

Te Pou Tarāwaho Tūhononga ki te Hapori a Watercare **Watercare Community Engagement Framework**





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Wāhanga A: Te here a Watercare ki te kaupapa tūhonohono

Part A: Watercare's commitment to engagement



Kupu whakataki

Introduction

Ki te ora te wai, ka ora te whenua, ka ora te tangata
“When the water is healthy, the land and the people are healthy”

Watercare is New Zealand’s largest water utility, supplying safe drinking water to Auckland’s communities and treating their wastewater. Achieving our ambition to deliver world-leading water and wastewater services Aucklanders trust, now and for generations to come, requires a commitment to genuine and proactive engagement.

High quality, consistent and proactive engagement will be critical for Watercare to achieve its strategic objectives, supporting the delivery of safe, reliable core services now and into the future. This Community Engagement Framework has been developed to support this strategic ambition, and in particular to support our Enterprise Strategy – Delivering Smarter. Together.

Watercare engages to strengthen relationships, improve decision-making, minimise adverse impacts, create shared value and maintain the trust and confidence of the communities it serves. Effective engagement supports Watercare’s social licence to operate by ensuring that the needs, experiences and aspirations of communities are understood and considered throughout planning, delivery and operation of water infrastructure.

Connecting with purpose*

“We will stay focused on customers, developers and strategic partners, strengthening relationships and customer experience, deepening our partnership with mana whenua and leading the sector through clear, purposeful connection.”

*Focus Area 3:
Watercare's Enterprise Strategy

Te whakamahi i tēnei pou tarāwaho

Using this Framework

This Community Engagement Framework (the Framework) has been developed to provide clear and consistent guidance on why, when and how Watercare undertakes engagement with community, consumers and stakeholders.

It is complementary to additional standards and guidelines provided in the Watercare Significance and Engagement Policy, and the Mana Whenua Engagement and Tāmaki Ora Outcomes frameworks.

The objectives of the Framework are to:

- Define what Watercare means by community engagement and why it is important.
- Provide clear guidance on Watercare’s commitment to engagement and set out the principles that guide how Watercare staff and representatives engage with the community, consumers, stakeholders and mana whenua partners.
- Provide a step-by-step process that supports the design, delivery and evaluation of leading practice engagement.

This framework has been developed through consideration of leading practice and industry benchmarking, along with consultation with Watercare staff and community representatives. This document will be reviewed regularly to ensure it continues to reflect the needs of Watercare and its stakeholders.

Ko wai ngā hapori e whai pānga mai ana?

Who are the communities we serve?

Auckland

2023 Census



Auckland population

1,656,486

regional population count

33.2% of total NZ population

5.4% more people since 2018

Future population

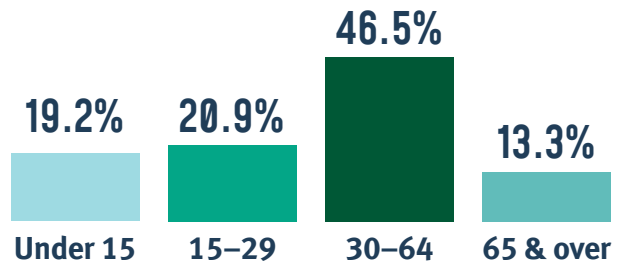
2,161,000 – 2,723,000

by 2053



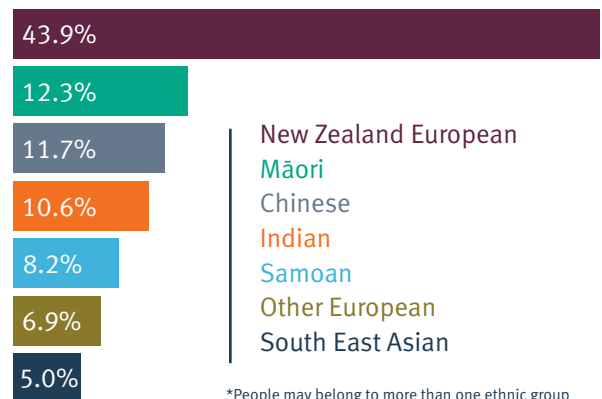
Our ages

35.9 years is the median age.



