



Part 2. Our Approach – How we implemented Napier Connects

The development and implementation of Napier Connects has been a fantastic team effort and we've learnt a lot along the way. In this section we share details of the steps taken from initial planning right through to measuring success.

Your council or organisation is welcome to follow some or all of our steps, though of course every community has different needs, so approaches throughout New Zealand will probably vary.

Our number one piece of advice is this: Be flexible. This type of project involves many people and moving parts, so adapting to things as they change is key.

We wish you well as you work through your own positive ageing and community engagement project, and we look forward to hearing about initiatives from around the country.

Planning (including Critical Success Factors)

Once community agencies received the request from the then-Minister for Senior Citizens, Hon Jo Goodhew and an initial meeting was called by Ministry of Social Development staff, we moved into planning phase, which consisted of these three main steps:

1. Getting support from community leaders
2. Establishing the Steering Group
3. Creating our Guiding Document

1. Getting support from community leaders

Napier Connects is led by the community, for the community. But the backing of municipal and community leaders and government organisations has given the project important credibility and help. We ensured the following support early on and believe it really helped to keep our path smoother than it would have been otherwise:

- The Ministry of Social Development's regional office. A key staffer was at the initial meeting with the Minister so they were in the loop from the start and that person is a member of the Steering Group.
- The Ministry's Senior Services, who helped Age Concern apply for a grant for a community intern.
- Department of Internal Affairs' Napier office staff member was the initial key contact for Community Connectors¹.
- Napier's Mayor.

This wide-ranging support enabled us to take these steps:

- Establishment of the Steering Group
- Development of our guiding document — a 'Community Connection Overview'
- Identification and consultation with 'Community Connectors' at a World Café
- Community consultation through surveys and research

- Resourcing of Napier Connects, with no existing budget
- Project branding and publicity of its benefits and successes

2. Establishment of the Steering Group

The initial meeting with the then-Minister for Senior Citizens was called by the Ministry of Social Development and attracted many individuals already involved in community projects, as well as those in professional roles within related organisations, Council and Department of Internal Affairs.

In the meeting, the need for a Steering Group was identified, and the group was founded by most of the attendees, with other members co-opted in the early planning stages of the project.

The Steering Group's role was to develop the programme and resulting activities (some of which were led by Community Connectors) and then hand them over to the Community Connectors to put them into action. The group has so far been tasked with setting goals, proposing the programme's projects, arranging resourcing, and networking. Because of the varied nature of the group's responsibilities, it has been important to have members who are able to influence, are flexible, adaptable and who collaborate freely.

At present, members of Napier Connects' Steering Group come from these organisations.

- Age Concern Napier
- Grey Power
- RSA Napier
- Volunteering Hawkes Bay
- Te Kupenga Hauora-Ahuriri
- Napier City Council
- Ministry of Social Development
- Red Cross

In the Steering Group there is no chair or leading organisation. We take turns hosting meetings, which take place about once a

¹ Older people and others with strong networks throughout the community

quarter, and more often when needed. We take and circulate minutes.

Our membership reflects our goals. For example, Napier Connects does not focus on health, so nor does membership of the Steering Group. But membership changes as our goals shift.

At meetings we update each other about the progress of activities we’re setting up. This sharing of knowledge has had some really positive effects, like resource sharing, combining services, adjusting services to meet current needs (for example, lowering the minimum age for joining a group to encourage greater uptake), identifying gaps and opportunities (for example, the community

connectors group identified transport as a barrier, at the same time vehicles are sitting idle), creating new activities like the Working Bee, promoting existing activities (for example, the Age Concern Napier newsletter tells readers about activities and volunteering opportunities).

3. Creating our Guiding Document

The Steering Group created a guiding document, *Community Connection Overview* and has used this as a reference point throughout the Napier Connects project. The Community Connection Overview is a table that describes people’s level of connection with the community and their wellbeing. It proposes actions, and who could lead them.

