

*Lifehack thanks our funders.  
We especially salute the passion,  
commitment, bravery and  
knowledge of the young people  
and adults who worked together,  
and with us, to explore new ways to  
help young people flourish.*

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[www.lifehackhq.co](http://www.lifehackhq.co)

# LIFEHACK: ENHANCING THE CONDITIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO FLOURISH IN AOTEAROA

A summative assessment of the impact and lessons to share from Lifehack: a four year prevention project funded by the New Zealand Government to reduce mild to moderate mental health issues in young people aged 12 to 19.



LIFEHACK

# HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

This report summarises Lifehack's learning about designing youth wellbeing innovation programmes to achieve greater impact.

Section One places Lifehack in the context of other youth mental health interventions.

Lifehack's last four programmes and their impact are profiled in Section Two. These provide practical examples of how we went about growing the conditions for youth wellbeing in our communities and the opportunities we identified for impact.

The theory of change and Impact Model that underpinned Lifehack's intervention and evaluation approach follow in Section Three. This shows our approach to growing and measuring important changes in the conditions for youth wellbeing in our communities. Mini impact stories provide examples of how programme outcomes are realised in practice in at different levels of the system. Core contributions to knowledge and networks are also described.

The final sections share insights gained from Lifehack's work into supporting innovation in youth wellbeing and recommendations for future investment.



## Want to support youth-led lab, start up, social enterprise and innovation approaches to youth wellbeing?

Section Four describes what we learned about the pitfalls and opportunities of start-up approaches for creating sustainable and successful youth wellbeing initiatives.

[GO TO SECTION 4](#)



## Making policy about youth wellbeing, suicide prevention, education and youth development?

Section Six describes what we learned about opportunities to support platforms and place-based interventions that use existing resources within the system to activate conditions for wellbeing.

[GO TO SECTION 6](#)

## JUMP TO INSIGHTS GAINED



## Working on the front-lines to influence youth wellbeing or responsible for workforce development?

Section Five shares what we learnt about building capability and the interdisciplinary skills and knowledge we identified as important to innovation in youth wellbeing.

[GO TO SECTION 5](#)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lifehack was a prevention project aiming to build the capacity of the service system to support the wellbeing of young people aged 12-19 years in Aotearoa New Zealand. It was funded by the Prime Minister's Youth Mental Health Programme (YMHP)<sup>1</sup>. This report summarises the outcomes and learnings from Lifehack.

Lifehack put young people at the centre of service innovation. Between 2013 and 2017, Lifehack evolved its ways of working in response to evaluation and reflection on its many activities. It went from an 'app' focus, to working with people across the system who supported youth mental health and wellbeing. Working with people from diverse backgrounds and points of influence in the service system modelled Lifehack's desire to move the *system* toward helping young people to flourish. Lifehack provided more than skills. It provided the opportunity for connection across sectors, disciplines and cultures, providing a safe space for dialogue and experimentation.

Lifehack upskilled participant's capacities in the areas of wellbeing, co-design processes, start-ups, collaboration and Aotearoa New Zealand's unique cultural and historical background. Learning processes modelled the principles of Lifehack. They were collaborative, respectful of diversity and diverse knowledges, and focused on connecting people across

sectors and disciplines (whanaungatanga) to foster innovation. Learning opportunities included weekend hackathons, residential hui for people working with youth, co-design labs, place-based learning initiatives and national resource sharing.

An Impact model, informed by the literature and practice, provided a line of sight from problem contexts, to interventions, to outcomes for young people. Lifehack programmes were also monitored against outcomes at practitioner, organisational, sector and community levels. Evidence suggests Lifehack was successful at changing practices across the systems it touched, as well as building networks across organisational and sectoral silos. Now Lifehack is complete, others in the system are taking up Lifehack methods. A summary of our key insights to inform future initiatives is outlined below:

## Opportunities and challenges for growing youth wellbeing in New Zealand include:

- 1 **Continuing to invest in interdisciplinary capability** especially co-design and primary prevention capacity across institutions
- 2 **Recognise co-design** as a means to build sustained youth and community capability – this is inseparable from creating more effective responses and initiatives
- 3 **Developing our capacity to enable young people to be an integral part of the youth workforce**, including youth-led and peer responses

- 4 **Recognising the need to specifically resource and support cross-sector efforts and capacity**, modelling the ways of working we want to encourage and that we know are necessary for systems change
- 5 **Building capacity and support for place-based initiatives** that build community capacity and influence youth wellbeing through structural change (not just individual health interventions)
- 6 **Acknowledging colonial history and creating safe spaces** for Māori and Pākehā to explore our history and our identities (ko wai au, who I am), and to learn new ways of working together.
- 7 **Fostering a more responsive and learning mindset** to be applied to intervention design and evaluation.
- 8 **Creating a coherent and co-ordinated policy framework for youth development** that brings together disparate interventions under a collective outcomes framework
- 9 **Transition to a flexible and responsive relational contracting system** that fosters innovative and collaborative ways of working and the building of evidence from practice
- 10 **Advancing the opportunity for better integration of education and wellbeing outcomes** - 'learning experiences that build protective factors'

1. <http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/mental-health-and-addictions/youth-mental-health-project/youth-mental-health-project-initiatives/lifehack-youth-approach-wellbeing>

# 1. ABOUT LIFEHACK

**Lifehack was a systems-level intervention in youth mental health and wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand.** Lifehack aimed to build the capacity of the system to support the wellbeing of young people.

Lifehack was launched in 2013 as part of the Prime Minister's Youth Mental Health Project (YMHP<sup>2</sup>). The YMHP focussed on young people aged 12 to 19 with, or at risk of developing, mild to moderate mental health issues. Lifehack funding was managed through the Ministry of Social Development as part of the Social Media Innovation Fund. The fund aimed to support innovative use of social media technology to improve youth mental health and emotional wellbeing, foster breakthroughs and shape innovative approaches.

## What made it distinctive

Lifehack was given a relatively open brief about how to approach the task of reducing mild to moderate mental health issues for young people. Bypassing a traditional services model, it quickly established itself as a platform that would provide people with the skills and opportunities to develop and enhance their own interventions. Between 2013 and 2017, Lifehack experimented with various kinds of interventions to determine which approaches were most effective at creating wellbeing impact.

As a result of ongoing reflection and evaluation of outcomes, Lifehack's focus evolved. The initial start-up led mission to support 'technology apps for youth mental health', showed limited ability to create sustainable projects or outcomes, and raised a number of ethical questions. So, Lifehack programmes moved away from a focus on new teams generating new ideas to enabling community-level change agents and locally responsive initiatives that were already embedded.

The 2011 'Gluckman report', which led to the development of the YMHP, identified a number of systemic factors that contribute to negative health outcomes for young people in their transition to adulthood<sup>3</sup>. Lifehack's interventions addressed a number of these including:

- developing sector and youth workforce capability
- promoting wellbeing knowledge and frameworks
- modelling co-design approaches that led to more inclusive and effective service delivery, and
- supporting increased cross-sector and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Lifehack interventions promoted a focus on primary prevention, increasing protective factors and strengths-based skills development that built on

existing assets in the community, rather than a focus on harm reduction and deficits (it didn't ignore these either). Lifehack also helped to address the imbalance of mental health programmes that focus on individual and medical interventions, instead targeting change at a structural and environmental level where the conditions for wellbeing are set – institutions such as schools and councils, health services, community amenities, youth development programming and so forth.

We reasoned that, in line with the well-known social-ecological model originating from public health prevention<sup>4</sup>, Lifehack should seek to create change at multiple levels of New Zealand society to reach and positively influence more young people in a scalable and sustained manner.

A core aspect of the programmes included building the capability and connections between people, organisations and communities that could maintain and scale new approaches to working together for youth wellbeing. We expected to consistently increase impact beyond a single intervention or initiative – looking to create positive ripple effects in any given situation.

How did we do this? The following section profiles four of Lifehack's final programmes showing how we went about growing the conditions for wellbeing in communities.

2. <http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/mental-health-and-addictions/youth-mental-health-project/youth-mental-health-project-initiatives/lifehack-youth-approach-wellbeing>

3. Gluckman et al. 2011 Improving the Transition, Reducing Social and Psychological Morbidity During Adolescence, A report from the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor Retrieved <http://www.pmcsa.org.nz/improving-the-transition/>

4. See MODULE 1: What are the Social Ecological Model (SEM), Communication for Development (C4D)?, [https://www.unicef.org/cbsc/files/Module\\_1\\_SEM-C4D.docx](https://www.unicef.org/cbsc/files/Module_1_SEM-C4D.docx) and Positive Youth Development in Aotearoa: 'Weaving connections - Tuhonohono rangatahi' (p19), <https://www.wfct.org.nz/assets/Uploads/PYDA-2017.pdf>

## 2. HOW LIFEHACK ENABLED IMPACT: INTERVENTIONS TO BUILD WELLBEING INNOVATION CAPACITY (EXPERIMENTS IN SYSTEMS CHANGE)

The profiles of Lifehack's last four programmes are practical examples of how we went about growing the conditions for youth wellbeing in our communities. They help to communicate what we learnt about creating impact as well as some of the key areas and opportunities that existed for building conditions for youth wellbeing. More detail on each of these programmes is available at [www.lifehackhq.co/initiatives](http://www.lifehackhq.co/initiatives).



### Oro - Upper Hutt

*An experiment in place-based programming which built co-design and youth wellbeing capability. It launched new locally responsive and connected initiatives and increased conditions for youth wellbeing through changes in attitude and practice at a community and sector level.*

#### WHAT

Six week part time intergenerational place-based community collaboration to support increased co-design and youth wellbeing knowledge and capability and development of community-led prototypes

#### WHO

25 people aged between 14 and 50 from the local community and Upper Hutt Community Youth Trust, ACC, Community Action on Youth and Drugs (CAYAD), Upper Hutt City Council and Upper Hutt City Library.