Our ethnicities

Top seven ethnic groups*



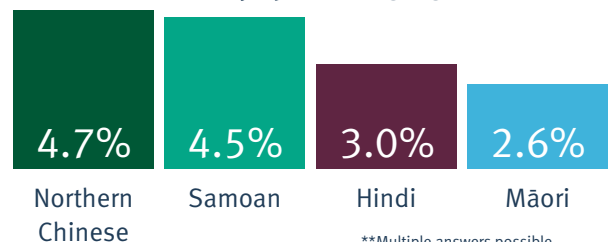
Languages we use

1,528,632

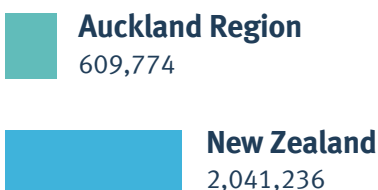
92.3% of the population speak English

NZ Sign Language: 0.4%
None (eg too young to talk): 2.3%

Next most commonly spoken languages**



Number of private dwellings



Number of private businesses



He aha e tūhonohono ai a Watercare?

Why does Watercare engage?

Engagement is defined by Watercare as a planned process with the purpose of working with communities and stakeholders to inform decisions, share knowledge, build understanding and strengthen relationships to build and maintain Watercare's social licence to operate.

How does good engagement benefit Aucklanders?

Good engagement supports individuals and groups to make informed contributions to decisions about projects and initiatives that impact or interest them. Effective engagement can also support positive behaviour change by increasing awareness, building understanding, and encouraging shared ownership of outcomes. When delivered to a high standard, engagement contributes to building stronger, more connected, and more resilient communities.

How does engagement benefit Watercare?

Effective engagement enables us to better understand the needs, values, and preferences of our stakeholders, and to use these insights to inform both what we do—including project delivery and future planning—and how we do it. These perspectives complement our internal expertise, supporting the achievement of outcomes that are beneficial for all. Strong engagement also helps stakeholders better understand our decision-making processes, which, when supported by clear and transparent practices, fosters greater trust.

Proactive, transparent engagement is a critical factor in mitigating strategic, project and reputational risks and provides a multitude of benefits to Watercare and the Aucklanders it serves.

Better decisions

Community knowledge, lived experience and local insights improve planning, design, construction and operational outcomes

Stronger communities

Engagement helps communities understand projects, participate meaningfully in decision-making and build resilience to change.

Reduced project risk

Early identification of concerns, impacts and opportunities enables Watercare to proactively address issues before they escalate.

Enhanced social value

By understanding community values and the impact of our work, engagement can reveal opportunities to minimise costs and contribute to leaving a positive legacy.

Trust and social licence

When communities feel informed, listened to and respected, trust increases. Trust contributes to Watercare's ability to successfully deliver projects and services while maintaining its social licence to operate.

Ngā uara me ngā mātāpono ā-tūhonohono a Watercare

Watercare's values and engagement principles

Watercare's values guide the way we work. To support these values, our engagement principles set out our commitment to engaging in a consistent, meaningful, and authentic way.

Watercare uses the following principles to guide how it engages with stakeholders and to set clear expectations for participants throughout the engagement process.

Watercare values			
			
Manaakitanga We care	Kounga We adapt and learn	Pono We do what we say	Kotahitanga We work together
Watercare engagement principles			
Genuine We are committed to authentic engagement, listening, learning, and providing meaningful opportunities to participate.	Proactive We will take an early, proactive approach to engagement, using the right tools at the right time. Adaptive We will learn from experience to continuously improve and adapt the way we engage to ensure it is accessible and inclusive.	Consistent We will do what we say we are going to do and close the loop to ensure the community understands how feedback has been used. Transparent We will be open and honest about what decisions can be influenced and why decisions have been made.	Collaborative We will align our engagement efforts and approach to reduce engagement fatigue and support better decision making across the organisation.

Te tūhonohono ki te mana whenua

Mana Whenua engagement

We are committed to meaningful and enduring partnerships with mana whenua, guided by the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi).

