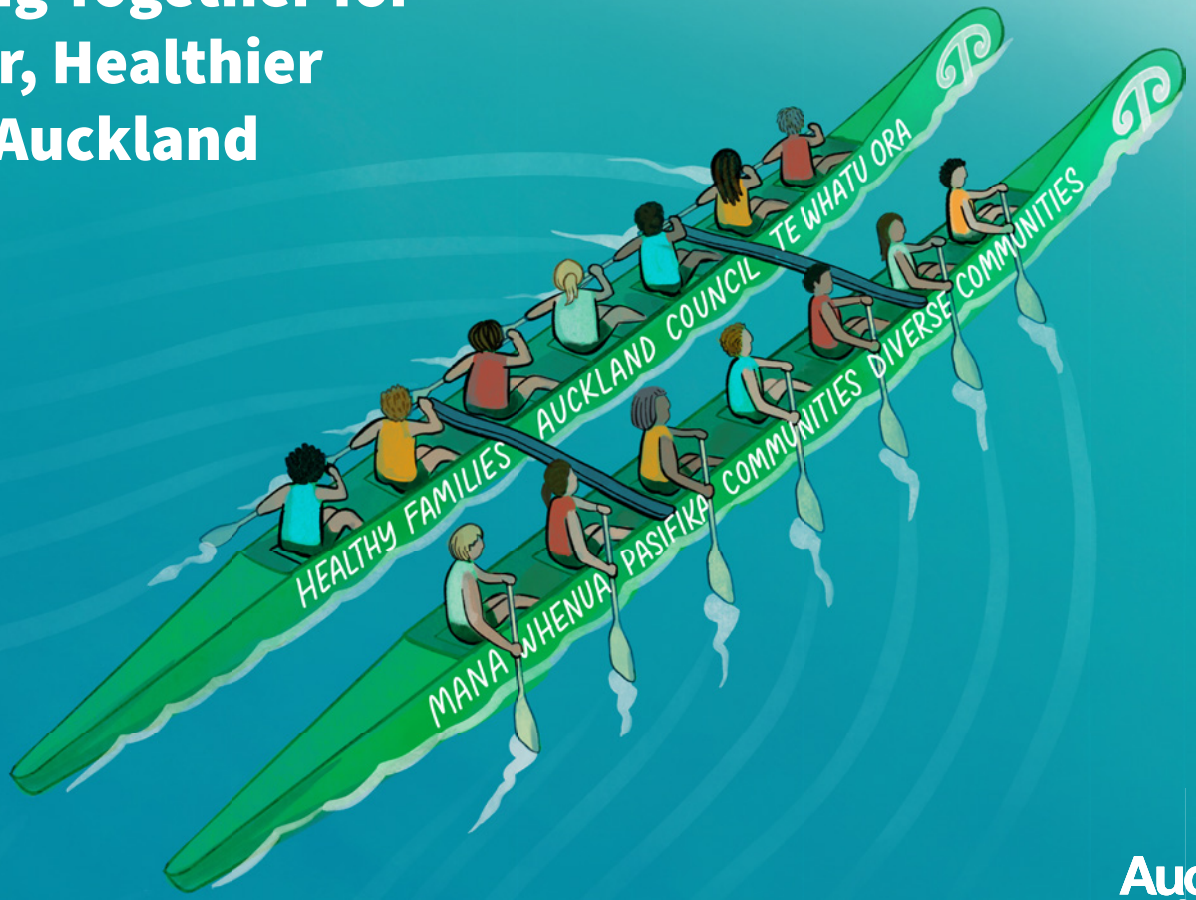
TUROU HAWAIKI

Working Together for a Fairer, Healthier South Auckland



healthy families
South Auckland
He oranga whānau

Auckland Council
Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau





HE KUPU WHAKATAKI

Ka rere taku manu ki runga, mātiro atu ki te whenua horapa nei. Whāia ngā awa tupua ki Te Mānukanuka o Hotura, ka kitea i tōku Hawaiki hou. He oranga hāpori, he oranga taiao, he oranga whānau e.

Mai i Pukekōiwiriki ki runga, Te Pane o Mataaho ki raro. Mātukutureia ki tai, Te Puke o Tara ki uta. Tēnei te manu o aumihi e rere atu nei ki ngā maunga whakahī, ki ngā hereherenga tāngata e tāwharautia nei i te rohe o Te Tonga o Tāmaki.

As my kite takes flight, it looks over the expanse of the land. As it flies over the many streams that reach towards the Manukau Harbour I begin to see how my future lies. A healthy community, a healthy environment, a healthy family.

From Pukekōiwiriki in the south to Te Pane o Mataaho in the north. Mātukutureia to the coast to Te Puke o Tara inland. We extend our gratitude to the many peaks and the many communities that collectively create South Auckland.

This report tells the story of Healthy Families South Auckland and how systems change, driven by community leadership, can improve health and wellbeing outcomes across South Auckland.

At the centre of this approach is the leadership of communities themselves. By working alongside whānau, iwi, Pasifika communities, local organisations and partners, Healthy Families South Auckland is supporting community-led solutions while working to influence institutions and systems to respond in more effective and equitable ways.

The report reflects on what we have done and what we have learned through this mahi. It highlights the conditions required for prevention to succeed, the importance of trust and relationships, and the role of local systems in enabling long-term change.

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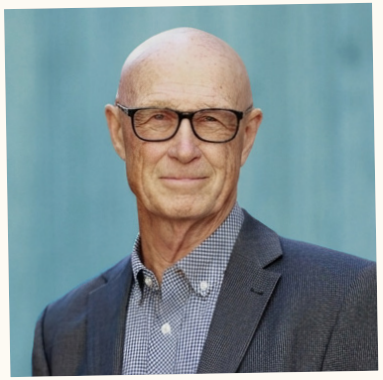
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FOREWORD

BOYD SWINBURN

Professor of Population Nutrition and Global Health at the University of Auckland and co-chair of Health Coalition Aotearoa



" Nourishing our children is foundational to a flourishing Aotearoa."

Back in 2012, I was heavily involved with Australia's Healthy Together Victoria, a pioneering large-scale, systems-oriented intervention designed to improve child nutrition and obesity prevalence rates.

While a fledgling project, it was an ambitious attempt to tackle chronic disease using a whole-of-system approach rather than just individual behaviour change.

That is why I am enthused to be re-engaging with the Healthy Families South Auckland kaupapa through Auckland Council.

While Healthy Together Victoria was ultimately hamstrung by short-term funding, it lasted long enough for its core ideas to leap across the Tasman.

In 2014, Healthy Families NZ was launched in 10 locations across Aotearoa. More than a decade later it is deeply heartening to see the kaupapa not only still standing, but evolving.

It is especially encouraging that Health Coalition Aotearoa, an organisation I am proud to be involved with, is now working alongside Auckland Council's Healthy Families South Auckland.

As shown in this report, the collaborative efforts between Auckland Council, Health Coalition Aotearoa, Moana Connect, Toi Tangata, and the University of Auckland are grappling seriously with the structural challenges shaping South Auckland's food environments.

The statistics are confronting. Forty-two percent of children in South Auckland live in households where food often or mostly runs out because there is not enough money. This is not an unemployment problem as joblessness sits at around five percent. Nor is it a food problem since Aotearoa produces enough food to feed eight times its population.

This is an economic system failure, which is the responsibility of the central government, and a food system problem which demands action from both the central and local government.

What gives me hope is what we hear directly from South Auckland communities. Despite neighbourhoods saturated with ultra-processed food outlets, we see extraordinary local innovation, resilience, and determination to feed whānau well. The challenge ahead for community, government and organisations like Healthy Families South Auckland, is to remove barriers and provide practical support where it can.

Nourishing our children is foundational to a flourishing Aotearoa. That is why continuity of funding is critical.

