment and try new things. Learning might include: working with clay, composting and worm farming, soil science, kukia removal and resolving water challenges. Sharing might include: sharing seeds, seedling, fertilizer and compost. This might be through trade, bartering or buying. However, sharing machinery might be problematic.

Growers - keen to share what they know and have

Cusp of Commercial - a step too far

There were a small number of growers with a larger scale growing operation. They would describe themselves as being on the cusp of commercial growing. However, they do not have the capacity or desire to move into commercial growing. This is largely related to the perceived challenges around labour and employment that comes with commercial growing.

There are a number of home growers, with a range of skills, growing a range of things in the Whangaroa region. For this group, there was not a large surplus of produce available for selling. Instead, many of these home growers described sharing their produce with others in their whānau or community.

Home Growers - sharing produce

"Labour is a big problem – that is why we don't sell."

Self-sufficiency is at the heart

For the small number of larger-scale growers they are mostly living self-sufficiently supplementing their income with other regenerative pursuits like possum trapping.

"We grow surplus to get us through the hard years so we always have something."

Growers in Whangaroa did not demonstrate that they have enough surplus to support a full-time or permanent system of distribution. All growers surveyed share their surplus with whānau. Events such as the local crop swap, the Kaeo market and the community pantry fulfill the current need.

Surplus food for distribution? Not yet.

Growing Aspirations

Many people have had aspirations and attempts at growing in the Whangaroa region for commercial purposes. This was particularly evident when attempting to connect with a number of recent local funding recipients for gardening and growing who are no longer in operation.

We heard that local food businesses need reliable and consistent produce. Currently, most local food businesses buy from national distributors such as Gilmours. However, some do make the effort to access regional produce from the Kerikeri market. Overall the perception from food businesses is that the current local market would be unable to meet their needs.

Consistency for Businesses is key

OPPORTUNITIES & DESIGN CHALLENGES

Introducing our 'How Might We' Statements

The following 'How Might We' statements take the key learnings from within this report and transforms them into potential design challenges or opportunities. Each of these statements can take you on a new journey of discovery and exploration towards addressing the communities needs around food security and resilience.

We suggest that the next steps bring the community together to identify and prioritise the How Might We statements. These can be prioritised in a number of ways. Some suggestions might include:



Once the statements are prioritised by the community, then the co-design process can continue into the problem solving phase. This starts with the generation of multiple ideas that might solve the **HOW MIGHT WE** statement, a process to synthesise those ideas and the development of prototypes to test and learn what works.

LEVERAGING COMMUNITY STRENGTHS

HOW MIGHT WE recognise and leverage the resourcefulness that many whānau possess when it comes to accessing, creating and not wasting food?

HOW MIGHT WE leverage the sharing economy and the innate sense of reciprocity that exists in the Whangaroa community to support food security and resilience?

HOW MIGHT WE support and grow the formal mechanisms of sharing that already exists in our community?

HOW MIGHT WE support a space where people who grow food can share what they know with others who are eager to learn?

MAHINGA KAI

HOW MIGHT WE utilise the knowledge and mātāuranga that is held by kaumātua, kuia and others to bring back the range of mahinga kai that was once readily available in the Whangaroa region?

HOW MIGHT WE support opportunities for whānau to learn and share their practices around the sustainable harvesting of mahinga kai?

HOW MIGHT WE create opportunities for foraging and play in the Whangaroa region?

HOW MIGHT WE foster the traditional transmission of knowledge that occurs between kaumātua, kuia and mokopuna?

HOW MIGHT WE rethink and invest in mahinga kai in the same way we think about and invest in the production and growth of mara kai?

CONNECTING

HOW MIGHT WE find ways to surface pūrakau and stories of growing and harvesting of food in the landscapes of Whangaroa so that whānau can feel connected to those spaces and the activities that occurred there?

HOW MIGHT WE enable the things that people value in accessing Whangaroa's fridge - like connection (to place, to people, to tupuna), exercise, mātāuranga in every interaction of our food system?

GROWING - STARTING OUT

HOW MIGHT WE provide ongoing and reliable support for people with aspirations to grow throughout their growing journey, not just at the beginning?

HOW MIGHT WE support people who are renting to grow their own kai?

GROWING - CHANGING GEAR

HOW MIGHT WE rethink the way we value people's time when they are supporting community food security or their own self-sustainable lives?

HOW MIGHT WE support growers on the cusp of commercial growing with the big leap?

HOW MIGHT WE start to build a local workforce that can support the big leap for growers on the cusp of commercial growing?



TE RŪNANGA
O WHANGAROA