

Ngā Awa river restoration programme

Engagement report 2023

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Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

Introduction and purpose

The Ngā Awa river restoration programme is committed to restoring biodiversity through shared leadership with our Treaty partners, and collaboration with communities at place. This commitment is reflected in the [Ngā Awa strategy overview](#).

Every 2 years the programme takes stock on how well our engagement approach is landing, assesses how well it is delivering restoration in partnership and collaboration with others, and what can be learned to take forward into the future.

The purpose of this document is to report on the engagement evaluations undertaken at each of the rivers in 2023. Elements of success, key challenges and learnings for the programme as a whole are also highlighted.

The evaluations involved the engagement advisor carrying out in-depth interviews with each river ranger, and in some cases alongside technical advisors, cultural advisors and tangata whenua.

Ngā Awa would like to undertake future assessment using the tool with our project partners and collaborators to gain a community wide sense of the effectiveness of our engagement at place.

Process overview

This engagement approach is based on best practice tools that have been field-tested and fine-tuned to fit our work at DOC. In addition to the participation spectrum (Appendix 1) we have created a step-by-step process that best serves landscape-scale engagement for biodiversity (Figure 1). This process is matched by an engagement matrix that provides a continuum for each step, with assessments ranging from 'at risk' to 'excellent' (Appendix 2).



Figure 1: Stepwise process for effective landscape-scale engagement.

Cover photo: Ngā Awa whānau being welcomed at Ōtākou Marae, May 2023. Image: Sarah Wilcox

Assessment matrix

The community engagement assessment matrix (Appendix 2) uses a continuum to reflect on the quality of the engagement, no matter where on the participation spectrum the engagement occurs. The matrix has numerical values to help determine the strength of the progression in engagement.

Each section of indicators is a key ingredient for effective engagement projects or programmes at landscape-scale. Together they reflect the journey and main components of successful engagement at place. The matrix can also help guide work and build capability.

Comparing summary results across years shows the progress of our work. There is a need for caution as circumstances outside our control may change the results.

The community engagement assessment matrix was used to evaluate level of engagement for each Ngā Awa river. The matrix contains a purpose statement for each set of values. The numerical values are:

1. At risk
2. Fair
3. Good
4. Excellent

Quantitative results

Overall, Ngā Awa is moving steadily along the continuum towards a standard of excellence.

Figure 2 shows the overall river engagement scores, Figure 3 has a more detailed breakdown for each assessment parameter for each river, Figure 4 shows an average of the scores by parameter.

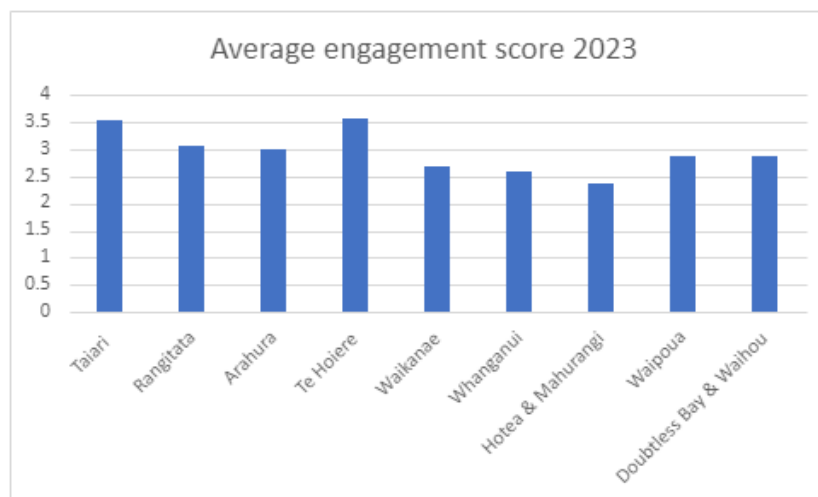


Figure 2: Summary of engagement score by river.

