

The Hive

Deep Dive with Decision-Makers

Insights & Recommendations 2024

curative_

Report prepared by Curative,
for the Ministry of Youth
Development — Te Manatū
Whakahiato Taiohi, and The Hive.

Table of contents

Introduction to The Hive

Insights-gathering

What we heard from decision-makers

Other observations

Reflections from the Hivers

Summary of opportunities

Recommendations

Introduction to The Hive

**Young people are 17%
of the population, and
100% of the future.**

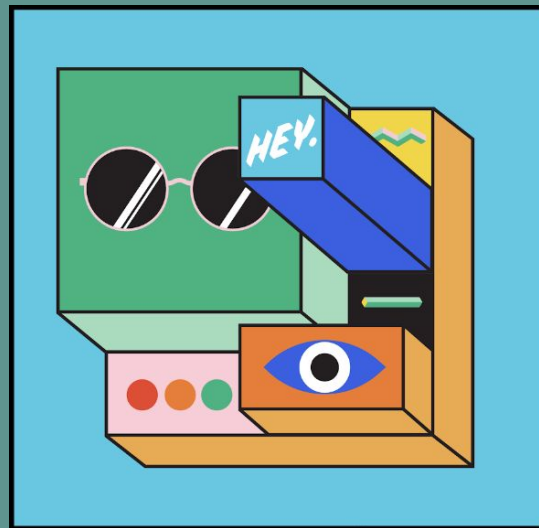
**So, their voices should be
viewed as critical in
decision-making.**

History of The Hive.

The Hive was co-founded in 2019 by the Ministry of Youth Development (MYD) — Te Manatū Whakahiato Taihi and creative agency Curative, following co-design workshops with young people.

The Hive is funded by the MYD and delivered by Curative.

- The Hive translates policy into snackable, relevant content.
- The Hive invites young people to speak in safe places and effortless ways.
- The Hive turns our insights into useful packs for policy makers.
- The Hive uses our content creation skills and social following to demystify all things politics.



The Hive model.

“The Hive was created to facilitate a meaningful two-way communication channel between young people and government, by supporting and encouraging young people to contribute their thoughts and opinions in a way that works for them and by synthesising the voices of young people into findings that can be used by government decision-makers to enhance their work.”

- MYD, *The Hive Strat on a Page*, 2023



What does The Hive produce?

Commissioned work by government agencies

The Hive is available to support government agencies and crown entities to co-design engagements with taiohi (young people) across Aotearoa New Zealand.

We can support decision-makers in translating engagement opportunities that are relevant for taiohi, and vice versa. We can translate youth voice into formats that decision-makers will be able to understand and action.

Proactive engagements by the Hivers

Hivers and our online community have the opportunity to proactively gather information from their communities on issues that they want decision-makers to know about.

We are able to do this in a variety of formats, including written reports, zines, videos, and podcasts.

Education resources and reactive explainers

The Hive produces a video series called Hi Vis that demystifies politics and our systems of government in Aotearoa New Zealand.

We also seek to produce reactive social content to explain current political events that is informative and accessible to a broad range of youth audiences.

The Hive toolkit.

Tools that we use to amplify taiohi voices in decision-makers' work:

Translating

Supporting decision-makers in translating engagement opportunities, policies, and government work that is relevant for taiohi.

Youthifying

Supporting decision-makers in making their engagement opportunities, policies, and government work interesting and appealing to taiohi.

Boosting

Amplifying opportunities through our networks for taiohi to engage with decision-makers or have their voices heard.

Info-gathering

Gathering youth voice on specific issues for decision-makers and sharing it back.

Connecting

Connecting taiohi to decision-makers, and vice versa.

Sense-making

Making sense of what we hear from taiohi to communicate to decision-makers and the relevance for their work.

The Hivers.

Every year The Hive is led by a diverse group of young people from around Aotearoa New Zealand. Each season (year) of The Hive includes 12 to 16 young people aged from 16 to 24 years.

Hivers are recruited for one season, but remain connected to The Hive through our alumni network.

Each season of The Hive explores opportunities to bridge the gap between young people and decision-makers. To date, we've had three seasons, with a total of 41 Hivers.



Season 1, 2020-2021.