We recognise Treaty obligations to Tangata Whenua under Te Tiriti (Treaty) and affirm their rangatiratanga (authority, leadership and self-determination) and role as kaitiaki (guardians and stewards). Decisions that may affect Treaty interests, the exercise of rangatiratanga, or the relationship of Māori to their ancestral lands, waters, wāhi tapu (sacred sites) and taonga (treasures) may be considered significant for the purposes of this Framework.

Our approach is to engage early, openly and in good faith, working collaboratively to shape outcomes, particularly where proposals or decisions have the potential to impact culturally significant lands, waters, or other matters that mana whenua have expressed interest in. We prioritise building trusted relationships over time through our rangatira ki te rangatira approach, supporting mana whenua aspirations and enabling shared decision-making where appropriate.

Through this partnership approach, we ensure our work reflects mātauranga Māori, protects taonga and delivers sustainable outcomes that support intergenerational wellbeing.

Further guidance on mana whenua engagement is available via Watercare's Mana Whenua Engagement framework, with support provided by the Te Rua Whetū team.



Te whakatinana i te tūhonotanga

Part B: Engagement in practice

The following section provides a practical, step-by-step guide to planning, designing, delivering and evaluating engagement at Watercare. It includes an overview of roles and responsibilities for the implementation of this Framework.



Ngā mātāpono tūhonohono ā-tinana

Engagement principles in practice

The approach to engagement at Watercare is driven by Watercare's core values and six Engagement Principles.

The table below outlines Watercare's commitment to engagement through six Principles, along with what this would look like in practice in terms of the behaviours we expect to see when designing and delivering engagement.

Watercare engagement principles		What this looks like in practice
	Genuine We are committed to authentic engagement, listening, learning, and providing meaningful opportunities to participate.	• Every engagement plan clearly articulates the objectives, negotiables and level of influence for the project stage prior to engagement commencing. • Engagement activities are designed in a way that's inclusive, accessible and provides multiple methods to participate.
	Proactive We will take an early, proactive approach to engagement, using the right tools at the right time.	• Engagement is a critical part of the conversation from the beginning of a project to ensure that we are maximising opportunities to engage at the right time. • The design of engagement activities clearly links to the level of influence, negotiables and engagement objectives.
	Adaptive We will learn from experience to continuously improve and adapt the way we engage to ensure it is accessible and inclusive.	• A lessons learned process is required at the end of each project stage to ensure that projects are evaluated, and learnings can inform future project stages. • We consider the needs and preferences of stakeholders and design engagement activities to minimise barriers to participation.
	Consistent We will do what we say we are going to do and close the loop to ensure the community understands how feedback has been used.	• All medium and high significance projects publish a 'close the loop' report at the end of each project stage which clearly articulates the engagement process, the findings and next steps. • Commitments and decisions relating to stakeholders are captured and the data is stored in a central location to ensure continuity across the project lifecycle.
	Transparent We will be open and honest about what decisions can be influenced and why decisions have been made.	• The level of influence and negotiables (including any decisions that have already been made) are clearly articulated for each project stage.
	Collaborative We will align our engagement efforts and approach to reduce engagement fatigue and support better decision making across the organisation.	• At the first stage of designing engagement, the project team will seek to understand any other engagement activities occurring that impact the same stakeholders or location, and/or are on the same topic or issue to reduce duplication. • Watercare will seek opportunities where possible to collaborate with other agencies working in the same space, especially Auckland Council and related CCOs.

Ngā mahi me ngā kawenga **Roles and responsibilities**

Watercare is committed to developing a culture of engagement and everyone has a responsibility for engagement in some way. While we have a specialist Engagement team available to provide guidance and advice on best-practice community engagement, everyone contributes to successful community engagement outcomes.