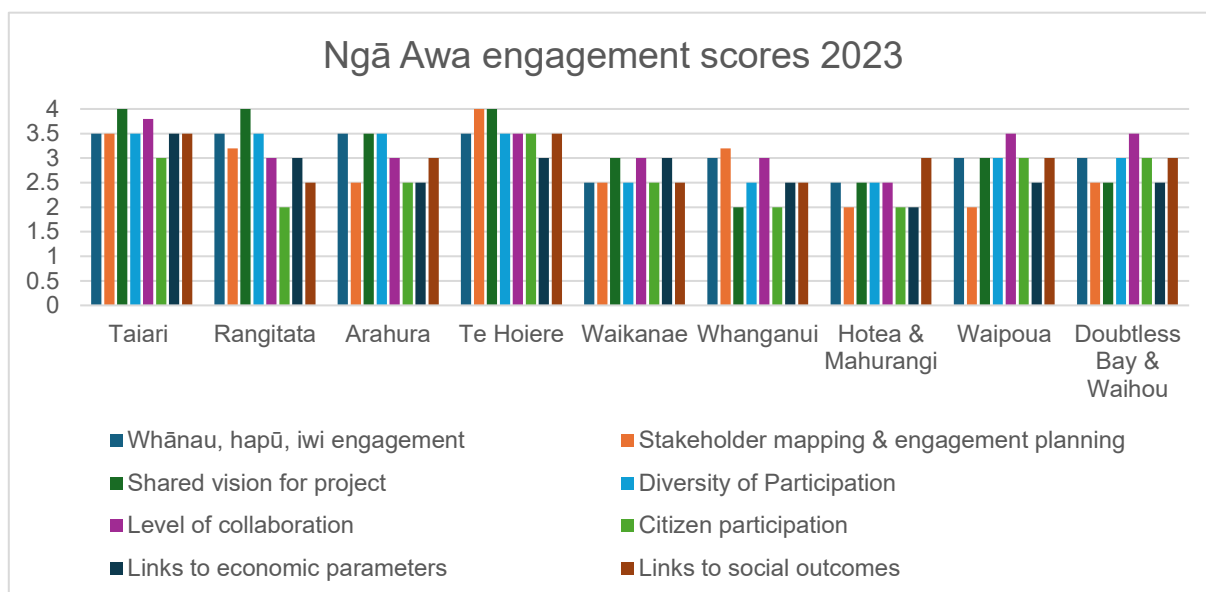


Figure 3: Engagement scores by parameter for each river.

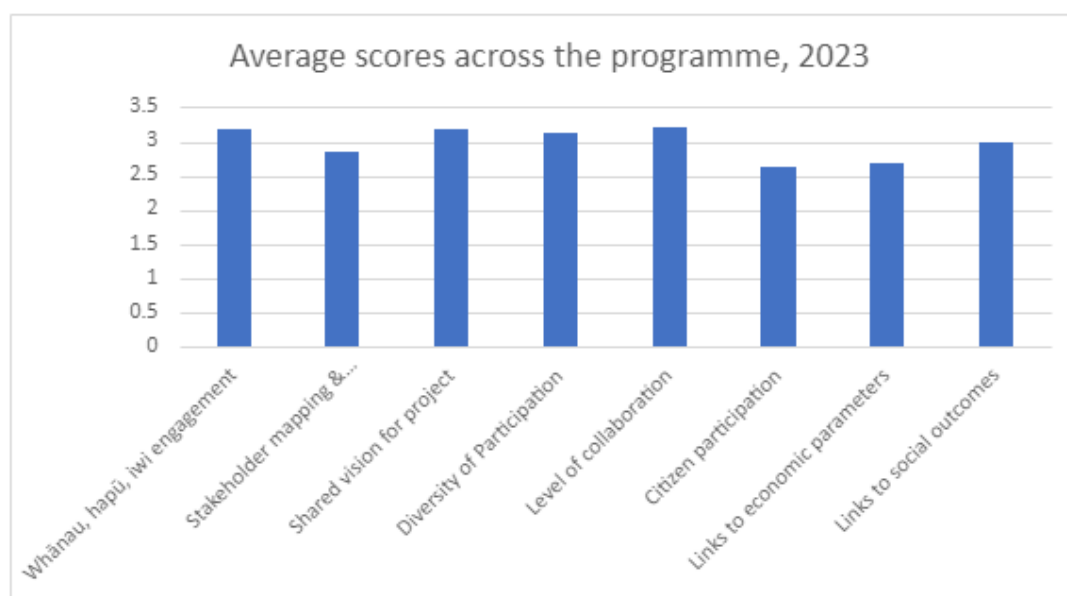


Figure 4: Average scores across the programme by parameter.

Qualitative results

We captured qualitative data for each parameter. This was used to provide insights into what is working, where the challenges are and what we can take forward for the programme.