Long-term systems change requires patience, persistence and political courage. Re-orienting institutions, policies and mindsets is slow but it is work worth doing if we want to help improve the health of our people.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENT MATTERS FOR PREVENTION

DICKIE HUMPHRIES

Head of Community Impact Unit

In recent decades we have begun to realise something apparent. Health is not determined solely by visits to the doctor or by hospital beds.

Instead it is shaped by the streets our tamariki play in, the availability of kai we put in our pantries, the strength of relationships in the whare and across neighbourhoods, our access to warm and dry homes, and whether we feel seen and supported by the institutions around us.

That is the logic behind the Healthy Families NZ network. It does not focus only on delivering programmes but looks at the whole system.

When local government plays its part in this ecosystem it can create the strongest foundation for preventing illness before it begins and for enabling communities to thrive.

As part of Auckland Council's Community Impact Unit, Healthy Families South Auckland sits in a unique and highly influential position.

The Community Impact Unit can bring together energy and leadership from across council including recreation, libraries, community development, strategic planning, as well as external partners including iwi, Pacific organisations, health services, local businesses and most importantly whānau themselves.

This synergy matters because the drivers of ill health are complex and cannot be addressed through siloed approaches.

This mahi is not about ticking boxes. It is an investment in the health of our communities so that fewer people fall through the gaps.

When a child regularly has healthy kai they are more able to thrive at school. When whānau live in warm and safe homes it helps prevent illness. When communities reclaim public places it strengthens social connection and community pride. When people see that their voices matter in local planning it builds empowerment.

Changing systems is a long game. Chronic disease, social inequity and structural disadvantage did not appear overnight and cannot be solved overnight. But when local government commits to prevention and to walking alongside communities rather than above them it creates the best chance of meaningful change.

I believe that South Auckland has all the ingredients for a future where wellbeing is the baseline rather than the exception. I also believe that local government, when grounded in community guidance and committed to long term change, can make the decisive difference.



As Turou Hawaiki reflects on the mahi of Healthy Families South Auckland it serves as a reminder of what becomes possible when everyone commits to prevention and to working together.

> *" local government, when grounded in community guidance and committed to long term change, can make the decisive difference "*

THE POWER OF PREVENTION FOR PUBLIC GOOD

MATT APPLEYARD

Manager for Healthy Families South Auckland

Healthy Families NZ is an essential, low-cost driver of prevention and equity with benefits that continue beyond delivery. This money-for-value finding is consistent with other prevention initiatives in Aotearoa such as the Healthy Homes initiative and Whānau Ora, while Healthy Families South Auckland at Auckland Council is also regarded as a high-value investment within Auckland's largest organisation.

Our contributions to health and wellbeing extend across iwi, local boards, multiple council units, regional intersectoral initiatives and communities of South Auckland.

Data from the 2022 evaluation of Healthy Families South Auckland shows an annual investment of about $8 per person (in participating whānau and communities) which creates durable community-level change with little ongoing cost.

Local government can and should play the roles of an anchor organisation, systems networker and champion community-led action. In our work we see community agency and locally tailored innovation drive emergent improvements, but only if Council enables and sustains those relationships, takes tangible actions, and reorients resources toward people and communities.

All public services operate within complex adaptive systems, where community-led action is essential for building effective and equitable outcomes. Auckland Council manages place-based public resources which affect all of our lives, the lives of future generations and the environments we need to support our hauora. No one else can do the same level of work for public good.

Because Auckland Council can implement at scale, local government is positioned to be one of the most powerful institutions for expanding systems-level prevention and wellbeing.

We deliver and contribute to multiple national and regional strategies including the NZ health plan's priorities.

We achieve measurable impacts by strengthening Māori and Pacific leadership and creating sustainable community-owned change. As an example, in the previous 12 months we have purposely partnered with Mātauranga Māori knowledge holders to promote and test mental wellbeing and resilience in a South Auckland secondary school.



" Because Auckland Council can implement at scale, local government is positioned to be one of the most powerful institutions for expanding systems-level prevention and wellbeing."

The power of prevention includes considering capabilities, pathways and connections, support and care and resourcing community leadership. Our mahi also steers toward addressing the risk factors of health by creating community pathways for policy development to enable healthier environments.

Turou Hawaki shares our collective efforts and the structural changes that are required to strengthen the prevention system.

MEET THE TEAM

The team at Healthy Families South Auckland is committed to driving major systemic changes in the way South Aucklanders live, learn, work, and play. Here are their highlights of working with Healthy Families South Auckland.

TOLEAFOA RAY TUALA

LEAD SYSTEMS INNOVATOR



Since joining Healthy Families South Auckland, I've been excited to support health prevention for whānau and communities through a systems change approach. It has been a great opportunity to co-design solutions for healthier, more prosperous futures.

In March as a team-building exercise our team paddled a six-person waka on the Waitematā Harbour. Key learnings included understanding our different roles, staying in sync, appreciating the various facets of the waka, and respecting external forces like the weather. Much of this applies directly to our mahi: understanding our operating environment, using our tools effectively, and working toward a shared vision.

I was also privileged to co-design a 10-week fitness programme with Project Wy. This fruitful partnership supported 15 child+parent teams, resulting in increased use of local facilities, strengthened whānau wellbeing, healthier habits, and reciprocal motivation between parents and children.

JULIO BIN

LEAD SYSTEMS INNOVATOR



Over the past eight years I have seen Healthy Families South Auckland evolve from project-level activity to a stronger focus on systems change.

In my role, I work to design and scale community-centred food system initiatives that address food insecurity while embedding indigenous knowledge and supporting food culture through sustainable, community-led enterprise models.

The challenge, and opportunity, is translating systems thinking into practical action. I do this by developing Theories of Change, creating frameworks such as the Good Food Road Map, and piloting place-based initiatives like the Papatoetoe Food Hub. It's great to be able to work together with community leaders, Council, and other partners to co-design solutions and build the evidence that can shape local and national policy.

I remain optimistic about the future: when communities are trusted to lead and supported to collaborate, we can build resilient food systems that strengthen health, wellbeing, culture and local economies.

MEET THE TEAM

REREAHU COLLIER

SENIOR STRATEGIST, KAUPAPA MĀORI



One of the biggest highlights for me is witnessing the turning point when community members recognise their power to change elements of the system or take active leadership in creating conditions that enable resilience.

In my work on the Kia ora Te Whānau hubs, we worked alongside staff and community members to capture the values that are necessary in Council-led facilities for people to feel that these spaces reflect who they are. Across the wānanga, stories and values emerged that captured the narratives of both rangatahi and pakeke, translating the historical stories of Mana Whenua into a modern context for what it means to live in this place. When staff embody these values and make them visible, it reminds everyone of the essence the space is meant to reflect.

In working alongside Mana Whenua, the intention is to demonstrate that Council is a partner worth engaging with to uphold and enable the aspirations of Māori communities.

MEL GOODWRIGHT

SYSTEMS INNOVATOR



This year I have had the privilege of being one of the co-chairs of the Healthy Auckland Together (HAT) Food Environments Group. This coalition is made up of over 20 health organisations, including NGOs and charitable trusts.

We are incredibly fortunate to have highly passionate, knowledgeable, and driven members who understand the value of innovation, collaboration, and resource sharing in making our sometimes-challenging work achievable.

As we know, many organisations work in silos, yet there are so many opportunities to collaborate with like-minded people and entities whose purposes, goals, and scope intersect. When we work together, we strengthen our collective skills and efforts through our shared reach, capabilities, capacity, and networks. Ultimately, this leads to better outcomes for the communities we serve, as well as for the kaimahi doing the mahi.

MEET THE TEAM

TUREI MACKEY

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER



Providing communications and media support for the Healthy Environment Approach was when I truly saw systems change in action.