Community Connection - Overview

Key purpose: Napier’s older people engage in their community

Low Engagement		High Engagement			
Connection	May receive services in the home	Is unaware/unsure about attending services	Attends services/ activities	A community contributor	A community connector
Wellbeing	Unwell	May require assistance to participate	May access support to participate	Independent	Independent
Possible Solutions	Community connectors provide information, encourage in-home activities with others	Community connectors provide information about services and encourage attendance (buddy)	Services may clash/ duplicate	Opportunities to facilitate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteering • Education • Social interaction (through interest/ social groups) 	Opportunities to lead
RECEIVING		PARTICIPATING		CONNECTING	

As you can see above, the Overview shows a continuum. At the left of the connection scale are people who may not have much contact, and may receive services at home like home help or Meals on Wheels. On the right are people who might be busy volunteers with strong, interconnecting networks.

The goal is to bring people from the left of the table, who are more isolated, towards the right end, where they can contribute and connect more. The principle aim is to meet each individual’s need for connection at their own level of comfort.



The document – especially its visual nature – has been useful also for explaining and describing the Napier Connects project to those outside the Steering Group.

Useful Resources:

- [Community Connection Overview](#)
- [Community Connection Overview - Notes](#)
- [Napier Connects Draft Project Plan](#)
- [Activity Tracker](#)
- [Communication Plan, Activities & Outcomes](#)
- [Consultation Plan](#)
- [Project Timeline](#)

Consultation

Consultation with our community was central to our approach and enabled us to better understand the needs and wants of those we're trying to engage with in the longer term.

Our consultation process consisted of two main parts:

1. Identifying Napier's 'Community Connectors'
2. Community Consultation- surveys and research

1. Identifying Napier's 'Community Connectors'

Using the '*World Café*' approach (meaning leading open, informal discussions in 'conversation clusters' so everyone has the opportunity to share their views), we invited

people with community connection to a one-day consultation about Napier's services and gaps in those services for older people at risk of social isolation.

The people we invited have wide, strong networks ('fingers in lots of pies') and who we thought would be keen to put Napier Connects projects into action.

A *consultation plan and a summary of guidelines* helped our team to guide conversations, which happened over a cuppa, and were friendly and informal. The open questions we asked included:

- Tell us what you think about services for people at risk of social isolation — what's going on, and what more could be done to increase community connections?
- What's going on in the voluntary sector, and what more can be done?
- What are the barriers for people getting involved with the community, and how can they be overcome?

After the World Café consultation session we asked the invitees if they'd like to be Community Connectors and almost all agreed. We also sent them all the summary of what had happened and resulted from the discussions, so these 'Community Connectors' were made to feel involved and in the loop from the outset.

The idea is that Community Connectors are the people who put Napier Connects plans and projects into action – they're the foot soldiers. Our steering group at present works alongside the Community Connectors, but as the project develops the Community Connectors will hopefully take more of a lead.

The group has an informal structure and a fluid membership. Many are older people and all have fantastic can-do attitudes. The initial group of 25 has grown as they've invited more volunteers to join them.

The Connectors use an '*Activity Tracker*' document at their meetings to organise and track activities.



2. Community Consultation - surveys and research

In the consultation phase of Napier Connects, *several different tools and surveys* were used to collect information and the views of older people in our community.

For example, the intern who worked with Age Concern held one-on-one interviews and focus groups. We've also surveyed transport and other sectors, asking for opinions around

- What activities and programmes are offer for older people in Napier?
- What / where are the gaps?
- What are the needs of the users of these programmes?

We've used events like the retirement expo to survey people, and that has also raised awareness of the Napier Connects project.



Resourcing

As is the case with many new collaborative initiatives, there was no new funding available for the Napier Connects project.

To resource Napier Connects, we identified requirements as the venture has progressed and relied heavily on 'people power'.

To start with, the time and expertise contributed by the Steering Group was enough to keep the project moving, but as it developed from the planning phase to the implementation phase, more resourcing was required.

Continued consultation was needed after the *World Café* workshop, and the steering group members did not have the capacity to undertake that. So Age Concern Napier made a funding application to the Department of Internal Affairs' Community Internship Programme. It was successful and an intern was employed for five months to undertake the consultation work.

