

YOUTH PLAN 2020-2022

Turning Voice into Action -
Rebuilding and Recovering

REVIEW

Targeted Engagement
with the Youth Sector

In October 2022, the Ministry of Youth Development (MYD) - Te Manatū Whakahiato Taiohi facilitated two engagement sessions with representatives from the youth sector to contribute to the review of the Youth Plan.

A huge thanks!

Ara Taiohi played a central role in organising and inviting sector representatives to the engagement sessions. Thank you to Jane and the Ara Taiohi team for your mahi and support.

Thank you to all the kaimahi who engaged and participated, for contributing your expertise, ideas, and mātauranga for the review of the Youth Plan. Your voice has helped inform the findings of Phase 1 of the review and will also contribute to future work of MYD.

The role of the Youth Plan

What **did** the Youth Plan offer to the sector?

Engaged youth sector representatives did not see the Youth Plan as a key driver of better outcomes for young people or increased engagement with the youth sector between 2020 and 2022.

For some actions in the Youth Plan, lead agencies engaged with or contracted youth sector organisations to help deliver on actions. However, youth sector representatives noted that this mostly happened where there were already pre-existing relationships.

Youth sector representatives also noted that in times of crisis, communities mobilise regardless of government strategies and plans. There was a desire to see better reflection of community-driven work in the Youth Plan.

What **could** the Youth Plan offer to the sector?

Sector representatives saw the Youth Plan having the **potential** to:

- raise the visibility of young people within the Child Youth Wellbeing Strategy (CYWS)
- coordinate youth-focused work within government around focus areas and priority groups
- connect efforts between government agencies and the wider sector
- increase accountability of youth-focused government action
- increase funding and collaboration opportunities over time
- promote best practice youth development frameworks within government including Mana Taiohi.

Youth sector representatives identified a number of gaps and challenges with the first iteration of the Youth Plan. Key themes have been summarised below and presented alongside identified opportunities to address these if there is a refreshed Youth Plan.

Gaps and Challenges

Monocultural and Pākeha framing of the Youth Plan

Sector representatives identified that the original Youth Plan lacked connection to Te Ao Māori and represented a predominantly Pākeha and monocultural lens across the Youth Plan. This was seen as a key barrier to better outcomes for actions and young people.

Feedback loops and research

Sector representatives also identified a problematic cycle of government identifying the need for research prior to substantive action being taken, commissioning research, and then not engaging deeply with findings and recommendations and, in many instances, not publishing research widely. This cycle leaves the sector frustrated and action stagnated. This issue was particularly raised around the rainbow youth space.

Connection to the wider sector

In the first iteration of the Youth Plan, all action leads were central government agencies. Sector representatives questioned the efficacy of this, noting that some of the most meaningful, impactful work happening in Aotearoa New Zealand across the four focus areas are led at a regional and non-governmental level. In some instances, agencies engaged with sector partners but this happened only where pre-existing relationships were in place and in an ad hoc way.

Youth development best practice

While the Youth Plan uplifts some key areas of focus (wellbeing, voice, and leadership) that relate to youth development best practice, sector representatives noted the lack of connection to best practice models like Mana Taiohi that the government could pull from to enhance its engagement and work with young people.

Missing priority cohorts

Sector representatives also identified the benefits to increasing the number of priority cohorts identified in the Youth Plan as they increase the visibility of these groups across government and in the wider sector. Suggestions for additional cohorts included: young people from ethnic communities, refugee and migrant background young people, young people in rural areas, and young people with care experience. Sector representatives recognised the tension of increasing the number of cohorts potentially decreasing the potency of focus on existing named groups.

Opportunities

Include a specific Te Tiriti statement in the Youth Plan and reframing focus areas to align with and draw from a bi-cultural frame.

Ensure feedback loops are always closed and key findings from research and engagement are drawn on to progress action particularly prior to any additional engagement or research being commissioned.

Build on the recommendation from the CYWS review that creates a central, accessible place for findings from research and engagement to be promoted and utilised by agencies and the wider sector.

Create a new suite of actions that includes sector partners as co-leads or supports on actions to promote better collaboration and ensure better outcomes for young people.

Identify opportunities for sector engagement in the monitoring and reporting of the Youth Plan. Explore opportunities to bring the youth sector and Cross-Agency Working Group together.

Explicitly link the scaffolding of the Youth Plan to models of youth development, namely Mana Taiohi, and include new actions for government agencies to utilise best practice youth development models in engagement, planning, and implementation of work that targets young people.

Explore increasing the number of priority cohorts in the next iteration of the Youth Plan to include other groups of young people who are historically marginalised or under-served by government action. Increase the age range of priority cohorts to meet the full range of young people (12-24 years). Identify the different needs of different age groups.