The goal of making healthy kai the norm for tamariki in early childhood settings became possible because so many parts of the system moved together. Strengthening staff capability, supporting managers with policy shifts, and working with vendors for healthier ingredients all contributed to a noticeable change.

The result was children enjoying healthier meals every day, kaiako feeling more confident and leadership teams seeing the value of investing in long term wellbeing.

The opportunity to tell that story, capture these voices and show how collective effort creates lasting change provided me with an early understanding of why systems change is so effective.

MATT APPLEYARD

MANAGER



Reflecting on the past two years, I'm proud of our team's progress. We continue to cultivate trusting, collaborative relationships while balancing short-term needs with our long-term strategic goals.

Understanding where we have the most influence supports playing to our strengths. We are enhancing place-based work with regional and national partners to champion policies that protect communities and drive evidence-based solutions.

As a high-trust bastion for local connection, we remain an agent for change, making real "on the ground" progress on the pressing health challenges whānau face today.

In 2027, we will build knowledge, address protective factors, and prioritise culturally grounded, community-led action. By focusing on social infrastructure and systems change, we ensure our communities do better, sooner, and for longer and Tāmaki Makaurau thrives.



New Zealand Kahoa Tauleva Trust's Enterprising Kai launch, which was supported by Healthy Families South Auckland.

THE HEALTHY FAMILIES SOUTH AUCKLAND STORY

Healthy Families South Auckland is part of a national movement, Healthy Families NZ, which focuses on strengthening the conditions that shape our wellbeing.

Rather than working only at the surface level of health challenges, the movement brings community leadership together to influence the environments where people live, learn, work and play. This approach aims to reduce the risk of preventable chronic disease by shifting the systems that influence daily life, including in South Auckland.

There are eleven Healthy Families teams across Aotearoa and the South Auckland team is the largest, serving around 350,000 people.

Based within Auckland Council and working closely with co-partner The Cause Collective, the team plays a central role in weaving together local leadership and community insight.

In 2023 Healthy Families South Auckland transitioned into the Community Impact Unit after previously sitting within The Southern Initiative. This shift has helped strengthen relationships across council teams working in wellbeing, infrastructure, libraries, housing and harm reduction.

It has also enabled better opportunities for preventative health initiatives to be more deeply integrated into council practice and policy development, supporting a more joined up approach to creating healthier environments.

Being positioned inside local government provides unique advantages, including direct links to operational networks and access to political decision making. These connections have already contributed to meaningful early outcomes. One example is helping local innovators have access to unused public spaces which they can then turn into a space for the community to enjoy, learn and understand the local kai system.

Across all areas of its mahi, from kai and movement to rangatahi mental wellbeing and wider hauora, Healthy Families South Auckland is known for its systems thinking, its grounding in mātauranga Māori including maramataka, and its strong relationships with community. These strengths continue to support long term, community led change across South Auckland.



“ Being positioned inside local government provides unique advantages, including direct links to operational networks and access to political decision making.”



OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH

WHĀIA TE PAE TAWHITI

In 2025, Healthy Families South Auckland undertook a review of our kaupapa to explore and affirm our team kawa, tikanga, strategic direction and see how our mahi contributes to the wellbeing of communities in South Auckland.

Guided by facilitator Dr Nikki Penetito Hemara through the practices of waka ama, we explored the kawa and tikanga that will orientate our team on how we lead and operate as a collective into 2027 and beyond.

We used waka ama to connect us to our past, present and future, connecting us to our Pacific ancestry, our cultural identities as Māori, and to look for new opportunities and retain our past knowledges.

Throughout this wānanga we revisited the core elements that shape our practices. We also looked at the waypoints that will guide our journey toward our vision, outcomes, and through the complex systems that we seek to change in improving healthy environments.

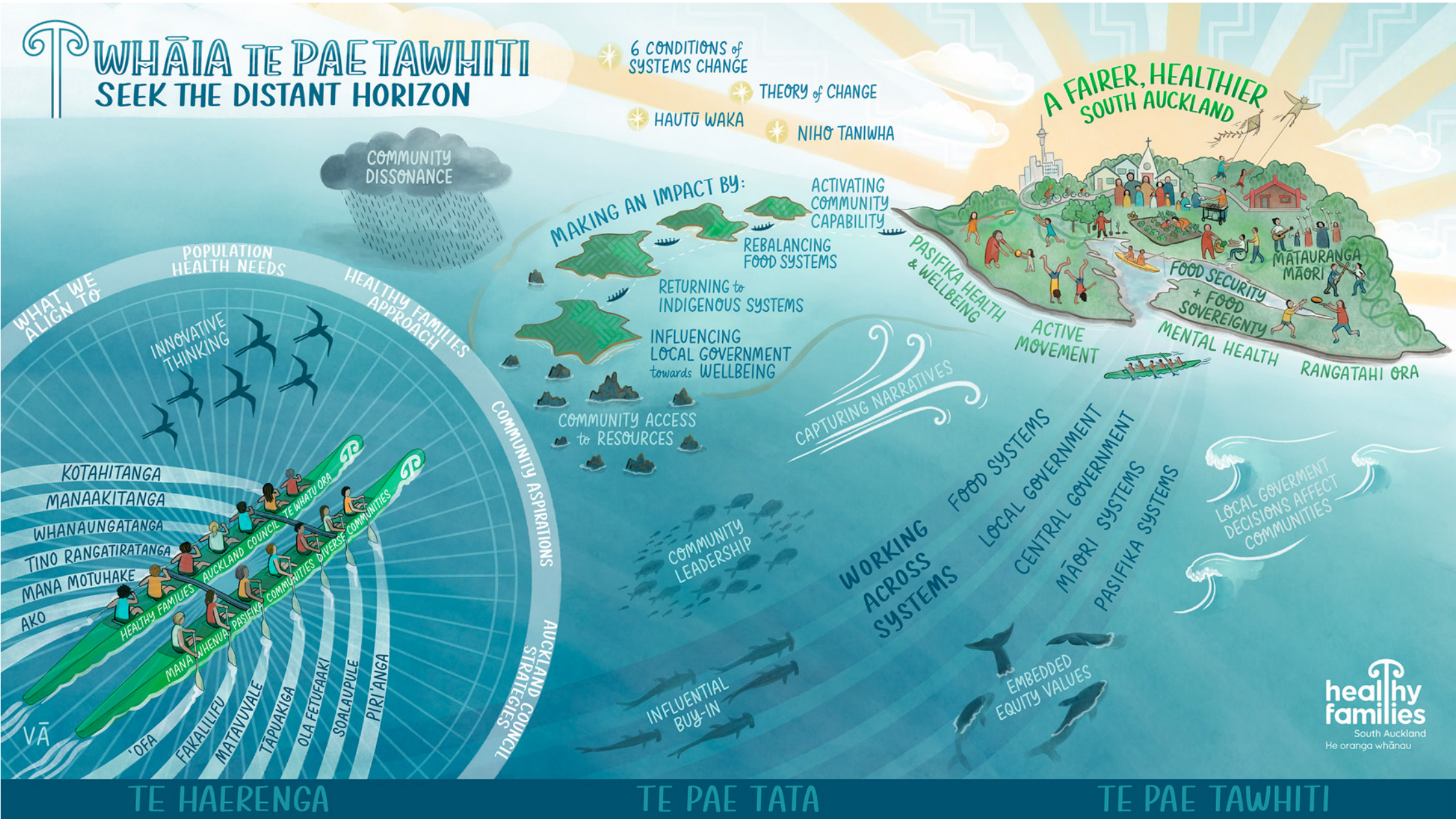
We also reaffirmed the central role of vā and key Pasifika values that nurture respectful relationships, reciprocity, consensus and collective strength with the guidance of Dr Sonny Natanielu.