Criteria 1: whānau, hapū, iwi engagement

Overall score: 3.18 (Good)

This parameter aims to ensure we work in true partnership, aiming for shared design and leadership, sharing the caretaking of the future.

What contributed to success

- Interconnection of different mana whenua from our rivers – the Ngā Awa national hui at Ōtākou Marae in May 2023 was a highlight and received plenty of endorsement.
- Working in clusters and focus groups to size the work.
- Co-design and shared leadership eg, DOC and rūnanga co-chairs both scanning for potential weakness or opportunity, which reduces risks and increases outcomes.
- Finding ways of sharing resourcing for the work.
- Jobs for Nature led by our Treaty partners: capability development, leadership openings, potential training options as well as social and economic outcomes.
- Involving mana whenua in field work: monitoring, eDNA, invertebrate assessments etc.
- Integration of te ao Māori principles into our work (eg, tikanga for monitoring work, guiding principles of collaboration etc).
- Shared vision that is strongly held by our Treaty partner.

Challenges on the journey

- Diversity of hapū for some rivers (124 for Whanganui!). To build full connection needs time and resources.
- Consistent relationships are important to our Treaty partners. Project staff changes and committee changes have an impact and need careful transition eg, mihi whakatau to transition.
- Internal changes for Treaty partner can bring an unsettled period and potential mixed messaging as new people find their place. Can pause or delay engagement and action on the ground.
- Tensions between iwi, hapū and rūnanga can be challenges, but hold potential for collaboration.
- Competing interests affecting capacity for the Treaty partner (eg, other funding coming in with its own requirements).

Insights and recommendations to take into the future

- Holding wānanga as a way of deepening the work and community connections is coming to the fore.
- Flexibility, patience and responsiveness are key ingredients, especially when there are internal changes for iwi, hapū or rūnanga.
- Cultural monitoring is still emerging in some of the rivers. Needs to be integrated with other science-based data. Careful respect of intellectual property, especially around potential harvesting sites.
- Hold further hui that allow all mana whenua across our rivers to catch up and share learning. Give plenty of space for each mana whenua group to present.

Criteria 2. Strategic stakeholder mapping and engagement planning

Overall score: 2.86 (Fair towards Good)

This parameter aims to ensure we take the time to involve partners and communities affected by the project from the start. This opens a sustainable pathway into the future.

What contributed to success

- Multi-lens engagement mapping and risk assessment influence planning, actions and increase returns. Repeat mapping acts as a stock take of the project. Plan provides a solid foundation for the work ahead.
- Keeping it intuitive and agile assists with positive outcomes, adaptive leadership approach.
- Having partners and collaborators as part of the engagement planning ensures it is owned across the catchment.

- Keeping the engagement plan live, agile with clear milestones and regularly reviewing against goals and actions.
- Clarity on priority engagement focus ensures successful engagement outcomes across the catchment.
- Complementing the engagement planning process with facilitated exploration of cultural and environmental values.

Challenges on the journey

- Challenges to engaging with stakeholders can include staff turn-over, responding to climate events that shift the community's focus (eg, disruptive floods), new emerging interest groups, and unexpected resistance or emerging conflicts (which is a normal part of group dynamics informally referred to as 'forming, storming, forming').
- Prioritising relationships with Treaty partners can mean that when changes occur within their organisation, we need to slow down the work and put the needs of the community on pause. In this scenario it is important to continue communications to key stakeholders and the wider community.

Insights and recommendations to take into the future

- Important to either keep engagement plan as a live document and update as we go, or have regular engagement reviews (6 monthly or at least annually).
- Worthwhile to carry out risk assessment process whenever a project enters a new phase.
- If full engagement mapping has not been completed, this creates the risk of missing key stakeholders, potential supporters and resource opportunities. It also carries the risk of a higher level of resistance.
- Not following the steps in the engagement planning process misses out on developing and sharing a more holistic approach to our work. The four kete benefits analysis has a great impact on sectors of the wider community wanting to become part of this work.

Criteria 3. Shared vision for project

Overall score: 3.18 (Good)

This parameter aims to ensure the vision is not directed and driven by DOC, but is a collaborative vision with support across partners and stakeholders. Collaboration also ensures the vision is live and not just a paper exercise.

What contributed to success

- Vision guided the action and the planning of the project.
- Vision becomes more diverse as participation expands. Some visions are already fully inclusive and therefore can remain unchanged. Some vision statements include cultural principles on how we work together in collaboration.
- As most river projects started in the collaborative space they are well along this pathway, with one river scoring an 'excellent' ranking for this parameter.