Role	Responsibilities
Executive Leadership Team	- Accountable for organisational adoption and consistent application of the Significance and Engagement Policy (SEP). - Support for the consistent application of the Community Engagement Framework. - Lead a culture of best-practice engagement by ensuring structures and resources are in place to support effective, inclusive engagement and feedback use. - Brief the Board about the role of community engagement by referencing social impacts and engagement outcomes in all relevant Board papers as appropriate.
Programme and Project Managers	- Maintain an 'engagement mindset' when overseeing programmes, projects, plans, and activities in their team/s. - Resource programmes and projects to deliver engagement through dedicated engagement budgets. - Ensure social and community impacts are assessed and factored into project plans, designs and decision-making. - Provide opportunities for stakeholders to give feedback. - Identify opportunities to provide social value to impacted communities.
Community and Programme Engagement Team	- Maintain understanding of the Community Engagement Framework, toolkit and resources. - Support our people to design, deliver and evaluate engagement to ensure a consistent approach to delivery. - Identify opportunities to build on engagement practice with a focus on continuous improvement. - Lead the review and evaluation process to ensure that learnings and case studies are captured as part of the process.
Strategic and Government Relations Team	- Ensure our shareholder, Auckland Council, and elected members are kept updated through a no-surprises approach. - Facilitate engagement and feedback from the Governing Body.
Te Rua Whetū Team	- Lead delivery of Watercare's Māori Outcomes Plan. - Support the organisation to grow and manage relationships with Mana Whenua. - Lead relationships with Mana Whenua. - Guide engagement in accordance with tikanga and aligned with kaupapa Māori.
Watercare staff	- Understand the application of the Community Engagement Framework and Significance and Engagement Policy (SEP). - Consider social and community impacts when making decisions. - Provide opportunities for stakeholders to give feedback. - Ensure sufficient information is provided to the community about our decisions. - Seek out the Community and Programme Engagement team early for advice and support.
Contractors	- Deliver on-the-ground community engagement to support impacted communities. - Share clear information and timely updates. - Collect feedback and share insights into community sentiment. - Deliver social value to impacted communities. - Will engage with stakeholders in accordance with Watercare's Engagement Principles.
Elected Members	- Collaborate on issues of shared interest. - Contribute insights at a local level. - Encourage community participation. - Help inform solutions.
Community	- Community members are encouraged to participate in engagement opportunities to help inform Watercare decision-making. - Recognise that Watercare needs to consider the needs of the whole community in its decision-making.

Te mārāma ki te horopaki ā-hapori me te whakaaweawe ā-papori

Understanding community context and social impact

Understanding community context early allows Watercare to identify potential social impacts, respond to community concerns proactively, reduce project risk, improve decision-making and strengthen trust and confidence in Watercare's activities.

It also supports Watercare's social licence to operate by ensuring community perspectives, local knowledge and lived experience are considered alongside technical, environmental and financial considerations.

When undertaking new engagement activities, project teams should review and draw on insights Watercare already holds about the impacted communities, including from the following sources:

- Customer insights and research
- Previous engagement findings and case studies
- Community profiles and demographic information
- Auckland Council Local Board plans.

This helps reduce engagement fatigue, improves consistency and enables Watercare to build institutional knowledge over time rather than repeatedly asking communities for information it already possesses.

Te arotake i te horopaki ā-hapori

Assessing community context

Project teams should seek to understand:

- Who may be affected by the project, directly or indirectly including any sensitive receivers.
- Community characteristics, demographics and diversity.
- Existing community strengths, assets and networks.
- Community identity, culture and sense of place.
- Existing levels of trust and confidence in Watercare.
- Local priorities, concerns and aspirations.
- Existing pressures or challenges facing the community.
- Other projects or activities occurring in the area that may contribute to cumulative impacts.
- Groups that may experience barriers to participation or be disproportionately affected.

Te arotake i ngā whakaaweawe ā-papori

Assessing social impacts

Social impacts are those directly or indirectly experienced by individuals, households, businesses and communities as a result of a project, activity or decision.