Hivers:

Meghshyam, Shannon, Bede, Leah, Ellie, Ala, Bridie, Joanne, Abby, Jeru, Ihi, Elliot, Maia, and Te Manaia.

Key areas of work:

- Establishing the foundations and strategic direction of The Hive.
- Working with the Climate Change Commission to host a conversation with young people on how they believed Aotearoa New Zealand should respond to climate change. Find the report [here](#).



Season 2, 2021-2022.

Hivers:

Lochlan, Ethan, Zoe, Eilidh, Fiona, Radha, Charlotte, Silas, Ellie, Dean, Ash, Malisha, Sean, Jessica, and Lily.

Key areas of work:

- Engagements in this period included:
 - understanding taiohi housing concerns. Read the report [here](#)
 - reporting on taiohi experiences of renting. Read the report [here](#)
 - engaging taiohi on the Emissions Reduction plan in collaboration with the Climate Commission. Read the report [here](#)
 - understanding taiohi perspectives on Adoption Law Reform. Read the report [here](#).



Season 3, 2022-2023.

Hivers:

Michael, Hope, Vira, Ayla, Elle, Te Atawhai, Ray, Cindy, Buua, Tia, Abby, and Madiha.

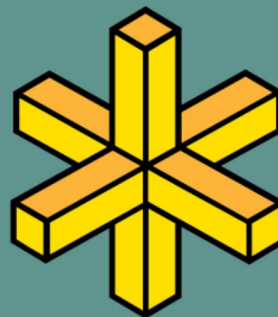
Key areas of work:

- Bringing The Hive to the Beehive to connect Hivers with decision-makers.
- Creating a report for Manatū Hauora of the lived experiences of health services for taiohi across Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Producing a zine co-designed with Hivers capturing taiohi voice and establishing rules of engagement. See the zine [here](#).



Introducing the All Stars!

After three years of The Hive, we decided that we needed to spend time to reflect on and evolve our model. In order to achieve this, we brought together a selection of previous Hivers for an All Stars season. Our 13 All Stars represent the cohorts from the first three seasons of The Hive.



THE HIVE
ALL STARS

The Hive All Stars.

All Stars:

Shannon, Joanne, Lochie, Ellie, Silas, Ethan, Ray, Tia, Te Atawhai, Cindy, Abby, Hope, and Eilidh.

Key areas of work across 2023 and 2024:

- Reflect on and evolve The Hive model through a series of engagements with decision-makers.
- Develop and implement The Hive social strategy.
- Revisiting The Hive brand and website.



Insights-gathering Oct - Dec 2023

Understanding the barriers and the opportunities.

The Hive wants to see youth voice uplifted and embedded in all public sector decision-making.

So this year, with the help of our All Stars, we set out to better understand the barriers that decision-makers experience around youth engagement and where opportunities to do things differently may lie.



A three-pronged approach.

The Hive embarked on three listening and insight gathering activities from October to December 2023, aiming to capture a variety of public sector voices and experiences.

These activities included:

1. an online survey
2. a series of in-person workshops with public servants
3. interviews with senior leaders.

Online Survey

‘Youth voice & your work.’

We designed an online survey titled ‘Youth voice & your work’ that was distributed by The Hive and MYD.

The survey was completed by 87 people working in the public service across 31 different departments and ministries.

Survey questions explored:

1. the respondent’s role and the mission of their organisation
2. their confidence around youth engagement
3. how The Hive might support them or their organisations in elevating youth voice across their work.

Interviews

2:1 kōrero with decision-makers.

Supported by Curative kaimahi (workers), The Hive All Stars interviewed seven senior public sector decision-makers. Our interviewees represented a range of organisations – including Mana Mokopuna - Children and Young People’s Commission, Accident Compensation Corporation, MYD, and Te Aka Whaiora - Māori Health Authority.

The interviews took 30 minutes. Two were held kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face) in Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington), and four were conducted online.

These kōrero investigated:

1. the factors shaping the interviewee’s strategic decision-making
2. the role of youth voice within their organisation
3. opportunities for taiohi to influence their work
4. the issues they most want to engage with young people about.

Workshops

Learning from decision-makers.

The Hivers designed and facilitated three in-depth workshops for decision-makers in Te Whanganui-a-Tara in November 2023. The workshops involved 50 public servants from 26 different organisations.



