

THE PETER MCKENZIE PROJECT: PARTICIPATORY PHILANTHROPY IN ACTION

~ an initiative of the JR McKenzie Trust ~



Peter McKenzie Project

BACKGROUND TO THE APPROACH

In 2021, PMP decided to move towards a more participatory philanthropic model in which ngā Kaikōkiri and the Committee could share power and work together to make decisions about strategy, resourcing and grant-making.

Conversations showed that most participants favoured ngā Kaikōkiri and the Committee working more closely together on strategic decisions. There was strong interest in ngā Kaikōkiri joining with the Committee to decide on the areas and aspects of upstream work to focus on, the selection and implementation of proactive and joint projects, and ways of building capacity and bringing other voices on board. They were interested, too, in deciding how to leverage more resources for this work. There was also interest from ngā Kaikōkiri in deciding on grant-making criteria, and some involvement in decisions around grant making selection, approval and evaluative processes.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATORY PHILANTHROPY

While it was acknowledged the outcomes of moving to a participatory approach would develop fully over time, several initial benefits were identified:

Sharing power: Both ngā Kaikōkiri and the Committee members, expressed a strong interest in "sharing power."

Te Tiriti o Waitangi based philanthropy: A participatory approach aligns with Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles and partnership obligations.

Enhanced decision-making and a better use of resources: Bringing the considerable expertise and experience of both the PMP Committee and ngā Kaikōkiri together was seen as a way to identify gaps, emerging issues, creative and innovative courses of action and adapting or evolving quickly in a changing environment.

Improving the funding process: For ngā Kaikōkiri, sharing the knowledge what good support looks like helps reduce power differentials and potentially enhances the experiences of applicants and those funded.

It increases ownership and accountability: While ngā Kaikōkiri contribute to the PMP vision and goals, participating in strategic decisions strengthens their sense of ownership of the project.

It is the right thing to do: Participatory approaches to decision-making promote diversity, equity and inclusion. It is evidence of PMP authentically shifting power by "walking the talk."

It broadens knowledge and connections: Ngā Kaikōkiri have different networks and connections, which will help PMP to identify new initiatives.

CHALLENGES

Several challenges have also been identified, and we are learning that:

Authenticity: Participatory philanthropy requires more than lip service, and ongoing attention will need to be paid to the authentic sharing of power.

Who might participate: Consideration will need to be given to the voices of those with lived experience, including how they might be engaged and supported.

Conflicts of interest: Mechanisms will need to be in place to deal with conflicts of interest.

Resource intensive: Active contribution required by participatory philanthropy can require greater time, emotional and intellectual commitments, particularly for those already undertaking challenging, time-consuming work.

Speed of decision making: There are times in which agility and the ability to make timely decisions is required.

Lasting approach: The approach will need to be embedded in the funding structure so that it can withstand changes to committee membership or personnel.

CONCLUSION

A participatory funding model can potentially improve funding processes and decision-making. It is noted that any changes will need to be evaluated to ensure that the process works well, is not too onerous, enhances outcomes and responds to the findings.

The next step in the PMP journey is for ngā Kaikōkiri and the Committee to work out how to further strengthen this mahi.



It was acknowledged that while our work around participatory philanthropy is at a welcome starting point, the structure and how it might be implemented is evolving and there are still questions which will need to be considered in progressing this work.