**“The biggest mindset change for me was to look outside the traditional “Youth Sector” “Social Sector” networks to create positive change in these areas. Youth and Social sectors far too often network and work within their own sector to try and create change and this limits thinking/ideas/new skills/new contacts/resourcing.”**

**“Connecting with other people from different organisations, and young people, has been so beneficial. I wouldn't have had access, or had known about, the people and connections and opportunities that have only developed because of Oro.”**

#### Example of changes we saw as a result:

- Increased system integration through new collaborations, partnerships and sharing of resources e.g., Kickstart Coffee - a coffee cart that also provides employment, skills and accreditation for young people
- Community gaining access to latent resources to support wellbeing initiatives for groups of young people facing significant challenges e.g three prototypes funded during the programme
- Increased motivation and commitment by significant institutions in the community in valuing young people as leaders/co-designers e.g., Spearhead Leaders, a youth-led leadership development programme supported by local council
- A sustained investment in youth co-design and youth development practices e.g., the community-led Hackathon post Oro in 2017.

## Palmy North

*An experiment on the impact of short training and modelling of co-design practices to improve how youth health and wellbeing is enabled in a specific region.*

**“It was motivating to see the passion and dedication that others had about helping youth in Palmerston North. Which motivated me to want to do more through the Youth Council and possibly through collaborations in the future.”**

### WHAT

Two day experiential training workshop to build co-design capability, motivation and opportunity for cross-sector partnerships in Palmerston North.

### WHO

12 participants from the Palmy Youth Network including representatives from DHB, Corrections, YOSS, student associations and local young people.

**“My motivation and commitment has increased in going out looking for extra wrap-around support and courses and programmes for our youths [...]. Going to meetings with others that work with youth.”**

### Example of changes we saw as a result:

- Greater understanding of the barriers facing young people in accessing current services and the negative outcomes that result from poor experiences
- Opportunities identified and motivation increased to improve youth participation and service integration in the local area especially for young people currently not well-served in Palmerston North
- Increased connectivity across different sectors and the network



## Flourishing Fellowship 2017

*Existing Intervention: 2017 was an experiment in ways to get greater impact from the programme through deeper Te Ao Māori programme integration, a more specific focus on recruiting those with existing opportunities for influence, and sustaining programme momentum and impact by building ties between cohorts and in specific geographical locations.*



**“I will be using some of the skills to up-skill the youth leaders I have and also some engagement skills that could be transferred into their personal work and professional pathways.”**

**“I have already used the wellbeing plan with a group of young people that I work with...Have been influenced by taking “time” to get the wellbeing of the group as the priority which has had a greatly positive influence on the connection and depth of discussions we’ve been able to have.”**

### WHAT

A part-time three month residential Fellowship involving three on-site hui. The Fellowship focused on creating national, cross-sector and regional networks and connections, building wellbeing, co-design and systems change capability and supporting the development of initiatives that respond to specific needs of important groups of young people in communities where Fellow’s work and live

### WHO

A group of 22 practitioners representing front line youth and service workers, managers and policy analysts from across different sectors including health, community, faith groups, education, justice, police and education, spanning ten regions across Aotearoa

### Example of changes we saw as a result:

- Formation of new networks and collaborations that support cross-sector collaboration resulting in a more networked sector in Aotearoa (e.g working collectively on youth initiatives in Northland)
- Application of more inclusive and participatory co-design approaches with young people in education and community settings resulting in more opportunities for young people often not engaged to become involved
- Increased confidence, motivation and support between the youth workforce reducing risk of burnout
- A shift from individual programme and service thinking to understanding opportunities for system level changes and interventions
- A critical mass within communities where multiple community members have attended Lifehack events

## Community Wellbeing Collaboration Ormiston Junior College (OJC)

*Experimenting with bringing a cross-sector collaboration into a school setting. As a result, merging design-led wellbeing processes with existing youth-led school processes to achieve mutually beneficial wellbeing and educational outcomes with young people.*

**“Receiving feedforward from community members was important as they are the ones that the project involves.” [Learner comments on sharing their prototype with community members during community connect day]**



**“It’s made me think about my communities better. There are more people coming in from the community and getting to know our community. I just thought that communities will stay in their houses, but they actually come to our expo. This is important because of diversity, so that we start to know each other.”**

### WHAT

A community cross-sector collaboration set in a school context supporting an authentic inquiry learner-led wellbeing design process. It involved eight on-site workshops across Term 2 and a Community Connect Day where representatives from community organisations worked with learners on their prototypes.

### WHO

62 deaf, hearing impaired and hearing learners (aged 11-15) at Ormiston Junior College, OJC teaching Staff, team members from Lifehack, Changing Minds and Auckland Libraries and a further 20 community representatives on Community Connect Day from Howick Local Board, Howick Youth Council, Auckland Libraries, Counties Manukau DHB, Healthy Families, CAYAD and Flipping East.

### Example of changes we saw as a result:

- Youth-led wellbeing initiatives being adopted by the school and influencing community outcomes leading to further opportunities for youth development in school and community and higher student engagement
- Increased wellbeing for learners through confidence in creative expression and engaging in new experiences, increased sense of identity and connection to peers and community, celebration of cultural identity and diversity
- Greater awareness by staff and learners of wellbeing concepts and new confidence to apply tools and practices for co-design and collaboration
- New partnerships and connections between and for learners, school and community collaborators helping to build social cohesion and wellbeing in this emerging community



### 3. HOW LIFEHACK MEASURED IMPACT: AN EVOLVING THEORY OF CHANGE

Lifehack's programme design and impact monitoring were underpinned by an Impact Model<sup>5</sup> developed in the 2016. The Model (overleaf) located Lifehack within a broader policy intent and articulated how Lifehack identified opportunities for impact. The Lifehack Impact Model showed who Lifehack worked with, the nature of the interventions and the impacts Lifehack sought to produce across the system. The model drew together practice-based evidence (learning developed through practice between 2013-2016) and evidence-based practice, such as known risk and protective factors for youth mental health and wellbeing<sup>6</sup> and established models of behavior and organisational change and learning.<sup>7</sup>

The approach is underpinned by Michie et al's COM-B model<sup>8</sup>, which identifies Capability, Opportunity and Motivation as integrated factors required for individual or organisational behaviour change to occur. Growing capability isn't enough if people lack the motivation or the opportunity to apply their skills. Applying COM-B as a lens strengthened Lifehack's ability to design for greater impact. It helped the team focus on who we worked with to help create change. That is, partners with the opportunity to influence conditions for youth wellbeing and who are already working with important groups of young people not currently well served by the system. It also provided a way to monitor and measure the kinds of outcomes and impact across the dimensions of capability, opportunity and/or motivation and to identify the most likely causes that contributed to such changes.

5. <https://lifehackhq.co/lifehack-resources/impact-model/>

6. See for example:

Risks to mental health: An overview of vulnerabilities and risk factors (2012) World Health Organisation Retrieved <http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/risks-to-mental-health-an-overview-of-vulnerabilities-and-risk-factors/>

Positive Youth Development in Aotearoa. (2011) Wayne Francis Charitable Trust Group - Youth Advisory Group 2011: Retrieved from <http://ir.canterbsury.ac.nz/handle/10092/6132>

Youth Mental Health Project, Research Review Summary, Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit (Superu), MAY 2015 Retrieved, [www.superu.govt.nz/publication/youth-mental-health-project-research-review-report](http://www.superu.govt.nz/publication/youth-mental-health-project-research-review-report)

7. See for example

The Behaviour Change Ball Hendriks et al. (2013). Proposing a conceptual framework for integrated local public health policy, applied to childhood obesity - the behaviour change ball. *Implementation Science*, 8(46).

KASAB Killion, J., & Hirsh, S. (2008). *Assessing impact*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.

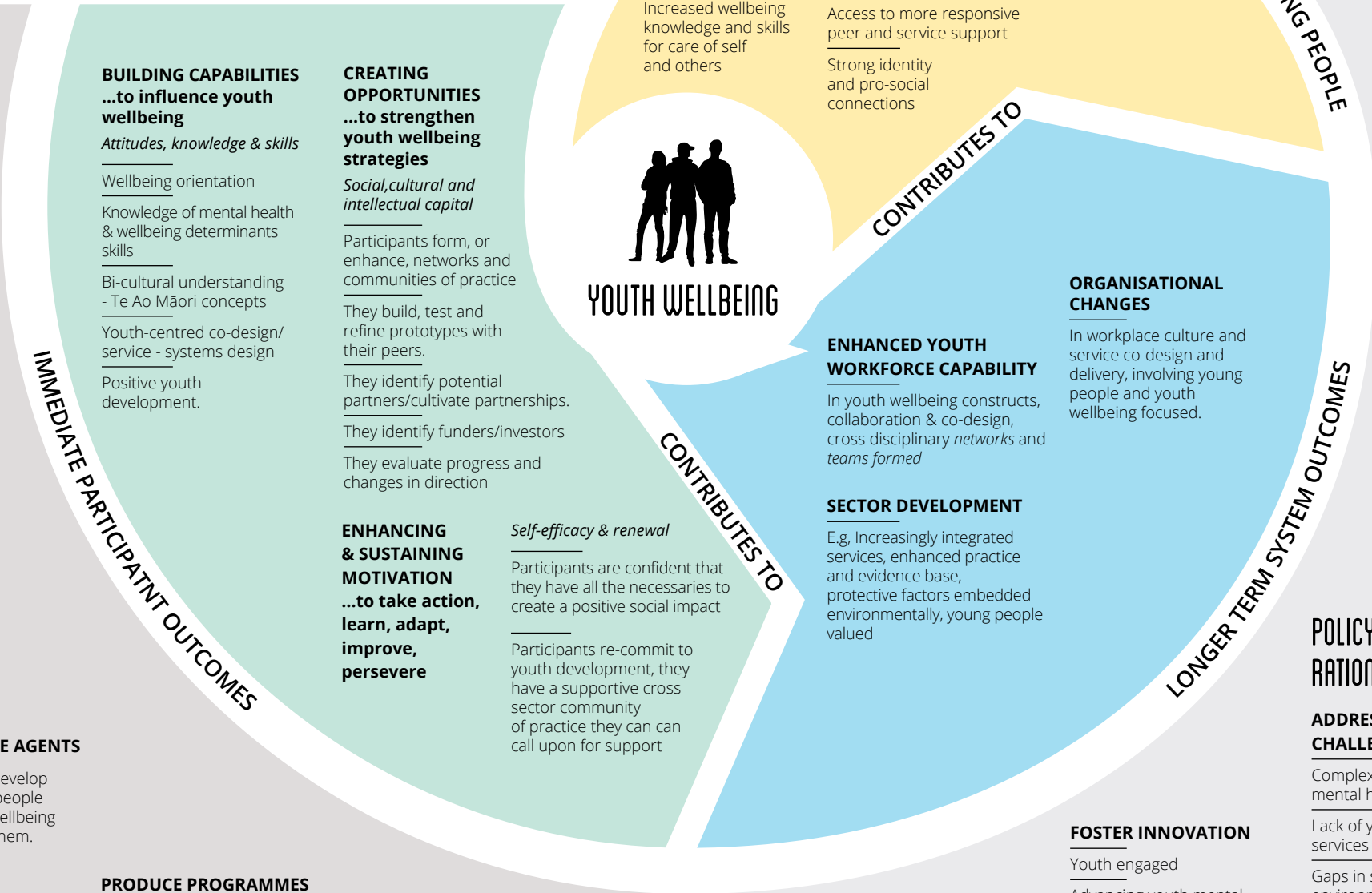
8. Wheel Michie, S. (2014). *The Behaviour Change Wheel A Guide To Designing Interventions*, Silverback Publishing