Potential impacts to consider include:

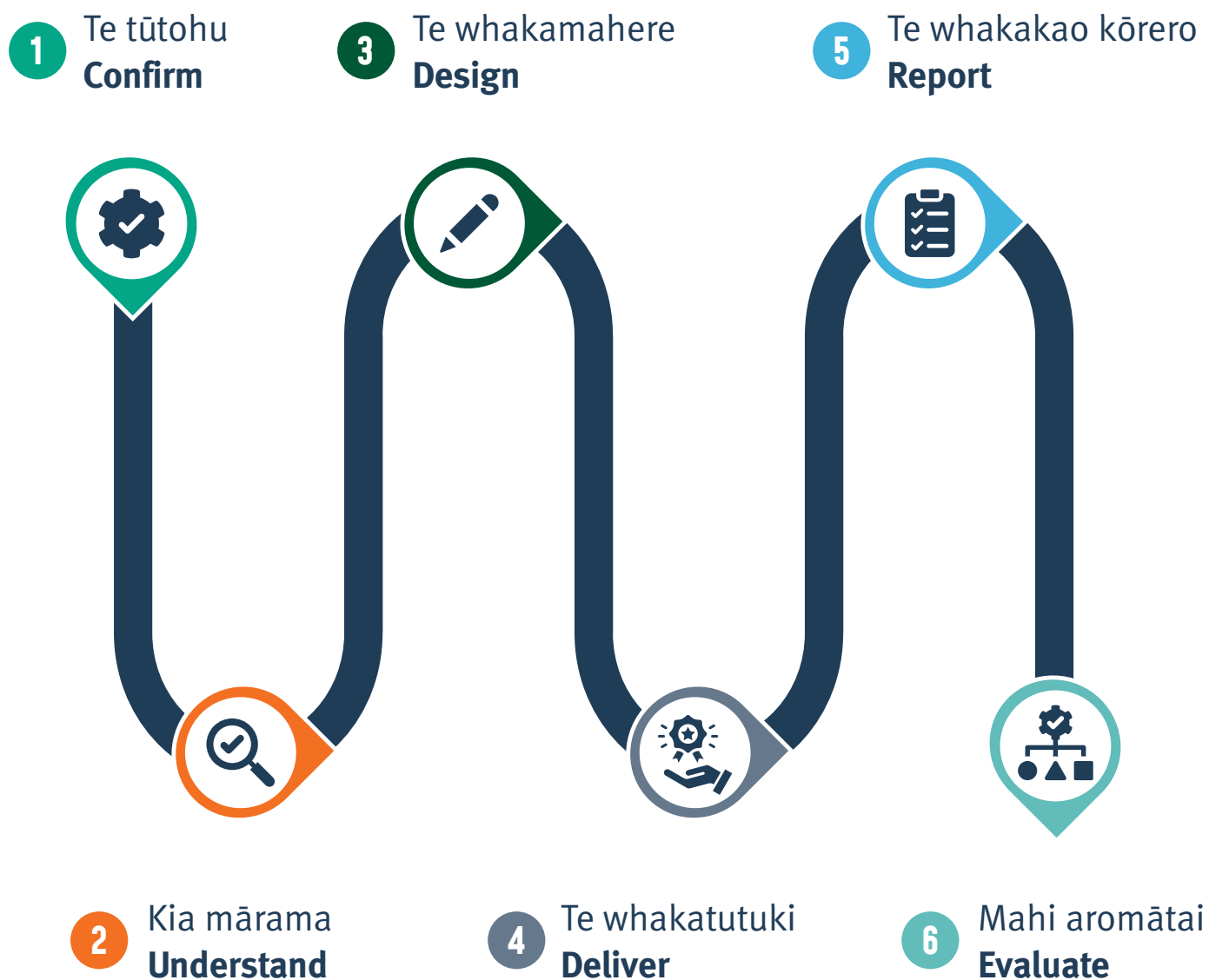
- Amenity and quality of life
- Economic and community wellbeing
- Social connection and community cohesion
- Equity and inclusion
- Cultural and place-based impacts

Following this process, a recommendation will be made on whether a full Social Impact Assessment by an accredited professional is needed.

Te whakariterite tūhononga

Engagement planning

Learn more about each step below and use the key questions at each stage to plan and implement effective engagement for your project.





Te tūtohu Confirm

To start, you will need to evaluate the level of significance of your decision based on Watercare's Significance and Engagement Policy, then confirm key elements of the engagement including the engagement approach associated with the level of significance, purpose of the engagement and who needs to be involved.