Challenges on the journey

- Developing project visions with each hapū or cluster group becomes a big task when there are many hapū present. The visions of each hapū and cluster group are important starting points.
- On occasion there is concern around biodiversity monitoring information being shared, which impacts the vision process. It is helpful to address this early.

Insights and recommendations to take into the future

- An important aim is for all rivers to have a shared, collaborative vision in place.
- For rivers with a firmly embedded vision it is the application of our vision, often leading to integrated catchment planning that is the growing edge.

Criteria 4. Diversity of participation

Overall score: 3.12 (Good)

This indicator aims to ensure that collaboration is not exclusive, but that all affected communities can participate in shaping the project and their future.

What contributed to success

- Ngā Awa has real potential for showcasing the diverse collaboration, reflected in governance, working groups and integrated catchment management. True diversity includes Treaty partner, agencies and community representation. All projects have local Treaty partner in a co-design role.
- Engaging young people is very rewarding. Examples include monitoring training, young leaders on marae, school involvement. This will build future sustainability of the programme.
- Jobs for Nature opened rangatahi participation, some are now in leadership roles
- Interconnection to other regional projects eg, interpretation on Central Otago Rail Trail, bat restoration work in Te Hoiere.
- Some rivers have a very strong base and are open to others joining in. This includes hapū, government agencies, community groups, regional authorities, forestry, roading, industries and farming.

Challenges on the journey

- Strong focus on hapū and the need to take time for this can delay reaching out to other parts of the community.
- Disruption from staff changes and internal issues for partners and collaborators can regress or pause the success of our work.
- Sometimes regional authorities are not aligned, which can delay input from others.

Insights and recommendations to take into the future

- Youth participation is only emerging in a couple of rivers, and we need to expand this to future-proof our work. It may be appropriate for mana whenua to lead this work sometimes. Enviro schools could be potential collaborators.
- Keep seeking diverse input, don't get stuck in a rut, don't get too comfortable with the people who are already involved.

Criteria 5. Level of collaboration (external)

Overall score: 3.22 (Good)

This parameter aims to ensure we aim beyond the minimum requirements and build quality relationship across sectors and communities. It also tests for collaboration on the ground and not just on paper.

What contributed to success

- Work planned and delivered in co-design and with collaborative approach.
- Hands-on projects with multiple participants build connection and participation, eg, planting, monitoring, eDNA surveys, restoring inanga spawning sites, signage, etc.

- Jobs for Nature projects have greatly enhanced collaboration potential in some places. We need to ensure that other action on the ground grows in parallel.
- Catchment coordinators bring the community on board in ways we could not do ourselves and contribute to emerging leadership and deepening commitment. Often done in collaboration with New Zealand Landcare Trust.
- Forest & Bird and Whitebait Connection are great contributors to collaboration and integration of other local work.
- Ruapaka Wetland restoration is an example of Ngāti Kuia, Fonterra, DOC, Marlborough District Council, other agencies and landowners working together.
- Resourcing, training and technical advice for landowners increases participation.
- Cultural stories and archaeological site assessments as foundation for new collaborations.
- Fish passage analysis, salinity monitoring, geomorphology, kanakana project all have potential to grow collaborative action.
- Action and projects expand beyond the river, including the forests. Predator control expands collaboration.

Challenges on the journey

- Some collaborative projects and action plans are waiting for the resolution of internal partner or stakeholder issues.
- Tension between hapū and rūnanga, and between sectors of community.
- To get collaboration on the ground will take time, agility. Be responsive with all concerned.
- Some monitoring programmes have funding criteria that are more rigid and less compatible with co-design.

Insights and recommendations to take into the future

- Linking all collaborative projects to the project vision and making this visible across community.
- Creating events and wānanga to bring together different groups who have the potential to participate and collaborate.
- Maramataka application as a way of getting further collaborative projects and interest. Shared training in using the maramataka and applying its principles to projects across the rohe.
- Creating a register of collaborative projects for Ngā Awa as a whole.

Criteria 6. Citizen involvement

Overall score: 2.62 (Fair)

This parameter aims to ensure participation reaches across communities and is not limited to experts.