YOUTH VOICE & YOUR WORK

In this fun and interactive workshop, we'll get to know each other, explore the barriers and opportunities for including youth voice in your work, and consider how The Hive could best support government to uplift and embed youth voice.

WHAT You're invited to a 2.5 hour rangatahi-led workshop!

WHERE Ministry of Youth Development, 56 The Terrace

WHEN A choice of three times:
16 November, 2pm - 4:30pm
17 November, 10am - 12:30pm
17 November, 2pm - 4:30pm

RSVP Please register [here](#) by Friday 3 November

WE'RE BUZZING TO MEET YOU!



CINDY

EI LIDH

ETHAN

LOCHIE

SHANNON

SILAS

Reflecting together.

Our workshops investigated the following questions:

1. How is youth voice being included in the work of the public service? How could this be improved?
2. What are the the barriers preventing public servants from successfully engaging with taiohi?
3. How might The Hive be most useful for decision-makers?



What we heard from decision-makers

Most decision-makers view youth voice as essential to their work.

The vast majority of decision-makers who completed our survey, attended a workshop, or were interviewed by Hivers believe that young people's perspectives are a critical ingredient in their work.

In their view, engagement with taiohi allows them and their agencies to make better decisions, deliver on strategic priorities, and create lasting, positive impact.

They want to make a difference.

The decision-makers we spoke to care about their work. They told us they love serving communities, and want to feel like they are delivering purposeful work that is positively impacting people's lives.

They aspire to engage well with young people.

Decision-makers who see the importance of youth voice want to *engage well* with taiohi. They care deeply about getting it right; and have a sense of what great – and not so great – engagement looks like.

In-person engagement is strongly preferred – when possible.

Most of our decision-makers have a strong preference for in-person engagement with taiohi – particularly when working on a specific issue or challenge. However, they highlighted that this is not always possible due to practicalities like timeframes and costs.

Written research, case studies, and reports, are also valued.

A number of our participants acknowledge they rely – sometimes exclusively – upon existing research, or the work of other organisations who do engage with youth voice.

These folks often need to turn around recommendations quickly, and want easy access to research, case studies, and reports.

Many decision-makers are already connecting with youth voice in some capacity.

Many of our participants are using the tools available to them to connect with youth voice. Some methods involve direct engagement with taiohi, while others are more removed.

Current methods include:

- youth advisory groups
- existing literature, research, and reports eg: the Youth19 Survey
- connections with service providers, community organisations, or government agencies who work with young people
- online surveys and polls
- interviews
- co-design workshops
- roadshows.

However, they acknowledge that youth engagement isn't always done well.

Many of the decision-makers we connected with had concerns about how youth engagement is currently being approached within government. They told us there is significant room for improvement.

And sometimes young people's voices aren't really considered at all.

Some of our decision-makers acknowledged that, in their work, the practice of youth engagement doesn't happen as much as it should. They told us that sometimes young people's perspectives and experiences aren't really taken into account at all.

**So, what's getting
in the way?**

**Decision-makers
named a series of
challenges in their
work that fell into
three themes:**



Operating
environment



Connecting with
young people



Ways of working



Operating environment

Hierarchy and bureaucracy.

Our decision-makers told us the hierarchies within government can create barriers to engaging with young people. Senior colleagues who are busy with higher-ranked deliverables can overlook the value of youth voice – causing taiohi engagement to be deprioritised.

Bureaucracy and the requirement for multiple layers of authorisation also cause problems – leading youth engagement to end up in the too-hard basket all too often.



Operating environment

Budgets and timelines.

The majority of the decision-makers we connected with say budget and timeline constraints are an issue. Ministers often require timely advice on complex issues, and the day-to-day pace of the sector can be demanding. As such, decision-makers often have to rely on existing research and publications to provide insights on youth voice.



Operating environment

Change moving slowly.

Our decision-makers told us that the machinery of government tends to move slowly. This can generate a significant delay between data collection and application – which sometimes means youth voice insights are not as current and relevant as they should be.



Connecting with young people

Difficulties reaching some young people.

We heard that decision-makers often find it challenging to engage with who they consider as 'hard to reach' taiohi. Our decision-makers told us that existing avenues of youth engagement are often inaccessible and/or unattractive to these young people.

