

Lessons for successful Mana Whenua engagement

Tips for people who don't know where to start



This document contains tips for those who want to engage well with Mana Whenua, but who might not know where to start. These recommendations provide a starting point for ensuring engagement starts well and continues positively.¹

Preparing for engagement

Engage early

If Mana Whenua are going to be engaged as key project partners, contact needs to start early in the life of the project. Ideally, engagement should begin at the concept or planning stage. If engagement during the planning stage is not possible, then it should be initiated as early in the design phase as possible. Contact should be made well in advance of other project deadlines, to allow coordination of the schedules of busy professionals.

This means prioritising Mana Whenua contact and engagement (along with the local board, as key governance stakeholders) in project communications and engagement plans.

Find your 'guide'

If you are new to engaging with Māori, it is important that you find a 'guide' to help you navigate the world of Mana Whenua. This guide may be Māori or non-Māori, but should be someone who has experience in working with Mana Whenua and navigating Te Ao Māori (the Māori world).

Guides might be found within your department, from Te Waka Angamua, or through other networks. Ask them to help you understand who you should talk to, to provide guidance on tikanga (protocols), and to support you as you establish your relationship with Mana Whenua.

Embrace partnership

Iwi signed the Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tiriti o Waitangi as partners, and both the Local Government Act 2002 and Resource Management Act 1991 require councils to give effect to and take into account the principles of the Treaty.

Engagement with a Treaty partner is different from consultation with the wider public. In line with Article Two of the Treaty, Mana Whenua should be engaged as close to the project planning stage as possible. Mana Whenua should be engaged earlier than the general public (i.e. earlier in the project development lifecycle) and, in line with local boards, should have greater levels of shared decision-making power than other stakeholders.

¹ These guidelines were developed as part of an evaluation of Te Auaunga Awa, an Auckland Council storm water and stream restoration project: Allpress, J. A. (2016). *Te Auaunga Awa (Oakley Creek) social evaluation: report 1 – engagement*. Auckland Council technical report TR2016/041

This document is supplementary to the Te Waka Angamua – *Te Whakawhirinakitanga Engaging with Māori: A Practical guide*.

Mataawaka (Māori living in an area who are not in a Mana Whenua group) should also be engaged, but as a key stakeholder during the design phase.

One way to ensure Mana Whenua have the opportunity to have a meaningful impact is through project governance. Set up project governance structures that reflect the importance of Mana Whenua as co-governors. Invite Mana Whenua to participate in the formalised governance of the project and/or set up regular kaitiaki meetings where key project decisions are brought to Mana Whenua representatives.

Be clear on the purpose of engaging with Mana Whenua

Before you meet, consider what reasons Mana Whenua might have for engaging with the project. What are the potential benefits for them and how can you make sure these benefits are realised? Talk to others in your department who have engaged with Mana Whenua – what were the motivations of Mana Whenua in those cases, and what are some lessons for your engagement?

Make sure also that you are clear on why you are meeting with Mana Whenua. What are you hoping to achieve, and what would success look like? Be prepared to articulate this to Mana Whenua when you meet with them.

Understand who you need to engage with

All Mana Whenua groups with an historical connection to the project area should be given the opportunity to provide their input – one Mana Whenua group cannot speak on behalf of others.

Te Waka Angamua's intranet site has contact details for key Iwi Authorities by local board area and your guide can help you understand which iwi have the strongest historical connection to the area.

Do your homework before meeting with Mana Whenua

A significant number of initial misunderstandings can be prevented by doing some background reading before meeting with Mana Whenua.

Before meeting with Mana Whenua, take some time to understand their history and values. Often Iwi Authorities have published information that can help you understand where they are coming from. Look at their website, their Treaty of Waitangi settlement summary if they have settled, and their Iwi Management Plan and Iwi Environment Plan if they have them.

Doing some background reading will prevent Mana Whenua from having to repeat themselves, and will show them that you take the relationship seriously.

In addition, familiarise yourself with the history of the Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tiriti o Waitangi if you have not already done so.

Understand basic tikanga

Tikanga Māori are general behaviour guidelines for daily life and interaction in Māori culture. Understanding the basics can go a long way to ensuring the relationship gets off to the right start.

Understand and be comfortable with protocols around opening and closing meetings. Ask your guide to help you understand what is involved in a pōwhiri (formal welcome), mihi whakatau (less formal welcome) and karakia (prayer). Your guide can help you understand protocol that is relevant in your circumstances and help with tikanga responses if required.