What contributed to success

- Citizen involvement currently mostly through action, collaborative projects on the ground and shared leadership.
- Education is proving to be a good connection point: entry point for hapū, home schooling, Papa Taiao, 'Ko wai au', working with 'alternative education' and LEARNZ have great potential.
- Wānanga as a regular connection point for hapū, catchment groups, landowners, community associations.
- Sharing tools and training: eg, monitoring training, bat project, SHMAK, eDNA, Whitebait Connection, NIWA training open to all collaborators
- Developing citizen science bird monitoring and photo points, kayak initiative.

Challenges on the journey

- Kauri dieback disease is a barrier to involvement in one catchment
- Initial engagement focused on governance and working groups, then sector groups. Need to start expanding our reach in this space.

Insights and recommendations to take into the future

- Design a citizen science approach for Ngā Awa to enable all our rivers to expand this work.
- Continue with training local people to expand our reach and participation.
- Encourage schools to adopt parts of streams, wetlands, catchments into the future.
- Continue to offer across community wānanga and training events.
- Supporting opportunities that arise eg, Tiaki Maniototo.
- Expand our internal capability for sharing citizen science tools.
- Treaty partner representatives (kaitiaki) from marae, hapū, rūnaka being invited and trained as monitoring team for the future.

Criteria 7. Project links to economic parameters

Overall score: 2.68 (Fair)

This indicator aims to ensure sustainable kaitiakitanga is practiced and economic viability is built alongside ecological aims.

What contributed to success

- Jobs for Nature has shown very positive social, cultural and economic impacts, especially through expanding employment and lifting capability. It has been a catalyst for exploring other sustainable economic opportunities connected to restoration.
- Sustainable land use and diversification research and actions have shown initial benefits and opportunities for the future. Dung beetle release and the LUDO (land use diversification opportunities) workshop are examples.
- Subsidised fencing and planting provided economic benefit for farmers.
- Exploring other economic options led to new economic sources like mānuka honey and tea, cultural services and tourism, tōtara plantings.
- Native nurseries have been successfully established in three Ngā Awa projects with a view to being commercially viable in the long term.
- Contracts for fish passage remediation, summer monitoring and kaitiaki rangers add employment and income to communities.

Challenges on the journey

- Big floods impacted fencing and invited a rethink on how to work with the effects of climate change related events.

Insights and recommendations to take into the future

- Important to communicate economic outcomes and future potential more widely, especially across DOC's freshwater team.
- Further land use diversification, sediment research and trials increase the sustainability of our work.
- Economic analysis of climate change impacts has potential for research partnerships.
- A strong job and employment creation theme, and the development and availability of local sustainable resources and products, which can be built on.

Criteria 8. Project links to social outcomes

Overall score: 3 (Good)

This parameter aims to ensure the social benefits arising from the project are captured. Social impact assessment becomes part of the journey mapping.

What contributed to success

- Consciously building positive connections and rapport across community has visible social benefits and deepens a sense of belonging and care for the river.
- Accessing different sectors of the community to expand our reach: education, farming, recreation, mahinga kai, food gardens, etc.
- Jobs for Nature has been very impactful, building connections to community and river and lifting social cohesion. Inviting whānau to key events and graduation further expands our reach.
- Catchment groups are key to build social cohesion across the rural landscape.
- Linking to other community projects builds positive social connection.
- Sharing local cultural history and values bridges social gaps and debunks myths.

Challenges on the journey

- Not all of our hapū are involved and inter-hapū tension needs to be managed carefully.
- Polarity of views across the communities and 'myths' about what others think or desire.
- Wider community still needing to be involved, going beyond key partners and sector groups.

Insights and recommendations to take into the future

- Increased connection to the natural environment shows social benefits and enhances communities.
- Mahinga kai restoration is a potent connection and cultural education tool.
- It is important to note and share the benefits emerging for communities involved through all communication channels.
- Community events in the freshwater space grow enthusiasm and participation. Ensure timing allows for maximum participation and that the themes are relevant to the audience.