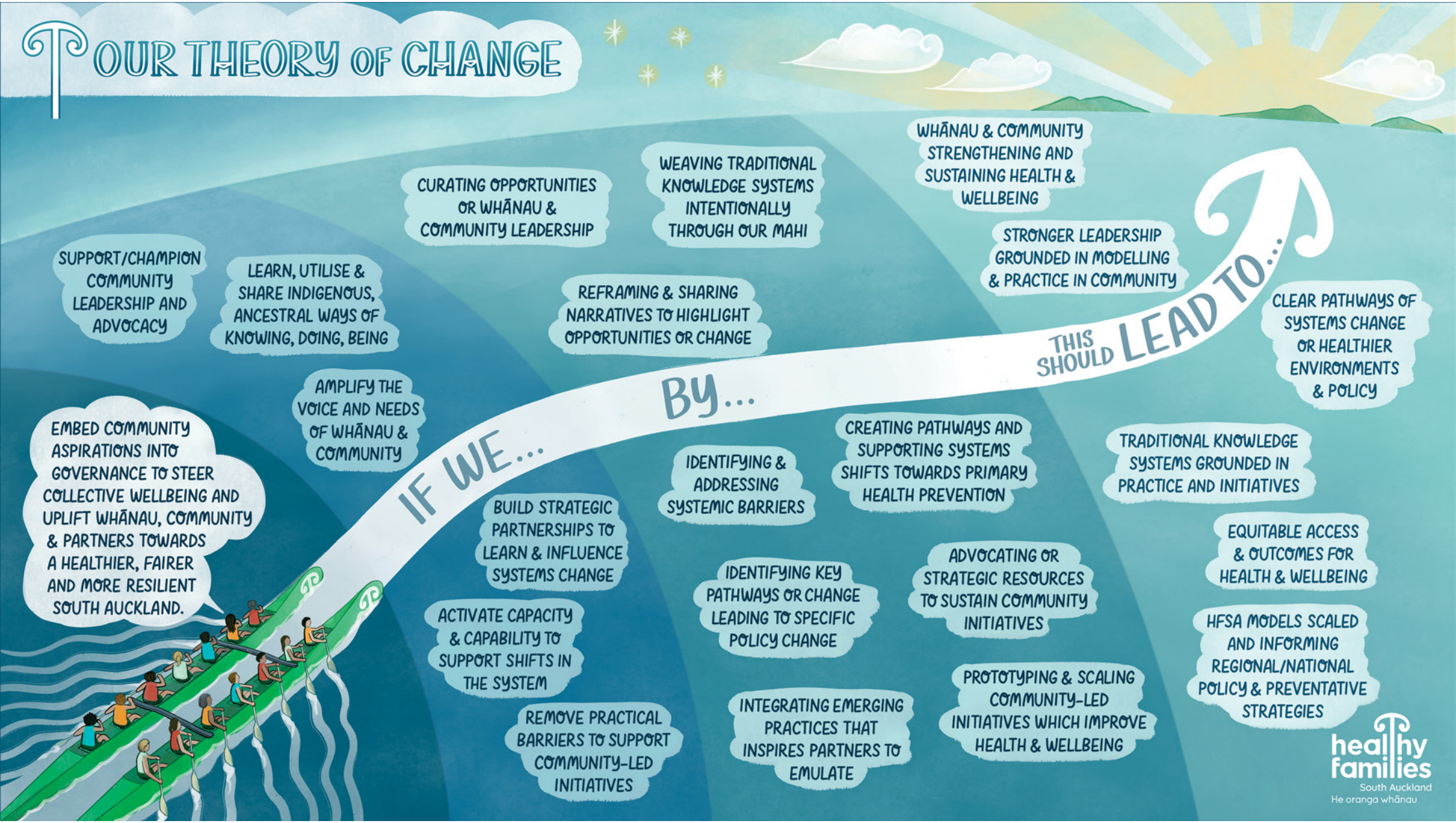
By affirming our values and priorities, we have also strengthened our shared purpose, helping us move forward together with confidence, clarity, and commitment.

The visual which represents this journey, Whāia te Pae Tawhiti, guides our collective gaze towards the distant horizon while staying grounded in the values, practices and outcomes that underpin our everyday mahi.

Inspired by our refreshed strategy, Healthy Families South Auckland is positioned to create pathways to wellbeing through collaborative, whānau-centred, and tikanga-based approaches.

The Whāia te Pae Tawhiti report and visual will be available at healthyfamiliessouthauckland.nz.


WHĀIA TE PAE TAWHITI
SEEK THE DISTANT HORIZON
6 CONDITIONS of SYSTEMS CHANGE
THEORY of CHANGE
HAUTŪ WAKA
NIHO TANIWHA
COMMUNITY DISSONANCE
MAKING AN IMPACT BY:
ACTIVATING COMMUNITY CAPABILITY
REBALANCING FOOD SYSTEMS
RETURNING to INDIGENOUS SYSTEMS
INFLUENCING LOCAL GOVERNMENT towards WELLBEING
COMMUNITY ACCESS to RESOURCES
A FAIRER, HEALTHIER SOUTH AUCKLAND
PASIFIKA HEALTH & WELLBEING
MĀTAURANGA MĀORI
FOOD SECURITY + FOOD SOVEREIGNTY
ACTIVE MOVEMENT
MENTAL HEALTH
RANGATAHI ORA
CAPTURING NARRATIVES
WHAT WE ALIGN TO
POPULATION HEALTH NEEDS
HEALTHY FAMILIES APPROACH
INNOVATIVE THINKING
COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS
AUCKLAND COUNCIL STRATEGIES
KOTAHITANGA
MANAAKITANGA
WHANAUNGATANGA
TINO RANGATIRATANGA
MANA MOTUHAKE
AKO
TE WHATU ORA
AUCKLAND COUNCIL
DIVERSE COMMUNITIES
HEALTHY FAMILIES
MANA WHENUA
PASIFIKA COMMUNITIES
VĀ
'OFA
FAKALILIFU
MATAVUVALE
TAPUAKIGA
OLA FETUFAAKI
SOALAUPULE
PIRI'ANGA
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP
WORKING ACROSS SYSTEMS
FOOD SYSTEMS
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT
MĀORI SYSTEMS
PASIFIKA SYSTEMS
LOCAL GOVERMENT DECISIONS AFFECT COMMUNITIES
INFLUENTIAL BUY-IN
EMBEDDED EQUITY VALUES
healthy families
South Auckland
He oranga whānau
TE HAERENGA
TE PAE TATA
TE PAE TAWHITI



Alongside Whāia te Pae Tawhiti, Healthy Families South Auckland has developed a new theory of change that strengthens the direction of its work going forward.

This refreshed framework reflects years of learning alongside whānau, community leaders and system partners, and brings together the values, insights and practices that have proven effective in shifting the conditions that shape wellbeing.

SYSTEMS THINKING

6 CONDITIONS of SYSTEMS CHANGE

THEORY of CHANGE

HAUTŪ WAKA

NIHO TANIWHA

Healthy Families South Auckland is guided by a central question that anchors its work each week:
What part of the system are we trying to shift?

This focus reflects a commitment to systems change, an approach that recognises the complexity of the world and seeks to shift the conditions that shape everyday life rather than adjust isolated parts.

By working alongside whānau and community leaders, the team supports South Auckland communities to influence the cultural, social and physical environments that determine health and wellbeing.

Systems change is a way of supporting people to navigate their own paths. Through this process, whānau can test and observe where positive shifts occur, whether in power or relationship dynamics, community practice, policy settings or mindset.

This approach is grounded in mātauranga Māori and enabled through the Hautū Waka framework, a shared wayfinding practice that aligns the team as they move forward together with clear purpose and collective leadership.