Key questions to consider

- What is the level of significance of your project using Watercare's Significance and Engagement Policy?
- Based on the level of significance, what is the indicated level of engagement?
- What are you hoping to achieve through engagement?
- What is the purpose of your engagement? Is it to strengthen relationships, inform decisions or share knowledge?
- What level of influence will stakeholders have over decisions?
- What aspects of the project (negotiables) can they influence? What are the non-negotiable elements or decisions that have been made?
- Who will need to be involved in designing and delivering your engagement?
- How will you evaluate the success of the engagement?

Outputs

- Significance assessment per Significance and Engagement Policy
- Engagement objectives
- Decision scope and negotiables
- Resource evaluation
- Complete Plan on a page





Kia mārama

Understand

At this step, you will seek to understand additional contextual information that will help you to design engagement that is proactive and collaborative. This includes understanding the community context and social impact of the project.

Key questions to consider

- What do we already know about this community from previous Watercare engagement and insight activities?
- What additional information do we need to understand before engaging?
- Who is likely to be affected and how?
- What social values are important to the community?
- What existing community strengths and assets can be leveraged?
- Which groups may experience disproportionate impacts?
- What cumulative impacts may arise from other projects occurring at the same time?
- What opportunities exist to reduce negative impacts?
- What opportunities exist to create positive community outcomes?
- What level of trust currently exists between Watercare and stakeholders?
- What do success and positive outcomes look like from the community's perspective?
- Who are we wanting to engage? What are the characteristics of the stakeholders and community?
- What previous engagement has occurred for this project and/or with these stakeholders? What do we know about their preferences?
- What level of influence does each stakeholder group have over decisions?

Outputs

- Stakeholder analysis and mapping
- Social baseline assessment
- Initial social impact summary or social impact assessment (if required)
- Engagement opportunities and risks



Te whakamahere

Design

When designing your engagement, you want to make sure that there is a clear link between your objectives, negotiables, stakeholders, level of influence and the engagement methods you are using.

Key questions to consider

- What questions are we trying to answer? What type of data will we need to collect?
- What tools and techniques might we use?
- What do our stakeholders need to know or understand to be able to meaningfully participate?
- How can we best reach the stakeholders we've identified? What do we know about their communication preferences?
- What barriers might they face in engaging with us?

Outputs

- Engagement plan
- Key messages



Te whakatutuki

Deliver

At this step you will be getting ready to deliver your engagement online or in person.

Key questions to consider:

- Have you completed relevant internal processes such as a risk assessment for your engagement activities?
- Have you adequately resourced your engagement, including with subject matter experts and the stakeholder engagement team as required?
- Have you provided adequate notice for people to participate?
- Have you prepared accessible engagement materials in plain language?
- Have you clearly articulated how stakeholders will influence decision-making, including any negotiables in your key messages?
- Have you selected venues that meet accessibility requirements?

Outputs

- Engagement activities
- Stakeholder records updated
- Collateral and FAQs



Te whakakao kōrero

Report

The goal of this step is to review and interpret the engagement information and data you have collected.

Key questions to consider:

- How will you consolidate the data and information you have collected?
- What is the data telling you about the themes, priorities, and preferences of participants?
- Were there any limitations in your engagement design? Were there any barriers to participation or assumptions made?
- Were there any identified stakeholder groups you didn't hear from?
- Is there any information or data that could be useful to share with other teams internally?
- How are you storing information about interactions with stakeholders (including any commitments made)?
- How will you close the loop with stakeholders?

Outputs

- Engagement findings report
- Actions report
- Report back to community (Close the loop)
- Confirm on-going engagement needs



Mahi aromātai

Evaluate

A critical part of Watercare's commitment to being Adaptive is to ensure that evaluation is a part of every project lifecycle.

Key questions to consider:

- How well did your project meet your engagement objectives?
- What worked well? What could be improved?
- What did you learn?
- What will you share back with the business?
- How did the engagement deliver value for the project and Watercare?