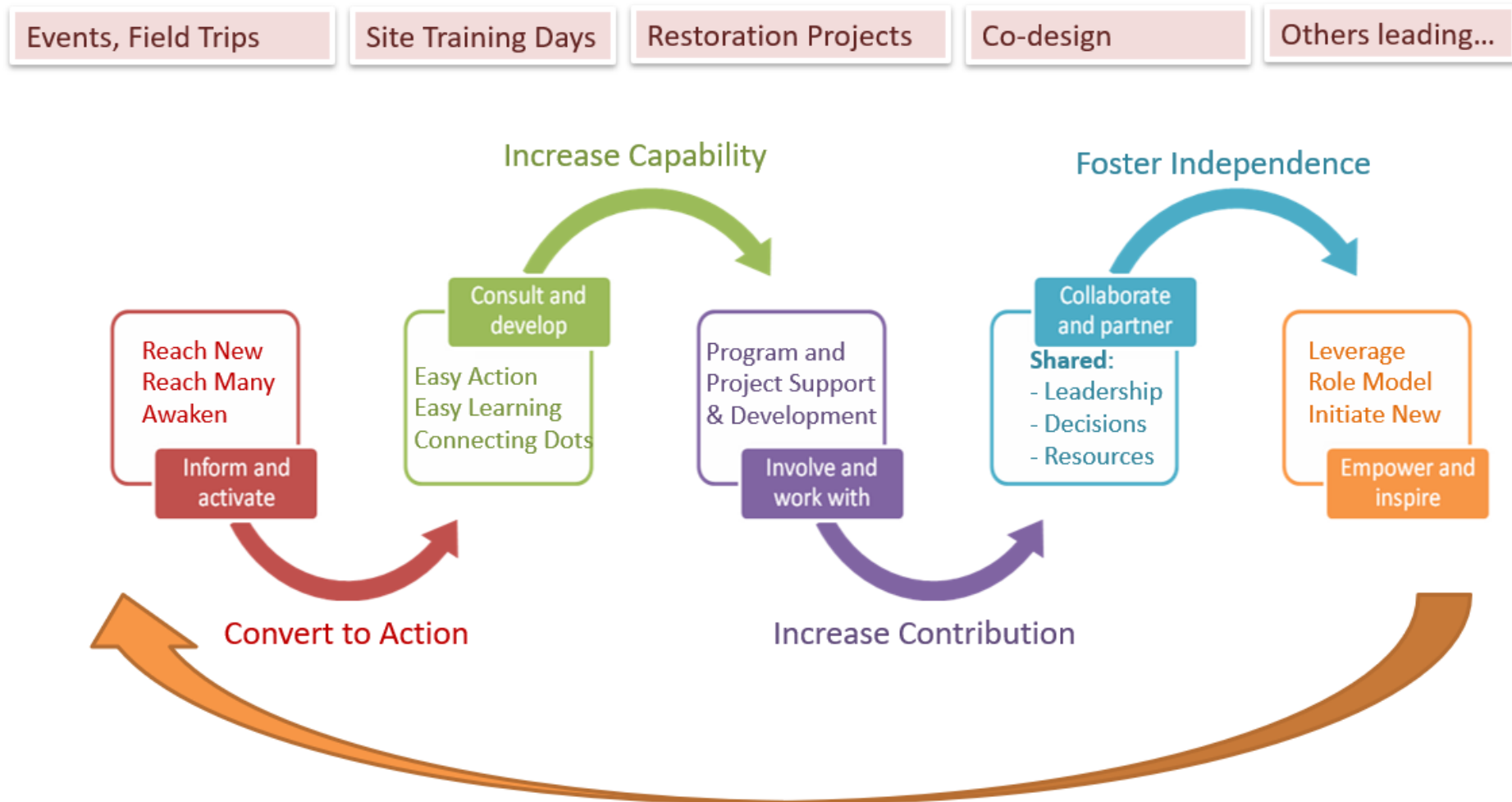
Looking to the future

Ngā Awa is evolving each year, and some rivers will be progressing into a new space for engagement. Funding through Jobs for Nature and the Ministry for the Environment has contributed to some remarkable achievements for biodiversity and for communities. We need to explore how best to grow and maintain these achievements.

Over time, the challenge will be to build a sustainable framework with leadership shared across partners and collaborators. Expanding citizen involvement is also critical to ensure local communities strongly support and protect each river and all linked catchments.

This may require shifting our focus to the public, via school projects, citizen science projects and wānanga at place. In the future, it would be preferable to assess engagement progress with more input from the partners, stakeholders and communities involved. This will provide a snapshot of where engagement is at and collaboratively help identify the next steps forward.