A key strength of Healthy Families South Auckland is its consistent use of Niho Taniwha, a values-led reflective practice that strengthens learning across initiatives.

Developed by the Auckland Co-Design Lab, Niho Taniwha draws on both mātauranga Māori and western knowledge and has been a core tool for the team for more than four years.

It supports systems innovators to track impact, reflect on emerging insights and build empathy for the communities and systems they work within. This consistency is essential because the six conditions of systems change are already embedded into Niho Taniwha, ensuring the team stays grounded in its purpose.

Weekly reflection sessions allow the team to explore what they are learning, how their work is influencing the system and what shifts are emerging for whānau.



MĀTAURANGA MĀORI APPROACH

Kia whakamuri te aronga whakamua — walking backwards into the future.

This whakatauki exemplifies the importance of remembering the history that has created current conditions while looking for ways to use indigenous practices to move forward.

Healthy Families South Auckland acknowledges the history of Aotearoa through contributions towards te ao Māori and places strong emphasis on a mātauranga Māori approach because it recognises that improving community wellbeing requires more than transactional relationships; it requires transformational ones.

The implementation of mātauranga Māori sees the use of our teams' cultural values in every interaction and initative. By adhering to these we commit ourselves to uplifting community voice and shifting mindsets through indigenous health strategies and practices.

Working alongside mana whenua has been central to this shift. Healthy Families South Auckland has spent years building meaningful relationships with iwi in South Auckland, including Ngāti Tamaoho, with whom we have collaborated in the kai systems space.

These partnerships ground us in the values, aspirations and narratives of mana whenua.





When we commit to these, we create opportunities for community environments to heal and regenerate.

These approaches also guide our own initiatives, particularly the Kia ora te Whānau hubs. The hubs created an opportunity for whānau to reimagine how their health and wellbeing is reflected within council facilities and how they may access support, share experiences, and lead local solutions based on what matters most to them.

They reflect a mātauranga Māori approach to innovation where traditional practices shape the development of healthy and supportive community environments.

By applying mātauranga Māori principles to design, decision making and collaboration, Healthy Families South Auckland has moved towards relationships where power and knowledge are shared.

Community voices are uplifted and cultural expertise is valued. Solutions reflect how whānau understand wellbeing, not as isolated behaviours, but as part of a wider ecosystem of connection.

PASIFIKA APPROACH

Healthy Families South Auckland continues to strengthen its Pasifika approach, recognising that the wellbeing of Pacific communities is shaped by a unique set of cultural, social, and economic realities.

Pasifika people make up one of the youngest and fastest-growing populations in Aotearoa, yet face some of the highest rates of preventable illness, food insecurity, and inequitable healthcare access. These complex challenges require solutions that are culturally grounded and community-led.



Our approach acknowledges that Pasifika wellbeing is holistic. Physical, spiritual, emotional, and social health are inseparable, and the strength of family and shared identity influences every aspect of life. This understanding shapes how we design and support initiatives in South Auckland, creating environments where families feel safe and where cultural leadership guides our direction.

The concept of vā sits at the centre of this practice. The vā is the sacred relational space between people, places, and the systems that influence their lives. When the vā is nurtured, relationships thrive and collective strength grows. We work to build relationships that are reciprocal, not extractive, and partnerships that are equal, not transactional.

Because Pasifika communities face multi-layered issues, from economic pressures to structural barriers, our approach is integrated. We look across food systems, physical activity, and neighbourhood design to support long-term shifts.

A key example is Project Wy Niu Growth, co-designed by HFSA. Over a 10-week programme, Pacific youth and parents promoted movement, healthy kai, and mental wellbeing together. Grounded in the values of vā and tautua (service), families celebrated milestones by walking, swimming, or reconnecting with their neighbourhood, even completing a half-marathon.

By maximising these cultural foundations, Healthy Families South Auckland continues to support Pasifika communities to lead health solutions that reflect their identity, aspirations, and collective vision.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT: HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT APPROACH

The Healthy Environment Approach was created by Healthy Families South Auckland in 2017 in partnership with Auckland Council services to weave health-centred design into the way local government operated.

Its aim was to make health a natural part of how the city planned, funded, and delivered services so that wellbeing became an everyday experience for South Auckland communities.

> *" At its heart the Healthy Environment Approach was about collaboration, equity, and systems change."*

By working alongside Council departments, local boards, and community partners, Healthy Families South Auckland helped shift how public spaces, events, and programmes were designed. The focus was on creating environments where the healthy choice was the easiest choice.

Through the Events and Community Grants process, Healthy Families South Auckland supported Auckland Council staff, event organisers, and vendors to apply Healthy Environment Approach principles to public gatherings.

This included ensuring free and visible access to water, providing seasonal and culturally relevant healthy kai, and embedding wellbeing criteria into event guides and grant applications. These changes influenced policy and practice, reshaping community expectations so that healthy events became the norm rather than the exception.

The Healthy Environment Approach was also applied in Auckland Council's leisure centres and childcare programmes. Through co-design workshops with staff and whānau, Healthy Families South Auckland supported teams to make healthy kai more accessible, from improving procurement and menu design to reducing preparation time.

This work resulted in thousands of healthier meals being served, along with a noticeable shift in attitudes towards wellbeing among staff and families alike.

At its heart the Healthy Environment Approach was about collaboration, equity, and systems change.

By strengthening local government's role in prevention and supporting shifts in power, resources, and mindsets, Healthy Families South Auckland and Auckland Council built environments where good health became part of the everyday fabric of South Auckland life.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT: KIA ORA TE WHĀNAU

Kia ora te Whānau is a community wellbeing hub initiative co-designed by Healthy Families South Auckland in partnership with Auckland Council and South Auckland whānau.

Together with Auckland Council teams including Active Communities, Connected Communities, and Māori Outcomes, Healthy Families South Auckland is helping reimagine how local government facilities can become spaces that nurture wellbeing and connection.

At its heart, Kia ora te Whānau places whānau voices at the centre of design. Through a series of community kōrero, three guiding pou (pillars) were identified, reflecting what matters most to local families:

- **Pou Hauora** – whānau are able to live well, happy and healthy
- **Pou Oritetanga** – equitable access to facilities that grow community wellbeing
- **Pou Mātauranga** – inclusive activation of spaces for learning and play

The initiative is being brought to life through test sites at Te Matariki Clendon Community Centre and Te Pātaka Kōrero o Waimāhia – Clendon Library.

These spaces have hosted creative and community-led activations such as a video series celebrating local programmes, murals inspired by South Auckland's stories and environment, and activities that invite whānau to shape what their wellbeing hub could be.

Healthy Families South Auckland's work with Auckland Council focuses on removing barriers so that whānau can more easily access council facilities and services. This includes simplifying booking and communication processes, improving coordination across Council teams, and ensuring each hub reflects local aspirations and identity.

Grounded in Te Ao Māori values, co-design, and equity, Kia ora te Whānau goes beyond delivering services and focuses on strengthening belonging, connection and wellbeing.

By embedding health and community voice into local government design, Healthy Families South Auckland and Auckland Council are helping to reshape how public spaces support the everyday wellbeing of South Auckland whānau.



FOOD SYSTEMS: POLICY AND FRAMEWORK

Healthy Families South Auckland has translated community practice into policy influence by working in coalitions and bringing frontline insights into strategic forums.

Through Healthy Auckland Together and partnership with Health Coalition Aotearoa, Healthy Families South Auckland has connected everyday community solutions with Council planning and national policy debates.

By documenting local evidence and sharing practical models, from community kai initiatives to food hubs, Healthy Families South Auckland has helped embed health-promoting principles into local plans and advocate for equitable access to healthy kai.