The survey data also revealed that many decision-makers don't feel confident in reaching and connecting with taiohi.

Because relationships and trust haven't been built with these communities of young people, our decision-makers worry that the same youth voices are being privileged in public sector work.



Connecting with young people

Challenges translating between government and young people.

Our decision-makers reported difficulties translating the language, processes, and policy of government into something that feels relevant and interesting to taiohi. They told us they find it hard to talk about their work and its real life implications in a way that encourages young people to engage.

This challenge was highlighted in our survey, with over half of our respondents sharing that they had moderate, low, or no confidence in communicating their work to young people in a way that is engaging for taiohi.



Connecting with young people

A lack of confidence working alongside taiohi.

Many of the decision-makers we connected with felt uncertain about when and how to engage with young people. This theme was particularly visible in our survey data – which saw more than a third of respondents rate their confidence in gathering young people’s input into their work as ‘low’ or ‘very low’.



Ways of working

Fixed mindsets and risk aversion.

Some of our decision-makers see fixed mindsets, rigid mental models, and risk aversion among their colleagues as a major barrier to elevating youth voice within their work.

They feel frustrated when those around them are unwilling to try something new or adapt their approach to one which might better resonate with taiohi.



Ways of working

The impact of working in silos.

Our interviewees and workshop participants told us silos existing within and between departments cause big challenges.

When knowledge isn't shared between agencies, engagements tend to be replicated. This sees young people asked the same questions again and again – often without a meaningful outcome – generating frustration and engagement fatigue.



Ways of working

An absence of mechanisms to ‘close the loop’.

Decision-makers told us that when young people *are* engaged with, the need to keep them informed about how their stories, perspectives, and insights are being used is often overlooked.

Our decision-makers felt an absence of accountability and mechanisms to ‘close the loop’ with the young people they engaged with was undermining trust – damaging the possibility of engaging well in the future.

**Decision-makers said
they need help to address
some of these challenges.**

**They told us they
wanted...**

Guidance around *when* and *how* to engage with young people.

Our decision-makers want to know when and how they should involve taiohi in their work. They want to understand what best practice looks like – and were eager for advice. How might they motivate taiohi to take part? At what stage of the process should young people be invited in? What approaches to youth engagement tend to work well?

To deepen their understanding of what young people need and care about.

The decision-makers we connected with expressed a very clear desire to better understand young people's perspectives, experiences, and needs. Participants were interested in listening to young people's views on a range of topics – including government, wellbeing, media, justice, technology, Te Tiriti, and the climate crisis.

Decision-makers also asked: which issues are most important to taiohi? What would they like to talk to us about?

To connect with young people who are 'harder to reach'.

Decision-makers are seeking help to connect with communities of young people who are seen as 'harder to reach'. Mindful that many existing youth engagement mechanisms tend to privilege the same voices, participants want to hear from a broader range of young people – including disabled young people; Rainbow young people; Pacific young people; rangatahi Māori; and young people from refugee and migrant communities.

Youth feedback on their plans, policy, projects, content, and events.

Decision-makers expressed a strong desire to receive feedback from young people on their work. Our participants want to understand how taiohi view their policies, plans, projects, prototypes, events, and content – and how they might be improved.

To understand how systems and services are working for young people.

A number of our decision-makers wanted to hear about young people's experiences of their systems, services, and facilities. These participants want to understand how well recreational facilities, health and wellbeing initiatives, school and training programmes, the justice system, emergency services, and other governmental systems are working for taiohi.

To understand what youth voice insights mean for their work.

Decision-makers want help to understand what youth voice insights mean for their work. Participants are seeking support with the 'so what' of youth engagement – translating young people's perspectives and experiences into strategic opportunities, recommendations, and solutions.

To reduce silos by forming connections across agencies.

Decision-makers who took part in our workshops and interviews expressed a strong desire for cross-agency collaboration. They want to break down silos, form connections with colleagues, share knowledge, and work together to elevate youth voice across the sector.

**Our decision-makers
also wanted to hear
from and about The
Hive regularly.**

**They felt regular
updates would
help them...**

Understand what working with The Hive looks like and involves.

Our decision-makers wanted to better understand how The Hive operates, and how they might work with us. They are eager to learn about the approaches and mechanisms of The Hive, and would like to engage with case studies that demonstrate what collaborating with The Hive might look like.

Learn from the data, insights, and outcomes generated by The Hive.

The decision-makers we connected with want easy access to The Hive's findings, insights, and recommendations. They are also seeking stories of impact that might help them understand the outcomes which can be generated by engaging with youth voice.

**What about the
participants who are
already engaging
with us?**

In their view...

The Hive works.

Participants who knew a little more about us, or have worked with us in the past felt that The Hive is already effectively addressing many of their challenges.

They value The Hive's ability to:

- connect decision-makers and young people
- translate language and processes between both audiences
- make public sector work feel real, relevant, and engaging for taiohi
- boost the reach and credibility of youth engagement initiatives.

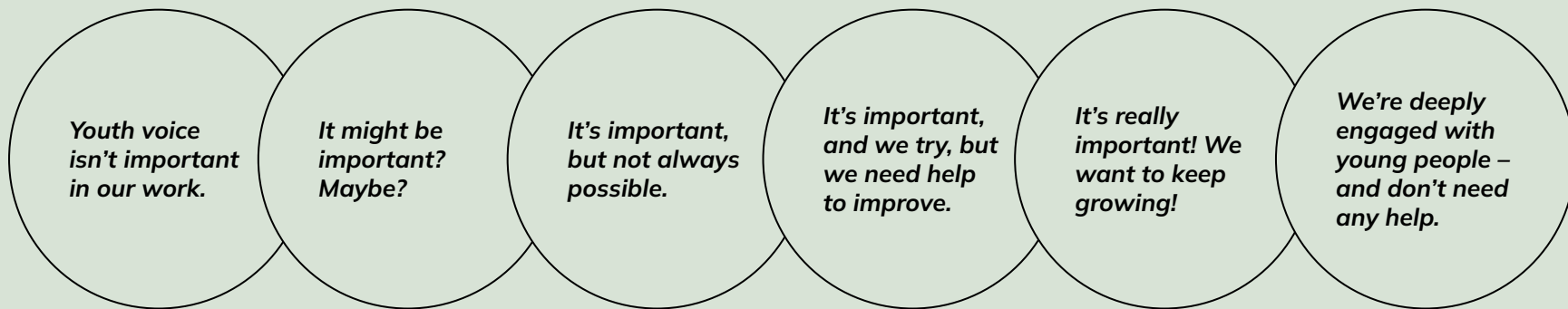
Other observations

Big differences.

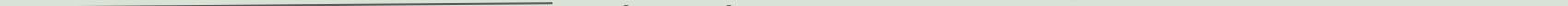
As we have reviewed the comments of the decision-makers who took part in our research, we've noticed some big differences. Participants' views reflect a wide spectrum of understanding around the 'why' of youth voice – and a range of capability in youth engagement practice.

We've mapped these differences across a continuum.

The journey of engagement.

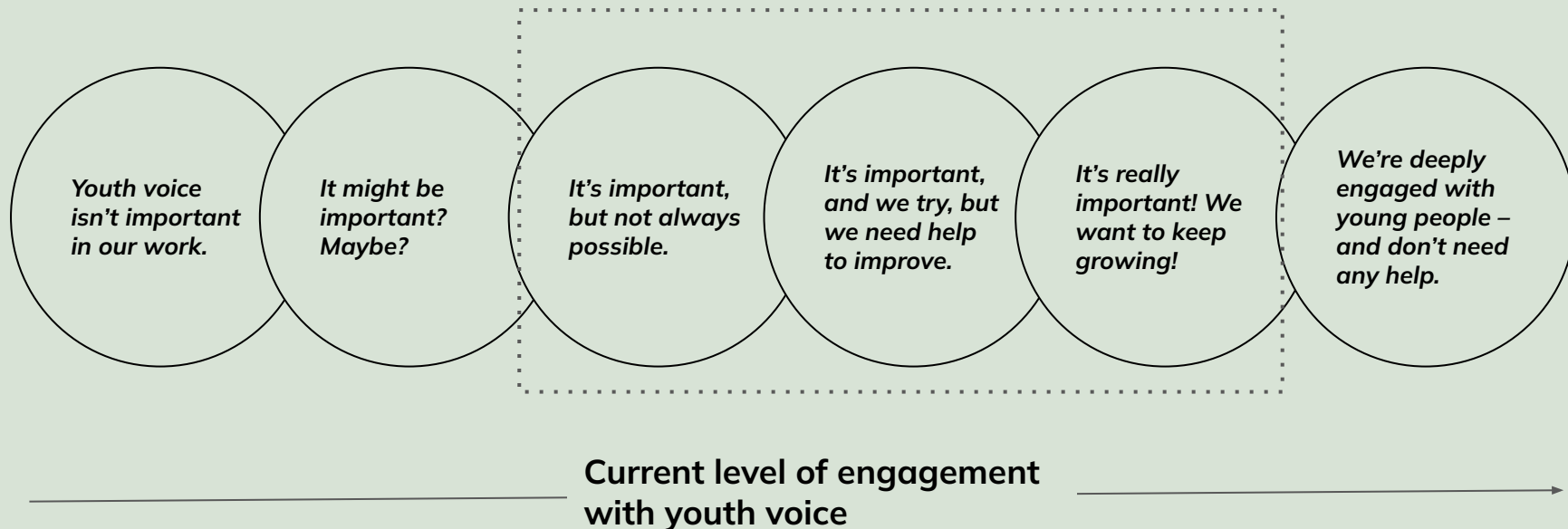


Current level of engagement
with youth voice



The journey: Workshop participants.

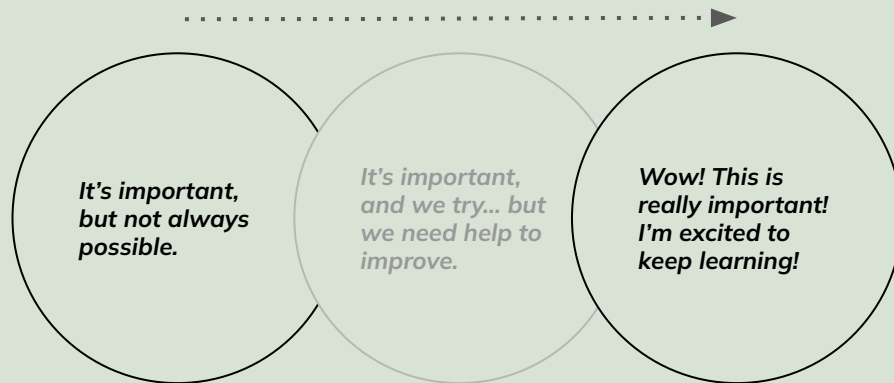
Survey respondents were positioned right across the continuum, but participants who came to a workshop tended to sit more towards the upper end.



The journey: Leveling up.

Our workshop participants arrived with a reasonable understanding around the importance of youth voice. However, they reported that during our time together, they shifted even further up the continuum.

They left our sessions buzzing - lifted by engagement with the Hivers, connections with other decision-makers, and excited about the possibilities youth voice might hold for their work.



Reflections from the Hivers

**As we look to the future,
it's vital to also consider
the perspectives
of Hivers.**

They want to see the impact of their work.

Hivers want transparency about what is being done with their hard work. They want to see their impact, and are seeking accountability from decision-makers. It's very important to them that public sector kaimahi loop back to demonstrate how The Hive's recommendations have been put into action.

Hivers tell us that being able to see their impact is deeply motivating – increasing their trust in decision-makers, and their willingness to engage in the future. It also allows Hivers to feel that *they* have done the right thing by the communities of young people who entrusted them with their stories.

They want to be able to work consistently.

Hivers feel frustration with the fluctuating nature of Hive engagements, and want to be able to work solidly and consistently on their work. They want sustained engagement with decision-makers – and desire to show up regularly and dependably for The Hive's social media communities.

They value engaging kanohi ki te kanohi.

Hivers really enjoy engaging with decision-makers – and each other – face-to-face. They love the energy, connectedness, and creativity that comes from working kanohi ki te kanohi.

Our Curative crew have also witnessed that in-person work rapidly accelerates Hivers' growth – fostering self-confidence, agency, and generating lots of personal and professional 'firsts'!

They view social media as critical for impact.

Hivers want to grow and sustain The Hive's social media platforms. They see an opportunity to develop social strategy and systems that allow The Hive to deliver content which is responsive, relevant, and fun. Hivers want our social media to feel trustworthy and entertaining – like the best mate who has your back in the good times and the bad.

They feel the tension between different audiences of taiohi.

The Hivers identified a tension between politically active young people, and those who are disengaged, skeptical, or struggle to see the relevance of government to their own lives. Both audiences feel important to the Hivers – but they recognise the challenges of developing content and engagements to meet divergent needs.

Summary of opportunities

Weaving this together.

Decision-makers want:

- guidance around *when* and *how* to engage with young people
- to deepen their understanding of what young people need and care about
- to connect with young people who are 'harder to reach'
- youth feedback on their plans, policy, projects, content, and events
- to understand how systems and services are working for young people
- to understand what youth voice insights mean for their work
- to form connections across agencies
- clear pathways to work with The Hive
- regular updates from The Hive.

Hivers want:

- to see the impact of their work
- to engage with decision-makers and each other *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face-to-face)
- to be able to work consistently on engagements and education opportunities for their communities
- a larger social media presence that responds in real time to help translate what is going on in government for youth audiences across Aotearoa New Zealand
- to grow our social media presence and relationships with *taiohi*, so that we have a strong, diverse, and engaged network to connect in to when the government is seeking youth engagement.

Four key opportunities.

The insights generated through our workshops, interviews, and survey highlight four key opportunities for The Hive. We believe youth voice can be elevated within decision-making by:

1

Helping decision-makers develop confidence in their youth engagement practice.

2

Fostering cross-agency relationships between decision-makers.

3

Bringing young people and decision-makers together in ways that stoke enthusiasm and build accountability.

4

Telling the story of what great youth engagement looks like.

Recommendations

Publish regular direct communications to decision-makers.

The decision-makers we connected with want to hear from The Hive regularly. They want to hear about the issues that matter to taiohi – and better understand young people’s perspectives, experiences, and needs.

We recommend The Hive publishes a quarterly e-newsletter which:

- explores issues of concern to the current cohort of Hivers
- offers insights from The Hive engagements
- provides examples of good youth engagement practice
- profiles opportunities for collaboration.

Host Hiver-led gatherings for decision-makers.

Our in-person workshops highlighted the power of bringing decision-makers together with one another in a space led by young people. These sessions broke down silos, forged connections, built understanding, and got decision-makers excited about how youth engagement might support them in their work. Developing and delivering these sessions also saw the Hivers flourish – they took big steps forward in their personal and professional development.

We recommend establishing regular Hiver-developed and facilitated gatherings for decision-makers which:

- build confidence, capability, and skills in both Hivers and decision-makers
- foster cross-agency relationships and information sharing between decision-makers
- develop decision-makers' relationships with – and accountability to – young people
- keep everyone buzzing!

Tell the story of The Hive.

Our decision-makers want to better understand how The Hive operates, and how they might work with us. They are eager to learn about the approaches and mechanisms of The Hive, and would like to engage with case studies that demonstrate what collaborating with The Hive might look like.

Alongside this, the Hivers want to see more transparency and accountability from those we work with – including a commitment to ‘close the loop’.

We recommend developing a communications strategy which:

- showcases the ways in which decision-makers can engage with us, including associated costs
- articulates our approach to youth engagement – and the expectations we have for those we work with on closing the loop
- helps decision-makers communicate the value of working with The Hive.

Sharpen up our Hiver recruitment and development pathways.

The All Stars season of The Hive has highlighted the power of a Tuakana Teina relationship between new Hivers and those who are more experienced. This mechanism of support has dramatically increased Hiver growth and confidence.

We recommend that the length of a Hiver season is adjusted to two years, with a new cohort recruited each year. This will generate an overlap between seasons – allowing Hivers to explore a ‘learning’ and then a ‘doing / teaching’ phase within their journey.

Grow and sustain The Hive's online presence.

Hivers see an opportunity to develop a strong online presence for The Hive – delivering youth-focused content which is responsive, relevant, and fun.

We recommend establishing a social media strategy which aims to:

- strengthen The Hive's online presence
- help taiohi understand how government works
- deliver regular updates on what is happening within government
- promote opportunities to engage with The Hive
- report back to our social audiences on the outcome of their engagement with us.

Mauri Ora!

hello@thehive.nz

www.thehive.nz

@thehive.nz

curative_