Appendix 1: Participation spectrum



Appendix 2: Community engagement assessment matrix

1. Whānau, hapū and iwi engagement

Indicator and purpose	At risk (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)	Assessment score and comment
Whānau, hapū and iwi engagement <i>To ensure we work in true partnership, aiming for shared design and leadership, sharing the caretaking for the future.</i>	<p>Lack of iwi connection.</p> <p>Reactive approach when working with whānau, hapū and iwi.</p> <p>Telling our intention instead of asking what is important to them.</p>	<p>Initial engagement with iwi and hapū.</p> <p>Exploring the shared vision and gaining an understanding of each other's values and priorities.</p>	<p>Shared vision with whānau, hapū and iwi and alignment of values.</p> <p>Proactively engaging with iwi and hapū, exploring how to work on this project together.</p> <p>Iwi and hapū are resourced for active participation.</p>	<p>Actively working in co-design and shared kaitiakitanga for the ecosystem.</p> <p>Cultural monitoring is integrated across all aspects.</p> <p>Rangatiratanga, whakapapa and kaitiakitanga are understood and applied.</p>	

2. Stakeholder mapping and engagement planning

Indicator and purpose	At risk (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)	Assessment score and comment
Stakeholder mapping and engagement planning <i>To ensure we take the time to involve, from the start, partners and communities affected by the project.</i>	<p>No mapping or engagement planning process in place.</p> <p>Stakeholder engagement is reactive and lacks strategic criteria.</p>	<p>Use of participation spectrum and Four Kete Benefits analysis as the basis for a proactive approach to 'enabling' stakeholders.</p>	<p>Full mapping and engagement planning process integrated into the project planning.</p> <p>Risk assessment is flowing from this in relation to engagement and communications.</p>	<p>Proactive live engagement plan ensures diverse, strong collaboration and participation.</p> <p>Regular review and adjustment of engagement goals and actions.</p>	

3. Shared vision for project

Indicator and purpose	At risk (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)	Assessment score and comment
Shared vision for project <i>To ensure it is not DOC directed and driven. To ensure it is live and not just a paper exercise.</i>	No project vision in place.	Project vision has been discussed, and a shared vision is under development.	Shared project vision is in place, having been created with partners and collaborators and reflecting shared values.	Shared project vision is created through diverse participation. This vision, and the goals sitting below it, guide the work.	

4. Diversity of participation

Indicator and purpose	At risk (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)	Assessment score and comment
Diversity of participation <i>To ensure collaboration is not exclusive. To ensure all affected communities can participate in shaping the project and their future.</i>	DOC-led and dominated.	DOC, iwi and hapū and govt agencies work together on the project.	Project working team includes iwi and hapū, govt agencies, local industries and representation from affected communities.	Diversity of participation is reflected in governance, specialist advice, and project teams and includes all sectors of affected communities. Young people have a voice on the project.	

5. Level of collaboration (external)

Indicator and purpose	At risk (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)	Assessment score and comment
Level of collaboration (external) <i>To ensure we aim beyond the minimum requirements and build quality relationships across sectors and communities.</i>	No collaboration in place for this project.	Collaborative projects emerging.	Collaborative projects in place, contributing to vision and desired outcomes.	Co-design and co-leadership in place for the future health of ecosystems and communities. Relationships with collaborators are strong and resilient.	

6. Citizen involvement

Indicator and purpose	At risk (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)	Assessment score and comment
Citizen involvement <i>To ensure participation reaches across communities and is not limited to experts.</i>	Lack of opportunity for citizen engagement.	Opportunities for citizen participation identified and shared.	Increasing citizen participation towards the vision and goals of the project.	Citizen science is an integral part of the project. Citizen participation, education and community sectors play an active role in achieving the set vision and goals.	

7. Project links to economic parameters

Indicator and purpose	At risk (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)	Assessment score and comment
Project links to economic parameters <i>To ensure sustainable kaitiakitanga is practised and economic viability is built alongside ecological aims.</i>	Only negative economic impacts are considered.	Potential economic benefits identified. Starting to build an awareness of sustainable land use.	Potential economic benefits further explored. Sustainable and diverse land use and innovative business research shared and/or initiated.	Sustainable and diverse land use exemplars in place. Economic benefits of restoration becoming visible. Circular economy explored.	

8. Project links to social outcomes

Indicator and purpose	At risk (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)	Assessment score and comment
Project links to social outcomes <i>To ensure the social benefits arising from the project are captured. Social impact assessment becomes part of the journey mapping.</i>	People have little or no connection to their local ecosystem.	People are connected to and value their local ecosystem.	People have an active connection to their local ecosystem for recreation, mahinga kai, family outings and community events.	The local ecosystem is recognised as a meeting place for social connection, recreation, families and visitors. Local and adjoining communities benefit from the local ecosystem.	