Age Concern's intern worked on Napier Connects for five months, focusing on collaboration and consultation. They:

- Identified activities already happening in the community
- Explored how we could improve existing activities to address social isolation
- Consulted with older people about what services they wanted.

As Napier Connects progressed, Steering Group member organisations gave support and some funding. Members gave through support 'in kind' such as skills and contacts; and in time, attending meetings and doing administration. Organisations provided funding through operational budgets, and discretionary grants.

Projects cost little or nothing to begin with. However, once the projects were established we needed support for them so they could become self-sustaining.

Useful Resources:

Documents:

- *Activity Tracker*
- *Consultation Plan*
- *World café project:*
 - *Project Plan*
 - *Workshop Programme*
 - *Workshop Summary & Facilitator Sheets*
 - *Workshop Participant Information Summary*
 - *Feedback Form*
 - *Workshop Feedback Report*
 - *Example Organisation Survey Form*

Websites:

- www.theworldcafe.com

Useful Resources:**Websites:**

- [www.communitymatters.govt.nz/
Funding-and-grants---Forms#cip](http://www.communitymatters.govt.nz/Funding-and-grants---Forms#cip)
- www.fjs.org.nz

Measuring Success

We set out with clear goals and measured success so we could check the effectiveness of Napier Connects and make decisions on how to proceed.

Setting Goals

A sub-committee of the Steering Group developed a *review framework* for Napier Connects, based on the Results Based Accountability (RBA) model. The RBA approach suits us because it uses plain language — ideal for our broad range of audiences. It's a simple, clear approach that uses data we already have, or could get easily.

Tracking Progress

The Steering Group has been able to record and monitor the progress of each project using the *Activity Tracker*.

A Steering Group member managed the tracker, calling for regular updates and reports back to the group. The Community Intern reported back regularly to the group about the progress of the internship *work plan*.

Measuring Progress

Using the simple RBA approach, we looked at Napier Connects' progress on two levels: an overall success measure (population measure) and the component measures (projects etc.)

For the population measure we used data from an existing survey (Napier Social Monitor). For measuring progress and success of individual projects we used a variety of approaches. Guidelines that were developed for another

local programme – *Safer Napier* – were used to decide on the evaluation methods.

Critical Success Factors

After 12 months of working on Napier Connects, the Steering Group have identified the following learnings to support a successful initiative:

1. Responsiveness to local community

It is essential to respond to what your community needs and prioritises. Knowing what is already available in your community and what the gaps and opportunities are will help develop projects and activities that are locally meaningful. A well-networked community sector contributes greatly in this area.

2. Leadership support

Particularly in the initial stages, leadership support from community and organisational leaders is essential, predominantly to give the programme credibility and resource support.

3. Committed and resourced Steering Group

The Steering Group played a pivotal role in planning and delivery. Attention to appropriate membership was crucial.

4. Action oriented, simple approach

Keeping things simple and taking action got the initiative underway quickly. We make short gains quickly.

5. Enthusiastic community connectors

Well-connected members of the community enable the programme to get going quickly. This is where a community-led approach came into its own. There must be acceptance that the programme can take on a life of its own. Establishing clear, well-communicated objectives at the beginning was helpful for keeping activities aligned with the goals of Napier Connects.



6. Flexibility and inclusiveness

Community is an ever-changing place. Staying open to new needs and solutions is essential. Keeping an 'open door' to those who want to become involved throughout the programme means that it can continue to grow, change and respond to local needs.

7. Small steps and experimentation

A key element was trying things out, evaluating and improving things that worked, and stopping things that didn't. Valuing small steps allowed bigger and better things to come about. Just getting people together had an immediate and positive effect on engagement levels.

Useful Resources:

Documents:

- *Review Framework*
- *Activity Tracker*
- *Community Internship Workplan*
- *Safer Napier Evaluation Guidelines*

Websites:

- <http://www.raguide.org>
- <http://www.napier.govt.nz/index.php?pid806>