In 2024, Healthy Families South Auckland's practical examples of community-led food resilience informed national conversations about rebalancing the food system, ensuring those policy discussions included the realities of South Auckland whānau. This two-way approach, lifting community voice into decision-making while supporting councils and national organisations to act, is central to moving from pilot projects to systems change.



" the Good Food Road Map reframes food as a public good, a vehicle for health, culture and climate resilience "

Published in 2020 by Healthy Families South Auckland, the Good Food Road Map is a practical, values-based blueprint that has shaped food system thinking across Aotearoa.

Far from a list of projects, the Good Food Road Map reframes food as a public good, a vehicle for health, culture and climate resilience, and has become a foundational reference for the Healthy Families NZ Food System Theory of Change and other national frameworks.

Its simple, ambitious vision, that everyone in Aotearoa can access good food at all times, is deliberately broad: good food is affordable, nourishing, culturally appropriate, appetising, locally produced and environmentally sustainable.

The Good Food Road Map organises action around five interlocking pou (pillars): food equity, food sovereignty, food culture and traditions, food for health and wellbeing, and food resilience.

This systems lens encourages strategic collaboration, lifts up mātauranga Māori and local knowledge, and directs investment and effort toward structural change rather than short-term fixes. Since 2020 the Road Map has guided practitioners, local organisations, and policy conversations, providing a consistent, community-centred logic for scaling change in the food system across regions.



Artwork from Apelu John Crouch in 2023, celebrating the Whenua to Whenua initiative.

FOOD SYSTEMS:
THE PAPATOETOE FOOD HUB & THE FOOD HUB COLLECTIVE

The Papatoetoe Food Hub story is now part of South Auckland's food system DNA. What began in 2017 as a pop-up response to local need has grown into a resilient social enterprise and a testing ground for collaborative practice.

Conceived through conversations between Healthy Families South Auckland and local whānau, the Food Hub emerged to tackle food affordability, build skills and strengthen local food resilience.

These early kōrero shaped a shared vision for a community led space where people could learn, cook, work and create solutions together, grounded in the needs and aspirations of the local community.

With seed funding and support from Auckland Council, Foundation North, and in-kind contributions from a wide network of partners, the initiative matured rapidly. Contributions ranged from equipment and expertise to the iconic White Lady food truck, alongside a strategic partnership with New World Papatoetoe to rescue surplus food.

> *" a shared vision for a community led space where people could learn, cook, work and create solutions together "*

By late 2019, the Food Hub was employing eleven local people, delivering low-cost, nourishing meals, running cooking and food culture programmes, and using surplus, rescued, and upcycled food as a platform for experiential learning and skills development. The space quickly became a focal point for connection, learning and innovation.

To steward and scale this work, the Food Hub Collective was established as a collaborative governance and operational group, bringing together community organisations, funders and businesses to nurture long-term sustainability.

Today, the Food Hub Collective operates as an enabler, providing support and advice while demonstrating how upcycling, enterprise, cultural practice, and community leadership can combine to improve food equity, create local jobs, and model resilient, regenerative local food systems across Tāmaki Makaurau.

This kaupapa shows how community led initiatives can evolve from small experiments into enduring infrastructure, shaping local systems, informing policy conversations and advancing equitable wellbeing outcomes for South Auckland whānau.




PAPATOETOE
FOOD
HUB


SOUP
SCONE
$6






FOOD
HUB









COMMUNITY CHAMPION:
RAJU RAMAKRISHNA

Raju Ramakrishna has been involved in the Food Hub kaupapa since its inception in 2017 and now leads the Food Hub Collective, a pioneering community-led enterprise managing the Papatoetoe Food Hub.

As a director and co-founder, Raju's leadership has shaped the Food Hub's mission to transform surplus food into nourishing, affordable meals while strengthening food resilience and sustainability in South Auckland.

Under his guidance, the Food Hub has rescued surplus food from local businesses, community gardens and growers, creating quality, affordable and culturally appropriate kai during its six years of operation. This model not only reduces waste but embeds a circular economy at its core.

With support from Healthy Families South Auckland, Raju established key public, private and community partnerships to build financial resilience and influence wider food system change.

The Food Hub Collective leads initiatives to foster community understanding of food waste reduction and circular economy principles. One of these initiatives is the Whenua to Whenua experiential learning programme, offering hands-on experiences that reconnect people with the whakapapa of kai and their relationship to place.

In 2025, ImpactLab, commissioned by Auckland Council's Community Impact Unit, assessed the programme's social value. It estimated a return of $2.10 for every dollar invested, through better lives, higher incomes and reduced government costs, while also identifying indicators and a forecast model to guide future development.



" Together South Aucklanders can make a real impact, ensuring that everyone has access to nutritious food while fostering a sense of community and belonging."

"When the Papatoetoe Food Hub opened our aim was not only to provide good and affordable food but also to embed sustainable practices that communities could adopt, including zero waste," Raju says. "Food has to be good for the pocket, puku, and planet."

Raju's vision emphasises systems change rather than short-term fixes. He has led the Food Hub through shifts in response to COVID-19, adapting to takeaway, delivery and learning-focused models, and reinforcing the need to move from food dependency toward food sovereignty. His impact has been recognised by government and community alike.

ORANGA HINENGARO







Healthy Families South Auckland is expanding its work in the mental health and wellbeing space, with two initiatives showing how local partnerships can support resilience, confidence and strong relationships among young people and their whānau.

MAURI TAU PROGRAMME

The Mauri Tau programme, delivered with The Kindness Institute, has been piloted at a South Auckland high school.

It aims to strengthen the mental health and wellbeing of rangatahi by giving them practical tools for self development, emotional awareness and situational understanding.

Grounded in Te Whare Tapa Whā, the programme weaves mātauranga Māori through each session. Karakia, breathwork, waiata Māori and tākaro are combined with widely used mind body practices such as yoga, meditation and mindfulness. These approaches help rangatahi to build self esteem, deepen relationships and develop emotional resilience.

Early feedback from teachers and kaimahi indicates promising outcomes, with students showing increased willingness to share openly and use the tools provided.

This kaupapa reflects the six conditions of systems change by strengthening connections, shifting power dynamics and influencing mental models linked to youth wellbeing and indigenous approaches to mental health. A full evaluation of the pilot will be delivered in 2027.

PROJECT WY NIU GROWTH

Project Wy Niu Growth is another example of innovation in the wellbeing space.

Co-designed with Project Wy, this 10-week initiative focuses on Pacific students aged eleven to thirteen and their parents. It encourages families to be active together while supporting mental wellbeing, promoting healthy kai and wai and reducing the harms of smoking.

A community rewards programme encourages families by offering points for physical activity and for using Auckland Council facilities.

Findings show that families are more active and are visiting parks, recreation centres and swimming centres more frequently. Participants report feeling healthier and more connected, and parents note that structured group sessions at recreation centres and swimming centres help them overcome time pressures and stay motivated.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS: HEALTH COALITION AOTEAROA

Creating healthier, more enabling environments requires more than good intention. It requires shared understanding and collective action.

Healthy Families South Auckland and Health Coalition Aotearoa have brought partners together around a common kaupapa, forming a strong coalition with Toi Tangata, Moana Connect and the University of Auckland.

Together, this partnership is building a shared picture of the local food system, one that reflects the lived realities of communities, the structures shaping food access and choice, and the opportunities within local and central government policy, regulation and legislation to drive lasting change.

To develop a systems view of the local food environment from the grassroots to canopy, the project combined the lived realities of whānau, communities and leaders of Māngere with the perspectives of planners and policymakers at Auckland Council.

" ...this systems analysis maps the mechanisms linking the food system to both the causes and consequences of food insecurity, revealing where meaningful change can occur."

This approach recognises that Māngere communities hold deep knowledge about what nourishes, not just physically, but culturally, spiritually and collectively.