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# LIFEHACK'S IMPACT MODEL

how it expects to exert influence over time to improve the wellbeing of young people



YOUTH WELLBEING

### **BUILDING CAPABILITIES** ...to influence youth wellbeing

*Attitudes, knowledge & skills*

- Wellbeing orientation
- Knowledge of mental health & wellbeing determinants skills
- Bi-cultural understanding - Te Ao Māori concepts
- Youth-centred co-design/ service - systems design
- Positive youth development.

### **CREATING OPPORTUNITIES** ...to strengthen youth wellbeing strategies

*Social, cultural and intellectual capital*

- Participants form, or enhance, networks and communities of practice
- They build, test and refine prototypes with their peers.
- They identify potential partners/cultivate partnerships.
- They identify funders/investors
- They evaluate progress and changes in direction

### **ENHANCING & SUSTAINING MOTIVATION** ...to take action, learn, adapt, improve, persevere

*Self-efficacy & renewal*

- Participants are confident that they have all the necessities to create a positive social impact
- Participants re-commit to youth development, they have a supportive cross sector community of practice they can call upon for support

- Feeling valued and experiencing supportive environments
- Opportunities to participate, lead, create and influence
- Access to more responsive peer and service support
- Strong identity and pro-social connections

**ENHANCED YOUTH WORKFORCE CAPABILITY**  
In youth wellbeing constructs, collaboration & co-design, cross disciplinary *networks* and *teams formed*

**SECTOR DEVELOPMENT**  
E.g. Increasingly integrated services, enhanced practice and evidence base, protective factors embedded environmentally, young people valued

**ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES**  
In workplace culture and service co-design and delivery, involving young people and youth wellbeing focused.

## INTERVENTIONS

### **IDENTIFY CHANGE AGENTS**

Best positioned to develop resilience in young people and 'protective' or wellbeing conditions around them.

### **ASSESS READINESS**

To influence youth wellbeing including constraints, strengths, alignments, roles within the system and baselines for monitoring progress & impact

### **PRODUCE PROGRAMMES & RESOURCES**

To prepare change agents to implement innovations, drawing on, contributing to effective practice and emerging evidence base

## POLICY RATIONALE

### **ADDRESS POLICY CHALLENGES**

- Complex problem of youth mental health
- Lack of youth input into services
- Gaps in strengths-based environmental interventions focused on protective factors
- Lack of service integration - systemic issues
- Lack of consensus on 'best effective practice'

### **FOSTER INNOVATION**

- Youth engaged
- Advancing youth mental health and wellbeing, - especially protective factors
- Multi-level impact (systems and practice)
- Learning by doing

# OUTCOMES MAP

The Outcomes Map shows the range of specific outcomes Lifehack monitors for in the short and long term across the system using five levels: practitioners (workforce, including peer youth workers), organisations, sector, communities and young people. The ‘map’ is used in programme design and in evaluation. Programme evaluations look to indicate which outcomes have been “switched on” and the strength of evidence for each. See examples of the outcomes and definitions for each in the evaluation of our Community Wellbeing Collaboration with Ormiston Junior College<sup>9</sup> and the 2017 evaluation of the Flourishing Fellowship<sup>10</sup>.



This Outcomes Map shows the outcomes “switched on” as a result of the Community Wellbeing Collaboration with OJC.

9. Inside Out: A community Wellbeing Collaboration <https://lifehackhq.co/lifehack-resources/2017-ojc-wellbeing-collaboration/>  
 10. Lifehack Flourishing Fellowship Programme Evaluation: Early Results <https://lifehackhq.co/lifehack-resources/2017-flourishing-fellowship-impact-report/>

## CHANGES IN WELLBEING AND CAPABILITY

These mini impact stories, created out of our evaluation data, provide insight into the kinds of impact Lifehack has created. The stories show impacts for young people and practitioners, as well as organisations and communities.

### YOUNG PEOPLE

#### Upper Hutt

I recently got work at KICK START COFFEE. It's an initiative run by the Upper Hutt Youth Trust. I am stoked to have my first job. I have really struggled at school and didn't have many mates. Since working at the cart I've connected with loads of cool people in my community and I'm feeling much more confident at talking in front of others and interacting with the customers. I even ran the cart myself last weekend and we took in heaps of money and it was an awesome day.

I never thought I'd be trusted to do that. It's been really different feeling like you've got people looking out for you that care and it's made me really think different about what might be in my future.



#### West Coast

It's tough living on the West Coast. I love it and my mates are here, but there's not a lot going on.

We recently had a guy come to our school and show us his rap music app GO-FLOW APP. We were able to make our own music and that was heaps of fun. He is local too just like us, but making a bunch of cool stuff out of his love of music. Me and my mates have asked for him to come back next term and help us record some new stuff. Apparently he has a thing that you can apply to to get some money to do it if you are bit serious.



#### Auckland

Recently I performed in my first public performance in front of a bunch of hearing adults. I've never been on a plane before, and never thought I'd be going to Wellington to perform just like the other hearing kids. I was really nervous the audience would laugh at us. But we got a standing ovation.

Since Lifehack worked with our teacher at our school we've been doing a lot more talking about our wellbeing, and me and my friends are finding it easier to participate in what's going on with the mainstream kids at school.



#### Wellington

Me and my friends go to all the Shift events. It's a cool safe place to do fun things with other girls. We get to design the programme ourselves, and the activities can cover any of the things we are interested in.

Right now we've developed a mental health pack to support other young people through NCEA stress. It's helped me be more aware of the things that make me feel bad, and also how I can help others. And it's been cool that we've been able to design it ourselves.

## PRACTITIONERS

**Kaimahi Northland**

I work with a huge number of different groups of young people in my role. The Fellowship was critical to helping me develop my networks nationally and connect into what's happening other sectors. I work closely with other fellows in my region to create systems change in our community. As a result of the fellowship, I have lots of ready support. I've been able to kick off a range of new initiatives some of which have turned into a community movement to protect and nurture our tamariki and rangatahi. This came straight from my learnings on the Fellowship, and understanding how to work with the right people in the community.

**Kaimahi Deaf Education**

Teachers of the Deaf usually work in isolation due to the nature of our learners, but working with Lifehack gave me an opportunity to work with people I don't normally work with. As a result, I have developed a new language and strategies to support learners' wellbeing, as well as prototyping ways to connect with other members of the deaf community across the motu.

**Kaimahi Taiohi**

I use material and workshops from the Fellowship in my work with t-risk teens. As a result we have some fast growing programmes and are increasingly getting referrals from police, schools, sexual assault services and community youth hubs. The Fellowship puts a focus on wellbeing of practitioners as well as young people. I've developed my own wellbeing skills and focus which means I can continue in this work.

**Peer youth worker**

I'm a peer youth worker in the Manawatu. I am involved in a cross-sector working party to improve clinical pathways for Trans and gender diverse young people in the region. After attending the Fellowship, my confidence to leverage my sphere of influence has grown, since then I've also taken on training with SOGISC<sup>11</sup> young people and their supporters. We have run a couple of trainings and have been told that as a result these practitioners are more clued up and able to work with diverse populations.

**Kaimahi Taiohi**

Te Reo Māori and tikanga was present throughout the Fellowship and this was important to creating a space for us to explore and learn together. I am more confident now sharing who I am and the importance of cultural connections. The fellowship gave me the confidence to involve rangitahi even more in community co-design initiatives and I can see the difference in how they are able to engage and participate. It gave me a new language to work with, and helped me to feel empowered in my role. I have taken these learnings into lots of initiatives where we support rangitahi to be leaders.

11. People of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics. More information can be found <http://www.asiapacificforum.net/human-rights/sogisc/recognition-sogisc-rights-international/>

## ORGANISATIONS / COMMUNITIES

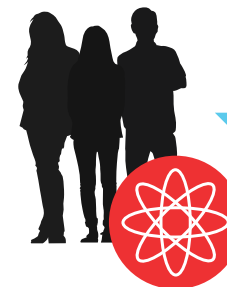
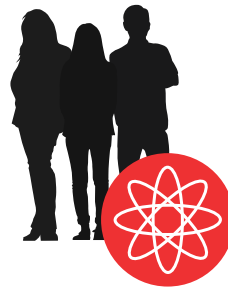
## Upper Hutt Organisation

As an organisation we are now much more cognisant of what it means to involve young people. Our involvement in Oro was a key part in flipping how we thought about engaging with young people. We have now transformed our approach, engaging with young people on a much more equal footing, inviting them to lead and decide what is right for them, and providing them support to do that. This has resulted in us supporting a number of new youth-led initiatives, developing new connections and networks across the community to support change in different ways. We plan to keep up the momentum and invest in young people in this way.



## Palmerston North

As a community, we now have a stronger understanding across our youth network of the issues facing our young people, and where some of key changes can be made to improve service quality and effectiveness for youth mental health. We are more connected as a network across different sectors and feel more confident about the value of co-design and how it might be applied in our setting. Our Lifehack Co-design Summit has helped motivate our group and set the scene for new cross section collaborations as well as created development opportunities for young people and peer led services.