Outputs

- Voice of Community insights
- Evaluation report and case study (as appropriate)
- Social value review



Appendix 1: Definitions

The following key definitions apply to commonly used terms in the Framework:

Term	Definition
Community	The term community refers to a group of people that has something in common such as identity, behaviours, interests or values. A community often shares a sense of place in a given geographical area (e.g. a country, city, town, or neighbourhood) or in virtual space through communication platforms.
Consultation	Consultation is a specific engagement method which involves obtaining feedback on proposals. The terms consultation and engagement are not used interchangeably.
Consumer (customer)	Consumer means a person who consumes, uses, is provided with, or benefits from the provision of, water services by Watercare – also known as a customer.
Elected members	Elected Members refers to Auckland Council elected members, including the Mayor, Governing Body members (Councillors) and Local Board members, who play a critical role in representing the interests and aspirations of Auckland communities.
Engagement	Engagement is defined as a planned process with the purpose of working with stakeholders and partners to inform decisions, share knowledge and strengthen relationships. Engagement is a broad term which covers all types of engagement from communicating/informing through to consultation, involvement and co-design.
Partner	Mana Whenua and Iwi are referred to as partners.
Shareholder	Auckland Council is the sole shareholder of Watercare. As shareholder, Auckland Council issues a Statement of Expectations to Watercare, and approves Watercare's Water Services Strategy. The council also has a legislative role in approving some other specific Watercare decisions, some of which are noted in this Policy.
Stakeholder	The word stakeholder refers to individuals, groups or organisations with a stake or interest in the outcome of a decision. Stakeholders may also have the ability to influence the decision given their role or position. Stakeholder has been used as a collective term to include community, consumers, and other individuals or groups.

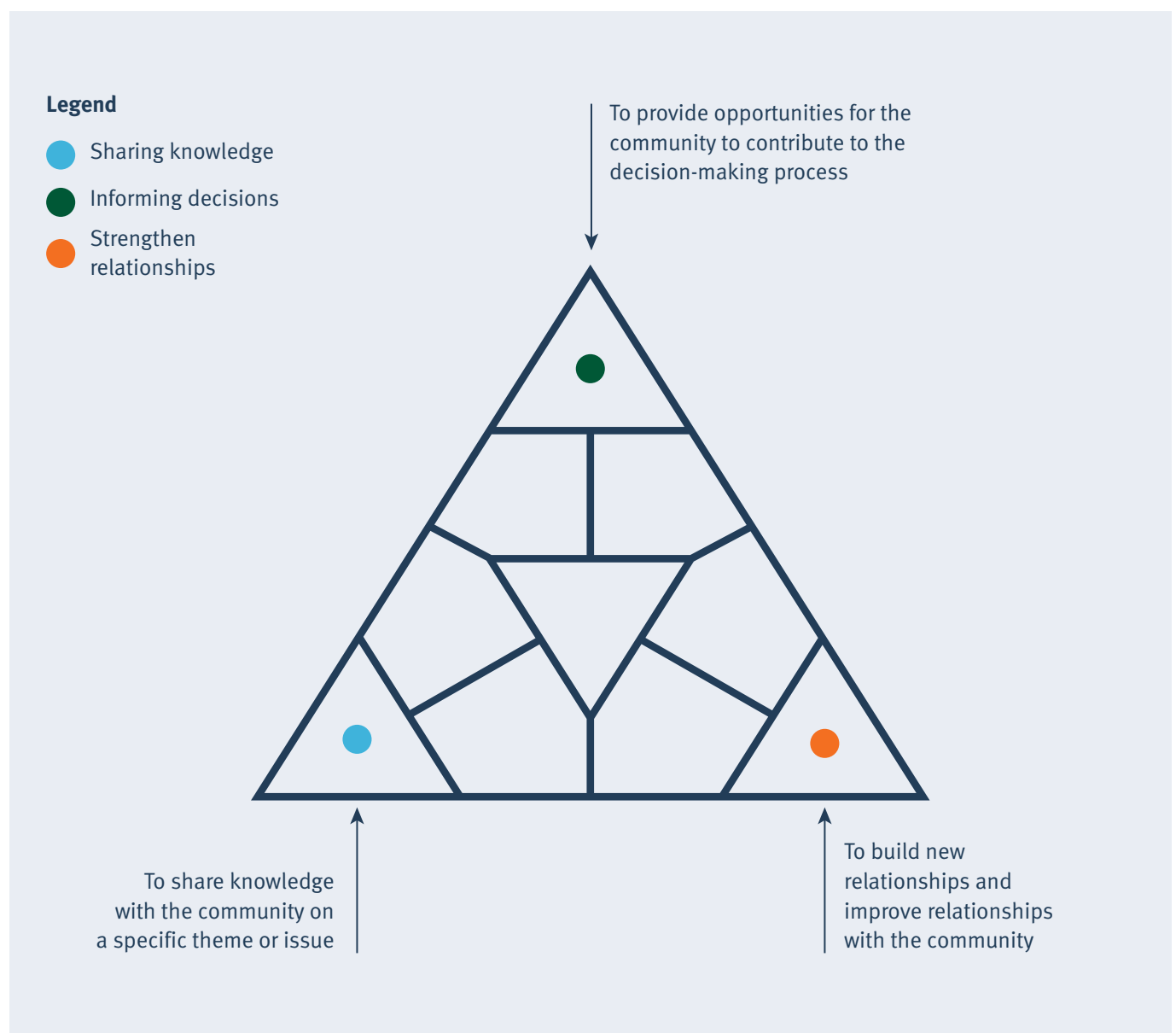
Term	Definition
Sensitive receiver	People, businesses, organisations, or places that may be more affected by a project or activity and may need extra consideration, support, or engagement, such as residents, schools, healthcare facilities, marae, community facilities, and vulnerable groups.
Social impacts	The effects a project may have on people, communities, businesses, and organisations, including changes to wellbeing, quality of life, access, amenity, connectivity, cultural values, and livelihoods.
Social value	The positive outcomes and lasting benefits created for people and communities through a project, activity, decision, or service, including social, cultural, environmental, and economic wellbeing.