Food insecurity and systemic barriers are experienced daily in Māngere. Yet whānau and community groups have long been leading solutions grounded in mātauranga Māori and Pasifika ways of knowing and living. Mapping the local food system placed community voices at the centre, strengthening existing evidence and helping to identify policy levers that support local kai resilience.

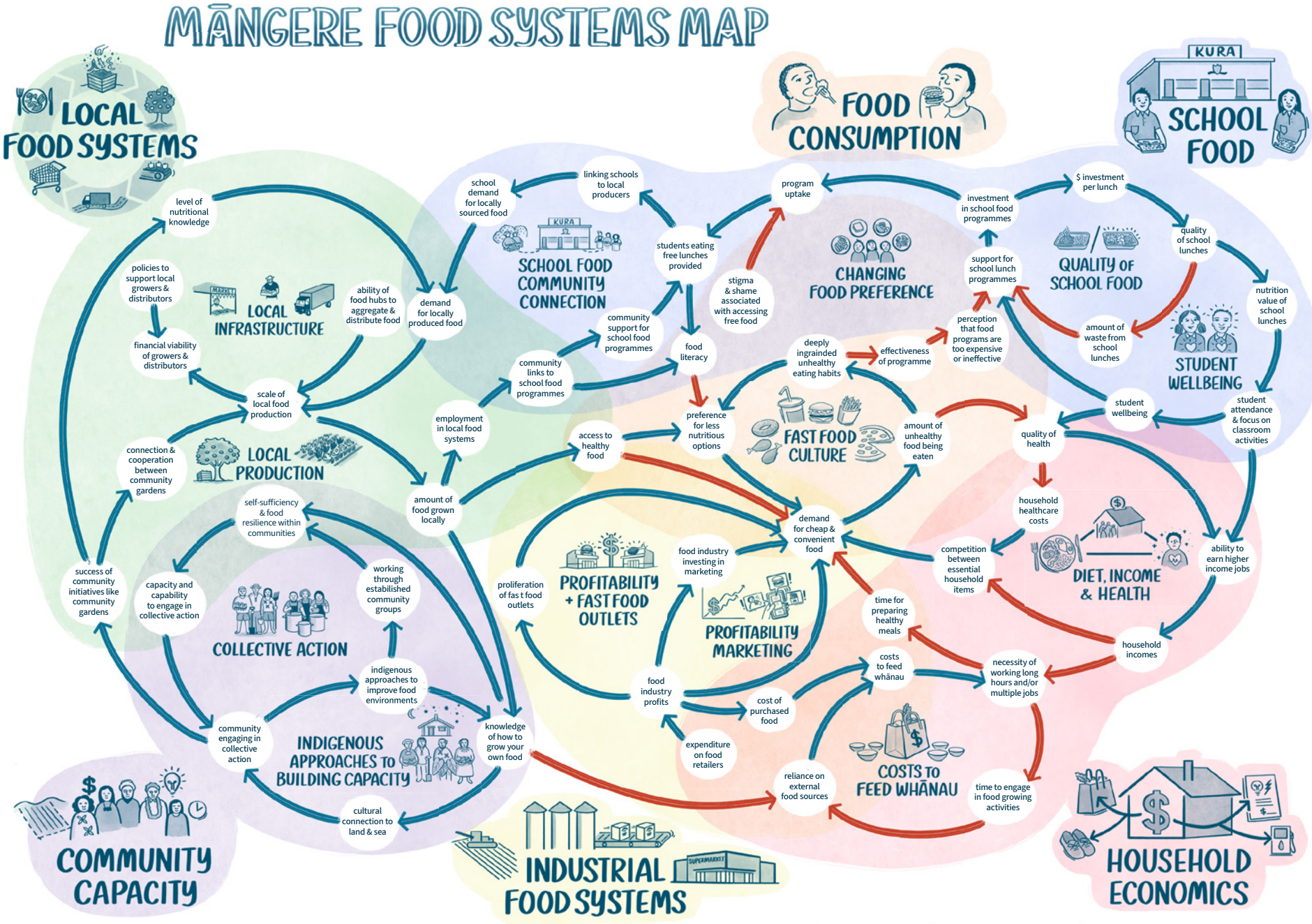
A first of its kind in Tāmaki Makaurau, this systems analysis maps the mechanisms linking the food system to both the causes and consequences of food insecurity, revealing where meaningful change can occur.

By creating a shared picture of current and potential impacts, and identifying clear opportunities for intervention, this work highlights the innovative initiatives already underway. It offers a visual understanding of how food system impacts are interconnected across communities and across local and central government systems.

This work is part of the findings of the He Kai Kei Aku Ringa - There is Food in My Hands report [1], which highlights opportunities to strengthen local food systems and food security.

This report celebrates what is already underway while supporting continued action, informing decision making, strengthening local initiatives, and helping us move together toward a future where nourishing kai is within reach for everyone.

1. Available via Knowledge Auckland Repository.



Mangere Food Systems map from He Kai Kei Aku Ringa report.

WHENUA TO WHENUA

Whenua to Whenua is an experiential learning programme delivered through the Papatoetoe Food Hub.

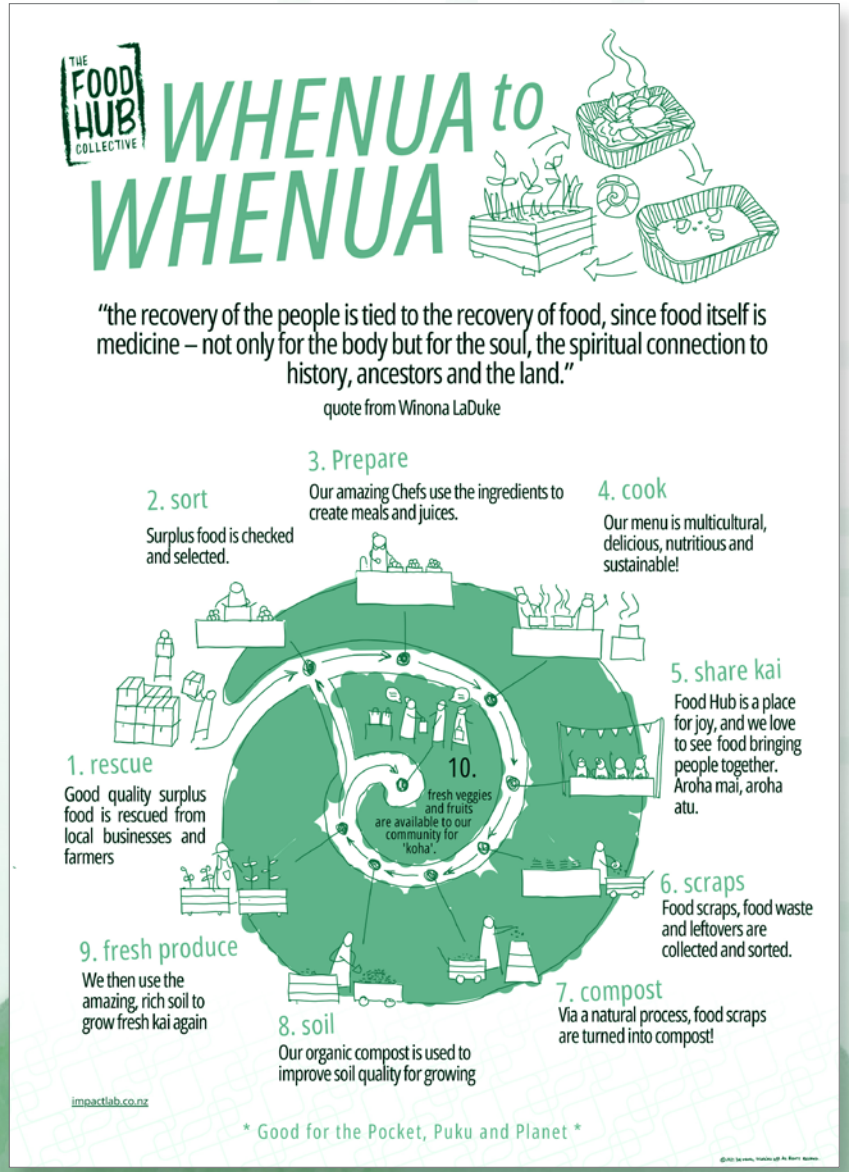
It was developed to reconnect people with the whakapapa of kai, strengthening the connections between food, land and community while supporting more sustainable ways of living.