Although it's unlikely that you will be expected to open and close the meeting, make an effort to learn a basic mihi (who you are and where you come from), and familiarise yourself with commonly used Māori words. Investing in a basic te reo Māori course can make these situations less intimidating!

If you are hosting the meeting it is considered good etiquette to provide some refreshments (even simple tea, coffee, juice and biscuits). Offer Mana Whenua the chance to bless the kai before eating.

Provide enough project resources to do a good job

The best intentions in the world can be undone by poor organisation.

Successful engagement with Mana Whenua requires a commitment of time and organisational resources in order to develop and maintain the relationship. These obligations need to be accounted for in the project planning. An individual should be given dedicated responsibility for maintaining the relationship and communications.

This individual should:

- organise hui (meeting) dates and times
- provide regular and reliable updates to Mana Whenua on upcoming meetings and key decisions to be made at those meetings
- record minutes and actions at meetings
- follow up with representatives who are not able to make meetings, and
- report back to the group on decisions made and resulting impacts on the project.

Misunderstandings are often the result of poor communication – something that can be solved by having a dedicated coordinator.

Engagement also requires sufficient funding to cover the costs of Mana Whenua expertise. This funding may be set up either as a defined 'pool' of money which Mana Whenua can charge for their ongoing involvement or a budget to cover a pre-specified time commitment.



Managing the relationship

Focus the initial hui on developing mutual understanding and respect

Initial hui should be focused on developing mutual understanding and respect. Take time to fully understand the values of Mana Whenua, their aspirations for the area and their desired contribution to the project. Share your values and aspirations for both the project and for the relationship.

Be clear on the project's scope and non-negotiables (e.g. budget, core objectives, time frames), but be flexible about how Mana Whenua are involved outside of those non-negotiables.

Once agreement has been reached, develop a Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference should identify who the strategic parties are, the agreed outcome(s), timeline (with key dates), resourcing and payment. The document should include a statement that the meetings will be conducted in a collaborative manner, with regular dates scheduled ahead of time and with follow up reminders.

Empower Mana Whenua to propose the scope and extent of their involvement

Partnership should involve discussion, flexibility and negotiation on how Mana Whenua contribute to the project.

After being clear on the project's non-negotiables, empower the Mana Whenua representatives to propose the scope and extent of their involvement within the realities of the project and their own capacity.

Agree on time commitments and scheduling

Mana Whenua representatives are busy and project timelines are tight. This makes it essential to clarify upfront the key project deadlines and agree upon time commitments across the lifespan of the project.

Once an agreement has been reached on the extent and timing of Mana Whenua involvement, find mutually convenient meeting times and reserve those times well in advance of the meeting. If Mana Whenua are being asked to meet collectively, ask them to propose times that fit with their other (often shared) meeting commitments.

Where possible, it may be beneficial to coordinate with other council projects that the representatives are involved in, and to hold longer, omnibus 'workshops'.

Nerves are normal

Feeling nervous about attending Mana Whenua hui is common. Recognise that anxiety is normal, and is often a result of wanting to do a good job.

Nerves can be soothed by making sure you are equipped for the meeting and that your guide is there to support you. This might include making sure you understand meeting protocols, have some basic te reo Māori, and know about the history of the iwi you are meeting.

If your values align with those of Mana Whenua, and you are approaching the interaction with a true intention of partnership, then the interaction has the best chance to develop into a positive one.

Be prepared for frank and open conversation

Mana Whenua tend to take a 'direct approach' to discussing issues and disagreements. Take some time to understand the point being made, and be prepared to have free and frank discussion.

Be prepared also to acknowledge mistakes if they have been made and to focus on how to move the relationship forward.



Some useful resources

Further resources for engaging with Māori:

- The 5 wai's of Māori Engagement (Atawhai Tibble) - <https://goo.gl/VYQUtK>
- Te Waka Angamua - Te Whakawhirinakitanga Engaging with Māori: A Practical guide (available on the Auckland Council intranet).

More information about the Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tiriti o Waitangi:

- Treaty Resource Centre: trc.org.nz

Basic te reo Māori and tikanga Māori information:

- Te Waka Angamua Te Reo Pronunciation for Local Government course
- Kōrero Māori – Māori language commission: tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/learn-te-reo-maori/tikanga-maori
- Māori Made Easy (book by Scotty Morrison), with accompanying videos – maorilanguage.net/maori-made-easy

Dictionary:

- maoridictionary.co.nz

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Find out more: phone 09 301 0101,
email rimu@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz
or visit aucklandcouncil.govt.nz