Appendix 2: Engagement Triangle

Capire Engagement Triangle

The term 'engagement' can have different definitions depending on your sector, services, resources, and communities. There are significant risks to any engagement unless the true context is established. The Engagement Triangle is a spatial tool that identifies desired outcomes of engagement. The Triangle should be used in the early stages of engagement planning to help clarify goals, map stakeholders and identify appropriate tools and techniques. Project teams should use the Engagement Triangle to determine the intent of the community engagement.

The Triangle identifies that Engagement can be used for multiple purposes - to Inform Decisions, Strengthen Relationships and Share Knowledge. You may identify that your engagement purpose aligns with one, two or even all three of these purposes. Different engagement methods and tools may align more closely with one or two sides of the Engagement Triangle, and this has been outlined on the subsequent page.



Appendix 3: Engagement Methods

The following table outlines common engagement methods, their engagement purpose and common examples.

Method	Purpose	Examples / Common Formats
Communications		Newsletters, social media posts, short videos, news articles and letters
Project webpage		Online project hubs, engagement portals, FAQs, maps and update pages
Survey / poll		Online surveys, intercept surveys, mail surveys, phone surveys and live polling
Submissions		Formal responses to policies, strategies, plans, proposals or statutory processes
Online discussion forum	 	Moderated discussion boards, online comment threads and platform-based participant discussions
Pop-ups	  	Shopping centre stands, market stalls, community event booths and dot voting activities
Drop-ins	 	Public displays, open houses and informal information sessions
Door knocking	 	Visiting homes or businesses in a defined local area
Public meetings	 	Information sessions, town-hall style meetings and public briefings
Targeted meetings	 	One-on-one meetings, small group meetings and stakeholder-specific briefings
Focus / study groups	 	Small facilitated discussions, user groups and topic-based research groups
Workshops	 	Structured group sessions, facilitated activities and collaborative problem-solving sessions
Tours / site visits	 	Community walks, site tours, augmented reality, virtual reality
Hui	 	Culturally safe group discussions, storytelling and listening spaces
Reference groups	 	Community advisory groups, working groups and liaison groups
Deliberative engagement		Citizens' assemblies, global cafés, panels and multi-criteria analysis processes
Legend  Share knowledge  Inform decisions  Strengthen relationships		

Pātai? **Any Questions?**

Get in touch with the Community and Programme
Engagement team.

engagement@water.co.nz