



Reimagining NGOs

Working Differently for the Future

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Five Lessons from The Southern Initiative

1. Leverage the Power You Already Hold

2. Shift from Delivering Services to Enabling Capability

3. Join Things Up Around Place

4. Learn by Doing and Reflecting

5. Work Across Boundaries

01

Leverage the Power You Already Hold

Case Study: Amotai

Supplier diversity intermediary connecting Māori and Pacific businesses with procurement opportunities

Auckland Council spends billions – what if that purchasing power deliberately flowed toward Māori and Pacific businesses?

Not charity — systems change

Your Forms of Power

- Relationships – you know communities
- Knowledge – you see patterns and have data
- Trust – communities trust you
- Networks – you reach where policy can't
- Moral authority – you can speak truth

Power unused is power wasted

02

**Shift from Delivering Services to
Enabling Capability**

Case Study: Healthy Homes

- Community members trained to support others – peer-to-peer capability building
- When people learn from people they trust, change is deeper and longer lasting

Doesn't just solve a problem – builds confidence, connection, and community leadership

Rethinking Our Role

FROM
"How can we help them?"



TO
**"How can we
unleash what's
already there?"**

When We Shift from Delivering to Enabling

- **We build community capability that lasts beyond the funding**
- **We transfer power to the people most affected**
- **We create peer networks that become self-sustaining**

03

Join Things Up Around Place

Case Study: First 2,000 Days

- Joined up what already existed – aligned local services and community networks
- Brought whānau, educators, and health providers around the same table to think together as a system

Built trust between sectors and with communities

The Disconnect

- **Most social problems aren't siloed – they're interconnected**
- **But our funding, KPIs, and organisations are all siloed**
- **When you organise around place and people – not programs – you can see the whole system**

"Who else is working with the same communities?"

What if we aligned our efforts?"

Think like systems conveners, not isolated providers

04

**Learn by Doing –
Build Infrastructure for Reflection**

TSI Learning Infrastructure

Niho Taniwha

Weaves learning and evaluation through innovation

Te Tokotoru

Evidence-based investment in whānau wellbeing

Made reflection structural, not optional

Two Approaches to Scaling

SCALING OUT

*"This worked here, let's
copy it everywhere"*



SCALING DEEP

**"Let's change how people
think,
how power flows, and who
gets to decide"**

05

**Work Across Boundaries –
Even with Unlikely Partners**

The Power of Unlikely Partnerships

- TSI brought together government, business, and community
- Amotai worked with businesses big and small
- Co Design Lab Funded by 8 government agencies
Including Police and Treasury
- Neutral ground where no one dominated
- Everyone had skin in the game

A New Way Forward

CURRENTLY
Competing for funding,
protecting IP,
defending our patch



WHAT IF...
We pooled resources,
jointly designed interventions,
shared learning?

The Big Shift

From Service Providers to System Actors

"Too often, NGOs are the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff"

Funded to meet need – but not to prevent it

Real Contribution

- **Building trust and relationships across silos**
- **Modelling equitable, community-led practice**
- **Sharing what we learn so systems can learn too**

***Not just delivering outcomes –
influencing how the whole ecosystem behaves***

The Mindset Shift

STOP ASKING
"How do we deliver more services?"



START ASKING
**"What are we doing to change
the conditions?"**

Keep Imagination Alive

- Imagination enables us see the world not just as it is, but as it could be
- Imagination is infrastructure – it makes transformation possible
- Imagination is not a luxury it is a necessity for all of us

Treat Imagination as Necessity

- Take action -try small experiments
- Build the imagination muscle
- Co-create and connect— bring unlikely people and ideas together

*"Real transformational impact
doesn't come from scale –
it comes from depth"*

Depth of relationship. Depth of reflection.
Depth of imagination.

**What would you do differently if you
saw your organisation not as a
service provider,
but as a system actor with the
power to shift conditions?**

Three Things You Could Do Tomorrow

1

Map your power and assets

What relationships, knowledge, trust, networks, and moral authority do you hold?

2

Create space for imagination and reflection

Start with one hour this month to reflect on what's working and ask "what if" questions

3

Reach out to an unlikely partner

Call someone you've competed with. Explore cooperation instead of competition

Ngā mihi

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Questions & Discussion