## Ormiston

The community collaboration supported by Lifehack built connections between students, as well as between the school, DHB and local board. As a community, Ormiston now has involvement between its local library and the local schools, including opportunities for young people from the community to contribute to the design of their local services. All these things reflect an investment in young people and in youth wellbeing, and create leadership and youth development opportunities and relationships that act as protective factors for young people living in an area of high cultural diversity, limited social cohesion and low services.

## LIFEHACK OUTPUTS: A CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE AND NETWORKS

With a track record of building capability in communities, Lifehack's methods and approaches have been adapted and replicated in different places and settings. These include Upper Hutt, Auckland and Kaitaia. Tools and techniques are being applied by other organisations and practitioners such as the Mental Health Foundation, Changing Minds, Youthline, Ara Taiohi, Healthy Families, Auckland District Health Board, Massey University and schools in Auckland and Dunedin.

Lifehack has contributed:

- 1.** A demonstrated model for enabling cross-sector and community collaboration around youth wellbeing. The model results in locally-led, and sustained co-designed or youth-led initiatives and collaborations that leverage existing and latent resources in the community and respond to issues defined as important by young people, the community and the evidence-base.
- 2.** A proven approach to capability development. It's an approach that builds co-design capability of stakeholders, increases wellbeing literacy and inclusive and participatory engagement approaches. The approach results in greater participation by young people not currently well served by the system, and builds capacity and opportunity for more integrated and collaborative partnerships.
- 3.** An evolving model of evaluative practice, integrated with design, as well as published tools and practice models, that are inclusive and responsive to the cultural and environmental contexts of Aotearoa. Our model contributes to the evidence-base about supporting innovation, evaluation and co-design in youth wellbeing
- 4.** A vibrant and diverse national and cross-sector network of motivated organisations, practitioners and entrepreneurs who are working with different and significant groups of young people in their local communities and who continue to support each other in these efforts.

We continue our contributions to knowledge in the following sections which summarise our Insights Gained about:

- incubating youth wellbeing initiatives
- building the youth wellbeing workforce
- growing the conditions for youth wellbeing

## 4. INSIGHTS GAINED: SUPPORTING AND INCUBATING YOUTH WELLBEING INITIATIVES

Many people are excited about using Start Up<sup>12</sup> and Social Lab<sup>13</sup> methodologies to generate new ideas and initiatives for youth wellbeing. There is also a focus on the development of “apps” that might respond to certain wellbeing or mental health related issues. Lifehacks’ earliest programmes, including Lifehack Weekends and Lifehack Labs, were developed on the premise of applying a Start Up and Social Enterprise methodology to youth wellbeing. We have some success stories: Aaron Intermanns Go Flo app is one of the few initiatives started early in Lifehack that is still going. Beast is another example of an online and face to face wellbeing programme that was implemented with young people.

However, the initial focus on supporting teams to launch new projects in “Start Up mode” didn’t result in many sustained projects. The implicit expectation that teams would be able to find sustainable business models for their wellbeing enterprises after the incubation period was not borne out in reality. Despite Lifehack trialing various forms of venture support, most individuals had to fit ventures around their existing work and this led to “Founders” reducing their own wellbeing and losing motivation as they strove to build a market for their intervention. Relying on young people (or adults) to build the venture in their spare time isolated people and was not

sustainable. Similar challenges have been noted by Flipping East and the recent young women’s Shift Challenge.

Based on their experiences at events around the country, the Lifehack team saw an opportunity for greater impact through building capability, capacity and opportunity for those already seeking to make change in their communities. While cultivating initiatives was important, Lifehack effectively flipped its model, supporting practitioners and organisations to better realise their ideas and commitment to change and youth wellbeing through new capabilities, skills and connections. The focus became on building people and ongoing capacity within communities, not just one off projects and ventures. The Fellowship programme was formed on this basis. It still had an intent to help people get initiatives off the ground, but the ideas were connected to their work (not things they’d have to do in their spare time). It also connected people to each other and to new resources. The skills and capabilities gained were sustainable and could be applied beyond a single initiative.

We also began focusing on initiatives that were grounded in the realities, structures and resources of existing communities. Programmes such as Oro and OJC were about supporting the development of new initiatives, but in ways that were connected into existing infrastructures, resources and people

power that could propel them along. Connecting councils and organisations as well as young people and community members into new ventures and prototyping processes has led to the adoption of new programmes by existing institutions well placed to resource them, and to the creation of new roles for young people to support those initiatives to progress. A double outcome of youth development opportunities created, in order to develop future youth-led development opportunities.

The outcomes of the Oro collaboration in Upper Hutt confirmed that a place-based intervention that has existing relationships and infrastructure (like local government, marae, schools) to connect into was more likely to result in sustained interventions than those not grounded in a local community and local government infrastructure. It also has a greater asset base to draw on. For example, people will volunteer time and resources into a local initiative that benefits their young people. Local and existing community infrastructure should be leveraged in this way when looking to start and support sustainable youth-centred and youth-led wellbeing interventions and incubators, rather than expecting them to survive on their own.

12. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Startup\\_company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Startup_company)

13. [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the\\_social\\_labs\\_revolution\\_a\\_new\\_approach\\_to\\_solving\\_our\\_most\\_complex\\_chall](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_social_labs_revolution_a_new_approach_to_solving_our_most_complex_chall)



## GUIDES TO EFFECTIVELY INCUBATING WELLBEING INITIATIVES

### **Focus on building relationship**

**skills** in people that can sustain and outlive ideas.

### **Work with participants to co-design and evaluate the**

**intervention**, so it can be reshaped as needed.

### **Support initiatives that come out of community settings**

and respond to community issues. Oftentimes, these initiatives can be supported with existing community resources.

### **Encourage cross-sector**

**collaboration** to bring resources, energy and new learning.

### **Don't expect young people**

or other community members to launch and hold evidence-based wellbeing initiatives or ventures on their own. It puts unrealistic pressure on them and is much less likely to result in population level sustainable change and impact. Instead look to embed initiatives into broader systems supports and activities such as councils or schools.

### **Embed technology-based programmes in communities.**

Technology might be the right delivery platform, but most effective and sustainable programmes are also embedded into the community. Include components of relationship building that are likely to have both an online and offline presence.

## 5. INSIGHTS GAINED: BUILDING A WELLBEING INNOVATION WORKFORCE

Over time, Lifehack developed a set of principles, content and knowledge, and skills that formed the basis for our programmes (our 'toolkit'). Our toolkit helped young people and their communities to co-design local wellbeing initiatives. The toolkit promotes the outcomes Lifehack seeks to activate and is based on our theory of change for improving youth wellbeing in Aotearoa. It also aligns with an emerging evidence base about how those capabilities and capacities can be enabled.

Four key elements underpinned the capabilities Lifehack sought to build as well as our approach to working with people.

Each is described in further detail overleaf. Briefly, these are:

- 1 **Design principles** that guide and underpin how programmes are designed and delivered
- 2 **An evolving interdisciplinary curriculum** that brings concepts and skills from different evidence-bases together
- 3 **Creating opportunities for impact,** connection and modelling **diversity** through who participates
- 4 **Measuring success** and impact across the system.

Importantly the skills and knowledge bases Lifehack sought to model and build through its programmes aligned with the more participatory, inclusive, integrated and strength-based ways of working named as important in Gluckman's 2011 review into causes and responses to youth suicide. They also align with changes recommended by the Productivity Commission's report into social services<sup>14</sup>. Evidence of a co-design approach (though potentially ill defined) is also fast becoming a requirement for some government contracts and services.

14. More Effective Social Services (2015), New Zealand Productivity Commission <https://www.productivity.govt.nz/inquiry-report/more-effective-social-services-final-report>

## 1. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

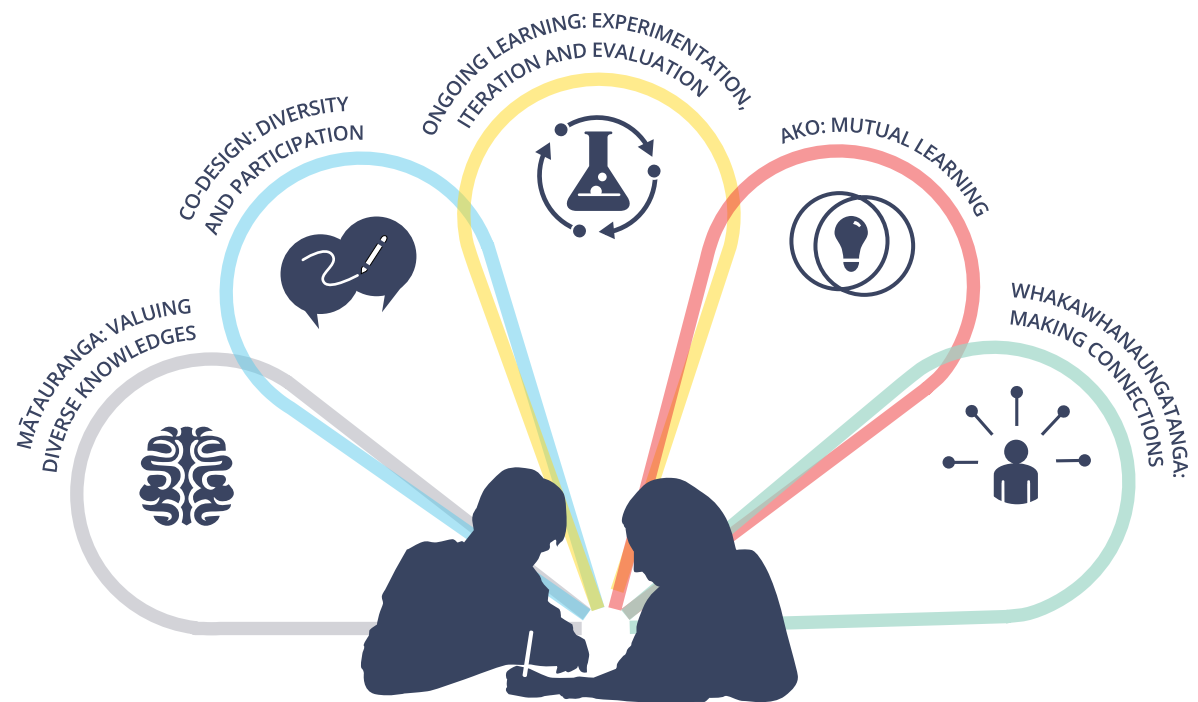
Five principles underpinned how Lifehack programmes were designed and delivered. The principles reflected learning built over time and through previous programme evaluations about how to create effective collaborative learning spaces that bring together diverse groups of people to explore sensitive topics.

The five principles located Lifehack interventions within the context and history of Aotearoa. When enacted in a programme design, these principles also helped to model the interdisciplinary ways of working that practitioners, organisations and communities could use to create services and communities that better address the needs of young people.

We know these principles work because we have seen programmes fail as a result of not doing them properly. We have also heard from participants how important these aspects have been for enabling them to participate in Lifehack programmes and apply changes in their world and practice as a result.

### Mātauranga: Valuing diverse knowledges

This principle incorporates a commitment to honoring Mātauranga Māori and efforts to develop a practice and approach informed by Te Ao Māori principles and practices. This commitment was reflected in programme design and content, as well as investment in forming close partnerships with different Māori practitioners and partners who co-delivered Lifehack programmes and acted as tuakana (big brother or sister). We saw the results of our commitment in increased Māori participation on Lifehack programmes, embedding of



Te Ao Māori, te reo and tikanga in programmes, and in programmes that had an Aotearoa identity that benefitted all participants and their communities. For Lifehack, the principle of Mātauranga also referred to our programme outcomes of multi-disciplinarity and cross-sector collaboration. That is, developing a workforce that respects and can work with different forms of wisdoms and evidence, world views and across disciplines.



### Co-design: Diversity and participation

Co-design was a core capability set of our programmes and this was modelled through the programme. For example, the Fellowship aimed to build the capability of those working alongside young people to develop and co-design more effective, locally appropriate, wellbeing options. This aim was realised both by sharing information and knowledge (strategies and tools) and modelled in processes that brought people from different parts of the system together. It was also modelled through involving participants in programme design before and during the intervention<sup>15</sup>.



### Ongoing Learning: Experimentation, iteration and evaluation

The process of programme reflection, evaluation and iteration models our third principle of Ongoing Learning. This was an essential part of our innovation work and necessary to develop knowledge about how to enable youth wellbeing. Lifehack programmes were evaluated throughout using regular feedback sessions, surveys, interviews and informal online channels to judge programme engagement as well as track emerging outcomes and impacts.



### Ako: Mutual Learning

Codesign is necessarily a process of learning together. The concept of Ako encapsulates this and is central to effective co-design with communities. It is enacted in Lifehack programmes through the explicit facilitation of safe and brave spaces for knowledge sharing between participants and acknowledgement of the different knowledge bases and expertise each participant (and different disciplines) will bring.



### Whakawhanaungatanga: making connections

Building connections, relationships and whanaunga is a core value of Te Ao Māori and central to enabling participation and change at any level. Programme evaluations demonstrated the significance of this aspect of the programmes for enabling successful outcomes including: enhanced wellbeing, increased connections that were used for new initiatives and cross-sector partnerships, increased workforce confidence and motivation and greater engagement of young people through co-design. Whanaungatanga was also a precursor to the sustainability and scale of programme impact as fellows connected their learnings back into their communities and organisations.

## 2. CURRICULUM

The Lifehack curriculum evolved over four years and drew on a number of evidence bases. These were wellbeing science, positive youth development, implementation science, codesign, systems thinking, social entrepreneurship and technology and Maturanga Māori. Content included materials and experiences that located participants within the specific context of Aotearoa. It also included ethical frameworks and tools that helped practitioners new to these disciplines to navigate between the different knowledge bases and value systems. We found that tools and activities that helped people become more capable of working at the intersection of different disciplines were as important as creating access to these different knowledges. The figure overleaf briefly summarises the Lifehack curriculum. Different programmes put emphasis on different aspects of the curriculum.

15. For example see: Co-design Case Study, Participatory Design for Programmes <https://lifehackhq.co/lifehack-resources/codesign-case-study/>

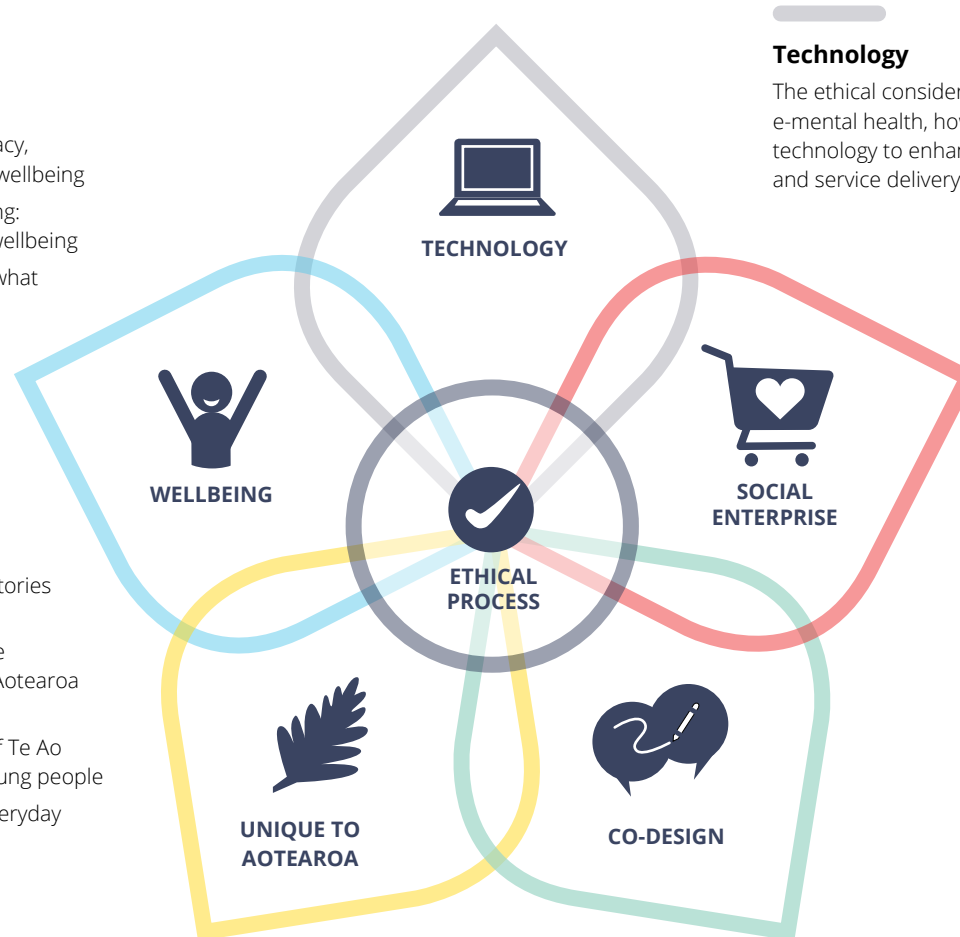
## Programme Content

### Wellbeing

- Personal wellbeing: wellbeing literacy, the inner critic and the science of wellbeing
- Supporting other people's wellbeing: interventions to support positive wellbeing
- Sharing current evidence around what works in youth wellbeing

### Unique to Aotearoa

- Whakawhanaungatanga: sharing stories and building relationships
- Colonial history: learning about the significance and lasting impact of Aotearoa New Zealand's history.
- Te Ao Māori: exploring concepts of Te Ao Māori in everyday practice with young people
- Tikanga: how to build tikanga in everyday practices alongside young people



### Technology

The ethical considerations in e-mental health, how might we use technology to enhance our practice and service delivery

### Social enterprise

Using tools like the Social Lean Canvas to develop and sustainably progress a project idea

### Co-design

How to use co-design methods to enable young people to participate in decisions and the design of services that affect them

Systems change theory and practice: What's your theory about how you might make change? What's your sphere of influence?

### Ethical Process

- Co-designing with young people in safe, effective and powerful ways.
- Using critical reflection and evaluative inquiry to monitor action and impact
- Evaluating and integrating different forms of knowledge

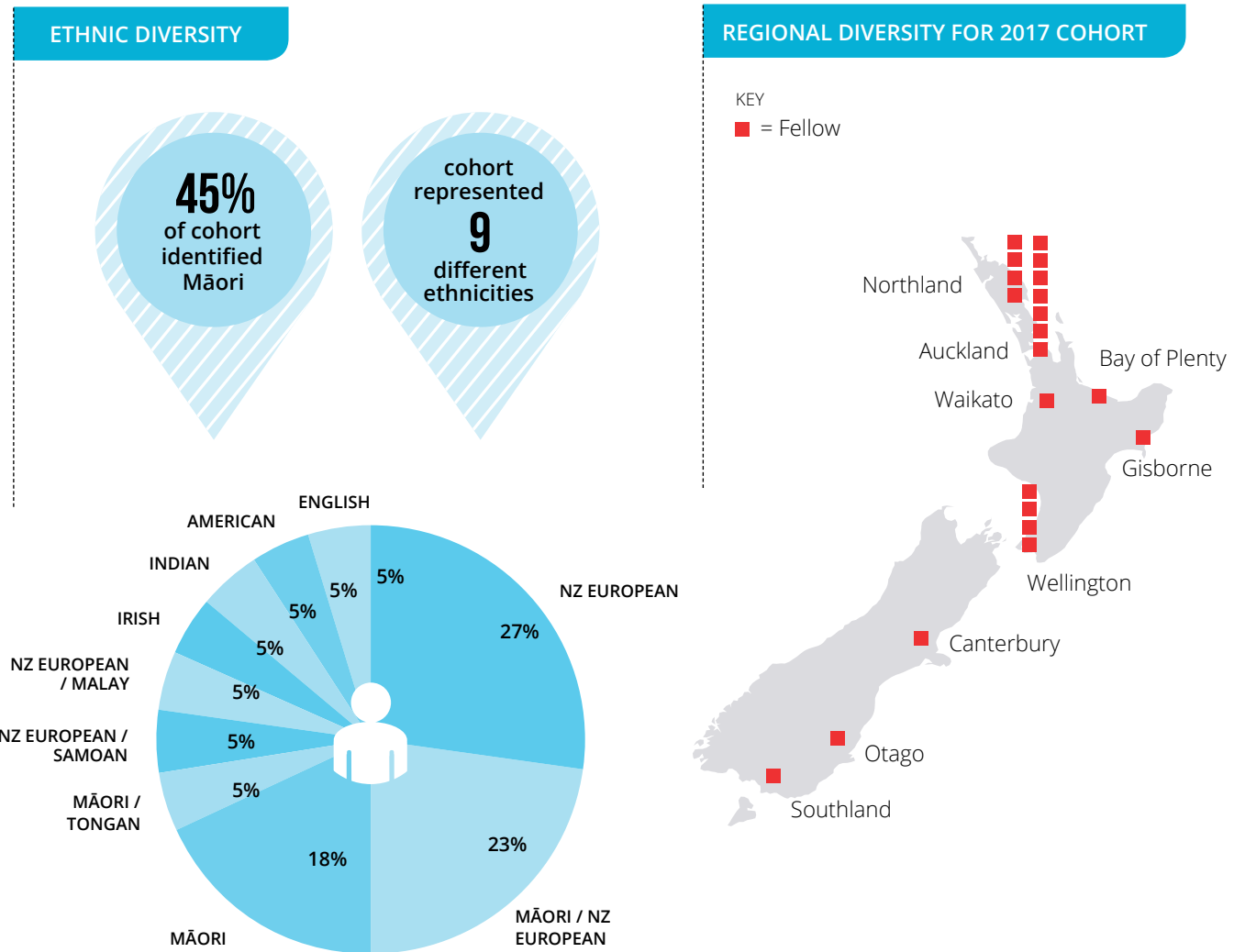
### 3. OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPACT THROUGH DIVERSITY

Diversity, multi-disciplinarity and cross-sector work and network growth were enabled through participant composition. Fellowship programmes, for example, deliberately recruited a diverse mix of people to model cross-sector working and increase the potential for skills and knowledge exchange between fellows.

Diversity of participants in background, ethnicity, geography, discipline and sphere of influence (for example, front line worker, manager, policy advisor) helped to build individual capacity for inclusive and participatory ways of working. It also built connections across the system. For example, policy advisors shared knowledge about funding and application processes; frontline youth workers exposed managers and funders to everyday experiences for rangatahi in the regions.

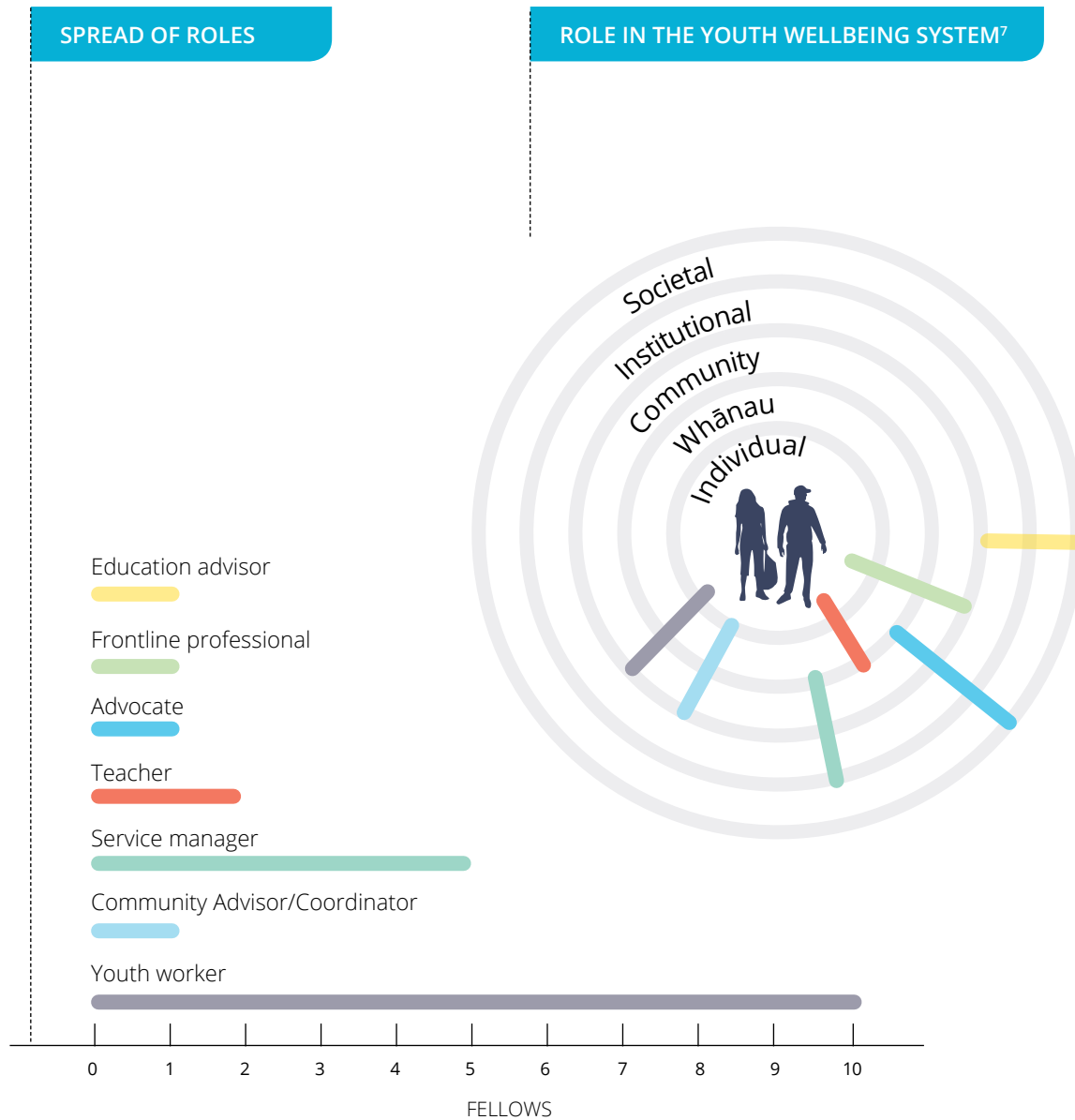
The figure here and overleaf shows some of the ways Lifehack mapped diversity and positioned itself for influence across programmes. It became clear that concentrating capability-building in specific locations (for example, within specific communities and organisations) helped to build a critical mass of support for changes to progress. This was evident where more than one person from a community or organisation had attended the Flourishing Fellowship or been involved in other Lifehack initiatives. Sharing expertise, a way of thinking, or a set of tools, enabled people to work together and create momentum around change initiatives.

#### Flourishing Diversity Infographic



SPREAD OF ROLES

ROLE IN THE YOUTH WELLBEING SYSTEM?



4. MEASURING IMPACTS ACROSS THE SYSTEM

The COM-B model helped to clarify that enabling change towards these new practices depended not just on building *capability* (that is, skills and knowledge). Practitioners, organisations and communities also needed the *opportunities* to adopt new ways of working together and *motivation* to change current practice. For this reason Lifehack programmes sought to measure whether participants had built new *capability*, but also monitored for enhanced *opportunity* and *motivation* to apply these new or existing skills. Evaluations showed that to gain effect it was important that Fellows had immediate and existing opportunities to put their new learning, skills or networks into practice with young people or their organisations. In addition, our evaluations showed that opportunities to build new cross-sector partnerships, for example, as a result of the Lifehack programmes, was as critical to successful practice changes as any specific materials or skills or content provided.

Motivation could be enhanced through connecting practitioners to a sustaining network, or refreshing their commitment to youthwork which is particularly important for frontline staff who were often under significant pressure and experience high levels of burn-out. Building organisational motivation to prioritise working in these new ways was equally important, as it often meant changing from “business as usual” practice. Motivation was also enhanced by celebrating the existing skills and knowledge of participants and communities and providing them with the confidence to apply and reconfigure those skills and resources differently for the benefit of young people.

## Building workforce capability for youth wellbeing depends on:

**...Building capability for interdisciplinarity**, including co-design skills, different perspectives on wellbeing, and critical self-reflection. It is not something we do naturally and it needs a deliberate focus.

**...Delivering programmes that help practitioners manage their own and their teams wellbeing.** This helps set the conditions for wellbeing of young people. This improves individual functioning and the ability to appropriately model self-care

**...Modelling ways of working we want to encourage and that we know are necessary for systems change:** reaching across disciplines and sectors and reflecting on our practice.

**...Acknowledging colonial history and creating safe spaces for Māori and Pākehā** to explore our history and our identities (*ko wai au, who I am*), and to learn new ways of working together. All are necessary to facilitate youth wellbeing in Aotearoa.



## 6. INSIGHTS GAINED: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR GROWING THE CONDITIONS FOR YOUTH WELLBEING IN AOTEAROA



### Insight 1

#### Building co-design capacity

**An investment in training and upskilling the workforce is needed, complemented by changes at commissioning level. Action based co-design initiatives and platforms like Lifehack, Flipping East, and The Southern Initiative build the skills, capacity and motivation for co-design and also result in new community-based initiatives.**

Gluckman's 2017 discussion paper<sup>16</sup> highlights the need for understanding and co-design with our communities. Co-design involves valuing the input of a diverse range of young people, taking a strengths based approach, and creating opportunities for young people to participate in shaping their own environment and experiences. Co-design results in services and initiatives that are more likely to address the issues that matter to those young people, including peer led services. The co-design process also provides opportunities for young people to build the capabilities Gluckman says are critical to effectively managing mental health, including confidence and executive functioning.

The culturally responsive and interdisciplinary skills and mindsets Lifehack has identified as important to enabling co-design and youth wellbeing

innovation come naturally to some working in youth and community development. However, for many practitioners and institutions, a significant shift is required. A shift made harder by inflexible commissioning and procurement, programme delivery and evaluation structures that are not conducive to co-design approaches.



#### Challenges to co-design identified by some Lifehack partners working in the field included:

- building trust with rangatahi to enable participation, especially when projects are subject to short time frames
- institutionalised processes that don't fit with a co-design approach
- accessing funding for projects for which outcomes are yet to be defined
- measuring impact for things that are evolving and changing
- lip service paid to co-design without the skills, resources and changes in structure required to make that possible
- sharing power with young people: adults need to be prepared to be challenged by, and shift position as a result of, the views and input of young people

Another key aspect of co-design capability and supporting youth wellbeing innovation is in increasing the ability of adults (and adult institutions) to enable youth-led and peer-led responses. Such frameworks give young people the knowledge and power to

lead their own interventions, defining what is right for them. This approach runs contrary to traditional and defined "services" and challenges conventional concepts of where expertise lies. Yet the challenges that young people face are changing faster than services can keep up. Frameworks that support youth-led actions acknowledge that young people also have a unique expertise in understanding their own worlds and that they are frequently navigating circumstances that adults cannot predict or control. These frameworks also respond to the evidence that tells us young people are more likely to reach out to each other and are significantly influenced by the behaviour of their peers.



### Insight 2

#### Building capacity at different levels

**We know that many of the conditions for wellbeing are set at environmental and structural levels. This means targeting change not just for young people, but also at groups and settings who have the capacity to influence the experiences and environments of young people including: practitioners, organisations, institutions, sectors and communities. Yet Lifehack was one of only two initiatives within the YMHP project (and recent suite of interventions funded) working to tackle and grow the conditions for youth wellbeing at an organisational, sector and community level.**

16. Gluckman, P. (2017). Youth Suicide Prevention in New Zealand: A discussion Paper. <http://www.pmsa.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/17-07-26-Youth-suicide-in-New-Zealand-a-Discussion-Paper.pdf>

Lifehack experimented with ways to build capacity at different levels. The Fellowship primarily focused on building the capacity of individuals and networks of practitioners. To scale this impact, Lifehack worked to understand how to best help Fellows extend changes and learning into their workplaces and communities. As a result of a supporting network, ongoing mentoring and programme opportunities, and in some cases by recruiting fellows from the same organisations and communities we saw evidence of some extension into Fellows workplaces and communities.

The most substantial change and impact was possible however when working with organisations and communities. Oro, the Palmy Youth Summit and Ormiston Junior College Wellbeing Collaboration were all interventions that included organisational level partnerships and collaborations. The changes that resulted had direct effects on organisations, sectors and communities, and therefore had the potential to impact more young people in an ongoing and sustained way. As the OJC collaboration showed, working in a school setting in collaboration with other significant structures such a local council's created significant opportunities for strengthening youth wellbeing and capability for the individual young people in the programme. It also built capacity across the community in ways that will have a sustained impact across the population of young people at the school and in the community.



### Insight 3

#### Working across sectors

**Lifehack's engagement model actively brings together people and organisations from across sectors, who have different sets of knowledge, resources and opportunities to influence youth health and wellbeing, including young people themselves. A commitment to this approach has consistently resulted in more collaborative behaviour and initiatives as well as outcomes that would not have been possible when working within a single sector. We see specific investment in these kinds of platforms and ways of working as necessary to achieving the levels of coordination between organisations, services and agencies sought by government.**

We know that one of the key barriers for positive mental health for young people is that current services and agencies operate in silos and there is little service integration<sup>17</sup>. A more joined up system is critical for addressing complex needs with limited resources and using the existing strengths and assets of communities to respond to their own issues. However there are few incentives or forums for working in cross-sector or coordinated ways. Teams need to be both motivated to, and capable of, working together differently. Organisational leadership that is ready and able to prioritise the demands of

17. See for example recommendations for collaboration in "A Strategy to Prevent Suicide in New Zealand: Draft for public consultation" <http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/strategy-prevent-suicide-new-zealand-draft-public-consultation>

collaboration over the "business as usual" (BAU) of delivering programmes is critical to enabling this.

While the need and benefits of cross sector collaboration and integration are described in numerous reports, the action and changes in practice needed to actually achieve this are less clear. Appropriate infrastructure is needed to support such sustained experimentation and coordination. The Palmy Youth Summit<sup>18</sup> and Lifehack's Mapping and Mobilising Youth Wellbeing Tool<sup>19</sup> reflect interventions specifically designed to help teams and organisations understand what collaboration might look like, and what kinds of action, skills and changes in "BAU" might be required to get there.



### Insight 4

#### A broad and systemic view of the 'youth workforce' and where capacity for influencing youth wellbeing lies

**A commitment to cross-sector work also reflects an understanding that the conditions for youth wellbeing -- that is, how young people are perceived and treated, the experiences they have and the opportunities they have available to them -- are set right across the system and influenced by people and organisations beyond what might be considered the traditional "youth workforce".**

18. See for example <https://lifehackhq.co/impactful-co-design-training-impact-story-palmerston-north/>

19. INSERT LINK WHEN IT IS LIVE

All of our major institutions have a significant hand in shaping the experiences and wellbeing outcomes of young people. They can be sites for influence and change, modelling co-design and positive youth development values in how they operate and engage with young people. Schools are of course an especially influential setting, but rather than expecting schools to do this work on their own, more is possible when schools are a setting for cross-sector community wellbeing collaboration.

Young people themselves are also key influencers and part of the youth wellbeing workforce. Programmes such as OJC are intended to deliver wellbeing outcomes for students who participate. But the goal is also to build their capacity as peer leaders. Students can influence their settings, and the experiences of their peers through modelling positive social norms, leading their own wellbeing interventions and programmes, and as effective first responders. Services cannot reach into or be relevant to all settings, interventions that build peer youth workforce capacity are also needed.



### Insight 5

#### A Place-based approach

**Place-based work connects up young people, adults, organisations and community members from a particular locality. Local connections lead to better use of existing or latent resources already available within the community, such as asset sharing between groups and support to access funding pools. In addition to creating platforms for new**

**initiatives or prototypes, these programmes build and leave behind capability and connections within practitioners and organisations that can be applied to ongoing and new challenges.**

While Lifehack held a national focus, we observed the greatest impact, results and potential through Lifehack programmes that focused on building up capability over time in a specific geographic community. Lifehack's place-based interventions engaged individual practitioners, organisations, local young people and other community members at the same time. This created a collective group with a significant influence over conditions for wellbeing of young people in that community. Such groups were able to identify and respond to issues that were important and relevant to young people, in ways that were appropriate to the local context. And they could act together relatively quickly to make change.

Working together such groups gained access to a shared pool of resources and assets in the community.

The benefits of a place-based approach is best illustrated in the Oro programme. The initial programme resulted in three youth-led prototypes in the community (all of which gained access to funding) as well as significant changes in practice and motivation for many involved<sup>20</sup>. Based on the increased community-level capacity built as a result of Oro, a cross-sector team then joined up to deliver their own version of a Lifehack Weekend<sup>21</sup>, which resulted in a further three initiatives being prototyped. This included a collaboration with Corrections for youth offenders

currently in prison and community input into new youth-led wellbeing programmes in Upper Hutt by Shift and the YMCA. The community is now planning another Hackathon in the new year.

We see similar community level impacts emerging from the OJC programme which supported 62 young people to team up and develop their own wellbeing initiatives<sup>22</sup>. In addition to the benefits experienced by learners leading those initiatives, there was also significant potential for impact for schools and community setting which adopted the wellbeing initiatives themselves. Beyond that, the school has incorporated wellbeing and co-design practices that will have ongoing benefits for all students and staff. Organisations from the community involved in the programme have also adopted a more active stance on youth participation in their community, enhancing protective factors and creating more youth development opportunities over all. As a whole, there is greater social capital and cohesion for the community gained through new relationships which sit across sectors.

Platforms of this nature can also be connected into policy learning cycles ie., what do we learn within local settings about constraints and enablers for change that can inform policy settings and goals?

20. <https://lifehackhq.co/lifehack-resources/oro-upper-hutt-report/>

21. <https://lifehackhq.co/orohackathonreflections/>

22. <https://lifehackhq.co/lifehack-resources/2017-ojc-wellbeing-collaboration/>



## Insight 6

### Designing and evaluating for impact

**Lifehack was willing to evolve its mission to respond to gaps and needs in the system as they were discovered. This demonstrated an effective learning and innovation approach – which sought to maximise its positive impact. Lifehack’s intervention model showed how outcomes across multiple levels could be tracked over time, and used to inform implementation and evaluation of programmes to achieve greater impact. However, the prevailing governance of the YMHP programme and its overarching evaluation meant that Lifehack’s value and outcomes were not well-understood, communicated, recognised or attributed to the programme at the time of a general review.**

A 2015 Research Review Summary of the YMHP notes that existing evidence and approaches for evaluating new initiatives (such as Lifehack) is lacking<sup>23</sup>. Over the four years Lifehack experimented with a range of different approaches to understanding and capturing impact<sup>24</sup>. The experimentation, testing and evaluation of different approaches and outcomes in the first three years enabled Lifehack to develop an intervention model that was grounded in evidence from both practice and theory.

23. Youth Mental Health Project, Research Review Summary, Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit (Superu), MAY 2015 Retrieved, [www.superu.govt.nz/publication/youth-mental-health-project-research-review-report](http://www.superu.govt.nz/publication/youth-mental-health-project-research-review-report)

24. See for example Working with Thicket to Working with Thicket to evaluate the impact of 2016’s Flourishing Fellowship <https://lifehackhq.co/working-thicket-evaluate-impact-2016s-flourishing-fellowship/> and Lifehack Impact Report 2013-2015 <https://lifehackhq.co/lifehack-resources/lifehack-impact-report/>

Lifehack was originally categorised by the YMHP as an online initiative under the Focus Area 4: Better access to appropriate information. As the intervention evolved into something broader and more systemic, the revised focus and scope was incorporated into contracts between the Ministry of Social Development and Lifehack. However, this development was not registered within the YMHP – expectations remained the same. Descriptions of the project still classified the initiative as being about access to information and limited to social media innovation. Consequently, government led evaluations continued to assess Lifehack’s success based on measures that did not match the more developed intent of the intervention.

For example, the cost-benefit analysis measures that were used did not appropriately evaluate Lifehack’s outcome or impacts. It counted how many young people had been reached by the service, not how much capability had been built in the system or how many young people had been reached by partners whose practice was improved through Lifehack interventions.

A more recent review of the Lifehack Flourishing Fellowship (completed by an independent evaluator) based on Lifehack’s explicit intervention model instead drew the following conclusion which suggested Lifehack was more than cost-effective.

*“A cost-benefit analysis of the Prime Minister’s Youth Mental Health Project<sup>1</sup> in 2016 produced an estimate of money saved or generated over a 10 year period if a young person ‘switched’ from having a mild to moderate mental health problem to being well. The benchmark was \$21,000 to \$30,000 per young person.*

25. See <https://lifehackhq.co/lifehack-resources/2017-flourishing-fellowship-impact-report/>

*By this measure, only three young people would need to improve their wellbeing from being connected to 2017 Fellows to make the Fellowship economically beneficial. If we assume a conservative 15 young people per year are impacted by Fellows in their work, that gives us 330 young people per year that could switch to a better state of wellbeing. That’s about 1% of the young people potentially reached by Fellows.<sup>25</sup>*

We conclude with three main areas of learning that will be important for creating and evaluating other initiatives of this kind. With complex, participatory, developmental initiatives it is important to:

- 1. Appropriately categorise interventions and co-develop ‘horses for courses’ measurement strategies for them.** For example, Lifehack, in seeking to innovate, came to resemble community-led development with aspects of community-based social marketing<sup>26</sup> rather than operating under the less useful category of a social media innovation incubator.
- 2. Embed sufficient evaluation support within the intervention team** to oversee monitoring, facilitate sense-making, help the team formulate learnings, and use appropriate data to underpin design and implementation decisions. We found you can’t assume this *critical inquiry* mindset or skills naturally resides in capable implementers.
- 3. Government to maintain a learning relationship with partners and interventions** that comprise a complex cross-sector project. Practically this means having sufficient of its own evaluation capacity (from multiple agencies) in order to understand and support

26. See <https://www.communitymatters.govt.nz/community-led-development-principles/> and <http://fred.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/conservation-webinars/MonaghanCommunityBasedSocialMarketing.pdf>

the development of interventions (and synergies between them) as they are implemented.

Understanding why the YMHP lacked the capacity to reclassify this initiative, or to apply 'complexity aware' approaches to evaluation, is important for understanding how we support and evaluate similar initiatives in the future. Project commissioners need to grasp how to evaluate community-led, strengths based wellbeing initiatives, and how to support and understand the value of innovation in responding to complex social issues.

## KEY ELEMENTS FOR FUTURE ITERATIONS AND INITIATIVES

Lifehack can be considered an early model for building community capability for youth wellbeing. Lifehack did this through supporting cross-sector collaboration, educating on youth wellbeing, and fostering youth development and prevention initiatives, including innovation and co-design with young people. It supported, and amplified, youth-centered, community-led responses to improve outcomes for young people facing tough times.

### Backbone and evaluation

Lifehack's programmes modelled a strength-based, intergenerational and cross-sector collaboration approach that teams could, and have, emulated and replicated in subsequent projects work. After specific interventions, Lifehack provided an ongoing 'backbone' function, helping to maintain new connections between organisations and practitioners, evaluating programme impact, and following up on changes over the long

term (which in itself could trigger further action). Lifehack's role also included sharing learnings and resources, and providing guidance and encouragement to communities and teams wanting support to apply the methodologies in a more self-directed way.

### More connected to the system

One under-developed aspect of the Lifehack project was its lack of connectedness to significant infrastructures and institutions. This freedom from traditional structures was helpful early on – partnerships that did eventuate were built on personal relationships formed through early programmes. This accelerated the pace of collaboration due to early trust being established. However, alignment and integration with larger influencing institutions was not achieved and therefore there was a missed opportunity to create impact across the larger service system. Lifehack did not get to work alongside other YMHP interventions to amplify their impact through cross-sector collaboration and co-design, for example, Youth workers in Schools (Ministry of Social Development), Positive Behaviour for Learning or PB4L (Ministry of Education). There were also missed opportunities to connect with DHB's, schools and councils within specific regions to support them to develop and achieve their youth wellbeing outcomes. This leads us to the following point.

### Future opportunity: Partnership and integration

We believe any future iterations of Lifehack or similar programmes that seek to build co-design capability and change at organisational and sector level need significant partners. Now that the early learning phases have been completed, the next phase of youth

wellbeing innovation should fully involve government agencies and major local institutional partners.

What showed particular promise were wellbeing initiatives connected to educational settings that operate with the wider support and influence of community partners - including local authorities. The collaboration with Ormiston Junior College showed the potential to achieve multiple and integrated education and wellbeing outcomes through a single intervention. Wellbeing benefits were delivered to individual students, while youth wellbeing capacity and opportunities were also created across the wider school and community population.

Taken together, schools and local authorities can provide significant insight into the particular challenges and resources available to young people and their whānau in their communities. They also hold significant capacity to change systems, services and environments that promote conditions for youth wellbeing. These early results from Lifehack, as well as other place-based interventions such as Tāmaki Health and Wellbeing and Flipping East Lab, suggest the benefits of a more coordinated design-led approach. It also shows the need for platforms and backbone roles/organisations that can do this "joining" work. Current youth policy is yet to recognise or facilitate this more coordinated approach to youth development and service design.

The next steps beyond Lifehack should include central government policy work that creates a coherent systemic framework for current initiatives and efforts – a framework that also creates alignment between, and further enables, local efforts to achieve universal and locally-responsive youth wellbeing outcomes.

## NETWORK MAP

The map below reflects the location of Lifehack events and programmes, and the spread of the network across Aotearoa, including some of the flow on effects within communities.

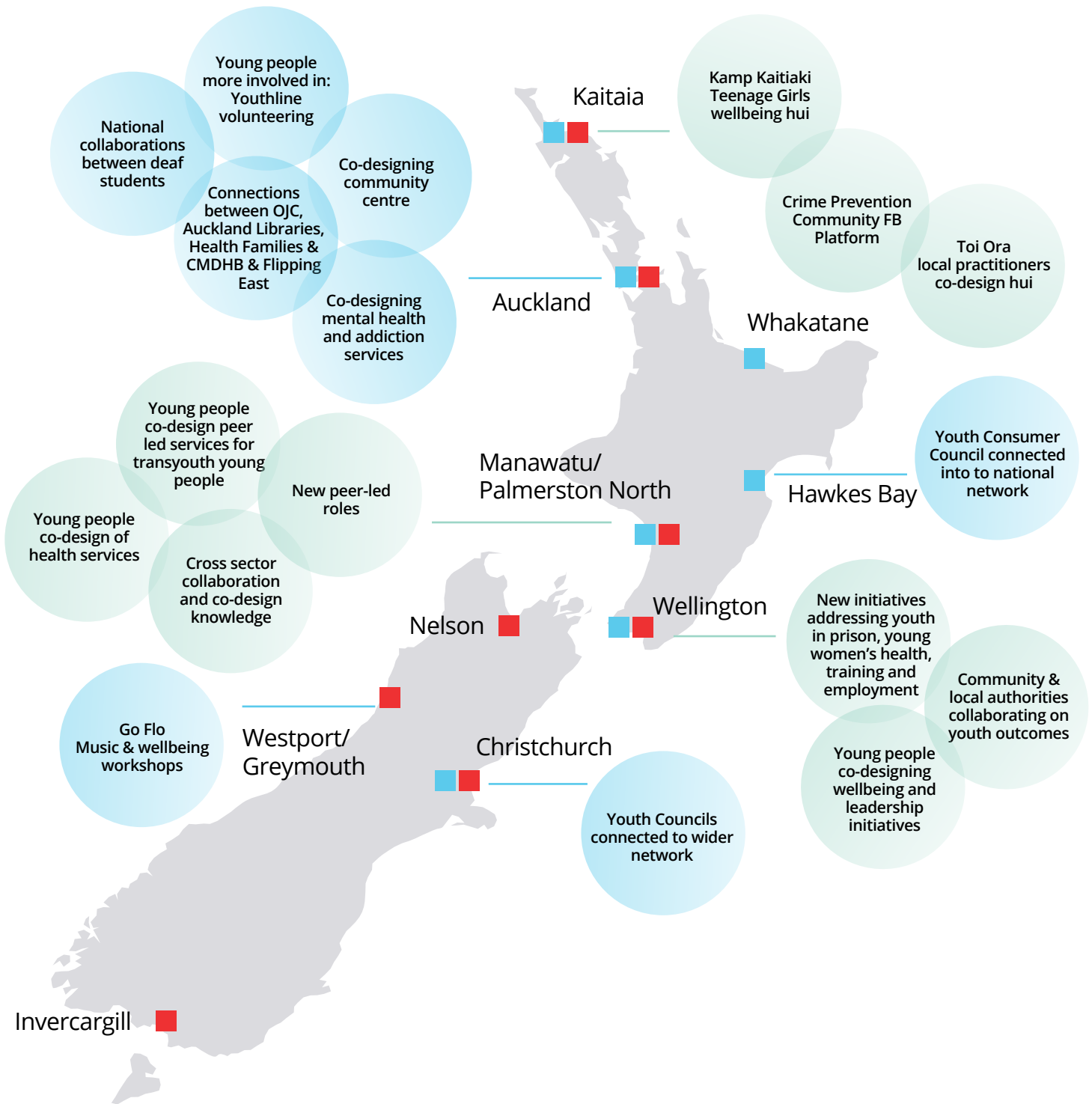
### KEY

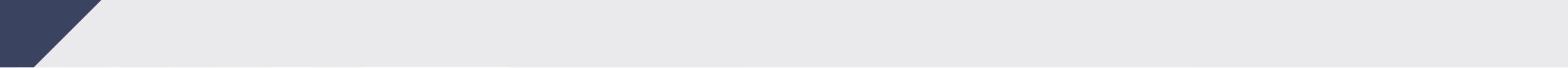
- = Lifehack events held
- = Lifehack network cluster

*(regional connections have been build, multiple Lifehack programme participants are connected and/or have referred others)*



Example of ripple effect in the community







LIFEHACK



The Prime Minister's  
**Youth Mental  
Health Project**

Lifehack was a Prime Minister's Youth  
Mental Health Project Initiative.

### Contact Us

Thank you for your interest in this report and for our work with  
Lifehack. If you would like to find out more head to our website:

**Website:** [www.lifehackhq.co/initiatives](http://www.lifehackhq.co/initiatives)

**Email:** [hello@lifehackhq.co](mailto:hello@lifehackhq.co)