Grounded in mātauranga Māori and community practice, the programme brings together hands-on learning, food growing, composting and waste reduction. It encourages participants to rethink food systems and their place within them, while building practical skills, knowledge and confidence.

Delivered by the Food Hub Collective and supported by Healthy Families South Auckland, it contributes to a wider effort to strengthen local food resilience through community-led action.

Whenua to Whenua creates space for people to reconnect with place, culture and one another. As part of the wider Papatoetoe Food Hub model, it shows how locally led initiatives can support long-term wellbeing and build stronger, more resilient communities.





FORECASTING SOCIAL VALUE WITH IMPACTLAB

In 2025, a GoodMeasure Foundations and Forecast Report[2] by ImpactLab, commissioned through Auckland Council's Community Impact Unit, assessed the impact and future value of Whenua to Whenua.

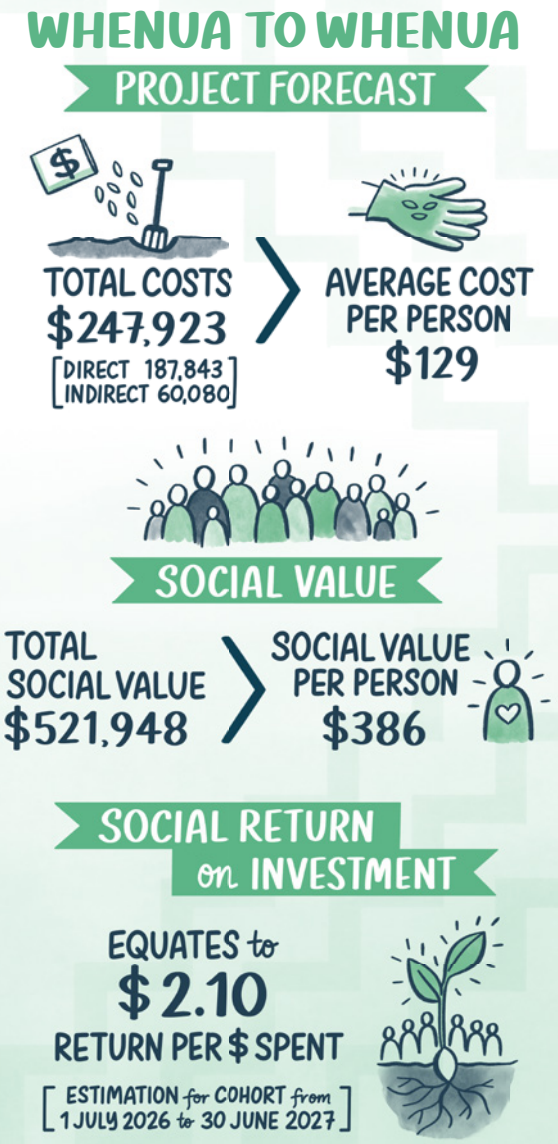
The analysis estimates a return of $2.10 in social value for every dollar invested, placing the programme alongside leading initiatives across the sector. This reinforces the role of locally led, culturally grounded approaches in delivering long-term wellbeing outcomes.

The report identifies a set of interconnected outcomes achieved through the programme, including:

- *Improved wellbeing and a stronger sense of belonging*
- *Increased food knowledge, skills and confidence*
- *Strengthened community connection and trust*
- *Reduced food waste and positive environmental impact*
- *Pathways to employment, training and leadership*

These outcomes show how Whenua to Whenua can influence multiple parts of the food system while addressing the social, cultural and environmental determinants of health. They also highlight the importance of building community capability and resilience over time.

The analysis identifies key indicators and a forecast model to support future planning and growth, providing a practical foundation for scaling the programme. The findings reinforce the value of investing in prevention and community-led approaches that generate lasting public good.



2. Available via Knowledge Auckland Repository.

LOOKING FORWARD — TUROU HAWAIKI

Turou Hawaiki has signalled both our intent and the breadth and depth of our work.

As we continue to explore ways of working focused on community potential and systems-level change, this part of the report represents a turning point rather than a destination.

Our vision remains strong: a fairer, healthier and more resilient South Auckland, and a Tāmaki Makaurau where wellbeing is shaped by people's connection to whānau, culture and place.

Our experience shows that communities hold significant untapped potential. They bring leadership and critical expertise through their networks, cultural practices, local knowledge and collective capability.

Operating within Auckland Council gives us a unique opportunity to influence change. Council's policies and operations strongly shape the determinants of wellbeing and provide levers to support improved health outcomes. Healthy Families NZ is a deliberate systems intervention that helps create the conditions for locally led action, as demonstrated through initiatives like Kia Ora Te Whānau Hubs and our work with Health Coalition Aotearoa.

At the same time, Tāmaki Makaurau continues to face significant and unequal burdens of preventable chronic disease. These are shaped by wider determinants such as housing quality, food insecurity, transport patterns, financial stress and limited access to healthy environments. Economic security remains a growing structural barrier to equitable outcomes.

We know what works. Evidence from practice and community-led approaches shows that improving wellbeing requires acting early, working upstream, reducing exposure to unhealthy environments and strengthening protective factors. Mātauranga Māori and other cultural knowledge will continue to guide our approach to systems change.

> *" Our vision remains strong: a fairer, healthier and more resilient South Auckland, and a Tāmaki Makaurau where wellbeing is shaped by people's connection to whānau, culture and place."*

As we continue this work, shifts in practice, investment and capability will strengthen our influence. By linking community voices to council levers, we can shape systems and environments that improve whānau health. Working in complexity requires attentiveness to context. Strengthening our use of tohu and indicators, alongside practice-based evidence and Indigenous knowledge, will support us to test and scale approaches with communities, creating the conditions for lasting, health-promoting change.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Healthy Families South Auckland acknowledges the many partners, communities and leaders who have contributed to this work and continue to shape a fairer, healthier South Auckland.

We acknowledge Auckland Council, including the Community Impact Unit, and the local boards of South Auckland for their ongoing commitment to prevention and wellbeing. Their leadership, resourcing and willingness to work alongside communities create the conditions for systems change to occur.

We extend our deep appreciation to the communities and neighbourhoods of South Auckland whose knowledge, leadership and lived experience sit at the heart of this kaupapa. In particular, we acknowledge mana whenua for their enduring role as kaitiaki and for the mātauranga, values and guidance that ground and strengthen this work.

We recognise the Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora for its continued support of Healthy Families NZ, enabling long-term investment in prevention and community-led approaches. We also acknowledge Health Coalition Aotearoa and Healthy Auckland Together, whose partnership and collaboration have strengthened collective action and policy influence across the region.

This work is guided by Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a foundational framework, affirming our commitment to equity, partnership and shared decision-making.

Together, these relationships reflect the collective effort required to support community wellbeing and create lasting, meaningful change across South Auckland.

This report was written by the Healthy Families South Auckland team, prepared by Turei Mackey and designed by Jacqui Chan.

Turou Hawaiki: Working Together for a Fairer, Healthier South Auckland

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He oranga whānau

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Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau