

Te Pūrongo Whakaaweawe o te Mahi Taiohi

Telling the Story of Youth Work through Social Return on Investment

A sector-led approach to impact measurement to
empower organisations to tell a clear, values-based
story about youth work in Aotearoa

September 2026

Report prepared by Hands for Impact
in partnership with Ara Taiohi

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Ethical Practices & Transparency

- Hands for Impact is a non-profit organisation that works with **non-profit** charitable organisations to measure and maximise their social impact through the provision of both evaluative and forecasting SROI analysis.
- Hands for Impact has agreed to undertake this SROI Evaluation and produce the Report for the Client on the terms and conditions contained in a **Pro Bono SROI Report Agreement**. Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the material and the integrity of the analysis presented herein, Hands For Impact accepts no liability for any actions taken on the basis of the contents of this report.
- **Māori Data Sovereignty Statement:** Hands for Impact aligns with Māori Data Sovereignty principles, ensuring Māori data is managed in ways that upholds Māori values and tikanga.

- **Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI):** Hands for Impact acknowledges that AI tools (e.g. Chat GPT by OpenAI) were used during the background research and initial drafting phase to support the outline structure of this report. All content has been reviewed and edited by human authors to ensure cultural integrity, relevance, and ethical alignment. The tools were configured to protect the security of the data: inputs cannot be stored or used to train external systems.
- **Use of the Charities Registration Data** is licenced under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand licence. The data extracted from the register has been aggregated for analysis purposes but otherwise not altered or restricted.
- **Methodology, Authorship, Advisory and Review:** This report's methodology is aligned with Social Value principles, and has been authored by a Social Value International Level 2: Accredited Practitioner (1 of only 5 currently in New Zealand), and two Social Value International Level 1: Associates.

Two SROI reports were conducted as part of the pilot to inform this report, and both were internationally assured with Social Value International and are published on their international register (approximately only 300 reports are currently internationally assured).

Think Impact provided SROI advisory and mentorship by a Social Value International Level 3: Advanced Practitioner along with a Report Assessment statement completed by their technical reviewer.

An external Peer Review Network reviewed and endorsed this report (names listed in the acknowledgements).

Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the Youth Work

Impact Report

Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi is woven into the fabric of Ara Taiohi and is a core commitment for Hands for Impact. It is about the relationship between Tangata Whenua and Tangata Tiriti and how tino rangatiratanga is honoured. The wero for our teams in this project is that Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a traditionally western framework. This has required our commitment to be both intentional and organic. This reflection is on our joint learnings as we embarked on this haerenga together.

It became an opportunity to contribute to a growing youth work sector that is increasingly confident in expressing its value through approaches that honour Te Tiriti, strengthen partnership, and reflect the unique cultural foundations of Aotearoa New Zealand. Our mahi has been guided by the Hands for Impact Te Tiriti o Waitangi Commitment Statement and the Ara Taiohi Te Tiriti Partnership Policy.

This project reflects that ongoing journey. While Social Return on Investment (SROI) offers a structured framework for understanding social value, it is rooted in Western evaluation traditions. Rather than applying it unchanged, we sought to hold it alongside Te Ao Māori perspectives, recognising that the most meaningful understanding of impact comes through relationships, collective care, lived experience, and the voices of rangatahi, whānau and communities. This was not about adapting Te Ao Māori to fit SROI but about ensuring we embrace Te Ao Māori to shape how we understood value, evidence and impact. The organisational structure has supported this process by weaving in voices from Ngā Kaihoe, our network of Māori who work with rangatahi, its leadership and governance.

Throughout the project, we intentionally honoured te reo Māori me ōna tikanga by embedding the principles of Mana Taiohi into both our process and our practice. This meant grounding our mahi in the values of Ara Taiohi to pursue mana taurite, uphold kaitiakitanga, practice manaakitanga, and weave kotahitanga, while recognising the strengths, potential and leadership of rangatahi.

Rather than viewing young people solely as participants, the project embraced the Mana Taiohi principle of *Whai Wāhitanga*, creating meaningful opportunities for rangatahi to shape what impact looked like and how it should be understood. This reflected a commitment to whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and approaches that

whakamana young people, their whānau and the different environments they engage in.

We considered Māori Data Sovereignty principles in the handling, interpretation, and stewardship of information and systems where possible. Particular focus was on reflecting culturally grounded practice and frameworks.

We acknowledge that future work can continue to build Māori leadership and decision-making over data relating to Māori communities, ensuring that information is generated, governed and used in ways that uphold tino rangatiratanga and create value for Māori. Stories, relationships, lived experience and collective aspirations are forms of evidence that sit alongside quantitative measures. By valuing these forms of knowledge, we sought to ensure the report reflected a more holistic understanding of impact that resonates with Te Ao Māori.

About Hands for Impact

Hands for Impact¹ is a non-profit organisation working alongside community organisations to provide pro bono Social Return on Investment evaluations in a way that is transparent, collaborative, and accessible.

We believe that social impact measurement is most powerful when approached through a sector-wide lens, grounded in partnership and collective learning. By working together, we aim to build the capacity of organisations to demonstrate their value, strengthen their voice, and ultimately increase the positive impact for the communities they serve and the sector as a whole.

Our Mission: *To improve access to social impact measurement for the non-profit sector within Aotearoa, through a **cost-effective, collaborative, and sector-wide** approach*

Our Vision: *A collaborative nonprofit sector whose impact is better understood*

Hands for Impact is committed to upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi, reflected through our values:

- **Mana Manaaki:** We build the mana of others through nurturing, growing, and challenging.
- **Mōhiotanga:** We share information through knowledge, knowing, understanding, comprehension, intelligence, awareness, insight, and perception.
- **Manawa Māui:** We're a catalyst for change by challenging the status quo constructively and seeking better ways of doing things.
- **Puaretanga:** We're transparent by nature by sharing what we're doing, how we are doing it, and what we learn.
- **Kotahitanga:** Collective action; our success comes through working collaboratively.

We are deeply grateful to Ara Taiohi for the opportunity to walk alongside them, and for their openness, insight, and generosity throughout.

¹ www.handsforimpact.com

Statement of Assessment

Think Impact confirms that the report *'Te Pūrongo Whakaaweawe o te Mahi Taiohi (SROI) Telling the Story of Youth Work through Social Return on Investment'* dated September 2026 satisfies the requirements of Think Impact's Social Return on Investment (SROI) assessment process. The review was completed by a Social Value International Accredited Advanced Practitioner (Level 3).

The assessment was undertaken on the final draft report (September 2026) and the accompanying social value model (v4) provided by Hands for Impact and relates to those versions only. It does not extend to any subsequent amendment of the report or the model.

The review draws on the Social Value Principles as a reference framework and considered:

- Model architecture: the decisions made in scoping the sector, identifying stakeholders and defining the theory of change, and whether the rationale for inclusions and exclusions is sound and clearly documented.
- Quantification and valuation judgements: the selection of indicators and financial proxies, and the treatment of deadweight, attribution, displacement and drop-off, with attention to materiality and the risk of over-claiming.
- Use of data: how sector-level data limitations have been handled, including the use of proxy or extrapolated data, and whether associated assumptions are reasonable and conservative.
- Transparency: whether the rationale for each material decision is documented, internally consistent and clear enough for an informed reader to understand what was decided and why.

Findings were provided to Hands for Impact in writing during the engagement and discussed with the project team. Matters raised in review were for Hands for Impact to accept, amend or decline.

The review found that the methodological judgements underpinning the analysis are reasoned and documented. Decisions on scope, stakeholder inclusion and exclusion, valuation technique and the treatment of deadweight, displacement, attribution, duration and drop-off are each accompanied with a rationale. Limitations are acknowledged at each stage of the analysis and the sensitivity testing reported in Section 10.2 reconciles to the social value model, which together provide a transparent basis on which the results can be interpreted.

Date of review: 17 September 2026.



Suzi Young, CEO, Think Impact

Social Value International Accredited Advanced Practitioner (Level 3)



Limitations:

This statement records the outcome of a technical review. It is not an audit, and it is not assurance under the Social Value International Assurance Standard, which is a separate process undertaken by Social Value International. The following limitations apply:

- Hands for Impact is the author of the report and the social value model. All methodological choices, assumptions, valuation judgements and final decisions on the content of the report and the model are those of Hands for Impact. The role of Think Impact was to review and advise; it did not make, direct or approve those decisions. Matters raised in review may have been accepted, amended or declined by the authors, and where differences of professional judgement remain, the position taken is the authors'.
- The review relied on information provided by the authors. It did not audit or independently verify the underlying data, including organisation-level financial information, participant reach figures or stakeholder survey responses, and did not involve direct engagement with stakeholders.
- The analysis is a forecast. The results are estimates of the social value expected to be created and are sensitive to the assumptions applied. The ratio should be read together with the sensitivity analysis and the limitations set out in the report, rather than as a precise measure of value.
- Think Impact held two roles in this project, both recorded in the report: SROI advisory and mentoring to Hands for Impact, provided by Rebecca Cain, Director, and the technical review of the report and social value model, undertaken separately by Suzi Young, CEO and Director. Separating these roles was intended to support objectivity. Both sit within the same firm, so this is not an arm's-length review by a party otherwise unconnected to the work.
- This statement is prepared for Hands for Impact and Ara Taiohi. Think Impact accepts no liability to any other party who may rely on it.

Acknowledgements

We extend our deepest gratitude to the taiohi who courageously shared their personal journeys and experiences of youth work. Their open and honest kōrero brought this mahi to life, and served as a guiding and grounding force as to the importance of sharing the impact of youth work.

Our heartfelt thanks go to the youth workers whose passion and dedication to helping taiohi thrive are at the heart of this kaupapa. We are grateful to the members of the Working Group, who generously shared their time, mauri and lived experience. Their contributions helped lay the foundations for this mahi and shaped its development to be sector-led.

Adam Brown-Rigg, The Kindness Institute
Aimee Visser, 24-7 YouthWork Trust
Alex Le Long, Ōpotiki Rangatahi Pā / Te Ariroa Evolutions Charitable Trust
Barney Wikitera, Maka Leadership Programme / Brotherhood Continues Trust
Bernadette Cranshaw and Abigail Clark, Vibe
Chillion Sanerivi, Ola le Ola Aotearoa/Pou Pasifika
Conin Bowker, Shore Junction
Daneka Geaney-Jones, Pathways & Real
Dujon Cullingford, Seed Waikato
Dylan Perfect-Tait, Youthtown
Ramon Narayan, Action Ed
Stacey Rose
Tash Kane, Central Youth Development Trust

We wish to thank the members of the Peer Review Network for contributing their specialist expertise and thoughtful feedback at key stages of the project's development. Their insights brought valuable system-level and sector-wide perspectives, helping to strengthen this mahi.

Dr. Jay Whitehead, Matatihi NZ
Jenn Chowaniec, Wayne Francis Charitable Trust
Dr. Judy Bruce, AUT
Dr. Marie Nissanka

Matthew Renata, Mana Mokopuna Children's Commissioner

Michael Smith and Lizzie Pringle, Praxis

Ministry of Youth Development - Te Manatū Whakahiato Taiohi

Rod Baxter, ONZM

Sarah Finlay-Robinson, Pou Manaaki Taiohi o Aotearoa (Scope Aotearoa Charitable Trust)

Shaz Reece, Te Rourou, One Aotearoa Foundation

Stevie-Jean Gear (Te Arawa, Ngai Te Rangi Iwi)

Tammie Metcalfe, Mayors Taskforce for Jobs

Toni Duder Chapman

We also thank Suzi Young, CEO/Director of Think Impact, for her technical expertise in social return on investment (SROI) and her quality assessment of this report. We are deeply grateful to Rebecca Cain, Director of Think Impact and a Social Value International Advanced Practitioner, for her mentorship and guidance throughout the project, and to Shamubeel Eaquad for his support and encouragement.

Finally, we offer a special thank you to the Ara Taiohi team for their manaaki, collaboration and ongoing stewardship and support of this mahi. We particularly acknowledge Jane Zintl, Kirsten Smith, Maya Duckworth, Tyler Ngatai, Bethany Walters and Aisling Carney. Their generosity and commitment helped make possible the depth of care and aroha woven throughout this work.

Foreword

Tēnā koutou,

This report is much more than numbers on a page. It is evidence of something many of us have long known: that youth work changes lives. It shows that when we invest in young people, we are investing in stronger families, communities, and futures. The finding that youth work generates \$12.69 of social value for every \$1 invested is powerful, but the real value lies in the confidence gained, the belonging created, the leaders developed, and the futures shaped.

Often youth workers are great at telling the stories of the young people we work alongside, and we are not as good at telling the story of youth work in a way that connects with decision-makers. This is the context for the partnership between Hands for Impact and Ara Taiohi. Young people have determined what outcomes are meaningful for them, the data has been rigorously analysed, and the resulting report outlines the undeniable impact of youth work. Reports like this make visible what communities experience every day and ensure youth work organisations and young people receive the recognition and investment they deserve.

Many have contributed their time, skills and expertise to this report. Rather than list everyone, I honour your essential role in the ecosystem of youth development that supports young people to thrive. We hope this report affirms your practice and equips you to prove the immense impact of our mahi in systems that haven't always recognised it.

This report reminds us that relationships, not programmes alone, create lasting change. The value of youth workers continues long after a funding contract ends, because their influence persists through the young people they inspire. May this report be a celebration of your past, a validation of your present, and a catalyst for an even stronger future.

Ngā mihi mahana ki a koutou katoa

Jane Zintl (MNZM)
CEO Ara Taiohi



Executive Summary

This Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis finds that youth work creates **\$12.69 of social value for every \$1 invested**. This ratio demonstrates the significant impact of youth work across Aotearoa for taiohi aged 12-24.

Material Outcomes - 12 core outcomes for taiohi were measured and valued:

- Stronger network of positive relationships (Whanaungatanga)
- Positive community contribution
- Stronger sense of belonging (Tūrangawaewae)
- Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm
- Increased personal stability
- Stronger sense of self
- Stronger connection to cultural identity
- Improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing
- Improved ability to meet everyday needs
- Expanded education and employment pathways
- Strengthened ability to shape own life path (Whai Wāhitanga)
- Improved physical wellbeing

These outcomes were evidenced directly through youth voice, alongside youth worker observations, organisational reporting, and existing youth research.

Key Findings - The analysis highlights seven key findings:

1. Youth work creates substantial social value for taiohi.

The analysis demonstrates that youth work contributes to meaningful improvements across a range of interconnected outcomes, including relationships, belonging, identity, emotional wellbeing, safety, agency, participation, and future opportunities.

Together, these outcomes create substantial social value and reinforce the important contribution youth work makes to the wellbeing of taiohi across Aotearoa New Zealand.

2. Trusted relationships are at the heart of how youth work creates value.

Relationships are the foundation of youth work and are often the catalyst through which wider changes occur.

Relationships, belonging, agency, wellbeing, safety, identity, and future opportunities reinforce one another, with trusted relationships creating the conditions that enable taiohi to thrive. Rather than representing one outcome among many, relationships are a key mechanism through which youth work creates value.

Across the evidence base including taiohi voices, practitioner expertise, the Working Group, and the literature this emerged as one of the strongest and most consistent findings.

3. Youth work creates value early, and sustained engagement is associated with a broader range of outcomes.

Taiohi described meaningful outcomes from youth work even with shorter periods of engagement, including stronger positive relationships, stronger sense of self and wellbeing. Those engaged for two or more years described a broader range of outcomes on average, including leadership, future direction, access to support, and reductions in harmful or risky behaviour. This suggests that sustained engagement can support a wider range of outcomes as the needs, circumstances and aspirations of taiohi evolve, rather than suggesting these outcomes only begin after longer engagement.

4. Youth work's ability to be flexible and responsive is central to how it creates value.

There is no single youth work pathway because every taiohi brings different strengths, identities, cultures, aspirations, and experiences.

The research found that youth work is uniquely positioned to meet taiohi where they are and respond in ways that make sense for them. This flexibility enables youth workers to build trusting relationships and support outcomes that are meaningful to each young person's circumstances and aspirations.

Rather than delivering a standardised intervention, youth work adapts to the diverse realities of taiohi. This responsiveness emerged as one of the defining strengths of the sector.

5. A significant part of youth work's value is preventative.

Much of the change identified through this analysis is about strengthening relationships, safety, identity, belonging, confidence, and direction before challenges escalate.

By strengthening these protective factors early, youth work supports healthier developmental pathways and creates the conditions for positive long-term outcomes. This preventative role is central to the value created through youth work, even where longer-term impacts extend beyond the scope of the monetary valuation.

6. The measured value represents only part of youth work's contribution.

The SROI estimates the value of outcomes that could be robustly evidenced and monetised. However, the research demonstrates that youth work creates wider value that extends beyond the outcomes included in the valuation.

The voices of taiohi, youth work practitioners, and the wider evidence base highlight broader contributions to whānau relationships, community participation, and long-term wellbeing that are not reflected in the monetary estimate.

The SROI ratio should therefore be understood as one way of expressing the value created through youth work. The broader contribution of youth work extends beyond what can be captured through monetary valuation alone.

7. There is an increasing complexity of need.

One of the most significant findings to emerge from interviews with taiohi was the importance of youth work in helping taiohi stay safe during periods of significant mental distress, including suicidality.

The Working Group confirmed that youth workers are often responding to levels of need that extend beyond the traditional scope of youth work, while continuing to maintain the trusted relationships that are central to positive outcomes. Although this analysis values the outcomes experienced by taiohi rather than the demands placed on the workforce, these findings highlight the increasing complexity of youth work practice and reinforce the importance of appropriate supervision, training, referral pathways, and workforce support.

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1. Introduction

Background & Context

Youth Work is a key driver of youth development in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Ara Taiohi defines Youth Work as *“the development of mana-enhancing relationships between a youth worker and a young person, where young people actively participate, discover their power, and choose to engage for as long as agreed”*². The practice is centred on supporting holistic, positive development so taiohi (aged 12 to 24) can contribute to themselves, their whānau (family), their community, and the wider world.

Evidence shows that Youth Work plays a significant role in the wellbeing and development of young people (Mahi Tūturu, 2025)³, yet the youth development sector remains undervalued and underfunded (Harrington, 2025)⁴. Many organisations operate under short-term contracts, facing growing pressure to deliver outcomes while providing funders and partners with evidence of their impact.

In response, there has been a shift in the non-profit sector toward more systematic ways of accounting for social value. Social Return on Investment (SROI) provides a tool for non-profit organisations to effectively demonstrate their value and identify where resources can be allocated to further optimise their impact.

This Social Value Report was commissioned by Ara Taiohi, the peak body for youth development in Aotearoa New Zealand, to better understand and articulate the social value created through Youth Work delivered by community organisations. Building on a pilot project involving two organisations, Rānui 135, an urban organisation based in West Auckland, and Tararua Community Youth Services (TCYS), a rural organisation based in Dannevirke, this report brings together the perspectives of youth work professionals, taiohi, and Ara Taiohi with the data from 54 youth work organisations to provide a sector-wide view of the outcomes and value generated by youth work. Drawing on insights from across the sector, it highlights the diverse ways youth work creates change for taiohi, whānau, communities, and government, while establishing a stronger evidence base for understanding and communicating the broader social value of youth work in Aotearoa New Zealand.

² Ara Taiohi. (2020). *Code of Ethics for Youth Work in Aotearoa New Zealand*.

³ Bruce, J, Ngatai, T, Martin, L., McConnachie, S., Schoone, A. (2025). MAHI TŪTURU: The landscape of Youth Work in Aotearoa. Ara Taiohi, Wellington, NZ.

⁴ Harrington, J. (2025). *Whanaketanga i Aotearoa: Ngā Tāhuhu Kōrero - A History of Youth Work in Aotearoa New Zealand*. Wellington, NZ: Ara Taiohi.

Report Methodology

SROI is a principle-based methodology for measuring and accounting for the broader concept of social value. It seeks to understand, measure, and value the outcomes experienced by people and organisations as a result of an activity. SROI combines qualitative, quantitative, and financial information to tell a credible story of change that reflects what stakeholders themselves say is important.

Through the use of financial proxies, outcomes that do not have a market price can be given a monetary value. This does not mean putting a price tag on people or their experiences, but instead expressing the relative importance of outcomes in a way that can be compared with the resources invested. The result is an SROI ratio, which shows how much social value is created for every dollar invested.

The methodology used in this report aligns with the Principles of Social Value, as outlined by Social Value International⁵ (described in Table 1). These principles draw on established approaches from social accounting, cost-benefit analysis, financial accounting, social research and evaluation practice. They provide the foundation for making more informed decisions about value, ultimately aiming to increase equality, improve wellbeing, and enhance environmental sustainability.

Table 1: The Social Value Principles

Principle	Simple Description
Principle 1: Involve stakeholders	Work with stakeholders to understand what changes for them, and ensure their voices inform what is measured and how.
Principle 2: Understand what changes	Articulate how change happens, describing outcomes (positive, negative, intended, unintended).
Principle 3: Value the things that matter	Use appropriate financial proxies to represent the relative importance of outcomes so that they can be compared to the investment.
Principle 4: Only include what is material	Include only the information and evidence that is necessary for an accurate and fair picture of the value created.

⁵ Social Value International. (n.d.). *The Principles of Social Value*.

Principle 5: Do not overclaim	Recognise the contributions of others and only claim the value that your activities are responsible for creating.
Principle 6: Be transparent	Demonstrate the basis of your analysis openly, making clear the methods, assumptions, and limitations.
Principle 7: Verify the result	Ensure the results are tested and assured independently, to increase credibility and confidence.
Principle 8: Be responsive	Use the results to learn, improve, and be accountable to stakeholders, embedding feedback and change into decision-making.

The methodology follows the six stages of SROI, as outlined in the *Guide to Social Return on Investment* (SROI Network, 2012), referred to throughout this report as the *SROI Guide*⁶.

Six Stages in SROI Analysis:

1. Establishing Scope & Identifying Stakeholders.
2. Mapping Outcomes.
3. Evidencing & Valuing Outcomes.
4. Establishing Impact.
5. Calculating the SROI.
6. Reporting & Using the Results.

Report Structure

This report is organised into 10 main sections (excluding the Introduction). These sections align with the six stages of the SROI methodology. Each section of this report - from 3. Project Scope to 10. Calculating the SROI - begin with a short description of the stage, adapted from the *SROI Guide*, followed by the Hands for Impact approach. Our approach is grounded in whakawhanaungatanga (building relationships), transparency, and accessibility.

In recognition of the cultural context of this mahi (work), the report also incorporates te reo Māori and Pasifika words. A complete glossary of terms is provided in **Appendix A**.

⁶ Nicholls, J., Lawlor, E., Neitzert, E., & Goodspeed, T. (2012). *A Guide to Social Return on Investment*.

2. Sector Background & Delivery

2.1 Taiohi in Aotearoa

Taiohi are a vital part of Aotearoa New Zealand's social, cultural, and economic landscape both today and in the future. The Ministry of Youth Development's *Youth Plan* defines young people as those aged 12–24 years, representing approximately 850,000 people, or around 17% of the population⁷. Adolescence and early adulthood are critical periods of development, during which taiohi strengthen their identities, build independence, deepen relationships, and establish pathways that influence their lifelong health, wellbeing, education, employment, and participation in society.

While this stage of life presents significant opportunities for growth, participation, and leadership, it also involves navigating complex transitions. Taiohi today are growing up in a rapidly changing world shaped by technological change, shifting labour markets, housing affordability, climate change, and evolving social expectations. Evidence shows that positive outcomes are influenced not only by individual circumstances, but also by the quality of young people's relationships, the opportunities available to them, and the strength of the families, communities, and systems that surround them^{8 9}.

These opportunities, however, are not experienced equally. Structural inequities mean that many Māori, Pacific, disabled, rainbow, migrant and refugee young people, alongside those living in rural communities, living within in state care/custody or experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage, face additional barriers to achieving positive outcomes¹⁰. These inequities arise from broader social, economic, and systemic factors rather than deficits within young people themselves, highlighting the importance of approaches that strengthen protective factors, foster belonging, and promote equitable access to opportunities¹¹.

Youth work plays an important role within this broader ecosystem of support. By building trusting relationships, creating opportunities for participation, and strengthening young people's confidence, identity, and connections to their whānau and communities, youth work helps taiohi navigate this period of development while

⁷ Ministry of Youth Development. (n.d.). *Youth Plan: Voice, Leadership, Action*.

⁸ Ministry of Social Development - *Youth Health + Wellbeing Survey: 2025 Findings*

⁹ Ministry of Social Development (2024). *The Child and Youth Strategy 2024-2027*

¹⁰ Ministry of Youth Development - *Youth Plan: Voice, Leadership, Action – Strategic Framework*

¹¹ Ministry of Social Development (2024). *The Child and Youth Strategy 2024-2027*.

recognising and building upon their existing strengths. The following sections outline how youth development practice in Aotearoa has evolved and the role Ara Taiohi has played in strengthening the youth development sector.

2.2 The Evolution of Youth Development in Aotearoa

Since the late 1990's, youth development in Aotearoa New Zealand has undergone a significant transformation. Earlier approaches often focused on reducing risk, addressing deficits, or preventing negative outcomes for taiohi. While these approaches recognised the challenges many young people face, they frequently positioned taiohi as recipients of services rather than active participants in shaping their own lives and contributing to their communities¹².

Contemporary youth development has shifted towards a strengths-based understanding that recognises the inherent potential, agency, and leadership of taiohi. This evolution has been informed by research, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Te Ao Māori, and increasing evidence that positive outcomes emerge through strong relationships, cultural identity, belonging, participation, and opportunities for taiohi to exercise leadership¹³. Rather than asking how to solve problems for young people, youth work increasingly focuses on creating the conditions in which they can thrive.

An important milestone in this evolution has been the reframing of youth participation through the concept of whai wāhitanga. Developed through the review of the Youth Development Strategy of Aotearoa, whai wāhitanga moves beyond traditional models of participation centred on consultation or representation¹⁴. Instead, it recognises taiohi as valued contributors whose mana, aspirations, and leadership are fundamental to the wellbeing of whānau, communities, and society. Participation is understood as an ongoing relational process in which young people are supported to "chase their place" through connection, responsibility, belonging, and contribution¹⁵.

This evolution has implications beyond frontline practice. If positive outcomes are created through skilled relationships, cultural responsiveness, ethical practice, and sustained engagement, then these outcomes depend on the systems that enable youth work. Effective youth development requires more than committed practitioners; it requires a professional workforce supported by appropriate training, supervision,

¹² Deane et al. (2019). *Ngā Tikanga Whanaketanga – He Arotake Tuhinga*.

¹³ Ministry of Youth Development (2023). *Youth Plan Strategic Framework*.

¹⁴ Ara Taiohi (2022). *Whai Wāhitanga: Rediscovering the Future of Youth Participation*

¹⁵ Deane et al. (2019). *Ngā Tikanga Whanaketanga – He Arotake Tuhinga*.

ethical accountability, organisational capability, and funding models that recognise the time and expertise required to build meaningful relationships. The quality of youth work is therefore shaped not only by individual practitioners, but by the wider policy, funding, and professional environments within which they operate.

2.3 About Ara Taiohi

Ara Taiohi is the peak body for youth development in Aotearoa New Zealand. Established in 2011 through the merger of the National Youth Workers Network Aotearoa and the New Zealand Aotearoa Adolescent Health and Development (NZAHD), the organisation was created to provide a unified national voice for the youth development sector. As a Tiriti-based membership organisation, Ara Taiohi now connects more than 3,600 people who work with taiohi across Aotearoa, championing youth development through advocacy, workforce development, research, professional standards, and sector capability building¹⁶.

Since its establishment, Ara Taiohi has played a central role in shaping the identity of youth work as a recognised profession in Aotearoa. Working alongside youth workers, iwi, community organisations, government agencies, and taiohi, it has sought to strengthen both the capability of the workforce and the wider systems that enable young people to thrive. Its vision, *"An empowered ecosystem of youth development, where rangatahi thrive,"* reflects a belief that supporting young people requires investment not only in frontline practice, but also in the organisations, policies, and relationships that underpin the sector.

A defining contribution of Ara Taiohi has been its leadership in developing a shared understanding of quality youth work. Through the Code of Ethics for Youth Work in Aotearoa New Zealand, Mana Taiohi principles of youth development, and ongoing sector research, training, and advocacy, Ara Taiohi has helped establish youth work as a skilled, ethical, and culturally grounded profession¹⁷. Rather than viewing youth work as a series of programmes or interventions, these frameworks position it as fundamentally relational, centred on honouring the mana of young people and supporting them to develop confidence, agency, belonging, and meaningful connections within their whānau and communities.

¹⁶ Ara Taiohi. (n.d.). About Us.

¹⁷ Ara Taiohi. (n.d.). *Mana Taiohi – Youth Development Principles*; Ara Taiohi. (2020). *Code of Ethics for Youth Work in Aotearoa New Zealand*.

Central to the philosophy of Ara Taiohi is the understanding that youth work is the development of a relationship that honours the mana of a young person, where taiohi actively participate, discover their own power, and choose to engage voluntarily for as long as agreed. Through these relationships, youth work supports the holistic development of young people so they can contribute positively to themselves, their whānau, their communities, and the wider world. This relational understanding has become a defining feature of contemporary youth development practice in Aotearoa and underpins the sector's shift towards strengths-based, culturally responsive approaches.

Alongside defining and strengthening good practice, Ara Taiohi plays an essential role in building the capability, sustainability, and visibility of the youth work sector. Through workforce development, training, professional standards, research, resources, sector connection, and advocacy, it supports youth workers and organisations to translate the principles of quality youth development into practice. This includes strengthening practitioner knowledge and skills, supporting safe and ethical practice, creating opportunities for shared learning, and strengthening recognition of youth work as a skilled and valued profession with clear pathways for development and progression.

An important feature of the youth work workforce is that these pathways can begin while youth workers are still young people themselves. Taiohi may move from participating in youth development into peer support, volunteering, leadership, and paid youth work. Youth development can therefore create pathways for taiohi not only to participate and lead, but also to recognise youth work as a potential profession. Supporting these pathways can retain lived experience, cultural knowledge, community connection, and emerging leadership within the sector, while growing a workforce that reflects and understands the communities it serves.

The contribution of the youth work workforce can also extend beyond work that is formally funded or remunerated. Alongside people who undertake youth work in a voluntary capacity, paid youth workers may contribute additional time outside their contracted hours to maintain relationships with taiohi and provide continuity of support. This reflects the deeply relational and community-based nature of youth work, where relationships and responsibilities do not necessarily fit neatly within programme schedules or contracted hours.

Taken together, these characteristics highlight the importance of understanding youth work as both a profession and a relational practice embedded within communities. Strengthening the sector therefore involves not only developing professional standards

and pathways into youth work, but creating the conditions in which youth workers can sustain high-quality relationships with taiohi over time. The Mana Taiohi framework provides a shared foundation for how these relationships are understood and practised across the youth development sector in Aotearoa.

2.4 Mana Taiohi: Aotearoa Youth Development Principles

As a sector-led project, Hands for Impact has used the Mana Taiohi principles as a guiding frame for understanding youth work practice throughout this research. Developed by Ara Taiohi with and for the youth development sector, Mana Taiohi provides an Aotearoa-specific, sector-grounded lens through which to explore how youth work is practised and how it contributes to meaningful change for taiohi.

Mana Taiohi is a principle-based framework that informs how organisations and practitioners work alongside young people in Aotearoa. It evolved from the youth development principles previously expressed in the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa, providing a shared foundation for youth development practice that reflects the unique social, cultural, and historical context of Aotearoa¹⁸.

Mana Taiohi is centred on the concept of mana-the authority and dignity every person inherits at birth. The principle-based framework recognises that all taiohi possess inherent strengths, identity, and potential, and that youth development should create opportunities for them to understand their own mana, exercise agency, and influence the decisions that affect their lives. Honouring the mana of young people means acknowledging their realities, celebrating their identities, supporting them to discover their strengths, and creating opportunities for them to participate and lead.

Mana Taiohi is organised into two complementary parts. The first focuses on understanding and affirming the mana that young people already possess, while the second describes how youth workers, organisations, and communities can intentionally whakamana (empower, encourage, and affirm) young people through their practice.

¹⁸ Ara Taiohi. (n.d.). *Mana Taiohi – Youth Development Principles*.

HONOURING THE MANA OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN AOTEAROA



we acknowledge the mauri, the inherent life spark and potential of young people, by supporting the development of their identity.



with young people we understand and affirm their whakapapa, exploring how genealogies and heritage connect to their sense of identity and belonging.



with young people we understand hononga, identity and strengthen connections.



with young people we explore te ao, understanding their holistic world and the dynamics that impact this.

HOW YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CAN WHAKAMANA YOUNG PEOPLE



with young people we prioritise whanaungatanga, taking time to build and sustain meaningful and trusting relationships.



with young people we uphold and extend manaakitanga, through reciprocal respect and care.



Whai wāhitanga recognises young people as valued contributors to society, creating space for participation, agency and responsibility.



with young people, we are empowered by rich and diverse mātauranga, that encompasses good knowledge, wisdom and understanding.

Figure: Mana Taiohi Principles¹⁹

¹⁹ Ara Taiohi (n.d.). *Mana Taiohi - Youth Development Principles*

Together, these principles reinforce that youth development is both relational and strengths-based. Rather than viewing young people through the lens of need or deficit, Mana Taiohi encourages practitioners to begin with the strengths, identity, and potential that already exist, and to create environments that foster belonging, participation, learning, leadership, and collective wellbeing. In doing so, Mana Taiohi shifts the focus of youth work from delivering programmes to nurturing the relationships and conditions through which taiohi can flourish.

This understanding of youth work has important implications for how its impact is understood and evaluated. Many of the outcomes associated with youth work, including strengthened identity, increased confidence, deeper connections, greater participation, and enhanced wellbeing, emerge through long-term, trusting relationships and are often experienced gradually over time. While these outcomes are widely recognised by taiohi, practitioners, and communities, they can be difficult to capture using traditional evaluation approaches because they are interconnected, relational, and frequently extend beyond the duration of individual programmes.

SROI provides a framework for understanding and valuing these broader outcomes. By considering the social, cultural, and economic value created for young people, whānau, communities, government, and wider society, SROI enables a more holistic assessment of the contribution of youth work. The following sections outline the scope and methodology used to undertake this SROI.

3. Project Scope

Establishing the scope is the first step of an SROI analysis. This stage helps to set clear boundaries about what is being considered, why it matters, and the resources available. This process ensures alignment with the organisation's goals while finding a balance of depth and feasibility within the project's timeline and resourcing. It is important to note that defining the scope is an iterative process, and adjusting the scope in response to new information is good practice and not unusual.

3.1 Purpose of Analysis

This analysis is a forecast SROI of the impact of youth work activities delivered by 54 eligible youth-centred organisations in Aotearoa to taiohi aged 12–24 during a 12-month period. Eligible organisations employ youth workers and have youth work or youth development as a primary organisational purpose. Organisations that provide youth services as one component of a broader service portfolio are outside the defined boundary.

3.2 Scope of Analysis

Stakeholder Group for Analysis

The monetised stakeholder group is taiohi participating in the activities. Outcomes for whānau, communities, public services and other stakeholders are recognised where material but are not currently monetised unless explicitly stated.

The analysis is intended to inform sector understanding, advocacy, funding and policy discussions, and future impact-measurement recommendations.

Young people aged 12–24 years are the primary stakeholder group for this SROI analysis.

Methodological Approach

Hands for Impact followed an abductive approach, centering stakeholder informed insights, and developing a Theory of Change iteratively as new understandings emerged. Insights were considered in relation to existing youth development research, as well as past evaluations to understand alignment, divergence, and eventually establish a final Theory of Change.

Abductive analysis is described as a back and forth process between the research evidence and considerations of theory actively comparing emerging insights with existing knowledge, to form a deeper understanding²⁰.

The model uses one year of organisational input and participation data for one annual cohort. Outcomes are projected for up to two or three years where supported by the selected duration and drop-off assumptions. The analysis therefore represents one annual cohort and input period, rather than benefits restricted to a single year.

Included activities comprise:

- Youth health / YOSS / counselling / therapeutic support
- Advocacy / systems navigation
- Care, accommodation and transition support
- Justice / supported bail / reintegration support
- Alternative education, employment and transition pathways
- Whānau / family support work
- Mentoring / relational youth development
- School-based youth work / in-school support
- Youth hub / community-based youth work
- Sport, recreation, camps and activity-based youth development
- Leadership, youth voice and peer-led programmes
- Creative arts / media-based youth development
- Faith-based / pastoral youth programmes
- Cultural identity / kaupapa Māori / Pasifika programmes

²⁰ Earl Rinehart, K. (2020). Abductive Analysis in Qualitative Inquiry. Qualitative Inquiry.

A SNAPSHOT OF THE YOUTH-WORK SECTOR REPRESENTED IN THIS SORI

ORGANISATIONS MODELLED



1 IN 3

Number of taiohi aged 12-24, who engage in youth work in Aotearoa.



270,481

Estimated number of taiohi engaged in the 54 modelled organisations.



54

Number of Ara Taiohi youth organisation members qualified as in-scope to be modelled in the study.



\$135.9M

annual resources mobilised to deliver the youth work modelled

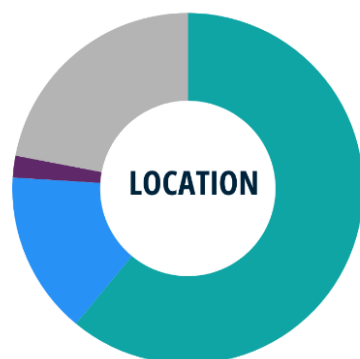
\$132.4m

financial resources to youth work in scope

+ \$3.5m

volunteer and in-kind contribution

WHAT DOES THE MODELLED SECTOR LOOK LIKE?



78%

of organisations are place-based

22%

operate nationally

Most organisations are place-based; a smaller group work nationally.



Up to 999 participants annually

> 33

organisations



1,000-4,999 participants annually

> 13

organisations



5,000-9,999 participants annually

> 4

organisations



10,000+ participants annually

> 4

organisations

85%

of organisations modelled engage with up to 5,000 participants annually

46 of 54 organisations - up to 5,000 participants annually



8 of 54 organisations - Over 5,000 participants annually



Some taiohi engage with more than one organisation.

3.3 Type of Analysis

In SROI, there are two types of analysis:

- **Evaluative:** Conducted retrospectively and based on actual outcomes that have occurred.
- **Forecast:** Predicts how much social value will be created if the activities meet their intended outcomes²¹.

Forecast Analysis

The analysis provides a forecast of the social value expected to be created by 54 youth organisations²² over a 12 month period, drawing on retrospective reflections and current lived experience to inform the projection.

3.4 Methodology and Sector Engagement

Overview of Approach

To guide the methodological design, HFI engaged Rebecca Cain from Think Impact, who brings extensive experience in leading large-scale social value and SROI studies.

Together, HFI and Rebecca explored how insights from the Rānui and TCYS reports, two grassroots SROIs with youth work organisations, could be ethically and meaningfully scaled to a sector-wide context²³.

This involved:

- Reviewing learnings and data from Rānui and TCYS reports and other youth sector evidence.
- Mapping potential methodological pathways to extrapolate findings.
- Meeting with Ara Taiohi to clarify non-negotiables, sector priorities, and desired outcomes.

Decision-Making Process

²¹ Nicholls et al. (2012). A Guide to Social Return on Investment.

²² The 54 youth organisations included in the scope of this analysis were derived from a list of organisations with active memberships with Ara Taiohi, registered on the charities register with published reporting data.

²³ Hands for Impact. (2026). Rānui 135 SROI; Hands for Impact. (2026). Tararua Community Youth Services SROI.

Six possible approaches were mapped, ranging from light-touch evidence synthesis to full SROI replication across all organisations:

1. **Leverage existing evidence** – Use literature, public datasets, and Rānui and TCYS case studies to produce a high-level sector report.
2. **Sector-defined outcomes and desktop evidencing** – Co-define outcomes with the sector, then evidence these through literature, datasets, and case studies.
3. **Sector-defined outcomes and sector evidencing** – Co-define outcomes, then gather data directly from youth work organisations.
4. **Typology-based extrapolation** – Classify organisations by programme type and apply equivalent SROI values.
5. **Benefit transfer** – Identify shared outcomes and drivers from case studies and extrapolate based on their presence across the sector.
6. **Full SROI per organisation** – Conduct an SROI study with every youth work organisation.

Each option was assessed against agreed decision-making criteria under four themes:

- **Kaupapa & Cultural Integrity** – Alignment with Mana Taiohi; upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi, cultural knowledge; youth voice and equity.
- **Practicality & Delivery Feasibility** – Resourcing; timeframe; and the demand placed on the sector.
- **Rigour & Method Quality** – Adherence to Social Value Principles; data validity; and likelihood of external assurance.
- **Use & System Influence** – Relevance for policy, funders, and members; potential to build shared language and strengthen sector capability.

Kaupapa integrity and practical feasibility were treated as threshold criteria, any option not meeting these was excluded from consideration.

Agreed Methodology and Rationale

After assessment and joint discussion at the October 2025 Planning Day, Hands for Impact and Ara Taiohi agreed to proceed with:

Option 2: Sector-defined outcomes and desktop evidencing

Defining the outcomes of youth work collaboratively with the sector, and evidencing these outcomes through youth voice, working group engagement,

existing literature, public datasets, and insights from the Rānui and TCYS case studies.

Key assumptions:

- Outcomes measurement is not yet widespread across the youth work sector.
- A single phase of sector engagement is realistic within the project timeframe (to Sept 2026).
- Sector participation is best concentrated in defining and validating outcomes, rather than supplying data.

Key reasons for selection:

- Builds a shared language and narrative for describing the value of youth work.
- Advances a credible, evidence-based sector report without overburdening organisations.
- Strengthens impact literacy and collective advocacy.
- Upholds kaupapa and cultural integrity, aligned with Te Tiriti and Mana Taiohi.
- Most feasible and proportionate approach given current resourcing and timelines.

This option was formally supported by Ara Taiohi during the planning day as the preferred method for delivering the sector-wide SROI report.

3.5 Activities

Youth work organisations across Aotearoa deliver a diverse range of programmes, services, and opportunities that respond to the strengths, aspirations, and needs of taiohi. While these programmes vary across organisations, communities, and settings, we can apply a sector-wide lens and find commonalities by categorising the different types of activities within the Mana Taiohi principles of Whanaungatanga, Manaakitanga, Whai Wāhitanga, and Mātauranga²⁴. These principles reflect not only *what* youth workers do, but *how* they engage with taiohi in practice. Together, they underpin how relationships are built, participation is enabled, learning is supported, and safe, respectful environments are created for taiohi to engage, grow, and thrive.

Activities are delivered in a range of ways, including one-to-one mentoring, group programmes, outreach, drop-in services, cultural initiatives, camps, leadership

²⁴ Ara Taiohi. (n.d.). Mana Taiohi – Youth Development Principles.

programmes, education and employment support, community projects, advocacy, and informal day-to-day interactions. The mix of activities varies according to organisational purpose, community context, and the aspirations and needs of taiohi. What activities can be offered to taiohi is also heavily impacted by the funding available to local youth work organisations, with activities often being adapted to fit within the requirements of the funders or align with funding goals and strategies. We address this in our recommendations in Section 11.4.

The youth development approach reflected in this SROI is understood through the following broad categories of activities:

Whanaungatanga – Building trust, belonging, and strong relationships

Activities that strengthen connection, trust, and a sense of belonging between taiohi, youth workers, peers, whānau, and communities include:

- Facilitating group programmes and shared experiences.
- Building trusting, consistent relationships between taiohi and youth workers.
- Supporting peer connection through group activities, events, and communities.
- Creating and maintaining welcoming spaces where taiohi experience belonging.
- Providing ongoing engagement and a consistent, reliable presence over time.

Manaakitanga – Creating safe, caring, and respectful environments

Activities that foster psychological, cultural, and relational safety include:

- Building trusting, respectful relationships that centre the strengths, aspirations, and needs of taiohi.
- Providing one-to-one support and regular check-ins tailored to individual circumstances.
- Creating physically, emotionally, and culturally safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces.
- Practising active listening and responding to the experiences and needs of taiohi.
- Providing consistent care, follow-up, encouragement, and positive role modelling through respectful relationships and mutual accountability.

Whai Wāhitanga – Enabling access, agency, and participation

Activities that support taiohi to participate, contribute, and shape their own pathways include:

- Removing practical and social barriers to participation.
- Co-designing programmes, activities, and opportunities alongside taiohi.
- Supporting taiohi leadership and youth-led initiatives.
- Involving taiohi in decision-making and recognising their voice.
- Creating pathways into education, employment, training, volunteering, and wider community participation.
- Supporting taiohi to develop and own their identity and chase their place in the world.

Mātauranga – Supporting learning, growth, and development

Activities that build capability, confidence, and future opportunities include:

- Delivering life skills, wellbeing, communication, and capability-building workshops.
- Supporting experiential learning through projects, community activities, and real-world opportunities.
- Facilitating guided reflection to help taiohi learn from their experiences.
- Supporting goal-setting, future planning, and personal development.
- Providing exposure to new environments, roles, experiences, and opportunities that broaden future possibilities.

These activities are not delivered as separate or sequential interventions. Rather, they are highly interconnected and are often experienced simultaneously. For example, a mentoring conversation may involve building trust and connection (Whanaungatanga), creating a safe and supportive environment (Manaakitanga), supporting taiohi to make decisions, set goals, or access opportunities (Whai Wāhitanga) and encouraging reflection and learning from those opportunities (Mātauranga). The principles therefore represent complementary ways of working that collectively support positive youth development, rather than discrete programme components.

Through these interconnected activities, youth workers create the conditions that enable taiohi to develop trusted relationships, strengthen their identity and capability, exercise agency, participate meaningfully in their communities, and access new opportunities. These experiences contribute to the early, intermediate, and long-term

outcomes described in the Theory of Change and valued within this SROI, providing the foundation for the social value generated through youth work.

YOUTH WORK TAKES MANY FORMS



Across the 54 organisations modelled, youth work shows up across 14 different activities and services.

26 Mentoring / relational youth development

26 Advocacy / systems navigation

23 Youth hub / community-based youth work

19 Alternative education, employment & transition pathways

19 Leadership, youth voice & peer-led programmes

15 Whānau / family support work

14 School-based youth work / in-school support

13 Youth health / YOSS / counselling / therapeutic support

11 Sport, recreation, camps & activity-based youth development



Organisations can be represented in more than one activity or service.

9 Cultural identity / kaupapa Māori / Pasifika programmes

6 Faith-based / pastoral youth programmes

4 Creative arts / media-based youth development

3 Care, accommodation & transition support

3 Justice / supported bail / reintegration support

THAT DIVERSITY ALSO EXISTS WITHIN ORGANISATIONS

Most organisations combine several forms of youth work around taiohi rather than operating within one narrow service category



94%
work across more than one activity or service



76%
work across three or more activities or services

4. Involving Stakeholders

Involving stakeholders is a core principle of SROI. Stakeholders are defined as people or organisations that experience change, whether positive or negative, intended or unintended, as a result of the activity being analysed.

Materiality means including only the information or stakeholder groups that are essential to telling an accurate and fair story of the value created. If excluding a stakeholder group would misrepresent the organisation's activities, outcomes, or overall value, then that group is considered material and must be included²⁵.

The following sections outline how representative stakeholders were selected and the method of engagement.

4.1 Identifying Key Stakeholders

As part of establishing the scope of the sector-wide SROI, Hands for Impact considered the people, groups and organisations that may experience change as a result of youth work. Potential stakeholders were identified through sector scoping with Ara Taiohi, desktop research, engagement with the Working Group, and taiohi evidence.

This highlighted that the effects of youth work can extend beyond individual taiohi to the youth workers delivering the mahi, whānau, communities, other organisations working alongside young people, and wider public systems. This led to the identification of six broad stakeholder groups for consideration:

- Taiohi aged 12–24
- Youth workers / the youth work workforce
- Whānau
- Communities
- Government / public systems
- Other complementary organisations working with young people

²⁵ Social Value International. (n.d.). The Principles of Social Value; Nicholls et al. (2012). A Guide to Social Return on Investment.

Stakeholder Inclusion & Exclusion

Following identification of the potential stakeholder groups, Hands for Impact considered whether each group experienced changes that were relevant and significant enough to be included within the analysis. In line with the SROI principle of materiality, this involved considering both the nature of the change experienced and whether sufficient evidence was available to understand and measure that change credibly.

Therefore, not all stakeholders considered were taken forward for measurement and monetisation. Some remain important to the wider Theory of Change and understanding of youth work impact, but were excluded from the monetary calculation where the evidence available was not sufficient to quantify the change without introducing a significant level of assumption or risk of overclaiming. This distinction is summarised below.

Table 2: Stakeholder Inclusion and Exclusion Rationale

Stakeholder group	Role / potential change	Treatment in the analysis	Rationale
Taiohi aged 12–24	Primary participants in youth work and the stakeholder experiencing the most direct changes across pathways.	Included and monetised	For the purpose of this analysis taiohi aged 12-24 were confirmed as the in-scope age group and the primary stakeholder whose material outcomes were quantified and valued within the SROI. It was recognised that an increasing number of youth work organisations are supporting younger people, including 10–11-year-olds, with this particularly relevant in some intermediate-school and rural community contexts. This younger cohort was retained outside the monetised stakeholder boundary because it fell outside the previously defined 12–24 scope of the analysis. This exclusion reflects the analytical boundary of this SROI rather than a judgement that youth work with younger people is not important or does not create value.

Youth workers / youth work workforce	Youth workers deliver the critical relational, developmental and practical support through which youth work outcomes are created. The work may also create meaningful change for the youth workers themselves.	Considered but not taken forward for measurement or monetisation.	Youth workers were explicitly considered as a potential stakeholder group because the work itself can create meaningful change for practitioners, including through the learning that occurs through practice and the ways young people can shape and influence those who work alongside them. Capturing these outcomes would have added an important dimension to the story of value created by youth work. However, exploring and evidencing youth worker outcomes as a distinct stakeholder pathway was beyond the scope and available resources of this SROI. Youth workers therefore contributed practitioner evidence to the analysis, while their paid and volunteer time was captured as an input to the SROI, but outcomes experienced by youth workers themselves were not measured or monetised. The project also identified that young people who are themselves youth workers represent a distinct perspective within the youth work ecosystem. While younger youth workers were not specifically engaged as a separate stakeholder group in this research, their dual position as both young people and practitioners may shape how they experience the outcomes, opportunities, and challenges associated with youth work. Further research could explore the experiences and contribution of this group in greater depth.
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Whānau	May experience changes through the wellbeing and development of taiohi, direct support from youth workers, strengthened relationships, increased capability, advocacy or access to support.	Outcomes identified and included in the wider Theory of Change, but not monetised	Whānau outcomes were identified through desktop research, practitioner knowledge and the development of the Theory of Change, with several changes considered significant to the wider impact of youth work. However, limited access to sector-wide whānau data meant there was not enough direct evidence to quantify these outcomes reliably. Monetising them would have required substantial assumptions and increased the risk of overclaiming. Whānau outcomes were therefore retained within the Theory of Change and the wider impact narrative but excluded from the monetised SROI.
Community	May experience increased youth participation and contribution, stronger inclusion and cohesion, improved relationships with taiohi, and increased sense of community safety.	Outcomes identified and included in the wider Theory of Change, but not monetised	Community outcomes were considered potentially material, but limited sector data required estimating scale and value across diverse communities which would have required substantial subjective assumptions. They were therefore retained within the Theory of Change and wider impact narrative, but excluded from the monetised SROI.

Government / public systems	May experience changes in demand for justice, health, mental health, housing, welfare and statutory services, alongside changes in education, employment and economic participation.	Outcomes identified and retained in the wider impact narrative; not included in the final monetised ratio	Government outcomes were identified through sector engagement and supported through desktop research. Relevant outcomes were taken forward for exploration and quantification; however, there was not enough sector-wide evidence to develop a reliable quantity of public-system change attributable to youth work. Monetising these outcomes would therefore have required substantial assumptions. These outcomes were therefore retained within the Theory of Change and wider impact narrative but excluded from the monetised SROI.
Other complementary organisations working with young people	Schools, health providers, community organisations and other services may work alongside youth workers, make or receive referrals, and experience changes in coordination or engagement with taiohi.	Considered but not taken forward for measurement or monetisation.	These organisations were recognised as part of the wider youth support ecosystem, but their own outcomes were outside the primary scope of the analysis and were not separately evidenced or valued.

Stakeholder Group Selected For Analysis

The monetised stakeholder group for this SROI is therefore taiohi aged 12–24. This does not mean the wider value created for whānau, communities and government is unimportant. These outcomes remain a significant part of the Theory of Change and the wider story of youth work. The decision not to monetise them was because the available evidence was not strong enough to quantify them confidently without relying too heavily on assumptions or risking overclaiming.

Consideration of Taiohi Sub-Groups

Given the diversity of taiohi and youth work settings included in this analysis, we considered whether some groups of young people may experience outcomes differently and whether those differences were significant enough to need separate treatment in the SROI.

During the planning and desk research stage, a number of potential sub-groups and context lenses were identified that may affect how taiohi experience an outcome. These were then explored through taiohi and Working Group engagements. The lenses identified and brought forward for consideration were:

- Developmental age
- Gender
- Ethnicity and cultural identity, including Māori, Pasifika and Pākehā taiohi
- Rainbow / takatāpui identity
- Tāngata whaikaha / Taiohi with a disability
- Neurodiversity
- Geographic location, particularly rural and urban contexts
- Justice involvement
- Migrant background
- Care and Protection system involvement
- Higher levels of need or instability, including trauma, housing and financial challenges

Taiohi and the Working Group members highlighted that demographics alone may not explain these different experiences, noting outcomes can have a very different impact depending on what a young person is carrying, the support they already have around them, where they are starting from, and the type of activity or programme they are engaging with. The Working Group also identified a number of factors that could

influence how outcomes were experienced or achieved, including identity, culture, experiences of discrimination, developmental stage, geography, access to support, whānau circumstances and programme design.

In response, most of the differences were treated as factors that shaped how an outcome was experienced, rather than as separate stakeholder groups. We did not create separate models for age, gender, geography, rainbow identity, tāngata whaikaha or neurodiversity where available evidence was not strong or consistent enough to support distinction.

How differences were reflected in the model

The model did not automatically create separate subgroups for every difference identified. Instead, Hands for Impact considered whether those differences changed the nature of the outcome itself, or if it related to how that outcome was experienced.

For some outcomes evidence showed quite different experiences of change for different taiohi and these were treated as separate outcome pathways. For 'Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm' this meant distinguishing taiohi experiencing acute suicidal risk from those experiencing a broader strengthening of mental resilience. Increased personal stability was treated similarly, separating reduced risky behaviour from reduced harmful behaviour. These represent different experiences of the same broader outcome, not demographic subgroups.

For others, the outcome itself remained the same, but its experience differed for particular groups of taiohi depending on identity, background or setting. This was most apparent for stronger connection to cultural identity and improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing. For cultural identity the final model separates Māori and Pasifika taiohi from other cultural identities and applies different quantities and depths to each to reflect these differences.

For Wairua the model distinguishes between taiohi with a faith background or involvement in faith-based programming, Māori and Pasifika taiohi experiencing culturally grounded wairua outside of those faith pathways, and other taiohi experiencing wairua or spiritual wellbeing. Different quantities and depths were applied to reflect the different ways this outcome was experienced across those groups.

The fact that other subgroup differences were not separately modelled should not be read as meaning those differences do not exist. Rather it reflects that the available sector-wide evidence was not strong enough to quantify them confidently without

introducing further assumptions. These differences remain important to the story of change for taiohi, and an area where stronger data would improve future analysis and understanding.

4.2 Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement was designed to ensure that the outcomes and pathways used in the SROI reflected both the experiences of taiohi and the realities of youth work across different contexts and settings. Given the sector-wide scope, Hands for Impact worked with Ara Taiohi as the peak body to structure engagement in a way that brought forward a diversity of perspectives across practice types, experiences, and contexts. This included a structured Sector Working Group, qualitative engagement, and later validation with taiohi, and review through a wider sector peer network.

Stakeholder engagement took place across different stages of this project as part of an iterative process. Evidence gathered at each stage was analysed and brought into subsequent discussions so that the Theory of Change, outcomes framework, and modelling assumptions could be progressively tested and refined to reflect the sector and its diversity of voices as accurately as possible.

Sector Working Group

A Sector Working Group was established to provide practitioner and sector expertise throughout the development of the SROI. The group included representatives from 13 youth work organisations bringing together frontline youth workers, programme service managers, organisational leaders and specialist practitioners. The makeup of the Working Group was intentionally designed to bring a range of youth work contexts and perspectives into the development and analysis including differences in geography, service setting, organisational mode, and the communities of taiohi being supported.

Engagement with this group occurred across several hui during the project, including an in person hui to develop and test the outcomes framework emerging from the initial desktop research and jointly iterate the initial Theory of Change. Later hui were used to test emerging findings from the taiohi engagement, refine the framework and explore differences in how outcomes may be experienced across different taiohi, contexts, and programmes.

The Working Group also contributed practitioner evidence used in later stages of the SROI including consideration of incidence, duration, depth, relative importance and other assumptions required to move from the Theory of Change into the quantitative model. This included a quantitative survey, providing an additional source of evidence alongside the qualitative discussions and hui.

Table 3: Breadth of Sector Working Group Representation

Area of diversity	Breadth represented within the Working Group
Organisational model and scale	Local and place-based organisations, regional providers, specialist services, youth hubs, and national or multi-site organisations and networks
Service setting and focus	School-based youth work, community and place-based youth development, youth hubs, youth work within YOSS/integrated youth health settings, wellbeing-focused youth work, education and employment pathways, arts/creative youth development, sport and recreation, and youth-sector/workforce development
Activities and delivery approaches	Relational and presence-based youth work, one-to-one and group mentoring/coaching, drop-in support, programmes and wānanga, creative and arts-based activities, sport and outdoor/adventure activities, leadership and youth voice, culturally grounded practice, and faith based support
Geography	Urban, regional and rural/smaller-community settings across different parts of Aotearoa, alongside organisations and networks operating nationally
Communities and perspectives	Kaupapa Māori and kaupapa Māori-aligned, Pasifika youth development, disability and inclusion, Rainbow-inclusive, faith-based, and broader youth development perspectives

Taiohi engagement

Direct engagement with taiohi was a critical part of developing and testing the outcomes framework and evidence that informed the quantitative model. Given this was a sector-wide SROI with a diversity of stakeholders, engagement with taiohi was facilitated through the participating Working Group organisations to ensure a range of views and contexts relating to taiohi were also captured.

The engagement approach for taiohi intentionally considered kaupapa Māori ways of working and the Mana Taiohi principles²⁶. In practice this meant prioritising whanaungatanga by working through established and trusted relationships, manaakitanga through creating a respectful and comfortable engagement process, and whai wāhitanga by giving taiohi choice and agency over how and with whom they participated. The approach also recognised the mātauranga held by taiohi themselves, prioritising their experiences and perspectives in shaping the outcomes framework rather than simply asking them to respond to outcomes already defined by others.

Taiohi qualitative engagement

Recognising that Working Group organisations held established and trusted relationships with taiohi and their whānau, Hands for Impact developed a structured engagement process and supporting workbook that allowed taiohi to take part through a youth worker and organisation they already knew, while providing a consistent core approach across participating organisations.

Qualitative engagement took place through one-to-one interviews, either alone or with a support person, and small- group interviews where two to three taiohi participated together with youth workers. All engagements were facilitated kanohi ki te kanohi. Taiohi were also given the option of speaking directly with a Hands for Impact facilitator if they preferred to engage with someone outside their organisation or felt this would give them greater freedom to express views they may not have been comfortable sharing with their youth worker or organisation directly. None of the participants chose this option.

A total of 35 current taiohi and former youth work participants took part in the qualitative engagement across 11 organisations. Thirty-three were aged 12-24 at the time of engagement. Two participants aged over 24 were included as they had previously been involved in youth work and reflected retrospectively on the changes they experienced during that time. Their reflections helped in understanding the pathways of change and provided a longer-term perspective on their experiences of youth work and its ongoing impact as they entered other life stages.

The engagement explored the changes taiohi experienced through youth work, how these changes happened, how different changes connected, and which mattered to them most. The guided workbook provided a consistent structure, including exercises to

²⁶ Ara Taiohi. (n.d.). Mana Taiohi – Youth Development Principles; Ara Taiohi. (2020). Code of Ethics for Youth Work in Aotearoa New Zealand.

identify experienced change, map relationships between them and consider their relative importance. At the same time the approach intentionally created space for taiohi and youth workers to engage in the way that felt most comfortable and relevant for them, supporting open kōrero where they could surface outcomes experienced, positive or negative, intended or unintended, and allowing taiohi to describe their experiences in their own words. Audio recordings and completed engagement workbooks were returned to Hands for Impact for analysis, alongside a closing survey completed by the facilitating youth worker. This provided a consistent evidence base across organisations while retaining the experiences and language of the taiohi themselves.

Table 4: Profile of Taiohi Qualitative Engagement Participants

Participant characteristic	Number engaged
Total participants	35
Age 12-14	1
Age 15-17	21
Age 18-20	9
Age 21-24	2
Former youth work participants aged over 24	2
Wāhine / woman / girl	19
Tāne / man / boy	13
Gender diverse / transgender	1

Non-binary	1
Gender not stated / discussed	1
Māori*	16
Pasifika*	10
Pākehā / NZ European*	13
Other ethnicities*	4
Ethnicity not stated / discussed	4

*Participants could identify with more than one ethnicity, so ethnicity figures do not sum to 35.

Taiohi validation survey

Following the qualitative engagement and further development of the outcomes framework, Hands for Impact undertook an online validation survey with a separate group of taiohi. This provided a further check of the emerging outcomes framework and contributed additional evidence to the extent of change experienced and the relevant importance of the outcomes.

The participants were all recruited again through the Working Group organisations with the intent to ensure a range of perspectives. The survey was anonymous and all 10 respondents indicated it was their first time participating in the project.

The survey presented the 13 outcomes being tested in the framework at that stage and asked taiohi to consider the extent to which each reflected their own experience of youth work. Taiohi were then asked to consider the relative importance of the different changes by allocating 100 points across the outcomes, giving more points to the changes they felt mattered most to them. They were also invited to explain why

particular outcomes were more important and what made those changes meaningful to them personally.

Findings from the survey were considered alongside the earlier qualitative engagement, practitioner evidence as the outcomes were refined. The responses also directly informed the quantitative model contributing evidence to inform depth and relative importance of outcomes.

Peer review network

A Peer Review Network was established to provide independent review and targeted feedback at key stages of the project. The network comprised 14 individuals and complemented the Sector Working Group by bringing additional perspectives and specialist expertise, helping to test the credibility, relevance and robustness of the research.

Members brought experience across youth work practice and leadership, youth participation, Te Ao Māori and Mana Taiohi principles, philanthropic funding, government funding, policy expertise, research and evaluation, social impact measurement and Social Return on Investment analysis, systems thinking and youth sector alignment.

The network was engaged at three key stages. Members first reviewed the draft outcomes framework, identifying gaps and areas for refinement. They then reviewed the evidencing approach and emerging model, providing feedback on sector reflection and alignment, assumptions, methodology and areas requiring further consideration. In the final stage, members reviewed the draft SROI report and key findings and completed a validation survey considering the credibility of the evidence, clarity of findings and limitations, ethical integrity, equity and Te Tiriti considerations.

The Peer Review Network strengthened the project by bringing independent scrutiny and a broader range of system perspectives into the research as it developed. In doing so, it helped address gaps and limitations in the research, including the need for stronger funder, government, population-specific and system-level perspectives, and supported the development of findings that are able to be understood and used across the wider youth work sector.

4.3 Qualitative Analysis Process

The qualitative analysis process was designed to bring together the different sources of stakeholder evidence collected through the project and iteratively test and refine the outcomes framework and Theory of Change. Rather than treating each source separately, evidence was considered across the project with findings from one stage informing the questions and discussions of the next.

This analysis did not begin from a blank page. An initial outcomes framework had already been developed through early desktop research drawing on evidence from existing youth sector research. This was designed to provide a starting point for engagement rather than a fixed framework.

Taiohi Qualitative Analysis

For the taiohi qualitative engagement analysis, evidence from audio recordings, completed workbooks and facilitator closing forms were linked using a unique participant ID so that the different sources of evidence could be considered together. Audio recordings were transcribed and de-identified, and written responses from the workbooks were extracted into a structured evidence table for ease of coding.

Digital and AI-assisted tools supported transcription, extraction, and initial coding, with Hands for Impact manually reviewing the outputs against the source material to confirm accuracy, correct any miscoding and ensure important evidence, themes, or outcomes had not been missed.

Each piece of evidence was then coded against the developing outcomes framework. At an individual level, this allowed Hands for Impact to build an outcome profile for each participant including the changes they described, which changes mattered most, how different changes connected and what other influences they identified. Coding was not limited to the outcomes already in the framework. Where taiohi described new or differently framed changes these were identified and carried forward for further consideration.

Once participant level analysis was complete, evidence was analysed across the full qualitative dataset to identify recurring outcomes, patterns in how changes connected, differences that appeared across identities and contexts, and outcomes that appeared particularly important or were strongly evidenced. Where new outcomes had been identified, the wider dataset was reviewed to understand whether similar changes were

also being described by other participants and how strongly the evidence supported their inclusion.

These findings were then used to test the outcomes identified through the earlier desktop research and Working Group process, refine how they were defined, identify where outcomes should be combined or separated, and further develop the pathways within the Theory of Change helping distinguish between enabling changes within a pathway and the material outcomes ultimately considered for inclusion in the model.

Working Group Analysis

Qualitative evidence generated through the Working Group was synthesised as part of the wider sensemaking process, helping to interpret and test emerging findings. Insights from each hui were documented and reviewed to identify areas of agreement, different perspectives, and areas for further exploration or refinement within the outcome framework and Theory of Change. This included feedback on outcomes definitions, missing outcomes, causal pathway changes, and how outcomes may be experienced across different settings, contexts and programmes.

Working Group findings were considered alongside the taiohi evidence throughout the project rather than as a separate stand alone validation step. Taiohi evidence remained central to understanding what change was experienced and why this mattered, while Working Group evidence helped test and interpret how those changes and pathways appeared across different youth work contexts. Final decisions about the outcomes framework and Theory of Change were made through interpretation of the combined evidence, while ensuring taiohi voices remained central to those decisions.

4.4 Limitations & Future Considerations

The qualitative evidence gathered provided a strong basis for developing and testing the outcomes framework and Theory of Change. However, given the scope of this project relative to the scale and diversity of the youth work sector, the engagement was not designed to be statistically representative of the full sector.

Across the qualitative engagement and validation survey, 45 current taiohi and former youth work participants contributed directly to the research. Participation was weighted towards taiohi aged 15–20, and recruitment through participating Working Group organisations means the evidence primarily reflects taiohi connected to those

organisations. While the Working Group was intentionally selected to bring a range of youth work settings, organisational models, geographic contexts and communities into the project, it did not reflect every part of the sector and some regions and perspectives were more strongly represented than others.

The project also identified differences in how outcomes may be experienced across identities, contexts and settings, but some perspectives were less well represented in the available evidence. In particular, evidence gathered relating to takatāpui and rainbow taiohi, as well as Asian and migrant communities was more limited. Tāngata whaikaha were not required to self-identify in either engagement so representation of that sub-group is possibly under-represented but not certain. Peer Review Network feedback also highlighted that existing sector data systems do not always capture these identities or their outcomes well, and that smaller grassroots and volunteer-led organisations may be less able to contribute the type of data required for sector-wide modelling. As a result, these perspectives were not always able to be reflected explicitly or separately within the quantitative model, despite feedback indicating that these identities and contexts can materially shape how outcomes are experienced.

Future Consideration:

Future sector-wide work would benefit from clearer and more consistent shared data collection across the sector. This could include standardised participant information, clearer reporting of activities and service settings, consistent definitions of outputs such as unique taiohi reached versus engagements or attendances, and more consistent outcome data. More consistent sector-wide data would also strengthen future quantification and subgroup analysis, and enable communities and forms of youth work that are currently less visible in the available data to be reflected more clearly.

5. Theory of Change & Outcomes

A Theory of Change is a clear, visual map that explains how an organisation's activities create meaningful outcomes for the people and communities it serves. It sets out the need or issue the organisation is responding to, who is involved, what activities take place, and how these activities lead to outcomes.

In SROI, the Theory of Change forms the foundation for identifying material outcomes, ensuring the analysis captures only those changes that are significant to stakeholders and critical to telling an accurate and fair story of impact²⁷.

The development of this Theory of Change was an interactive, participatory process led by Ara Taiohi and Hands for Impact. The approach placed the voices and lived experiences of taiohi at the centre, drawing on the one-to-one interviews, observations and organisational knowledge shared by the participating Youth Workers, and the sector wide understanding held by Ara Taiohi, which was then tested through our Peer Review Network.

The process began with desktop research, sourcing a wide array of possible outcomes created by youth work. This list was then presented to the Working Group as a starting base from which the group could then consider their own observations of outcomes created by youth work and begin mapping possible outcomes and chains of events leading to material outcomes. The Working Group members then interviewed taiohi from a range of subgroups gaining clarity on their journeys of change.

This process allowed us to cluster the outcomes observed into developmental and wellbeing related **Domains of Change**.

- This framing allowed us to recognise core areas in which change occurs, whilst also allowing space for how the outcomes experienced within those areas of change interact with and reinforce one another.
- These categories formed the qualitative analysis framework, with each category containing multiple potential outcomes identified from interviews and focus groups.

The Working Group was engaged in refining and verifying the Theory of Change through three review cycles and with input from the Hands for Impact mentor.

²⁷ Nicholls et al. (2012). A Guide to Social Return on Investment.

5.1 Domains of Change

When taiohi engage in youth work, change occurs across multiple areas of their lives. These domains of change group the key outcomes experienced by taiohi, helping to show where and how meaningful change is created.

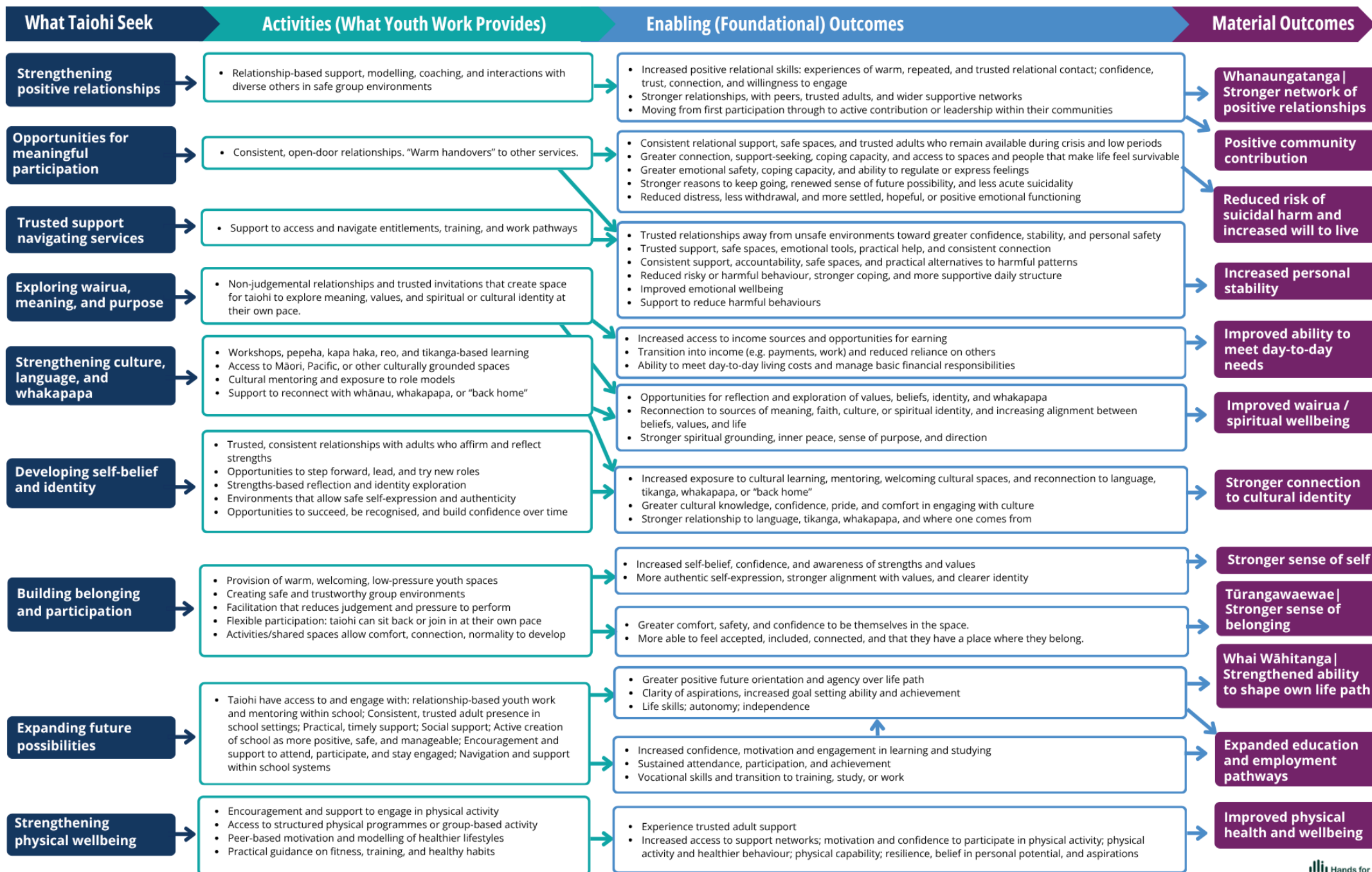
Table 5: Material outcomes categorised by their domain of change

Domain of change	Linked material outcomes
Relationships, belonging, and community	Stronger network of positive relationships (Whanaungatanga); Stronger sense of belonging (Tūrangawaewae); Positive community contribution
Emotional wellbeing, safety, and stability	Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm; Increased personal stability
Culture, wairua, identity, and self	Improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing; Stronger connection to cultural identity; Stronger sense of self
Practical, material, and financial wellbeing	Improved ability to meet day-to-day needs; Expanded education and employment pathways
Physical wellbeing	Improved physical health and wellbeing
Agency, aspirations and future direction	Strengthened ability to shape own life path (Whai Wāhitanga)

Youth Work Impact THEORY OF CHANGE

Long-term
Impact

Taiohi are better positioned to thrive, shape their own lives, pursue futures that matter to them, support others and contribute meaningfully to their communities.



5.2 Determining Material Outcomes

This section outlines which outcomes were included in the analysis and why. Guided by the principle of materiality, only outcomes that are significant to stakeholders are counted. Materiality is assessed by asking whether excluding an outcome would change how taiohi, funders, partners, or managers understand the impact, whether stakeholders identified it as meaningful, and whether it could influence future support.

Materiality was assessed using a dual test of relevance and significance, supported by the “So What?” test:

- **Relevance:** Outcomes that matter to stakeholders, especially taiohi, as evidenced in focus groups, interviews, and programme data.
- **Significance:** Outcomes that are substantial in scale or duration, with enduring value or the potential to influence decisions.
- **“So What?” test:** Outcomes were tested for whether they led to meaningful, lasting change. If not, or if they primarily acted as stepping stones, they were treated as enabling outcomes rather than valued directly²⁸.

Hands for Impact distinguishes between two categories:

- **Enabling Outcomes (Precursors):** Early-stage or foundational changes that create conditions for later outcomes but are not valued to avoid double-counting.
- **Well-Defined, Material Outcomes:** Later-stage, substantive changes that can be evidenced, monetised, and directly linked to stakeholder input.

The enabling outcomes were incorporated into the Theory of Change and the causal chain narrative, explaining how material outcomes occur. Material outcomes were carried forward into the valuation, supported by indicators, evidence, and financial proxies.

5.3 Taiohi Outcomes

This section describes the material (well-defined) outcomes identified for taiohi in this SROI analysis and the Activities and Change Pathway that lead to that material outcome.

²⁸ Social Value International. (n.d.). The Principles of Social Value.

Relationships, belonging and community

Stronger network of positive relationships (Whanaungatanga)

The taiohi described having more trusted, supportive, positive relationships around them. This included having more people to talk to and/or rely on, gaining friends, or good mates, brothers, sisters or a second family, encouraging them to connect with others and for some, to overcome feelings of isolation and loneliness.

These relationships form strong bonds that continue to guide, support and shape them.



“

“And that’s another thing, I love that because of this I actually have someone that I can call my best friend. And she thinks the same to me.” - Age 18

This change unfolds as taiohi get relationship-based support, modelling, coaching, and opportunities to interact with diverse others in safe group environments. This leads to the taiohi building the relational skills and understanding of others that allows them to eventually develop a strong network of positive, reciprocal and meaningful relationships around them.

“And just a lot of people, you know... them just being around, it’s not like I have to constantly be having deep conversations and talk about my problems. It’s just having these kind of people around me that, like, understand and enjoy my company.” - Age 18

“I’ve been trying to be comfortable around other people and being supported by youth workers helped me be comfortable.” - Age 18

“[Organisation] connected me to Kapa Haka helped build whanaungatanga with different people.” - Age 17

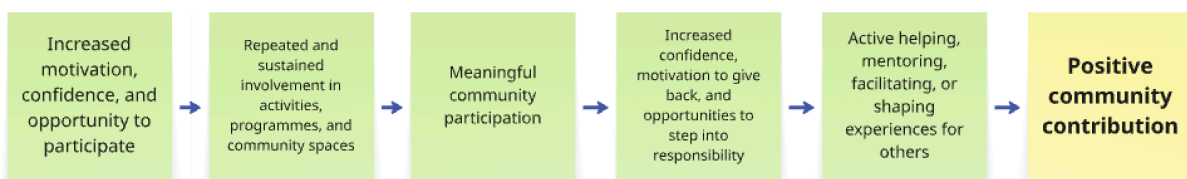
"Every social interaction I really had [before youth work] was just through a phone. Whereas now... I think I appreciate being around real people a bit more." - Age 18

"And it would give me reasons to get out of the house... I could go out and be with people that weren't just my family and I wasn't just... curled up at home." - Age 16

"I self isolated a lot and stuff like that. And I feel like... youth group and stuff like that... really helped..." - Age 15

Positive community contribution

This outcome reflected the taiohi being actively involved in positive, structured, or constructive activities, groups, or spaces within community life. Actively helping, shaping, supporting, or adding value to others or the wider community.



The activities leading to this change are strongly centred around the Mana Taiohi principles that focus on the ways youth development can whakamana young people. Taiohi experience manaakitanga when they are supported to show up and stay involved, engaging in supportive environments that make participation feel safe and achievable. The taiohi get access to peer-based group environments, shared activities and programmes which provide the foundation of whanaungatanga that builds their connection to a community. Whai Wāhitanga and Mātauranga are reflected by the taiohi sharing the skills and knowledge they have built through engaging with youth work, expressing leadership and agency through supporting/mentoring other taiohi, actively shaping the development of future group activities and ways in which they choose to contribute to their communities.

“

"When I first walked in here, I was just trying to get to know everyone and I was a student and over time became a leader and becoming a role model for the new boys..." - Age 19

A particularly important expression of this outcome is the progression from being supported to supporting others. Taiohi described wanting to use their experiences, knowledge, and growing confidence to help other young people, taking on roles as peer supporters, mentors, role models, and community leaders. For some, this progression can extend into volunteering and youth work itself. Rather than positioning taiohi solely as recipients of support, this reflects the reciprocal nature of youth development: young people who have experienced supportive relationships can increasingly become contributors within those same communities, using what they have learned to support and whakamana others.

"I now want to be able to help kids the way they help me and support kids." - Age 20

"So what I feel most important to me when thinking about youth work has been a service to me. Now I feel that's my calling per se is to serve my community, serve my people." - Age 17

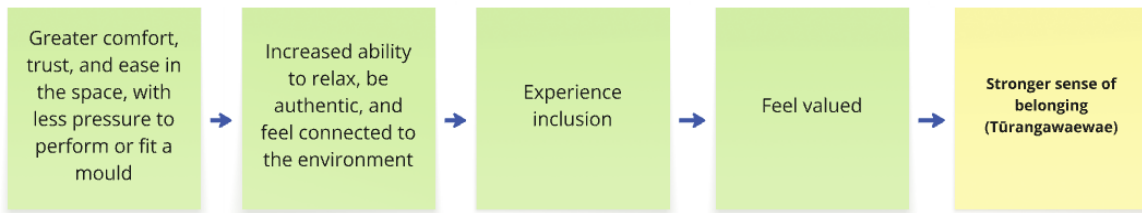
"I wanted to be a part of that and help be one of the voices of the youth community here." - Age 18

"Oh yeah... I've been going to [organisation]... you do one good deed a day, feed the homeless or compliment someone... I think now I've just been more engaged with not only myself but also society and the people outside of my close knit group." - Age 15

"I can go to them and they can come to me... because at one point in my life, it felt like no one was there for me, so then I could be there for other people, and then they can pass it on to the next person..." - Age 15

Stronger sense of belonging (Tūrangawaewae)

This outcome is defined as taiohi feeling accepted, welcomed, and able to belong within a space, group, or community without needing to hide, explain, or reshape who they are. It is distinct from the growth of relationships reflected in the outcome 'stronger network of relationships'. While relationships can contribute to belonging, this outcome reflects a broader experience of inclusion, it is the sense that a space or community is somewhere taiohi are welcome, safe to be themselves, and have a recognised and legitimate place.



This understanding of belonging connects with the concept of tūrangawaewae, commonly understood as ‘a place to stand’. Tūrangawaewae expresses a deeper relationship between identity, people, place, and belonging. It goes beyond simply being present or being permitted to enter a space, reflecting a sense of being connected, recognised, grounded, and able to stand with confidence. Traditionally, tūrangawaewae is deeply connected to whakapapa, whenua, whānau, hapū, and the places through which identity and belonging are established²⁹. Within a youth work context, it provides an important lens for considering whether taiohi experience a space not simply as somewhere they attend, but as somewhere they have a meaningful and recognised place to belong outside of home and the classroom.

“

“I value the safe space [organisation] has created for us. The way we all relax when we come together, the way we aren’t afraid to be ourselves.” - Age 17

Youth work can play an important role in creating conditions in which this sense of belonging can develop. Youth work settings help create those conditions. Research describes open youth work, “a practice of informal education that operates in a variety of spaces, from youth clubs and community centres to street corners”³⁰, settings as a form of ‘third space’ or ‘third place’ beyond the more structured environments of home, school, and work. These spaces offer an informal and relational environment where participation is voluntary, expectations are less institutional, and taiohi have greater choice over how and when they engage. Relationality, openness, informality, and the intentional creation of welcoming environments are central to this experience. Belonging therefore does not arise from the physical setting alone, but through the interaction between the place, its atmosphere and norms, the presence of trusted youth workers, and the ability of taiohi to participate in and shape the space.²⁷

²⁹ Durie, M., et al. (1996). *Māori profiles, an integrated approach to policy planning. Te hoe nuku roa. A report prepared for Te Puni Kōkiri.*

³⁰ de St Croix, T., & Doherty, L. (2023). *‘It’s a great place to find where you belong’: Creating, curating and valuing place and space in open youth work.’*

These experiences can be particularly meaningful when taiohi see their identities and cultures respected, have agency over how they participate, and are able to contribute to and influence the space. These experiences reinforce the sense that their presence matters and that the space is, in part, theirs. For taiohi Māori, Kaupapa Māori youth work programmes with connections to whakapapa, whenua, whānau, hapū, iwi, tikanga, and te ao Māori can further strengthen experiences of tūrangawaewae and belonging.

Over time, repeated opportunities to return, participate in shared activities, and experience ordinary moments of connection allow familiarity, comfort, and trust to develop. Research on young people and third spaces suggests that repeated participation can contribute to place attachment and a psychological sense of community^{31,32}. As taiohi become familiar with a space and experience themselves as recognised and legitimate participants within it, the space can shift from somewhere they are simply permitted to attend to somewhere they experience as ‘our place’ or ‘a place where I belong’. Belonging therefore reflects both social and emotional inclusion and the deeper experience of having a place from which to stand and belong.

“It’s a very welcoming space... It’s just a good space to be.” - Age 16

“Every time I walked through the door... it was such a positive environment... If I could live here, I would live here.” - Age 18

“...it feels like I’m part of something...” - Age 15

“They still, like, accepted me for me.” - Age 21

Emotional wellbeing, safety and stability

Content note: This section of the report discusses suicide and suicidal thoughts. Some readers may find this material distressing.

Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm

This pathway led to two distinct sub-group experiences. Some taiohi described feeling emotionally better overall, including feeling more settled, happier, calmer, less

³¹ Littman, D. M. (2022). *Third places, social capital, and sense of community as mechanisms of adaptive responding for young people who experience social marginalization*.

³² Littman, D. M. et al. (2024). *What do recently housed young people imagine for the future of third places? Using game-based inquiry to (re)imagine affirming, youth-centered third places*.

distressed, or better able to cope and regulate emotionally, building a sense of strengthened mental resilience.

While other taiohi on this pathway, described previously being in a state of acute distress at times having suicidal thoughts. They expressed this outcome as a meaningful shift toward valuing and choosing life, reflected in a growing sense of hope, future possibility, and personal reasons to keep going. This may include fewer or less intense thoughts of suicide, alongside an increased capacity to stay safe, seek support, and remain connected during difficult moments.



The activities leading to this change centre on providing consistent, accessible, and relationship-based support during periods of emotional distress. Youth workers act as trusted first points of contact, maintaining open supportive spaces and remaining available through in-person contact, messaging, school-based support, and ongoing follow-up. They provide opportunities for taiohi to talk openly, develop coping and emotional-regulation strategies, and seek help before distress escalates. Where additional or specialist support is needed, youth workers help taiohi navigate services and provide referrals or warm handovers so they are not left to manage complex systems alone. For taiohi experiencing crisis or particularly low periods, the continuity of a trusted relationship and access to safe people and spaces can provide an important source of connection and support alongside appropriate crisis responses.

“
“I mean, my anxiety is like better. I can handle that better. Like, it always still be there, but I handle it a lot easier.” - Age 18

Some taiohi may enter this pathway experiencing persistent distress, withdrawal, low hope, or difficulty managing their emotions. Others may be experiencing acute suicidal thoughts or periods in which remaining safe feels difficult. Consistent support increases their willingness and ability to seek help, remain connected, express what they are experiencing, and use strategies that make distress more manageable. As coping capacity and emotional regulation strengthen, taiohi may feel calmer, more settled, and less overwhelmed, contributing to stronger mental resilience and a more positive

outlook. For taiohi in the acute suicidal-risk subgroup, these changes may also strengthen their reasons for living, sense of future possibility, and capacity to remain connected and seek support during periods of crisis. Together, these protective changes contribute to a reduced risk of suicidal harm and an increased desire to live.

"I'm just way happier. It's like a big weight was pulled off my back. I'm way more relaxed. I'm not stressing all the time..." - Age 15

"I've been way more open with how I feel and verbalizing it." - Age 16

"Mental health wise, definitely has changed a lot... [organisation] has taught me how to express my feelings and my mental health and accept that it is a normal thing to have changes in your mental health." - Age 18

"Without [Organisation] I feel like I wouldn't be here. Basically it would have been suicide." - Age 16

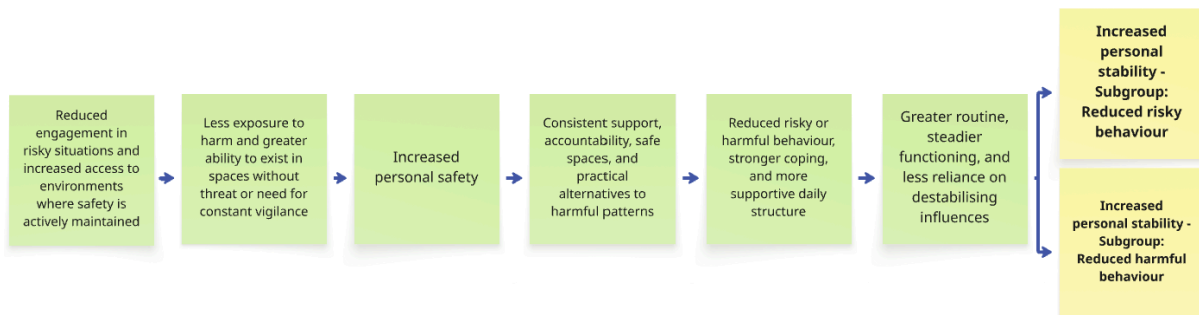
"[Youth worker] Just being there for me has saved my life." - Age 17

"there was definitely a point where I was thinking of taking my own life... I feel that that's why I thank you guys for everything, because I do feel you guys have saved my life..." - Age 18

"I feel like if I hadn't met the people who are in my life now through this, I wouldn't be here now..." - Age 17

Increased personal stability

Taiohi describe their lives becoming less chaotic and more manageable, with fewer risky or harmful behaviours. They speak about developing routines and structure in their daily lives, including healthier patterns around sleep, time use, and day-to-day habits. Many describe feeling more at ease spending time alone or stepping away from unsafe or high-risk environments. This shift is often reflected in more consistent engagement in work, volunteering, or meaningful daily activities, and an overall sense that life feels more settled, safer, and on a better path.



The activities leading to this change combine consistent youth worker support with access to safe spaces, practical alternatives, and meaningful daily structure. Youth workers maintain regular contact and follow-up, support taiohi to recognise and move away from unsafe people or environments, and provide clear boundaries, accountability, and encouragement where harmful patterns are occurring. Taiohi may also be connected with volunteering, employment, structured programmes, or other purposeful commitments that provide positive alternatives to risky or heavily peer-driven social environments. Wraparound support helps address practical sources of disruption while reinforcing healthier routines around sleep, time use, emotional regulation, substance use, and everyday responsibilities.

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“I don’t party. I’d like to say I’m a good influence and not ever around those bad influences... Basically my whole life has changed.” - Age 20

Some taiohi may enter this pathway with lives that feel unsafe, or shaped by risky environments and destabilising influences. Access to trusted support and safer alternatives can reduce their exposure to harm and strengthen their ability to recognise risk, manage difficult emotions, and remove themselves from situations before they escalate. As risky or harmful behaviours reduce, taiohi have more opportunity to establish routines, participate in meaningful daily activities, and experience greater consistency in how they function. Over time, steadier habits, stronger coping, and less reliance on destabilising people, substances, or environments contribute to a life that feels safer, more manageable, and increasingly stable.

“How to deal with situations in a way that is like going to de-escalate rather than escalate things. How to act with integrity... how to communicate and work with other people better...” - Age 20

“I’ve found ways that I can remove myself so that maybe if I’m that mad, I don’t say something I don’t want to say... I just remove myself from the

situation so that nothing from both part is done that will be regretted along the road and may just escalate it.” - Age 15

“Yeah. We were idiots. And then I kind of stopped all of that. Stopped drinking, stopped all the illegal shit.” - Age 16

“I used to, like, swear... Now I’m like, more chill. Because I realized that there’s other people that matter.” - Age 15

“I think I was... destined to go down a bad path. If I had have dropped out of school... I feel like things wouldn’t have gone well and I would have... ended up in juvie or... either dead on the side of the road or jail.” - Age 18

Culture, wairua, identity, and self

Stronger sense of self

Taiohi describe a stronger understanding of who they are, including their strengths, values, and role. They are more confident in who they are and describe a shift in how they see themselves. They describe greater self-acceptance, reduced self-judgement, and clearer recognition of what matters to them. Taiohi also speak about being more open, expressive, and able to use their voice, with some stepping into leadership, independence, or more values-aligned ways of living.



The activities leading to this change centre on trusted relationships and strengths-based environments that help taiohi explore and express who they are. Youth workers consistently recognise and reflect back the strengths, values, interests, and growth they observe in taiohi. They create spaces where taiohi can speak openly, try different forms of self-expression, and explore aspects of their identity without judgement or pressure to conform. Opportunities to take responsibility, succeed, lead, or try unfamiliar roles allow taiohi to test their capabilities and receive recognition for what they contribute. Encouragement and reflection over time help them make sense of personal change and identify what matters to them. This is a strong reflection of the Mana Taiohi principle of

Mauri (o te taiohi) where youth workers acknowledge the inherent life spark of the taiohi, their potential and support the development of their identity.

“

“Just really being who I want to be and not following people, being my own person.” - Age 17

Some taiohi may begin with uncertainty about who they are, low confidence in their abilities, or a tendency to shape themselves around the expectations of others. Trusted relationships and repeated recognition of their strengths support increased self-belief and a clearer awareness of their values, qualities, and capabilities. As confidence grows, taiohi become more comfortable expressing themselves authentically, using their voice, and making choices that are consistent with who they understand themselves to be. This increasing self-acceptance, clarity, and alignment between identity and values develops into a stronger sense of self.

“Helped me be authentic to people. Help me be 100 me all the time.” - Age 17

“I can be comfortable in my own skin no matter where I am.” - Age 16

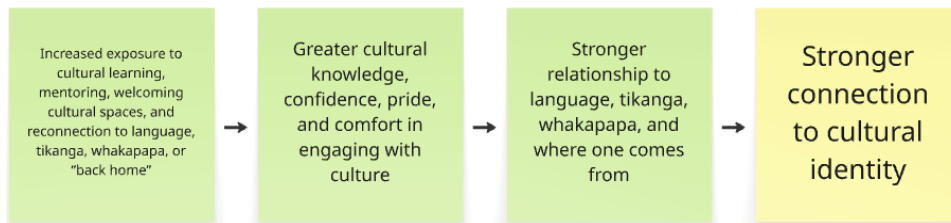
“Everyone can have their own opinions about me, but at the end of the day, mine is the only one that matters about myself.” - Age 16

“These changes feel important to me because it has shaped who I am as a person. Supported me in finding who I am and my voice.” - Age 18

Stronger connection to cultural identity

This outcome is defined as a stronger connection to culture, roots, language, tikanga, whakapapa, and culturally grounded identity. Taiohi describe reconnecting with culture, language, tikanga, or whakapapa, and feeling more connected to where they come from or “back home.” They also speak about learning or reclaiming pepeha, reo, kapa haka, or other cultural practices.

Many describe increased comfort and confidence in cultural spaces, and a sense that culture has become more present and important in how they understand themselves.



The activities leading to this change provide taiohi with safe and meaningful opportunities to learn about, participate in, and reconnect with their culture. These may include developing their pepeha, participating in cultural workshops or activities such as kapa haka, learning reo, tikanga-based learning, mentoring, and participation in Māori, Pacific, or other culturally grounded spaces. Youth workers may support taiohi to connect with cultural role models, whānau, discover whakapapa, or places and communities that represent where they come from. Ongoing involvement in environments where culture is actively practised and shared allows cultural knowledge to be developed through relationships and lived experience rather than through information alone.

“If I have to explain my cultural identity or, like, say where I’m from, it’s a much less intimidating question than it was beforehand. And I don’t know, just having the knowledge of your own culture is, like, quite powerful in a way, and... an important part of identity as well.” - Age 21

Some taiohi may enter this pathway with limited knowledge of their cultural background, uncertainty about where they come from, or discomfort participating in cultural settings. Others may already have a cultural connection that they want to deepen or extend into other parts of their identity. Access to welcoming cultural spaces, trusted guidance, and opportunities to learn increases cultural knowledge and familiarity. As taiohi become more confident using language, participating in tikanga or cultural practices, they may experience greater cultural pride and comfort in culturally grounded environments. These repeated experiences strengthen their relationship with language, tikanga, whakapapa, people, and place, contributing to a stronger connection to cultural identity.

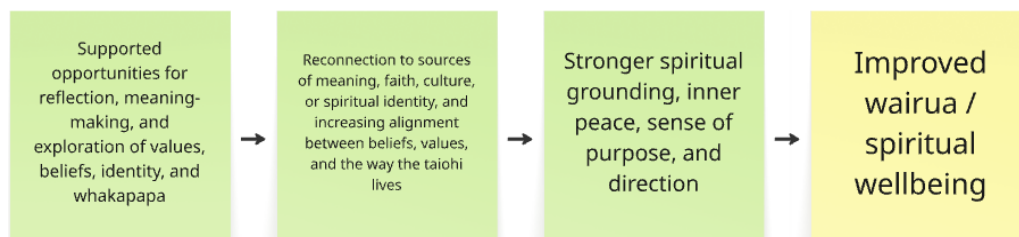
“I think what changed for me that first comes to mind is cultural identity. I feel that was a big change for me and shift in my life. And just, you know, what we worked through in the programme really kind of helped develop that in me.” - Age 21

"It feels like I've actually created a stronger connection to my identity, to my roots, to my papa. And so [organisation] enabled me to nurture that." - Age 18

"Now I have a pepeha that I can understand and it makes sense to me and I know the connection. And I've, like, gone and talked to other whānau about these different parts of myself that I didn't have before." - Age 21

Improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing

This outcome is described by taiohi as a stronger sense of spiritual grounding, peace, and connection to wairua or mauri, reflected in a deeper sense of meaning, identity, and way of living. This may include both faith-based and cultural expressions of spirituality, and a growing feeling of alignment with values and self.



The activities leading to this change are grounded in relationship-based, mana-affirming practice that allows taiohi to explore spirituality, belief, meaning, and values without judgement or expectation. Some cultural or faith based youth work organisations become a safe space for taiohi to explore their own relationship with and definition of wairua. Depending on the preferences and context of the taiohi, this may include kōrero, reflection, karakia, waiata, prayer, or other culturally or spiritually grounded practices. Ongoing support gives taiohi time to explore questions of spiritual wellbeing, and where that sits within their identity, and purpose.

“

"I'm Christian. I was not then. Basically my whole life has changed." - Age 20

Trusted relationships and non-judgemental opportunities for reflection give taiohi the space to explore their understanding of what wairua, faith, or spiritual identity means to them. As taiohi reconnect with cultural, faith-based, or personal sources of meaning,

they may develop greater alignment between their beliefs, values, identity, and the way they live. This can strengthen their sense of grounding, inner peace, purpose, and direction, described as an overall sense of improved wairua or spiritual wellbeing.

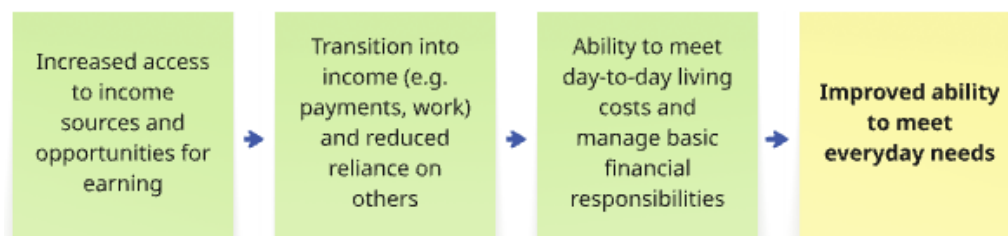
"I had heaps of support from youth workers in church... that helped me change aspects of my ways." - Age 17

Practical and material, and financial wellbeing

Improved ability to meet everyday needs

Taiohi describe being able to support themselves financially, including accessing income through benefits or employment that has improved their material wellbeing.

This includes paying bills, rent, and other living costs, alongside reduced reliance on others for money or essentials. Overall, taiohi describe a more stable, manageable, and workable material situation, with a growing sense of financial independence.



The activities leading to this change combine trusted relational support with practical navigation, advocacy, and connection to sources of income. Youth workers provide an accessible first point of contact and help taiohi understand and engage with financial, employment, education, and government systems. This may include support to apply for income assistance or accommodation entitlements, prepare a CV, develop job-readiness skills, access vocational education, obtain licences, or move from volunteering and work experience into paid employment. Ongoing guidance also helps taiohi understand financial responsibilities and build confidence in managing the practical requirements of increasing independence.

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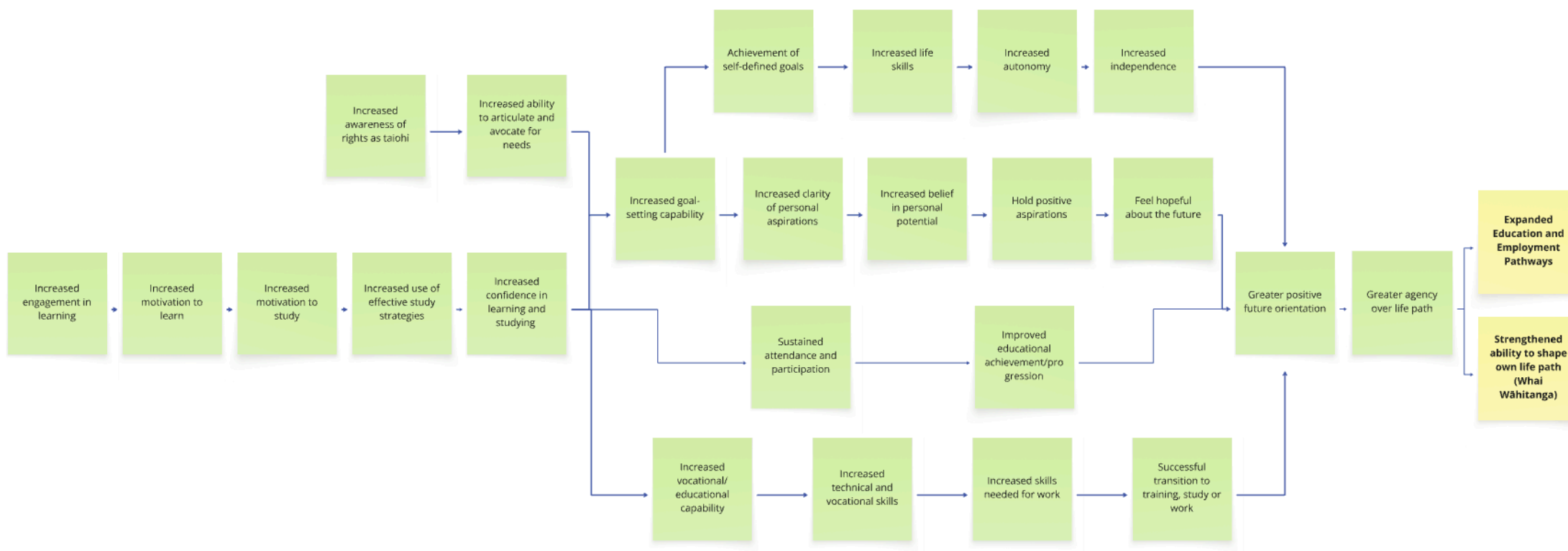
“It made me be able to support myself and not think I was still under those people’s control cuz they were somewhat supporting me.” - Age 17

Some taiohi may begin with limited awareness of the support available to them, low confidence engaging with formal systems, or reliance on other people for money and essential needs. Trusted guidance increases their willingness to seek help and their ability to engage with the services, entitlements, training, or employment pathways that are appropriate to their circumstances. Timely access to these supports can increase income through payments or paid work and reduce dependence on others for essential resources. As taiohi become better able to pay rent, bills, food, transport, and other day-to-day costs, their material circumstances become more workable and they feel a sense of independence and material safety.

“Getting on the youth payment, became independent.” - Age 17

“Now I can pay my own bills.” - Age 24

'Expanded education and employment pathways' and 'Strengthened ability to shape own life path (Whai Wāhitanga)'



Causal pathway leading to material outcomes 'Expanded education and employment pathways' and 'Strengthened ability to shape own life path (Whai Wāhitanga)'

Expanded education and employment pathways

Taiohi describe having more active and sustained engagement in education, training, or work pathways that will ultimately lead them to greater financial security through improved earning potential and ability to work in chosen fields. This pathway is supported by consistent, relationship-based support that helps school feel safer, more positive, and manageable, leading to increased attendance, participation, and motivation to engage in learning. Alongside this, taiohi describe gaining clearer direction, stronger decision-making capability, and a greater sense of control over their life path. They speak about setting and following through on goals, making intentional choices about study, work, or future plans, and feeling less influenced by external pressures.

The activities leading to this change operate across school engagement, vocational preparation, and transitions into further education or employment. Within school settings, youth workers provide a consistent and trusted adult presence, practical support when taiohi feel overwhelmed, and social connection that helps school feel safer and more manageable. They encourage attendance, participation, persistence, and engagement with learning while helping taiohi navigate school systems and access the support they need. Beyond school, youth workers support goal setting, career exploration, CV preparation, digital and technical skills, licences, training applications, volunteering, work experience, and connections to employers or tertiary providers. For some taiohi, youth development can itself open a vocational pathway, with experiences of peer support, volunteering, and youth leadership providing opportunities to develop transferable skills and, in some cases, creating a pathway towards training or employment in youth work.

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"Tangibly changed? I want to say my career, my future, as back when I first started coming here, I had no idea what I was doing with my life, no idea what I was going to do after school and coming here... locked in the future of wanting to go into social work." - Age 18

Some taiohi may begin with low engagement in learning, uncertainty about their future, limited knowledge of available pathways, or few opportunities to develop the skills required for further study or work. Feeling safer, cared for, and supported within education can improve their perception of school and increase their motivation to attend and participate. At the same time, exposure to different occupations, training

options, and practical learning opportunities expands their understanding of what is possible. As confidence, study skills, vocational capability, and goal clarity increase, taiohi are better able to persist in education, complete qualifications, enter training, or transition into work. These concrete experiences and achievements expand the education and employment pathways available to them.

This outcome is distinguished from 'greater ability to shape one's own life path' as 'expanded education and employment pathways' concerns increased access to and participation in tangible education, training, and employment pathways, while the Whai Wāhitanga outcome concerns the wider agency developed by the taiohi to choose and direct their future, and the deeper sense of life satisfaction that generates.

"I can't remember when it was that I did find a job, but she helped me with that. And, you know, we worked on my CV and everything..." - Age 24

"I've got my licence, I've completed my course level one and two." - Age 17

"It helped me make up my mind of what I wanted to do with my life, which changed significantly for me because I think the only option I had or was thinking about was going into trades, which I didn't really enjoy." - Age 18

"Life skills like getting my licence... [Youth Worker] is helping me get a job, restricted licence." - Age 17

"Now I work in healthcare. I'm an HCA. I'm about to start my level four in health and wellbeing." - Age 24

"I've now completed one course and I'm planning to go into another course with guidance as well." - Age 17

Agency, aspirations and future direction

Strengthened ability to shape own life path (Whai Wāhitanga)

Taiohi describe feeling more able to shape and pursue the direction of their own lives. They have greater confidence, are more willing to use their voice, have more choice, and have greater clarity about what matters to them. They feel more able to speak up for themselves, advocate for what they need, make decisions, set goals, and take steps toward the future they want.

“

“The changes in my life goals, from not having any life goals, to actually having a solid plan... here’s the options for what we can do.” - Age 18

They speak about having clearer direction, more choice, and the ability to make intentional decisions that shape their future. This is supported through supportive relationships, encouragement, exposure to opportunities, and learning about different pathways.

Taiohi describe their view of the future expanding, becoming aware of new roles and possibilities, and moving from narrow or fixed expectations to a wider sense of what is achievable. They speak about feeling more hopeful and optimistic, with “doors opening” and new opportunities becoming visible. This shift allows them to imagine a different or better future, contributing to an overall increased sense of satisfaction with their lives.

The activities leading to this change centre on supporting taiohi to identify what matters to them and take an active role in decisions affecting their lives. Youth workers provide mentoring, goal-setting support, and opportunities to explore different life, study, work, and leadership pathways. They expose taiohi to real-world options that may previously have felt unavailable or unknown and provide practical assistance, such as support with licences, applications, training, finances, or other barriers to progress. Encouragement, accountability, and opportunities to take responsibility help taiohi practise making decisions and following through on choices rather than having their direction determined by others.

“

“I can control what I want and don’t want by saying what I need.” - Age 16

Some taiohi may begin with limited confidence in their own potential, unclear aspirations, or a narrow view of the choices available to them. Trusted guidance and exposure to different possibilities help them identify their strengths, articulate their preferences, and develop clearer goals. As their decision-making and goal-setting capability increases, taiohi become more able to advocate for what they need, assess options, and make choices that reflect their own values and aspirations. Acting on these decisions through study, work, leadership, or other self-defined goals strengthens

autonomy and independence. Over time, this develops into a greater ability to shape and pursue the direction of their own life.

"[Organisation] really showed me different paths. Instead of giving up on heaps of my goals and my ambitions, they really brought me back." - Age 16

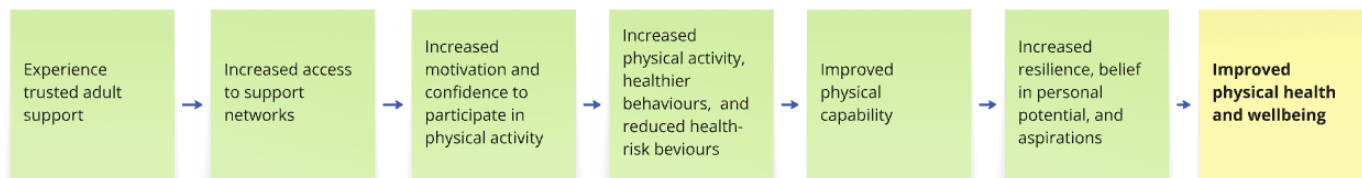
"We got to put our own input in and got to tell them what we wanted to do, they also let us be in control of what we wanted to do in a safe way." - Age 16

"I'm able to put my own input into things that I want to do, not just have specific plans to do whatever's told to us." - Age 16

"Having support from the youth workers has helped me grow and become more independent." - Age 17

Physical wellbeing

Improved physical wellbeing



Taiohi describe improvements in their physical wellbeing through healthier daily behaviours, increased activity, and growing physical capability. This includes being more physically active through walking, sport, or training, alongside reduced engagement in harmful behaviours such as smoking, vaping, or drinking. Taiohi spoke about making healthier lifestyle choices and placing greater value on caring for their bodies and overall health. Some tāngata whaikaha highlighted improved physical capability and fitness as a key outcome for them.

The activities leading to this change provide accessible opportunities and encouragement for taiohi to become more physically active and develop healthier daily habits. Youth workers may facilitate sport, walking, fitness training, outdoor activities, group challenges, or other forms of movement suited to the interests and physical capabilities of the taiohi involved. Peer participation, team environments, and trusted adult encouragement can make physical activity feel safer, more enjoyable, and

achievable. Youth workers also model and reinforce healthier choices, provide practical guidance around sleep, fitness, and routines, and support taiohi who want to reduce behaviours that affect their physical health. For tāngata whaikaha, activities are provided or adapted in a way that creates supportive, positive and enjoyable experiences.

“

“So sports, having a little routine change of environment, whether it’s inside or outside, is making me feel good and keeping active.” - Age 24

Supported access to enjoyable and achievable activity increases motivation and participation, while positive peer and adult encouragement helps taiohi persist and recognise improvements in their capability. Alongside reductions in harmful behaviours and the development of healthier routines, increased activity can improve fitness, sleep, energy, and physical functioning. As these changes become more consistent, taiohi develop greater confidence in caring for and using their bodies, contributing to improved physical wellbeing.

“Taha tinana, going for walks, going outside, been more active.” - Age 17

“I’ve been managing my sleep regularly... I would just stay up late a lot... I had, like, the worst sleep schedule...” - Age 17

“Everything. I don’t party... I care about my body and the way I live...” - Age 20

“I think what feels different now is that... I can sort of... push myself to higher limits with knowing I actually have people that will help me get there... I’ve sort of built not just a fitness level, but also a connection with the people at [Organisation]...” - Age 15

Variation in Taiohi Outcome Pathways

The outcome pathways described above represent the common ways in which youth work can contribute to change for taiohi across the sector. They should not, however, be interpreted as a single pathway that operates in the same way, or to the same extent, for every taiohi or organisation.

Across the sector, youth work shares a relational and youth-development approach, but the context in which that approach is applied varies considerably. Organisations provide different combinations of activities and services, work with taiohi with different circumstances, needs and aspirations, and differ in the intensity, continuity and length of engagement they are able to provide. These differences influence which pathways through the Theory of Change are most relevant and the types of outcomes that may reasonably be expected.

For example, broad-access community, school-based, recreational or creative youth work may create particularly strong opportunities for relationships, belonging, participation, confidence and community contribution. More targeted health, care, transition or navigation services may provide more direct pathways into mental and physical wellbeing, stability, safety, material wellbeing or future pathways. These are not exclusive relationships: the same youth work setting may contribute to multiple outcomes, and the pathways available to an individual taiohi may change as their circumstances, aspirations and relationship with youth work develop.

These differences should not be understood as meaning that one form of youth work is inherently more impactful than another. Different forms of engagement create different opportunities and patterns of change. Broad-access or lighter-touch youth work can create substantial relational, belonging and community value, while more sustained or individualised support may be particularly important for outcomes involving stability, practical needs, behaviour change, health or future pathways.

The qualitative evidence also suggests that continuity of engagement can influence how these pathways develop over time. Taiohi engaged with youth work for two or more years described a broader range of outcomes on average than those engaged for shorter periods. However, positive relationships, sense of self and wellbeing were already commonly evident among taiohi engaged for shorter periods, while larger differences were apparent in areas such as leadership, goals and aspirations, navigating services and supports, physical wellbeing, and reductions in harmful or risky behaviour.

This should not be interpreted as evidence that longer engagement alone causes greater impact. Rather, the findings support the importance of sustained youth work relationships as a source of continuity, through which different opportunities and forms of support can become relevant as the needs, circumstances and aspirations of taiohi evolve. This has implications for the conditions surrounding youth work, including the ability of organisations and youth workers to sustain supportive relationships over time.

Taken together, these findings show that there is no single youth work pathway to impact. The outcomes that emerge depend on the interaction between what the service is designed to provide, the nature and continuity of engagement, and the circumstances, needs and aspirations of the taiohi.

The Theory of Change should therefore be understood as a shared sector framework of possible pathways and outcomes, rather than a standard sequence that every taiohi or organisation is expected to reproduce. Different organisations may contribute strongly to different parts of the Theory of Change, and individual taiohi may move through different pathways as their needs, aspirations and engagement evolve.

5.4 Whānau Outcomes

The outcomes experienced by whānau arise where youth work organisations intentionally include whānau in the support process, or where taiohi choose to invite whānau into their development journey. Through youth work, whānau may gain access to positive and trusted relationships, culturally safe and mana-affirming environments, practical resources, services, and opportunities to build knowledge and skills. Whānau may also be welcomed into shared spaces and activities that are grounded in whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, whai wāhitanga, and mātauranga. These conditions create opportunities for whānau to participate in the support surrounding their taiohi while also accessing assistance relevant to their own wellbeing³³.

Strengthened cultural identity

For Māori whānau, opportunities to participate in tikanga, engage with Te Ao Māori, reconnect with whakapapa, and develop confidence in Māori spaces can strengthen connection to Māoritanga and cultural identity. Similar pathways may occur for whānau from other cultural communities where they can safely participate in cultural practices and express their identity. These experiences can strengthen cultural pride, cultural safety, and connection with people and places that are important to the whānau.

Confident, capable parenting and caregiving

Positive engagement with youth workers and youth work organisations can increase whānau members' confidence, knowledge, and capability to support taiohi. As whānau better understand the needs, strengths, and aspirations of their taiohi, they may become more able to communicate openly, respond constructively to challenges, and

³³ Lakhota (2021); Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust (2017); Wylie (2025).

provide consistent encouragement and guidance. Increased parenting and caregiving knowledge, stronger coping with parenting demands, and greater awareness of positive role modelling can contribute to more confident and capable parenting and caregiving.

Strong supportive whānau relationships

Relational and culturally grounded engagement can also strengthen trust, respect, openness, and mutual support between whānau members. As communication improves and whānau become more willing and confident to support one another, relationships may become stronger and more cohesive. This can contribute to the development of strong, supportive whānau relationships and a greater collective capacity to respond to difficulties.

Improved mental and physical health

Access to practical guidance, advocacy, and services can help whānau navigate health, social support, financial, housing, and other systems. As support strengthens around taiohi and whānau, stress can reduce and coping skills can improve, contributing to improved emotional wellbeing for whānau members. In addition, increased health literacy and confidence in managing whānau health can support whānau to identify self-defined hauora goals and make decisions that align with their values. Where whānau receive support to reduce substance-related harm or participate in physical activity together, this may contribute to reduced misuse of alcohol or drugs and improved physical health.

Improved safety for whānau members

Better access to systems and support can also help whānau establish safer and more stable home environments. Where whānau are better equipped to provide environments that are stable, safe, and free from harm, this can contribute to improved safety for whānau members, avoidance of whānau violence, and reduced likelihood of taiohi being placed in care. Where involvement with statutory services continues, stronger relationships, advocacy, and cultural responsiveness can support interactions that are more mana-enhancing, productive, and helpful for both taiohi and their whānau.

5.5 Community Outcomes

Community outcomes arise where youth work organisations are embedded in their local communities and intentionally collaborate with community leaders, services,

cultural groups, and other organisations. Through this engagement, communities gain opportunities to connect meaningfully with taiohi in culturally appropriate and mana-affirming ways. Youth workers can support this process by facilitating relationships, advocating for taiohi, coordinating services, and ensuring that young people have genuine opportunities to contribute to community activities, initiatives, and decisions³⁴.

Communities experience stronger social cohesion and increased sense of safety

Taiohi-informed events, programmes, and community initiatives can increase opportunities for young people and community members to participate alongside one another. This helps community organisations and services build their capacity to engage with taiohi and strengthens connections between young people and the wider community. Where this engagement is culturally grounded and responsive to local context, it can also contribute to stronger inclusion, trust, and cohesion within communities.

Community participation, volunteering, leadership, and contribution are important ways through which taiohi may experience belonging and purpose. These activities can also support identity, confidence, and self-worth. As taiohi develop their skills in leadership, self-advocacy, and community participation, they can increasingly contribute as volunteers, mentors, role models, and future community leaders. This may include upholding tuakana-teina approaches by sharing knowledge and supporting younger or less experienced taiohi.

Youth workers also advocate for young people within local systems and help community services understand how to engage with taiohi more effectively. Stronger coordination between youth work organisations, community services, cultural leaders, and other local stakeholders can help reduce barriers to participation and make services more accessible and responsive. This contributes to the increased social inclusion of young people and strengthens the community's capacity to involve taiohi as valued participants.

Positive relationship networks embedded within communities may also support taiohi who are reintegrating following involvement in the justice system. Trusted relationships, community acceptance, and access to positive roles and activities can support reintegration and reduce isolation from community life. Improved perceptions of young

³⁴ Deloitte Access Economics (2022); Bruce et al. (2025); Wylie (2025).

people and stronger community support can make it easier for taiohi to reconnect safely and constructively.

As taiohi experience stronger inclusion, connection, and access to positive community roles, communities may experience reduced harm and reduced youth offending. Improved relationships between taiohi, services, and community members can also contribute to safer environments for young people and the wider community. Over time, these pathways can lead to stronger social cohesion through increased inclusion and connection, alongside increased sense of community safety.

5.6 Government Outcomes

When taiohi experience barriers, they may be at greater risk of poor wellbeing, disengagement from education, financial hardship, housing instability, and involvement in high-cost systems. Youth work can provide culturally safe, relational, and trusted environments that are often easier to engage with than formal services. Through these pathways, engagement can increase, enabling earlier connection and allowing needs to be identified and responded to sooner.

This may happen when taiohi receive sustained, tailored support that strengthens identity, confidence, agency, and capability. As taiohi and, where relevant, whānau access the right support at the right time, reliance on crisis and welfare responses can reduce, and support can become more timely and coordinated. Over time, this can contribute to greater stability and reduced exposure to harm, contributing to lower demand on high-cost systems and stronger long-term participation³⁵.

Reduced demand on the justice system

Improved decision-making, stronger protective relationships, increased stability, and access to positive education, employment, and community pathways can contribute to reduced youth offending and reduced escalation into the justice system. For taiohi already involved in justice processes, sustained support and community reintegration may also reduce reoffending, detention, and later justice involvement. Over time, this can contribute to reduced demand on policing, courts, youth justice services, detention, and the wider justice system.

³⁵ Oranga Tamariki. (2020). Outcomes Framework; New Zealand Government. (2024). Child and Youth Strategy 2024–2027; Deloitte Access Economics (2022).

Reduced reliance on public services (including physical and mental health, housing and welfare)

Health and wellbeing

Earlier help-seeking, improved emotional and physical wellbeing, reduced substance-related harm, and stronger access to appropriate support can reduce avoidable demand on physical and mental health services. This may include fewer acute or crisis responses and more timely use of preventative, primary, or community-based support.

Housing and social support services

Greater access to housing and access to practical support including restorative action for families that allows a young person to safely stay or return home, can reduce the likelihood that housing or material hardship escalates to crisis. This may reduce demand on emergency housing, crisis assistance and other social support services.

Welfare and economic participation

Improved engagement in education, vocational training, and employment can increase workforce participation and reduce the number of taiohi who are not in education, employment, or training. Access to income, qualifications, work experience, and sustainable employment pathways may reduce long-term reliance on benefits and welfare services. Over time, increased employment and earning potential can contribute to stronger economic participation and a greater long-term economic contribution.

Reduced need for statutory intervention for child protection

Stronger whānau capability, safer and more stable home environments, improved access to support, and earlier responses to emerging needs can reduce the likelihood that difficulties escalate to statutory intervention. This may contribute to fewer children, taiohi, and whānau requiring crisis intervention, statutory care, custody, or child protection responses. The resulting government outcome is a reduced need for statutory intervention for child protection.

More effective, responsive and preventative public systems

Youth work can also improve the way public systems engage with taiohi. Youth workers frequently act as an interface between young people, whānau, community organisations, and government services. Their relationships and local knowledge can support collaboration, improve service navigation, strengthen the inclusion of youth

voice, and increase cultural responsiveness. These contributions can help public systems operate in a more coordinated, preventative, effective, and responsive manner.

Overall, the changes supported through youth work can contribute to greater stability in wellbeing, housing, education, employment, relationships, and community participation. At a system level, this can lower the likelihood of escalation into high-cost services and contribute to reduced lifetime demand and costs across justice, health, mental health, housing, welfare, and statutory care systems, alongside stronger long-term social and economic participation.

6. Inputs & Outputs

This section sets out the resources invested across the 54 in-scope youth work organisations used to model the sector for this review, and the outputs generated from their activities. In this SROI, inputs represent the resources used to deliver the youth work in scope, while outputs describe the direct activity and reach generated through that investment.

6.1 Description of Inputs

Identifying and valuing inputs ensures that the final SROI ratio reflects a fair comparison between what is invested and the value created.

For this analysis, the inputs fall into two main categories:

- **Financial Investment:** The financial resources used to deliver the youth work in scope, funded through contracts, grants, donations, service income and other sources. For this SROI, the value of the financial investment was estimated using the share of organisational expenditure attributable to the youth work in scope. This captures:
 - paid staff involved in delivering and supporting youth work;
 - programme delivery costs, including materials, transport, activities and events; and
 - operational and shared resources, including administration, facilities, technology, insurance and other costs needed to support delivery.
- **Volunteer and in-kind contribution:** Unpaid time from community members and other contributed resources used in delivery that were not already captured within organisational expenditure.

To estimate a representative annual input, Hands For Impact reviewed available financial and organisational information for each organisation, including expenditure, income and funding, staffing and volunteer contribution. This was drawn mainly from the Charities Services Register and supported by annual reports and other publicly available information³⁶.

Rather than relying on one financial year, we looked across recent years to understand what best represented each organisation's usual level of delivery. A three-year median was generally used to reduce the effect of one-off changes. Where this did not make

³⁶ Charities Services. (n.d.). Charities Register / Open Data.

sense, for example because an organisation had grown significantly, changed its reporting structure, or had an unusual year, the available evidence was reviewed and a different basis used.

For most organisations, the financial input was based on the share of organisational expenditure attributable to the youth work in scope. This captures the paid staff, programme delivery, administration, facilities and other resources required for delivery. Volunteer and in-kind contribution was added where it represented an additional resource not already included in the accounts.

Not all organisational activity fell within the scope of this SROI. Where needed, the financial basis was adjusted to reflect the proportion relating to youth work, taiohi aged 12–24, and other relevant scope boundaries. We also checked for double counting, including where funding, staffing or organisational reporting overlapped.

All values were converted to 2025 NZ dollars so that financial information from different years could be compared consistently.

Table 6: Inputs Summary

Type	Description	Annual Value (\$)
Financial resources attributable to youth work in scope	Paid staff, programme delivery, administration, facilities, transport, technology and other operating resources used to deliver the youth work in scope	\$132,392,131
Volunteer and in-kind contribution	Eligible unpaid time and other contributed resources used in delivery that were not already captured within organisational expenditure	\$3,511,506
Total annual input	Total resources included in the SROI input	\$135,903,637

The total represents a representative annual level of resources across the 54 organisations modelled, expressed in 2025 NZ dollars. Volunteer and in-kind contribution accounts for approximately 2.6% of the total input value.

6.2 Description of Outputs

Activities are what organisations deliver using the resource described above. Outputs are the direct results of those activities such as programmes delivered, sessions or contacts, participations and taiohi reached.

The 54 organisations in scope for this model deliver youth work in a variety of ways. This includes school-based youth work, mentoring, youth hubs, health and counselling, care and transition support, education and employment pathways, advocacy, recreation, creative activities, leadership, faith-based youth work, and culturally grounded programmes. These activities are described in more detail in Section 3.5.

Establishing a consistent reach measure

Outputs are the direct, countable results of those activities. Organisations report their outputs in different ways. Some report the number of individual taiohi they work with, while others report engagements, attendances, contacts or programme participations. These figures cannot be treated as directly comparable because the same taiohi may take part or receive support more than once.

For this reason, the common output used in the sector model is a modeled estimate of the number of individual taiohi aged 12–24, with repeat participants removed within each organisation where the available data allowed.

- where an organisation reported a clear number of individual taiohi, this was used and adjusted to the age or activity scope where needed;
- where only engagements, attendances or participations were available, these were converted into unique reach using the available organisation-level evidence and comparable delivery models; and
- low, base and high estimates were developed where unique reach needed to be modelled.

Table 7: Output summary

Output	Representative annual estimate
Estimated unique taiohi aged 12–24 reached	270,481
Low-high reach range	226,346–318,044

The modelled base reach is the starting point for the outcome quantity model. It does not assume that every taiohi reached experiences every outcome. Section 7.1 explains how the base reach was narrowed to the taiohi likely to be involved in activities relevant to each outcome before an incidence estimate was applied.

Because the available information is reported at organisation level and there are no shared identifiers across the sector, the same taiohi may be represented in the reach of more than one organisation where they accessed multiple services. While this limits the precision of the sector reach estimate, accessing multiple services can also reflect taiohi receiving complementary support across the sector.

7. Measuring Change / Outcomes

The section explains how outcomes were measured, including the data used, how many people experienced change, and the depth of change experienced, ensuring the impact story is transparent, accurate, and credible.

7.1 Evidencing Outcomes

The quantity for each outcome is a modelled estimate of the number of taiohi likely to experience that outcome across the in-scope youth work sector. Because consistent data is not collected across organisations, quantities were estimated using a structured assigned reach approach rather than applying each outcome to the full reach of every organisation.

The estimation was informed by three evidence inputs:

1. **Organisation, activity and reach mapping**, using sector mapping of in-scope youth work organisations and publicly available information about each organisation's activities, delivery model, target groups and available estimates of the number of taiohi worked with.
2. **Taiohi evidence**, including which outcomes were experienced and how commonly they appeared in the qualitative and survey material.
3. **Working Group and practitioner feedback**, including practitioner expectations about which outcomes youth workers would reasonably expect for the taiohi they support.

These evidence inputs were applied through structured modelling judgement that considered activity intensity, likely duration of support, participant acuity and the strength of the pathway between each activity context and outcome.

From organisational reach to outcome-relevant reach

The starting point for the quantity calculation was the estimated annual reach of each organisation described in Section 6.2.

However, organisational reach could not be applied directly to every outcome. As an organisation may work with thousands of taiohi, but not every taiohi will experience every change and between organisations different activities or forms of support contribute more strongly to a particular change.

Noting this each organisation was mapped against the activity and service delivery contexts represented within its delivery, for this model these included broadly:

- school-based youth work/in-school support;
- mentoring/relational youth development;
- faith-based/pastoral youth programmes; care, accommodation and transition support;
- justice/supported bail/reintegration support;
- youth health/YOSS/counselling/therapeutic support;
- alternative education, employment and transition pathways;
- whānau/family support work;
- advocacy/systems navigation;
- youth hub/community-based youth work;
- sport, recreation, camps and activity-based youth development;
- creative arts/media-based youth development;
- leadership, youth voice and peer-led programmes;
- cultural identity/kaupapa Māori/Pasifika programmes.

These activity contexts were then mapped to the outcomes they were most likely to contribute to. For example, relational, school-based, youth hub, faith-based, recreation, creative, leadership and cultural identity activities were more strongly linked to outcomes such as relationships, belonging, positive community contribution, sense of self, wairua/spiritual wellbeing and life direction.

More targeted or higher intensity contexts, such as youth health, counselling, therapeutic support, care and transition support, justice/reintegration support, advocacy, systems navigation, AOD-related support and intensive casework, were more strongly linked to outcome pathways in wellbeing and safety outcomes, including personal stability, reduced suicidal harm and increased will to live, everyday needs and financial or material wellbeing.

For each organisation-outcome combination, the estimated organisation reach was narrowed to the proportion of taiohi considered likely to be involved in activities capable of contributing to that outcome.

This produced an assigned reach percentage, with caps applied where appropriate to prevent broad organisational reach, light-touch engagement or activities with only an indirect pathway to an outcome from generating implausibly large quantities.

Estimating incidence within outcome-relevant reach

The second part of our model recognised that being exposed to an activity or form of support capable of contributing to an outcome does not mean that every taiohi will experience that change. To account for this, an incidence percentage was applied to estimate the proportion of taiohi within that assigned reach who would reasonably be expected to experience the outcome.

Incidence judgements considered:

- the strength of the activity-to-outcome pathway;
- the nature and intensity of engagement;
- the likely period over which engagement occurred;
- patterns evident in the qualitative taiohi evidence; and
- practitioner expectations about the likelihood of change.

These inputs were used to produce a gross modelled incidence for each organisation-outcome combination. Gross incidence was then subject to an outcome-specific maximum, after which an outcome-specific realisation factor was applied to produce the final incidence used in the quantity calculation. The realisation factor is a conservative calibration within the quantity model and is applied once; it is not an additional incidence estimate.

The calculation was:

Base reach × assigned reach % × final incidence % = estimated quantity experiencing the outcome

WORKED EXAMPLE

Organisation 12 reported an annual reach of 5,700 taiohi. The organisation was mapped to youth health/YOSS and advocacy and systems-navigation activities, which provide direct pathways to practical and material support (among others). Based on this activity mapping and the assigned-reach controls applied within the model, 35.4% of its reported reach (approximately 2,018 taiohi) was estimated to be involved in support capable of contributing to improved ability to meet everyday needs.

A gross incidence estimate of 69.4% was produced. This reflected the strength of the activity-to-outcome pathway, the targeted nature and intensity of the support, and the wider taiohi and practitioner evidence about the likelihood of this change occurring. This was below the 75% maximum for this outcome. Applying the 80% realisation factor produced a final incidence of 55.52% (55.5% rounded).

5,700 × 35.4% × 55.5% = 1,120 taiohi (rounded) assigned to improved ability to meet every day needs.

The model therefore estimates that approximately 1,120 taiohi within this organisation's annual reach would experience a material improvement in their ability to meet everyday needs.

This distinction between assigned reach and incidence was important.

Assigned reach asks: Who is realistically exposed to an activity or form of support likely to contribute to this outcome?

Incidence asks: Of those taiohi, how many would reasonably be expected to experience the outcome?

This avoids applying a uniform outcome rate across organisations delivering materially different forms of youth work. It also reduces the risk of over-claiming by ensuring that quantities reflect the activities organisations actually deliver, the taiohi likely to be exposed to relevant outcome pathways, and the proportion of those taiohi reasonably expected to experience each outcome. Once incidence has been applied, the resulting quantity therefore represents the estimated number of taiohi who experience the outcome. This is distinct from depth, which considers the amount of change experienced among those for whom the outcome occurs.

Measuring the Depth of Change

To inform depth, a Taiohi Outcomes Survey was undertaken with 10 taiohi aged 12–24 to provide direct stakeholder evidence about the amount of change experienced through youth work. For each material outcome, taiohi were provided with a plain-language description of the change and asked how much of that change they had experienced, using a four-point scale:

0 – Not at all

1 – A little bit

2 – Quite a lot

3 – A lot

Depth was calculated among respondents who reported experiencing at least some of the outcome. The average for those respondents was divided by the maximum possible score of three and expressed as a percentage:

Average reported change among respondents experiencing the outcome ÷ 3 = depth

This treatment maintains the distinction between incidence and depth within the model. Incidence already estimates the proportion of outcome-relevant taiohi who are expected to experience the outcome. Responses of “Not at all” were retained within the stakeholder evidence as an indication that the respondent did not experience that particular outcome. They were not, however, included in the calculation of depth.

This is because non-occurrence is already represented separately through the incidence component of the quantity model. Including them as zero within depth would cause the measure to partly reflect non-occurrence as well as magnitude of change, creating an overlap between the incidence and depth adjustments, effectively discounting for non-occurrence twice.

Table 8: Depth Calculations and Evidence Basis

Outcome	Depth (%)	Basis
Stronger network of positive relationships	86.7%	Taiohi Outcomes Survey
Positive community contribution	80%	Taiohi Outcomes Survey
Stronger sense of belonging (Tūrangawaewae)	80%	Taiohi Outcomes Survey
Reduced risk of suicidal harm – acute suicidal risk subgroup	83.3%	Taiohi survey measure of improved ability to keep self safe when mental distress escalates
Reduced risk of suicidal harm – strengthened mental resilience subgroup	83.3%	Taiohi survey measure of improved ability to keep self safe when mental distress escalates
Increased personal stability – reduced risky behaviour subgroup	70.8%	Taiohi Outcomes Survey

Increased personal stability – reduced harmful behaviour subgroup	70.8%	Taiohi Outcomes Survey
Expanded education and employment pathways	75%	Taiohi survey measure of greater financial security and wellbeing, defined in the survey through engagement in education, training, work and future pathways supporting income, independence and choice
Improved ability to meet everyday needs	76.2%	Taiohi survey measure of improved material stability
Stronger connection to cultural identity – Māori/Pasifika subgroup	90%	Subgroup modelling assumption informed by triangulation
Stronger connection to cultural identity – other cultural identity subgroup	71.5%	Taiohi Outcomes Survey
Stronger sense of self	80%	Taiohi Outcomes Survey
Improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing – explicit faith or pastoral pathway	90%	Subgroup modelling assumption informed by triangulation
Improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing – Māori/Pasifika culturally grounded wairua pathway	85%	Subgroup modelling assumption informed by triangulation
Improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing – other pathways	83.3%	Taiohi Outcomes Survey
Strengthened ability to shape own life path (Whai Wāhitanga)	83.3%	Taiohi Outcomes Survey
Improved physical wellbeing	77.8%	Taiohi Outcomes Survey

Because the Taiohi Outcomes Survey involved a small sample, these percentages are treated as stakeholder-informed modelling estimates rather than statistically representative population parameters. Outcome-specific sample sizes also vary because depth is calculated among respondents reporting the relevant change.

The survey findings were triangulated against practitioner evidence from the Youth Work Impact Project survey (Appendix C) and depth estimates used for conceptually similar outcomes in previous youth work SROI analyses. These sources were used as reasonableness checks rather than to generate the survey-derived percentages directly.

15 youth workers participated in the Youth Work Impact Project survey. Collectively, respondents reported experience across a broad range of youth work populations and contexts, including urban and rural taiohi; Māori, Pasifika, Asian and migrant-background taiohi; Rainbow and Whaikaha youth; taiohi experiencing mental distress; and young people involved with care and protection and youth justice systems. Their practice also spanned community-based, school-based, cultural, mental health and wellbeing, housing and social support, youth justice and other youth work settings. The survey informed the assessment of whether the identified outcomes occur through youth work and how commonly practitioners observe those changes across the taiohi they support. Respondents also provided evidence about the expected duration of outcomes and differences in experience across particular groups and contexts.

There was notable alignment between the two sources (youth work impact survey and Rānui 135 and Tararua Community Youth Services SROI reports). Relational and developmental outcomes such as stronger sense of self, belonging and positive relationships were among those practitioners considered most commonly experienced through youth work and were also associated with relatively high depth scores in the Taiohi Outcomes Survey. Outcomes relating to financial and material circumstances, cultural identity and wairua were considered more dependent on the needs, identity and context of individual taiohi. This supported the use of more differentiated modelling for these outcomes rather than assuming that the same depth applies to all taiohi.

The findings were also compared with depth estimates used for conceptually similar outcomes in the SROI analyses conducted for the youth organisations Rānui 135 and Tararua Community Youth Services. Comparable Rānui 135 outcomes used depth estimates between approximately 84% and 95%, including 95% for greater network of support, 94% for belonging, 91% for improved mental wellbeing, 84% for greater sense of self and 90% for progress in education, employment or training. Comparable TCYS outcomes generally applied depth estimates within a similar range of 82% - 96%³⁷.

³⁷ Hands for Impact. (2026). Rānui 135 SROI; Hands for Impact. (2026). Tararua Community Youth Services SROI.

For cultural identity and wairua/spiritual wellbeing, the wider evidence indicated that the significance and depth of change could differ according to identity and youth work context. Differentiated assumptions were therefore retained for Māori/Pasifika cultural identity, explicit faith or pastoral pathways, and Māori/Pasifika culturally grounded wairua pathways. These are modelling assumptions rather than statistically estimated subgroup effects and are tested through sensitivity analysis.

Table 9: Taiohi material outcomes, rationale, quantity

Note: The materiality assessment identified 12 parent outcomes. For modelling purposes, *'Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm'*, *'increased personal stability'*, *'stronger connection to cultural identity'*, and *'improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing'* have each been separated into stakeholder subgroups to reflect distinct experiences and valuation approaches identified through the evidence, resulting in 17 monetised outcome pathways.

Domain	Material Outcome	Essence	Rationale	Quantity
Relationships, belonging and community	Stronger network of positive relationships (whanaungatanga)	Whanaungatanga, I belong to people / I have people around me/Social capital	Desktop research surfaced trusted relationships, social connection, positive peer and adult support, reduced isolation, and wider support networks as recognised youth development outcomes ³⁸ . Working Group feedback reinforced the relational nature of youth work, including its role in supporting respectful, trusted relationships around taiohi and helping taiohi develop healthy, positive relationships that can continue beyond the youth work space. Taiohi voices supported this as a material outcome, with young people describing friendships, trusted adults, whānau-like or family-like support, positive influences, and people they could talk to, rely on, return to, and be supported by over time.	83,516
	Positive community contribution	I now give back and help shape things positively for other people	Desktop research surfaced positive contribution, willingness to help others, volunteering, civic/community participation, leadership, advocacy, and contribution roles as recognised youth development outcomes ³⁹ . Working Group feedback	46,202

³⁸ Bruce et al. (2025); Centre for Social Impact (2018); Weber-Sparrow (2023).

³⁹ Centre for Social Impact (2018); Deloitte Access Economics (2022).

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Note: The materiality assessment identified 12 parent outcomes. For modelling purposes, *'Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm'*, *'increased personal stability'*, *'stronger connection to cultural identity'*, and *'improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing'* have each been separated into stakeholder subgroups to reflect distinct experiences and valuation approaches identified through the evidence, resulting in 17 monetised outcome pathways.

Domain	Material Outcome	Essence	Rationale	Quantity
			reinforced youth agency and voice as core outcomes, including advocacy for others, changemaking, leadership, ownership of spaces, and contributing to community. Taiohi voices supported this where young people described moving beyond participation into helping others, leading, advocating, giving back, or shaping safer and more supportive spaces.	
	Stronger sense of belonging (Tūrangawaewae)	Tūrangawaewae/I belong to a place	Desktop research surfaced belonging, inclusion, acceptance, safe spaces, and feeling like they belonged in a community as recognised youth development outcomes. Working Group feedback reinforced that taiohi agency includes ownership of spaces, supporting the importance of youth work environments where taiohi feel respected, included, and able to be themselves. Taiohi voices supported this as a material outcome, with young people describing changes in how youth work spaces, groups, or communities became places where they felt like they were accepted, were safe to be themselves, able to participate without judgement, and describing changes of no longer being out of place or isolated, now having spaces they felt they belonged.	81,020

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Note: The materiality assessment identified 12 parent outcomes. For modelling purposes, 'Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm', 'increased personal stability', 'stronger connection to cultural identity', and 'improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing' have each been separated into stakeholder subgroups to reflect distinct experiences and valuation approaches identified through the evidence, resulting in 17 monetised outcome pathways.

Domain	Material Outcome	Essence	Rationale	Quantity
Emotional wellbeing, safety and stability	Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm <i>*Different experiences of this outcome have been identified and are reflected as separate pathways within the value map.</i>	I do not want to die anymore" Or "I have stronger reasons to stay alive and know how to get support when things get dangerous.	Desktop research surfaced reduced self-harm and suicide, reduced distress, safety from harm, and hope/future orientation as recognised youth wellbeing and safety outcomes ⁴⁰ . Working Group feedback reinforced the importance of knowing where to go in a crisis, developing willingness to seek support, and accessing relational safety when support is needed. Working Group members also identified "helping save lives" as one of the impacts of youth work. This was reflected by a subgroup of taiohi who described youth work as helping them stay alive, move away from wanting to die, find reasons to keep going, and reconnect with support and future possibility. We do however note that while youth work is not positioned as a crisis response, the relational nature of youth work means youth workers are increasingly becoming places of disclosure, and acting to connect, navigate services, and provide an additional layer of protective support for taiohi experiencing severe distress. This is increasing particularly where crisis and mental health service gaps exist to current over demands on these services in the New Zealand context.	1,546 for the acute suicidal risk subgroup 45,846 for the built mental resilience subgroup

⁴⁰ Deloitte Access Economics (2022); Wylie (2025).

Table 9: Taiohi material outcomes, rationale, quantity

Note: The materiality assessment identified 12 parent outcomes. For modelling purposes, 'Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm', 'increased personal stability', 'stronger connection to cultural identity', and 'improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing' have each been separated into stakeholder subgroups to reflect distinct experiences and valuation approaches identified through the evidence, resulting in 17 monetised outcome pathways.

Domain	Material Outcome	Essence	Rationale	Quantity
	Increased personal stability <i>*Different experiences of this outcome have been identified and are reflected as separate pathways within the value map.</i>	I am making safer choices, with less chaos and risk to myself or others.	Desktop research surfaced personal stability, reduced risky or harmful behaviour, safer decision-making, stronger routines, and more constructive daily activity as recognised youth development outcomes linked to longer-term wellbeing and reduced escalation ⁴¹ . Working Group feedback reinforced that stability and safety includes understanding safe and appropriate behaviour, respectful relationships, and the ability to navigate or advocate for safer spaces. Taiohi voices supported this, with young people describing moving away from risky or destabilising patterns, avoiding harmful influences, learning to de-escalate situations, regulating behaviour, making safer choices, and feeling on a more stable path. For a smaller group of taiohi, this change was described in higher-risk terms, where youth work helped interrupt an escalating pathway of harm, unsafe behaviour, or antisocial or justice involvement.	6,098 for reduced risky behaviour subgroup 49,998 for reduced harmful behaviour

⁴¹ Deloitte Access Economics (2022); Wylie (2025); Weber-Sparrow (2023).

Table 9: Taiohi material outcomes, rationale, quantity

Note: The materiality assessment identified 12 parent outcomes. For modelling purposes, *'Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm'*, *'increased personal stability'*, *'stronger connection to cultural identity'*, and *'improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing'* have each been separated into stakeholder subgroups to reflect distinct experiences and valuation approaches identified through the evidence, resulting in 17 monetised outcome pathways.

Domain	Material Outcome	Essence	Rationale	Quantity
Practical and material, and financial wellbeing	Expanded Education and Employment Pathways	I am on a stronger pathway toward financial security.	Desktop research surfaced education, training, employment readiness, and economic participation as recognised youth development outcomes linked to future financial security ⁴² . Working Group feedback reinforced that this extends beyond academic education to include transferable skills, soft employment skills, financial literacy, alternative pathways, talents, purpose, and direction as important foundations for taiohi long-term financial stability. Taiohi voices supported this, with young people describing tangible progress toward future financial security through youth work support for study and course engagement, identifying alternative pathways and future employment goals, and supporting job readiness, licences, work engagement, and volunteering-to-paid pathways.	20,253
	Improved ability to meet everyday needs	I can meet my day to day needs now	Desktop research surfaced material sufficiency, housing stability, access to essential resources, income stability, and capability to manage daily/adult responsibilities as recognised youth development outcomes ⁴³ . Working Group feedback	29,302

⁴² Deloitte Access Economics (2022); Weber-Sparrow (2023); Hands for Impact (2026), TCYS SROI.

⁴³ Wylie (2025); Hands for Impact (2026), Rānui 135 SROI.

Table 9: Taiohi material outcomes, rationale, quantity

Note: The materiality assessment identified 12 parent outcomes. For modelling purposes, *'Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm'*, *'increased personal stability'*, *'stronger connection to cultural identity'*, and *'improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing'* have each been separated into stakeholder subgroups to reflect distinct experiences and valuation approaches identified through the evidence, resulting in 17 monetised outcome pathways.

Domain	Material Outcome	Essence	Rationale	Quantity
			reinforced the importance of taiohi being able to navigate systems, understand support options and rights, and advocate for access for themselves and their whānau. Taiohi voices supported this in a more targeted way, with young people describing youth work support helping them access kai, manage bills, secure income support, develop practical life/admin skills, and take steps toward independence and meeting everyday needs.	
Culture, wairua, identity, and self	Stronger connection to cultural identity	I am strong because I know and am connected to where I come from	Desktop research surfaced cultural identity, connection to culture, language, beliefs, tikanga, whakapapa, place, and personal or ancestral background as recognised youth development outcomes, with broad relevance to taiohi connection to their individual cultural backgrounds, not only Māori or Pacific identity ⁴⁴ . Working Group feedback reinforced that cultural outcomes needed to include connection to whenua, whakapapa, mātauranga/tīpuna, engaging in Māori spaces, increased access to culture, and intergenerational knowledge transfer. Taiohi voices supported this for a group of	6,355 for Māori/Pasifika subgroup 7,386 for other cultural identity subgroups

⁴⁴ Bruce et al. (2025); Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust (2017); Hands for Impact (2026), Rānui 135 SROI.

Table 9: Taiohi material outcomes, rationale, quantity

Note: The materiality assessment identified 12 parent outcomes. For modelling purposes, *'Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm'*, *'increased personal stability'*, *'stronger connection to cultural identity'*, and *'improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing'* have each been separated into stakeholder subgroups to reflect distinct experiences and valuation approaches identified through the evidence, resulting in 17 monetised outcome pathways.

Domain	Material Outcome	Essence	Rationale	Quantity
			young people describing youth work as helping them reconnect with Māori, Pacific, or other cultural backgrounds, strengthen cultural practices, feel more confident in cultural spaces, and feel stronger through knowing where they come from.	
	Stronger sense of self	I know who I am/I am stronger in who I am	Desktop research surfaced self-belief, confidence, self-acceptance, clearer identity, strengths, values, purpose, and authentic self-expression as recognised youth development outcomes ⁴⁵ . Taiohi evidence supported this as a distinct outcome where young people described becoming more confident in themselves, understanding their strengths or value more clearly, shifting how they saw themselves, feeling more able to be themselves, and expressing themselves more authentically.	73,676
	Improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing	I feel more spiritually grounded, settled, or connected	Desktop research surfaced holistic wellbeing, including spiritual health, and recognised faith based/community support and spiritual dimensions of wellbeing as relevant youth work-influenced outcomes for some taiohi, especially those	3,621 for faith/pastoral pathway subgroup

⁴⁵ Bruce et al. (2025); Centre for Social Impact (2018); Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust (2017).

Table 9: Taiohi material outcomes, rationale, quantity

Note: The materiality assessment identified 12 parent outcomes. For modelling purposes, *'Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm'*, *'increased personal stability'*, *'stronger connection to cultural identity'*, and *'improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing'* have each been separated into stakeholder subgroups to reflect distinct experiences and valuation approaches identified through the evidence, resulting in 17 monetised outcome pathways.

Domain	Material Outcome	Essence	Rationale	Quantity
			involved in spiritual or cultural based activities. Working Group feedback reinforced that, for some taiohi, wairua or spiritual connection and wellbeing, both religious and cultural, were important dimensions of change, and that the outcomes framework needed to expand to reflect this. Taiohi voices supported this, with a subgroup describing faith, church, wairua, or spiritually grounded youth work support, and linking this to spiritually connected changes in belief, grounding, and how they understood or lived their lives.	7,982 for Māori/Pasifika subgroup 11,497 for other wairua/spiritual wellbeing pathways
Agency, aspirations and future direction	Strengthened ability to shape own life path (Whai Wāhitanga)	I can steer my own waka.	Desktop research surfaced agency, voice, self-determination, aspirations, goal-setting, advocacy, leadership, and future direction as recognised youth development outcomes, including confidence where it supported taiohi to make decisions, shape pathways, speak up, and act toward self-defined goals ⁴⁶ . Working Group feedback reinforced youth agency and voice as core outcomes, particularly advocacy for self, having a say in decisions affecting them, and strengthened ability to make choices and influence their own direction. Taiohi voices	56,050

⁴⁶ Centre for Social Impact (2018); Ministry of Youth Development (2023).

Table 9: Taiohi material outcomes, rationale, quantity

Note: The materiality assessment identified 12 parent outcomes. For modelling purposes, *'Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm'*, *'increased personal stability'*, *'stronger connection to cultural identity'*, and *'improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing'* have each been separated into stakeholder subgroups to reflect distinct experiences and valuation approaches identified through the evidence, resulting in 17 monetised outcome pathways.

Domain	Material Outcome	Essence	Rationale	Quantity
			supported this as a material outcome, with young people describing youth work as helping them find their voice, make choices, speak up for themselves, identify what they wanted, set goals, pursue new pathways, and take more active ownership over the direction of their lives.	
Physical Wellbeing	Improved physical wellbeing	I feel physically healthier, stronger, and more capable	Desktop research surfaced improved physical health, increased activity, healthier routines, reduced smoking, vaping or drinking, and physical capability as recognised youth development outcomes linked to wellbeing and hauora ⁴⁷ . Taiohi voices supported this with some young people describing increased physical activity, healthier routines, improved sleep, reduced smoking, vaping or drinking, improved fitness or endurance, and greater care for their bodies. This was particularly evident for some tāngata whaikaha, who highlighted improved physical capability and fitness as a meaningful outcome.	44,221

⁴⁷ Bruce et al. (2025); Deloitte Access Economics (2022); Wylie (2025).

7.2 Limitations & Future Considerations

We acknowledge that our sample size for the Qualitative Taiohi Engagement and Quantitative Taiohi Outcomes Survey is small at 35 taiohi for qualitative engagement and 10 taiohi for the quantitative survey, and that without a quantitative survey of the broader taiohi population, the analysis cannot claim statistical representation of all taiohi engaged in youth work. Outcomes Validation Survey findings are presented transparently as indicative evidence grounded in qualitative data, and compared against the feedback from Working Group participants and the prior SROI studies conducted for Rānui 135 and Tararua Youth Community Services.

Future Consideration:

Outcome tracking could be embedded into existing organisational systems and processes. This would allow youth workers to record the data as they observe and hear it from the youth.

8. Valuing Change / Outcomes

In SROI, valuation (sometimes called monetisation) is the process of assigning a financial proxy, a dollar value, to outcomes that do not have a market price. The purpose of valuation is not to reduce people or their experiences to money, but to make the importance of outcomes visible in a language that decision-makers and funders understand. Valuation allows outcomes to be compared to one another and ensures that the analysis reflects the value stakeholders place on change⁴⁸.

In this analysis, financial proxies were identified using the following valuation techniques.

- **Revealed Preference:** Using the cost of an equivalent service or programme that could deliver the same outcome (e.g., a leadership camp for confidence and identity)
- **Wellbeing Valuation:** Drawing on large datasets (e.g., Treasury CBAX) that assign monetary values to outcomes like confidence, belonging, or resilience.

What are financial proxies?

A financial proxy is the stand-in dollar value used to represent an outcome where no market price exists. In SROI, the proxy reflects the value the stakeholder experiencing the change places on the outcome. Proxies can be informed directly through stakeholder feedback or indirectly through research and datasets. Credible proxies are those that:

- Have been used in previous SROI studies or government reporting.
- Are backed by independent, transparent data sources.
- Are conservative and realistic.

8.1 Identifying Financial Proxies

For this analysis, financial proxies were identified using a systematic process guided by SROI standards and adapted for the Aotearoa youth development context. For each material outcome, we asked: *"What's the real-world value of this change, and what dollar equivalent could reasonably stand in for it?"*

The process involved:

⁴⁸ Nicholls et al. (2012). A Guide to Social Return on Investment.

- Drawing on proxies already tested in previous youth development SROI reports (Hfl outcomes database).
- Reviewing government datasets and publicly available unit costs.
- Considering market prices for equivalent services or programmes.
- Prioritising NZ-specific data first, followed by wellbeing valuation, and then international proxies only where no local alternative was available.
- Selecting conservative and reasonable proxies to ensure credibility / not overclaim.

Each chosen proxy is described with its rationale in the valuation table below⁴⁹.

⁴⁹ CBAX values used in this table are drawn from The Treasury CBAX Spreadsheet Model. The Treasury. (2025). CBAX Spreadsheet Model

Table 10: Valuation technique and proxy rationale by outcome

Domain	Material Outcome	Valuation technique and proxy	Rationale
Relationships, belonging and community	Stronger network of positive relationships (Whanaungatanga)	Technique: Wellbeing valuation Proxy: \$3,455 Source: CBAX row 189, reduced loneliness	The CBAX reduced-loneliness value represents the benefit of developing trusted friends, adults and whānau-like support. Taiohi evidence describes gaining people they can talk to, rely on and spend time with, which is the type of relational change captured by the loneliness scale. The value is annual and should be applied only where a material improvement in the availability or quality of positive relationships is evidenced.
	Positive community contribution	Technique: Wellbeing valuation Proxy: \$3,146 Source: CBAX row 182, member of a volunteering group (general population)	The CBAX value for membership of a volunteering group is used as a wellbeing proxy for the personal value taiohi experience from contributing to others and participating in collective activity. It aligns with accounts of volunteering, leading, advocating, role-modelling and giving back. The proxy captures the benefit to the taiohi from purposeful participation and contribution.
	Stronger sense of belonging (Tūrangawaewae)	Technique: Wellbeing valuation + Replacement cost (revealed preference) Proxy: $\$3,455 + \$589 = \$4,044$ Technique: Wellbeing valuation	The reduced-loneliness value is used as a wellbeing analogue for moving from feeling isolated or out of place to feeling accepted, safe and part of a group, place or community. The YMCA concession membership is representative of the connection to a physical place or safe space the taiohi is part of. This aligns with taiohi

Table 10: Valuation technique and proxy rationale by outcome

Domain	Material Outcome	Valuation technique and proxy	Rationale
		Proxy: \$3,455 Source: CBAX row 189, reduced loneliness Technique: Replacement cost (revealed preference) Proxy: 50% of \$1,179 = \$589 Source: Value of an annual concession membership to YMCA https://www.ymcanorth.org.nz/assets/Pricing-and-Facilities-Auckland-Membership.pdf	accounts of having a place to go, being able to be themselves and feeling part of something. We have apportioned 50% of the value of that membership to discount the value of the facilities and physical benefits of a gym.
Emotional wellbeing, safety and stability	Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm - Acute suicidal risk subgroup	Technique: Statistical life-year / DALY valuation Proxy: \$56,735 Source: Half point value of central estimate CBAX row 158 Value of a Statistical Life Year (VOSLY \$123,335) x Sapere 2025 Calculation for avoided loss of a healthy life year. Disability weight for a non-fatal suicide attempt 0.46 x VOSLY \$123,335 = \$56,734	A wellbeing valuation based on the avoided health burden of a non-fatal suicide attempt was selected for the acute suicidality subgroup. This subgroup represents taiohi for whom there was credible evidence of acute suicidal risk and where youth work made a material contribution to helping the taiohi remain safe, reconnect with support, or move away from acting on suicidal intent. This is materially different from the broader subgroup of taiohi who experienced increased hope, stronger reasons for living, or less frequent or intense suicidal thoughts without evidence

Table 10: Valuation technique and proxy rationale by outcome

Domain	Material Outcome	Valuation technique and proxy	Rationale
			that a suicide attempt was likely or imminent. The financial proxy was drawn from Sapere’s 2025 Social Return on Investment analysis of the 1737 Need to Talk? mental health support service. Sapere valued an avoided non-fatal suicide attempt by applying a disability weight of 0.46 to the New Zealand Value of a Statistical Life Year of \$116,474.89⁵⁰. We have applied the same calculation to the current as at Oct 2025 CBAx VOSLY of \$123,335. The disability weight represents an estimated loss of 46% of one year of healthy life associated with a non-fatal suicide attempt. The proxy therefore represents the value of avoiding this one-year loss of health and wellbeing. The Sapere valuation was considered relevant because it was developed in an Aotearoa New Zealand mental health and suicide-prevention context and included people presenting with high-risk distress, suicidal thoughts and emergency support needs. Although youth work is not positioned as a crisis intervention, evidence

⁵⁰ Ohrnberger, J., Yee, D., & Moore, D. (2025). Measuring the Social Return on Investment of the 1737 Need to Talk? Mental Health Support Line. Sapere.

Table 10: Valuation technique and proxy rationale by outcome

Domain	Material Outcome	Valuation technique and proxy	Rationale
			from taiohi and the Working Group indicates that youth workers can become trusted people to whom severe distress and suicidality are disclosed. Their role may include strengthening immediate safety, maintaining connection, supporting safety planning, involving appropriate whānau or trusted adults, and navigating access to specialist or emergency services.
	Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm - Built mental resilience subgroup	Technique: Revealed Preference Proxy: Cost of counselling/youth mentoring (1 hour per week x 40 weeks @ \$120 per hour) = \$4,800 P.A Source: https://teencounselling.co.nz	This proxy is a suitable representation of the ability to keep self safe and maintain mental resilience that is created through the consistent relational support, safe spaces and trusted relationships that remain available to taiohi during crisis and low periods by engaging in youth work. The average cost of youth counselling reflects sustained one-to-one professional support that could help a young person build coping, emotional-regulation, help-seeking and safety strategies. The time attributed accounts for planned one-on-one support, unplanned drop-in time, and group mentoring and learning sessions.
	Increased personal stability - Reduced risky behaviour subgroup	Technique: Wellbeing valuation Proxy: \$1,692 + \$1,469 Source: CBAX 184 Health Mental health (0-100 scale) (general	The CBAX mental-health value assigns an annual wellbeing value to a one-point improvement on a 0-100 mental-health scale. It reflects a shift in the mental state of the taiohi as they reported more improved emotional

Table 10: Valuation technique and proxy rationale by outcome

Domain	Material Outcome	Valuation technique and proxy	Rationale
		population) + 20% of CBAX row 242 WELLBY: one point change in life satisfaction (0-10) scale - low	regulation, stronger coping abilities and a more supportive structure or daily routine. We have also included an apportioned WELLBY proxy for change in life satisfaction to represent the improvement to the wellbeing of the taiohi as they disengage from risky or harmful behaviours and feel an overall sense that life feels more settled, safer, and on a better path. <i>"Before I started in (programme), I was smoking weed and doing a lot of other stuff... pretty much from the first or second lesson, I quit smoking it... changed quite a bit throughout that time... that was one of the big reasons that I stopped as well."</i>
	Increased personal stability - Reduced harmful behaviour subgroup	Technique: Wellbeing valuation Proxy: \$1,692 + \$734 Source: CBAX 184 Health Mental health (0-100 scale) (general population) + 10% of CBAX row 242 WELLBY: one point change in life satisfaction (0-10) scale - low	
Practical and material, and financial wellbeing	Expanded Education and Employment Pathways	Technique: Wellbeing valuation Proxy: \$2,958 Source: CBAX rows 114 and 110: Level 4-6 certificate/diploma income less no-qualification income	The \$2,958 proxy is the calculated difference between the CBAX 2026-adjusted average annual income for a Level 4-6 certificate or diploma (\$69,524) and no qualification (\$66,566). It represents the incremental earnings associated with higher qualification attainment and aligns with taiohi who described being more engaged in school, completing relevant courses or moving into qualification-linked employment pathways. <i>"I needed to be in some sort of schooling and I knew I didn't fit in at school, so that was my next option. But yeah, you helped me with my goals... I've gotten way further than I thought I would with your help. I've got my licence, I've completed my course level one and two. And I'm planning to</i>

Table 10: Valuation technique and proxy rationale by outcome

Domain	Material Outcome	Valuation technique and proxy	Rationale
			<i>go into another course with guidance as well."</i>
	Improved ability to meet everyday needs	Technique: Revealed Preference Proxy: \$19,326 Source: Living wage @ 15 hours per week (part-time employment). Living Wage Movement Aotearoa New Zealand; Inland Revenue PAYE rates and ACC earners' levy	The financial proxy represents the value of an increase in income or income-equivalent resources that strengthens a young person's ability to meet recurring everyday needs. Youth work may contribute to this change by supporting taiohi to access employment, secure the income assistance or entitlements available to them, resolve administrative barriers, develop financial capability, or advocate for safer and more stable material circumstances. The proxy is based on 15 hours of paid work per week at the 2025/26 New Zealand Living Wage of \$28.95 per hour. This produces gross annual earnings of \$22,581 and estimated net annual income of approximately \$19,326, after income tax and the ACC earners' levy and excluding KiwiSaver and student-loan deductions⁵¹. Fifteen hours per week has been selected as a conservative part-time assumption that recognises that many taiohi may also be participating in education, training, caregiving or other developmental activities. The selected proxy sits below the estimated cost of fully

⁵¹ Living Wage Movement Aotearoa New Zealand (2025); Inland Revenue. (n.d.). Tax Rates for Individuals; Inland Revenue. (n.d.). ACC Earners' Levy Rates.

Table 10: Valuation technique and proxy rationale by outcome

Domain	Material Outcome	Valuation technique and proxy	Rationale
			meeting core expenses in shared accommodation. It is therefore interpreted as a conservative value for an improved ability to meet everyday needs, rather than as evidence that a young person can meet all living costs or live independently. It reflects increased material stability, reduced immediate financial pressure and greater practical autonomy, including a reduced need to rely on unsafe, unstable or controlling relationships for access to essentials.
Culture, wairua, identity, and self	Stronger connection to cultural identity	Technique: Wellbeing valuation Proxy: \$4,354 Source: CBAX row 187, cultural expression (0-5 scale) (general population)	The CBAX cultural-expression value estimates the annual wellbeing benefit associated with a one-point improvement on a 0-5 cultural-expression scale. It aligns with taiohi becoming more connected to culture, language, whakapapa, whenua, beliefs and cultural practices, and feeling more confident participating in cultural spaces.
	Stronger sense of self	Technique: Revealed preference Proxy: $25\% \times \$4,198 = \$1,050$ Source: Outward Bound one-week course for ages 16-18 https://www.outwardbound.co.nz/courses/one-week-teen	The one-week Outward Bound course is used as a market-based replacement-cost because its stated outcomes include a stronger sense of identity, exploration of values, attitudes and strengths, increased self-belief, clearer direction and greater purpose. These closely match the changes described by taiohi. The full \$4,198 course fee also supports resilience, leadership,

Table 10: Valuation technique and proxy rationale by outcome

Domain	Material Outcome	Valuation technique and proxy	Rationale
			teamwork, relationships and physical challenge, so only 25% (\$1,050) is allocated to reflect the elements of the programme that contribute to a stronger sense of self.
	Improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing	Technique: Wellbeing valuation Proxy: \$4,354 Source: CBAX row 187, cultural expression (0-5 scale) (general population)	The CBAX cultural-expression value is the closest available wellbeing analogue for the value of becoming more grounded in wairua, connected to te taiao, whakapapa or a wider sense of meaning. However, wairua is broader than cultural expression, so the proxy is considered a partial best fit.
Agency, aspirations and future direction	Strengthened ability to shape own life path (Whai Wāhitanga)	Technique: Wellbeing valuation Proxy: $25\% \times \$7,343 = \$1,836$ Source: CBAX row 242, WELLBY one-point change in life satisfaction - midpoint	The low WELLBY measure values a full one-point annual increase in life satisfaction at \$7,343. Because the ability to shape one's own life path is one contributor to life satisfaction rather than the whole of wellbeing, 25% (\$1,836) is used as a conservative apportioned value. This aligns with taiohi gaining voice, self-determination, decision-making ability, goal-setting and ownership of their future direction.
Physical wellbeing	Improved physical wellbeing	Technique: Wellbeing valuation Proxy: \$1,291 Source: CBAX row 240, young people physically active at Ministry of Health guidelines	The CBAX proxy represents the annual wellbeing benefit for young people aged 5-17 who meet the Ministry of Health physical-activity guideline of at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity each day. It aligns with taiohi reporting increased activity, fitness, strength,

Table 10: Valuation technique and proxy rationale by outcome			
Domain	Material Outcome	Valuation technique and proxy	Rationale
			endurance and healthier routines. <i>"Taha tinana, going for walks, going outside, been more active."</i> <i>"So sports, having a little routine change of environment, whether it's inside or outside, is making me feel good and keeping active."</i>

8.2 Limitations & Future Considerations

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of valuation within this SROI analysis. Financial proxies are estimates rather than exact market values and, in some cases, directly comparable values were not available for the outcomes identified by taiohi. Where this occurred, the closest available independent proxies were selected and, where appropriate, apportioned or combined to reflect only the relevant elements of the outcome. This approach sought to apply financial proxies conservatively while retaining a reasonable representation of the change experienced.

A specific limitation is the use of the same CBAX wellbeing proxy across more than one material outcome. CBAX row 189, reduced loneliness, is used for both a stronger network of positive relationships and, as one component of, a stronger sense of belonging (Tūrangawaewae). These are related but distinct changes, the former reflects access to supportive people, while Tūrangawaewae reflects having a recognised place within a group, space or community. To better represent this place-based dimension, the Tūrangawaewae proxy also incorporates an apportioned YMCA membership value.

Similarly, CBAX row 187, cultural expression, is used for both stronger connection to cultural identity and improved wairua or spiritual wellbeing. These outcomes were separately identified and evidenced through stakeholder engagement. Cultural identity relates to connection with culture, while wairua relates to spiritual grounding, meaning, mauri, faith or spirituality, and alignment with personal values. Cultural expression was the closest available CBAX analogue for both changes, although it is recognised as only a partial representation of wairua. Using the same proxy does not in itself mean the same outcome has been counted twice, as each proxy is applied to a separately defined and evidenced change. However, the limited availability of suitable Aotearoa-specific proxies, particularly for culturally grounded, relational and spiritual outcomes, remains an important limitation.

Future Consideration:

Future studies could strengthen valuation by developing and testing youth-specific financial proxies for these outcomes, using larger-scale stakeholder valuation exercises, and further developing a youth relevant social-value proxy database capable of representing culturally grounded concepts such as Tūrangawaewae, cultural identity and wairua.

9. Establishing Impact

Establishing impact is a critical step in SROI because it reduces the risk of over-claiming and ensures that the value reported is credible and defensible. It requires demonstrating which outcomes are genuinely attributable to the organisation's activities, rather than the result of other influences. To do this, four filters are applied to financial proxies: counterfactual (what would have happened anyway), attribution (the contribution of other people or services), displacement (whether benefits came at the expense of others), and duration/drop-off (how long the change is expected to last and whether it fades over time). Together, these adjustments provide a more accurate picture of the net value created⁵². The assumptions behind each filter were informed by stakeholder reflections.

9.1 Counterfactual

Counterfactual reflects the proportion of change that would have happened anyway without the involvement of youth work. To understand this, taiohi were asked during qualitative interviews "what might have happened without this service?" The answers then informed the rationale for the applied counterfactual filter which is displayed in the table below.

Table 11: Counterfactual discount classification and decision criteria

Classification	Counterfactual discount	Decision criteria
None	0%	Evidence indicates the observed change would essentially not have occurred within the relevant period without youth work.
Low	5–25%	Some change would probably have occurred anyway, but the majority of the observed change is related to engagement with youth work.
Moderate	30–50%	A material proportion would probably have occurred anyway; youth work however substantially increased, strengthened or accelerated the change.
High	55–75%	Most of the observed change would probably have occurred anyway; youth work made an identifiable but smaller incremental contribution.

⁵² Nicholls et al. (2012). A Guide to Social Return on Investment.

Very high	80–100%	Nearly all of the observed change would probably have occurred anyway; little of the outcome is additional to youth work.
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Table 12: Estimated counterfactual discount and rationale

Domain	Material Outcome	Counterfactual Discount (%)	Rationale
Relationships, belonging and community	Stronger network of positive relationships (Whanaungatanga)	25%	A 25% counterfactual discount has been applied because the qualitative evidence suggests that some positive relationship development may have occurred through existing family, peer, school, sport and community networks without youth work engagement. However, taiohi repeatedly described youth work spaces as accelerating access to trusted, supportive relationships. One taiohi described the youth worker as “someone that you trust to, like, talk to,” while another described programme relationships shifting from not talking to becoming “good mates” and “brothers”.
	Positive community contribution	25%	A 25% counterfactual discount has been applied because some community participation may have occurred through structured activities hosted by other networks the taiohi might engage with e.g. school, faith based centres, sports. However, youth work appears to have created intentional opportunities for taiohi to move from participation into contribution, including event organisation, mentoring, volunteering, leadership and supporting younger people. One taiohi described moving from being “a student” to becoming “a leader and... role model for the new boys”.
	Stronger sense of belonging (Tūrangawaewae)	20%	A 20% counterfactual discount has been applied because some sense of belonging may have developed naturally through peers, sport, whānau, faith based centres or school environments. However, the

Table 12: Estimated counterfactual discount and rationale

Domain	Material Outcome	Counterfactual Discount (%)	Rationale
			qualitative evidence indicates that youth work provided a distinctive relational space where taiohi felt accepted, safe and cared for. Taiohi described youth workers “showing up” as evidence that they cared, and described the value of being able to speak with someone who would not judge them.
Emotional wellbeing, safety and stability	Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm - Acute suicidal risk subgroup	30%	A 30% counterfactual discount has been applied because there are clinical support services dedicated to this outcome that taiohi can access however qualitative reflections indicated these services were often already operating at capacity and the trusted relationships established through youth work were better able to provide that first initial connection point for taiohi to feel safe reaching out for support. Qualitative reflections from taiohi indicated youth work played a significant role in this outcome for them, “I wouldn’t be here today without... the space here” and “you guys have saved my life in times”. A moderate counterfactual is retained to avoid overclaiming, recognising that family, other organisations, crisis services or personal protective factors provide much needed support.
	Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm - Built mental resilience subgroup	30%	A 30% counterfactual discount has been applied because some development of coping capacity and resilience may occur with age, family support, school support or other mental health services. However, the qualitative evidence shows that youth work provided trusted adults, practical support, safe spaces, referrals and repeated

Table 12: Estimated counterfactual discount and rationale

Domain	Material Outcome	Counterfactual Discount (%)	Rationale
			opportunities to practise emotional regulation. Taiohi described having a consistent place to go for support and being helped to connect with further support when needed.
	Increased personal stability - Reduced risky behaviour subgroup	20%	A 20% counterfactual discount has been applied because some reduction in risky behaviour may have occurred through maturation, changing peer groups, school expectations, sport commitments, faith based or family support. However, youth work appears to have materially shifted trajectories away from unsafe behaviour. One taiohi described a “complete turnaround” from partying, drinking and spending time with peers involved in shoplifting, while another said the programme “steered me away” from going down the wrong track.
	Increased personal stability - Reduced harmful behaviour subgroup	20%	A 20% counterfactual discount has been applied because some change in harmful behaviours may have occurred as taiohi matured or through family, school, sport, faith or other support systems. However, the discount remains low because taiohi linked youth work to sustained emotional support, de-escalation, communication, safer decision-making and stepping away from harmful influences. The youth worker provides an important point of safe disclosure and support for the taiohi. One taiohi described the change as “very small and slow,” suggesting the outcome required sustained support rather than occurring automatically.

Table 12: Estimated counterfactual discount and rationale

Domain	Material Outcome	Counterfactual Discount (%)	Rationale
Practical and material, and financial wellbeing	Expanded Education and Employment Pathways	35%	A 35% counterfactual discount has been applied because education, employment and training outcomes are influenced by multiple systems outside youth work, including schools, training providers, employers, whānau, benefit systems and the young person's own effort. However, youth work contributed by improving direction, confidence, attendance, goal-setting and engagement. One taiohi said that without support, achieving some milestones "would have taken a lot longer," including getting a driver's licence and progressing toward employment. This indicates it is moderately likely the outcome would have happened but guidance and support had played a significant role in the taiohi having already achieved those outcomes.
	Improved ability to meet everyday needs	30%	A 30% counterfactual discount has been applied because some improvement in everyday material needs may have occurred through benefit entitlements, employment, family support or other services. However, youth work appears to have helped taiohi navigate these systems and convert eligibility into practical stability. One taiohi described youth payment as enabling them "to support myself" and no longer feel "under those people's control," while also noting youth worker guidance and advocacy was important in navigating the process.
Culture, wairua, identity, and self	Stronger connection to cultural identity	20%	A 20% counterfactual discount has been applied because cultural connection may also develop through whānau, iwi, school, kapa haka,

Table 12: Estimated counterfactual discount and rationale

Domain	Material Outcome	Counterfactual Discount (%)	Rationale
			sport or wider community and kaupapa Māori spaces. However, the qualitative evidence indicates that youth work created culturally affirming spaces where taiohi could explore identity, culture and belonging. Many taiohi identified “culture,” “identity,” “gratitude,” and learning about “back home” as significant changes, alongside stronger bonds with peers and mentors.
	Stronger sense of self	20%	A 20% counterfactual discount has been applied because self-understanding, confidence and maturity can develop naturally during adolescence and through school, whānau, sport, faith and peer relationships. However, the evidence suggests that youth work materially accelerated this outcome by providing trusted relationships, leadership opportunities, encouragement and safe spaces for expression. Taiohi described becoming more confident, learning to express themselves, stepping into leadership, and developing a greater understanding of what is important to them.
	Improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing	25%	A 25% counterfactual discount has been applied because some development may have occurred through faith based centres, whānau, culture or personal reflection without youth work. However, the qualitative evidence shows improved wairua was part of a wider transformational pathway supported by youth workers, mentoring and youth group participation particularly in kaupapa Māori spaces.

Table 12: Estimated counterfactual discount and rationale

Domain	Material Outcome	Counterfactual Discount (%)	Rationale
Agency, aspirations and future direction	Strengthened ability to shape own life path (Whai Wāhitanga)	20%	A 20% counterfactual discount has been applied because some growth in agency, goals and future direction would be expected with age, education transitions, employment exposure and family support. However, youth work appears to have accelerated this development by helping taiohi set goals, access opportunities, make decisions and imagine different futures as well as focusing on supporting youth participation in the form of youth advisory groups, youth engagement, supporting young people to make submissions, and helping young people to enrol to vote. One taiohi described moving from having “no goals set for my future” to feeling “ <i>I’m actually gonna somewhat go somewhere</i> ”.
Physical Wellbeing	Improved physical wellbeing	35%	A 35% counterfactual discount has been applied because physical wellbeing outcomes were strongly influenced by sport, coaches, whānau transport, family encouragement, training routines and personal discipline. However, youth work still contributed by reinforcing motivation, belonging, confidence, commitment and providing opportunities to engage in sports and physical activities. One taiohi identified youth worker presence at sporting events as evidence of care and encouragement that helped them stay committed.

9.2 Displacement

Displacement considers whether the benefits created through an intervention occur at the expense of benefits experienced elsewhere. In other words, it assesses whether positive outcomes for one individual, organisation or community simply replace benefits that would otherwise have been realised by another.

Displacement was assessed for each material outcome by considering the mechanism through which value is created and whether there was a credible pathway by which benefits generated through youth work could reduce benefits available to others.

For the majority of outcomes, displacement was assessed as negligible. The material outcomes identified in this SROI primarily relate to wellbeing, identity, relationships, belonging, agency, cultural connection and community participation. These outcomes generate additional social value rather than redistributing existing value and are therefore not considered rivalrous in nature. Improvements experienced by one young person do not reduce the ability of others to experience similar benefits and, in many cases, create positive spillover effects for whānau, communities and wider society.

This approach is consistent with comparable mental health and youth sector SROI studies, which conclude that services addressing unmet demand create additional value by preventing escalation to more intensive interventions rather than displacing existing services or benefits⁵³. Similarly, youth work strengthens protective factors, relationships and capabilities that complement, rather than replace, the contributions of whānau, schools, health services and communities.

A small displacement discount of 5% was applied only to the outcome, “Expanded education and employment pathways”. This recognises the possibility that employment-related pathways may involve limited labour market competition in some circumstances. However, youth work primarily improves capability, confidence, employability and participation rather than redistributing employment opportunities. Consequently, only a conservative adjustment was considered appropriate.

Overall, displacement is not considered a significant source of overclaim within this SROI.

⁵³ Ohrnberger, Yee, & Moore (2025); Deloitte Access Economics (2022).

Table 13: Estimated displacement discount and rationale

Domain	Material Outcome	Displacement Discount (%)	Rationale
Relationships, belonging and community	Stronger network of positive relationships (Whanaungatanga)	0%	A 0% displacement discount has been applied because stronger relationships create additional social capital rather than transferring benefits from others. As taiohi develop trusted relationships with youth workers, peers and wider community members, these connections expand existing support networks rather than reducing opportunities for others to form positive relationships.
	Positive community contribution	0%	A 0% displacement discount has been applied because community participation and leadership generate additional value for communities. Increased volunteering, leadership and civic participation enhance collective wellbeing and social cohesion rather than replacing or reducing the contribution of others.
	Stronger sense of belonging (Tūrangawaewae)	0%	A 0% displacement discount has been applied because belonging is not a finite resource. Greater belonging strengthens inclusion and connectedness within communities without reducing the ability of others to experience belonging.
Emotional wellbeing, safety and stability	Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm - Acute suicidal risk subgroup	0%	A 0% displacement discount has been applied because youth work strengthens protective factors, safety planning and early intervention, reducing the need for crisis responses rather than replacing existing services. Similar to the 1737 SROI, these supports address unmet demand within the mental health system and generate additional

Table 13: Estimated displacement discount and rationale

Domain	Material Outcome	Displacement Discount (%)	Rationale
			social value by preventing escalation to higher-cost interventions.
	Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm - Built mental resilience subgroup	0%	A 0% displacement discount has been applied because improved coping skills and resilience increase young people's capacity to manage future periods of distress. These capabilities complement, rather than replace, support provided by whānau, schools and health services and therefore generate additional value rather than displacing it.
	Increased personal stability - Reduced risky behaviour subgroup	0%	A 0% displacement discount has been applied because reductions in risky behaviour improve individual and community wellbeing without reducing benefits experienced by others. Safer behaviours represent additional social value rather than a redistribution of existing resources.
	Increased personal stability - Reduced harmful behaviour subgroup	0%	A 0% displacement discount has been applied because reductions in harmful behaviour decrease the likelihood of adverse outcomes for taiohi, whānau and communities. These benefits are additional and do not occur at the expense of other individuals or services.
Practical and material, and financial wellbeing	Expanded Education and Employment Pathways	5%	A 5% displacement discount has been applied because improvements in financial security may partly arise through increased participation in employment. While youth work primarily strengthens capability, confidence and pathways into education and employment, some

Table 13: Estimated displacement discount and rationale

Domain	Material Outcome	Displacement Discount (%)	Rationale
			labour market competition may occur where employment opportunities are limited. A small displacement adjustment recognises this possibility while acknowledging that improved youth employment contributes to overall economic participation.
	Improved ability to meet everyday needs	0%	A 0% displacement discount has been applied because increased access to essential needs creates additional wellbeing rather than reducing another person's access to resources. Improvements are achieved through better access to support, services and personal capability rather than through redistribution.
Culture, wairua, identity, and self	Stronger connection to cultural identity	0%	A 0% displacement discount has been applied because strengthened cultural identity enhances connection to culture, language, whakapapa and community without diminishing opportunities for others. Cultural participation and identity are reinforcing rather than competitive, often strengthening collective cultural wellbeing.
	Stronger sense of self	0%	A 0% displacement discount has been applied because a stronger sense of self reflects increased confidence, identity and self-awareness. These developmental gains do not occur at the expense of others and often create wider benefits through improved participation, relationships and resilience.
	Improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing	0%	A 0% displacement discount has been applied because spiritual

Table 13: Estimated displacement discount and rationale

Domain	Material Outcome	Displacement Discount (%)	Rationale
			wellbeing reflects personal and collective connection, meaning and purpose. Improvements in wairua do not rely on scarce resources and may generate positive spillover effects for whānau and communities.
Agency, aspirations and future direction	Strengthened ability to shape own life path (Whai Wāhitanga)	0%	A 0% displacement discount has been applied because increased agency, confidence and self-determination expand a young person's capability to make informed decisions about their future. These capabilities create additional value and do not reduce opportunities available to others.
Physical Wellbeing	Improved physical wellbeing	0%	A 0% displacement discount has been applied because improvements in physical wellbeing are individual health gains that do not occur at the expense of others. Better physical health may also reduce demand on health services, creating wider social benefits rather than displacing them.

9.3 Attribution

Attribution reflects the fact that the investment and core programme activity may not be wholly responsible for all of the value created, and as such we must consider the possible contributions of other influences that could be attributed to the outcome alongside youth work. The other influences considered included educational systems, whānau, peers, and other supporting communities the taiohi were engaged in, all of which factor into the applied attribution and rationale discussed in the table below.

The assigned attribution discount percentages are informed by direct engagement with taiohi. Taiohi participating in the direct stakeholder engagement were asked “who or what helped create these changes?”, “how much of the change feels linked to this organisation?” and asked to shade or divide a pie chart to indicate their answer or discuss in their interview. Their answers were then categorised and considered within following ranges to inform the final discount percentage allocated:

Table 14: Attribution discount classification and decision criteria

Classification	Attribution Discount	Decision criteria
Low	0% - 35%	Most change is as a result of engagement with youth work.
Medium	36% - 65%	There are multiple contributing influences to the outcome.
High	66% - 100%	The change is mainly due to other influences.

Table 15: Estimated attribution discount and rationale

Domain	Material Outcome	Attribution Discount (%)	Rationale
Relationships, belonging and community	Stronger network of positive relationships (Whanaungatanga)	50%	A 50% attribution discount has been applied because the qualitative evidence consistently demonstrates that positive relationships developed through the combined influence of youth work, whānau, friends, school and wider community networks. While youth work created opportunities to build trusting relationships, taiohi recognised that these relationships were strengthened by multiple people in their lives. One taiohi allocated approximately 20% of relationship change to the youth development programme and 80% to school, family and peers, while noting that the programme acted as the catalyst for developing those relationships after arriving in New Zealand. Multiple taiohi attributed relationship changes being attributed to multiple influences, across school, peers, whānau, communities they engage in alongside the youth organisation indicating that no single contributor was solely responsible for the outcome.
	Positive community contribution	45%	A 45% attribution discount has been applied because opportunities to contribute to community emerged through multiple settings, including youth work, school, university, whānau and community groups. One taiohi attributed approximately 25% of their leadership and community opportunities to the youth organisation, while recognising additional contributions from university, friends, whānau and the wider community. Youth work enables participation and leadership

Table 15: Estimated attribution discount and rationale			
Domain	Material Outcome	Attribution Discount (%)	Rationale
			opportunities within communities which are then reinforced through broader community systems.
	Stronger sense of belonging (Tūrangawaewae)	45%	A 45% attribution discount has been applied because belonging developed through interconnected relationships rather than through a single intervention. Taiohi commonly described the youth organisation as providing a safe place where they felt accepted, while also recognising the role of family, peers, schools, sports clubs and cultural communities. Workbook responses frequently acknowledged both the organisation and existing support networks when reflecting on who contributed to this outcome.
Emotional wellbeing, safety and stability	Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm - Acute suicidal risk subgroup	25%	A relatively low attribution discount of 25% has been applied because several taiohi described the youth organisation as the primary factor preventing suicide while still acknowledging additional contributors. One taiohi stated, "I wouldn't be here today without (the youth organisation)," while another recorded a 10/10 impact rating for the organisation and indicated that the programme had "saved my life". Another taiohi similarly identified the organisation as having the greatest contribution to this outcome while recognising encouragement from whānau and support from other organisations. Given the seriousness of the outcome, attribution remains conservative by recognising that crisis services, whānau and other professionals may also have contributed.

Table 15: Estimated attribution discount and rationale

Domain	Material Outcome	Attribution Discount (%)	Rationale
	Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm - Built mental resilience subgroup	35%	A 35% attribution discount has been applied because resilience was developed through youth workers, whānau, schools and other trusted adults. Several taiohi identified the youth organisation as the principal contributor to developing resilience and coping skills, while others recognised additional support from family, teachers and counselling services. One workbook specifically linked resilience and mental health support primarily to the organisation.
	Increased personal stability - Reduced risky behaviour subgroup	40%	A 40% attribution discount has been applied because behavioural change was clearly multi-factorial. One taiohi explicitly apportioned contribution across church (30%), teachers (20%), sport (10%) and the youth organisation (40%). This taiohi described the programme as central to moving away from partying, alcohol use and unsafe peer groups while recognising that sustained change also depended on faith, education and sport. This evidence provides a strong stakeholder basis for a moderate attribution discount.
	Increased personal stability - Reduced harmful behaviour subgroup	40%	Similar to reduced risky behaviour, taiohi described gradual behavioural change resulting from support across several environments. Youth workers provided relational support and accountability, but family, teachers, faith based centres, peers and other services also reinforced safer behaviours over time.

Table 15: Estimated attribution discount and rationale

Domain	Material Outcome	Attribution Discount (%)	Rationale
Practical and material, and financial wellbeing	Expanded Education and Employment Pathways	55%	A 55% attribution discount has been applied because financial outcomes were strongly influenced by education providers, employers, MSD supports, family assistance and the effort of the taiohi themselves. Many taiohi described youth workers helping them navigate employment, education and financial systems, but recognised that income and employment ultimately depended on opportunities created by employers, training providers and wider government systems.
	Improved ability to meet everyday needs	50%	A 50% attribution discount has been applied because material wellbeing relied upon both youth worker advocacy and broader social support systems. Taiohi described assistance accessing Youth Payment, housing and practical supports, while acknowledging that MSD, family support and their own efforts were also important contributors. The programme often functioned as the navigator rather than the direct provider of material resources.
Culture, wairua, identity, and self	Stronger connection to cultural identity	35%	A 35% attribution discount has been applied because the taiohi consistently recognised whānau, marae, iwi, culturally embedded faith practise and Te Ao Māori spaces alongside the youth organisation. One taiohi identified the organisation as important for cultural confidence while also acknowledging marae and whānau. Another taiohi linked increased cultural identity primarily to the organisation but identified their church as an important contributor to both cultural and spiritual

Table 15: Estimated attribution discount and rationale

Domain	Material Outcome	Attribution Discount (%)	Rationale
			development. The qualitative evidence therefore supports shared contribution rather than sole attribution.
	Stronger sense of self	35%	A 35% attribution discount has been applied because confidence and identity developed through youth work, while also being reinforced by family, peers, education and personal growth. Taiohi frequently described youth workers helping them become more confident and authentic, but also acknowledged their own determination and the encouragement of significant adults. Some taiohi acknowledged their own self growth alongside the organisation, supporting a moderate attribution discount.
	Improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing	55%	A relatively high attribution discount of 55% has been applied because spiritual wellbeing was commonly shared with faith communities and whānau. One taiohi specifically identified becoming Christian as central to the changes they experienced and apportioned a substantial proportion of contribution to her faith community while still recognising the role of youth workers. Youth work appears to have supported spiritual development rather than being the sole source of it.
Agency, aspirations and future direction	Strengthened ability to shape own life path (Whai Wāhitanga)	40%	A 40% attribution discount has been applied because aspirations and future planning emerged through the combined influence of youth workers, schools, tertiary providers, employers, family and the young person's own agency. One taiohi stated that achieving these changes

Table 15: Estimated attribution discount and rationale

Domain	Material Outcome	Attribution Discount (%)	Rationale
			<i>"would have taken a lot longer if I was doing it on my own,"</i> indicating that youth work accelerated rather than independently created the outcome.
Physical Wellbeing	Improved physical wellbeing	55%	A 55% attribution discount has been applied because physical wellbeing depended heavily on sporting organisations, coaches, family encouragement and personal commitment. Taiohi described youth workers encouraging attendance and participation, but recognised that sustained improvements in physical health were achieved through multiple external influences beyond the programme.

9.4 Duration and Drop-off

Duration

Duration refers to the estimated period over which an outcome continues to create value after a young person's direct participation in youth work has ended. It reflects the expected persistence of change rather than the length of programme participation.

Duration assumptions were informed through multiple sources of evidence. Interviews with taiohi consistently described youth work as creating lasting changes that extended beyond immediate programme participation. Young people spoke about developing trusted relationships, stronger identities, increased confidence, improved coping strategies, and clearer aspirations that continued to influence their lives over time. Rather than describing short-term improvements, taiohi frequently reflected on being on a different life pathway, with youth work providing foundations that continued to shape future decisions and opportunities.

These qualitative findings were complemented by estimates from the Youth Work Impact Project survey (Appendix C). Practitioners reported that most material outcomes were expected to persist for approximately two to three years following participation, with average estimated durations ranging from 2.0 to 2.6 years across the outcomes. Outcomes relating to identity, relationships and belonging were generally expected to persist longer than outcomes more closely influenced by changing life circumstances, such as material wellbeing or physical health.

Rather than applying individual duration assumptions to every outcome, durations were assigned at the domain level to reflect the shared mechanisms of change within the Theory of Change. Outcomes within the same domain were considered likely to demonstrate similar patterns of persistence because they are supported through similar developmental processes. Duration assumptions were rounded to whole years and intentionally selected conservatively to avoid overstating long-term value. Where evidence indicated that a particular outcome was likely to persist differently from other outcomes within its domain, this was reflected within the model.

Drop-off

Drop-off accounts for the proportion of value that diminishes over time after the initial change has been achieved. The rationale for the applied drop-off filter for each outcome is discussed in the table below.

Drop-off recognises that while outcomes may continue beyond the initial benefit period, the strength of those outcomes may reduce over time as young people's circumstances change and other influences contribute to sustaining or reinforcing them. There is limited longitudinal evidence on annual rates of decline for youth development outcomes in Aotearoa New Zealand. Consequently, drop-off assumptions were informed by practitioner estimates collected through the Working Group survey, the developmental nature of each outcome domain within the Theory of Change, and approaches adopted in comparable SROI studies⁵⁴.

Rather than applying a single annual drop-off rate across all outcomes, assumptions were applied at the domain level to reflect the different ways outcomes are expected to persist over time. Lower annual drop-off rates were assigned to outcomes representing enduring developmental changes, such as identity, cultural connection and agency, while moderate rates were applied to outcomes that are more sensitive to changing personal, social and economic circumstances. This domain-based approach provides a transparent and consistent method for modelling outcome persistence while avoiding the assumption that all outcomes decline at the same rate. The assumptions adopted are intentionally conservative, and their influence on the overall SROI ratio is tested through sensitivity analysis.

⁵⁴ Ohrnberger et al. (2025); Hands for Impact (2026), Rānui 135 SROI; Hands for Impact (2026), TCYS SROI; Weber-Sparrow (2023).

Table 16: Estimated drop-off discount and duration based on outcome domain

Domain	Material Outcome	Duration Period	Drop-off Discount (%)	Rationale
Relationships, belonging and community	Stronger network of positive relationships (Whanaungatanga)	3 years	10%	Working Group practitioners estimated that outcomes within this domain persist for approximately 2.5–2.6 years following programme participation, with stronger relationships identified as one of the most common and enduring outcomes of youth work. Relationship-based outcomes are expected to persist because they are reinforced through ongoing connections with peers, whānau, mentors and community. However, changes in life circumstances, relocation or reduced community engagement may weaken these connections over time. A low annual drop-off reflects that most gains are expected to endure while recognising some gradual decline.
	Positive community contribution			
	Stronger sense of belonging (Tūrangawaewae)			
Emotional wellbeing, safety and stability	Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm	3 years	20%	Practitioners estimated these outcomes persist for approximately 2.2–2.5 years. Improvements in emotional wellbeing, personal stability and the ability to remain safe during periods of mental distress are expected to continue beyond programme participation but remain sensitive to changing life circumstances, ongoing support and future experiences. A moderate drop-off reflects the likelihood that benefits diminish gradually without continued reinforcement. This approach is consistent with comparable mental health SROI studies that tailor persistence
	Increased personal stability			

Table 16: Estimated drop-off discount and duration based on outcome domain

Domain	Material Outcome	Duration Period	Drop-off Discount (%)	Rationale
				assumptions to the evidence available for each outcome.
Practical and material, and financial wellbeing	Expanded Education and Employment Pathways	2 years	20%	Practitioner estimates indicate these outcomes typically persist for around 2.0–2.3 years. Material wellbeing is influenced by external factors such as employment, income, housing and the wider economy. Although youth work can strengthen pathways to financial security and improve the ability to meet everyday needs, these outcomes remain susceptible to changing economic and personal circumstances. A moderate drop-off has therefore been applied.
	Improved ability to meet everyday needs			
Culture, wairua, identity, and self	Stronger connection to cultural identity	3 years	5%	Practitioner estimates suggest these outcomes persist for approximately 2.0–2.4 years. However, because they represent developmental changes in identity, self-belief, cultural connection and spiritual wellbeing, they are expected to continue influencing behaviour, resilience and decision-making beyond direct programme participation. Comparable youth development SROIs have similarly treated identity and confidence outcomes as relatively enduring. A low annual drop-off reflects the expectation that these developmental gains remain largely embedded while acknowledging that they continue to evolve over time.
	Stronger sense of self			
	Improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing			
Agency, aspirations	Strengthened ability to shape own life path (Whai Wāhitanga)	2 years	10%	Practitioner estimates suggest outcomes relating to agency and future direction persist for around 2 years. Although

Table 16: Estimated drop-off discount and duration based on outcome domain

Domain	Material Outcome	Duration Period	Drop-off Discount (%)	Rationale
and future direction				these outcomes influence future decisions regarding education, employment and life pathways, they represent capability and mindset shifts that can continue to support young people's decision-making beyond programme participation. A relatively low drop-off reflects the enduring nature of these capabilities while acknowledging that aspirations and opportunities may change over time.
Physical wellbeing	Improved physical wellbeing	2 years	10%	Practitioners estimated physical wellbeing outcomes persist for approximately 2.2 years. Improvements in physical wellbeing are expected to continue where healthy behaviours are maintained but may diminish over time without ongoing participation in physical activity or supportive environments. A moderate annual drop-off reflects this gradual reduction in benefit.

9.5 Limitations

Impact Filters

The discounting factors applied in this analysis are informed by the best available evidence, including taiohi interviews, practitioner expertise, published literature and comparable SROI studies. However, several limitations should be acknowledged. Counterfactual and attribution assumptions were primarily informed by qualitative interviews with taiohi, which involved a relatively small sample and reflect participants' individual experiences and perceptions. Duration and drop-off assumptions were informed by a survey of youth workers. While these practitioners have extensive experience working with taiohi across the sector, the survey sample was relatively small and the estimates reflect professional judgement rather than longitudinal measurement. Displacement assumptions were based on the nature of the outcomes and established SROI principles, as there is limited empirical evidence quantifying displacement for youth development outcomes. These assumptions therefore represent informed and conservative estimates rather than empirically validated measures. Sensitivity analysis was undertaken to assess the influence of key assumptions on the SROI results.

10. Calculating the SROI

This section brings together all the data gathered across the SROI process to calculate the SROI ratio. The SROI ratio is an expression of the total present value of benefits created compared to the total value of inputs invested:

$$\text{SROI Ratio} = \frac{\text{Present Value of Benefits}}{\text{Total Inputs (Investment)}}$$

10.1 SROI Ratio

To calculate the present value of benefits for youth aged 12-24 engaged with youth work, the following steps were undertaken in line with the SROI Guide (2012⁵⁵):

1. The **gross value of outcomes** was calculated by multiplying the quantity of change by the chosen financial proxy value.
2. **Impact filters** (counterfactual, attribution, displacement, and drop-off) were applied to avoid over-claiming (Principle 5) and to isolate the additional value attributed to youth work activities.
3. **Discounting** was applied to reflect the time value of money, ensuring comparability of benefits that occur in different time periods. A discount rate of 2% was used, consistent with public sector discounting guidelines for social value analysis⁵⁶.
4. The discounted values were then summed together to get the **total present value of benefits**.

The SROI ratio was then calculated by dividing the total present value of benefits by the total value of investment.

Table 17: Calculated SROI for the analysis

Present value of benefits	\$1,725,132,852
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⁵⁵ Nicholls et al. (2012). A Guide to Social Return on Investment.

⁵⁶ The Treasury. (2024, October 2). *Treasury Circular 2024/15: Updated Public Sector Discount Rates for Cost Benefit Analysis* (Treasury Circular). The Treasury, New Zealand. <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2024-10/treasury-circular-2024-15.pdf>

Present value of investment	\$135,903,637
SROI ratio	\$12.69:\$1

Interpretation of the SROI Ratio

This SROI ratio indicates that for every dollar **invested** in youth work activities, an estimated **\$12.69 of social value** is generated for taiohi aged 12-24 engaged.

While this ratio provides a useful high-level indicator, it should always be read alongside the qualitative insights and stakeholder narratives presented earlier in the report (*Section 5.3 Taiohi Outcomes*), as these narratives convey the lived experiences, cultural significance, depth and nuance behind the number.

The scale of the return may also reflect substantial value being generated within a sector operating under funding and workforce constraints. The ratio should therefore not be interpreted as evidence that current levels of investment are sufficient. Rather, the wider findings highlight that workforce capability, appropriate funding structures and continuity are important conditions for sustaining the value created through youth work.

10.2 Sensitivity Analysis

Sensitivity analysis modelling tests the robustness of results by testing key assumptions made during the SROI analysis. This process reduces the risk of over-claiming (Principle 5) and highlights where future evidence could improve confidence.

Scenarios Modelled

Sensitivity testing was undertaken across the key areas of uncertainty and professional judgement within the model. These tests included alternative assumptions for depth, duration, investment inputs, quantity, the variables associated with the highest-value outcomes, and significant impact filters such as counterfactual and attribution.

Table 18: Sensitivity analysis results

Variable tested	Testing rationale	Method of testing	New SROI
Depth % applied to financial proxy value	The percentages representing the full depth of change experienced for an outcome could be over or understated as we had a small sample size participate in the survey that tested depth. Given the participants reported high degrees of change for most outcomes it is reasonable to test the ratio against a discounted depth assumption.	Decrease depth % by 25 percentage points. - Note the depth percentage is applied to the proxy value.	\$8.75:\$1
Duration	We could have under-claimed the duration for the outcomes 'expanded education and employment pathways' and 'strengthened ability to shape own life path (whai wāhitanga)' as these outcomes reflect skills and knowledge developed through youth work that are likely to endure as they cannot be taken away once developed. Therefore it is reasonable to test a longer duration period for each outcome.	Outcomes - 'expanded education and employment pathways' and 'strengthened ability to shape own life path (whai wāhitanga)': The base model tests a 2 year duration that begins during the period of activity. Sensitivity tests a 3 year duration for each outcome beginning during the period of activity.	Outcomes - 'expanded education and employment pathways' and 'strengthened ability to shape own life path (whai wāhitanga)': \$12.99:\$1 Outcome - 'increased personal stability':

	We could have over-claimed the duration for the outcome 'increased personal stability' as maintaining some of the related behaviour change is strongly supported by the positive environment and relationships youth work provides, so we have tested an alternative assumption of a shorter duration period for that outcome.	Outcome - 'increased personal stability': The base model tests a 3 year duration that begins during the period of activity. Sensitivity tests a 2 year duration	\$12.48:\$1
Investment Calculation Assumptions	The investment calculation required some organisations' expenditure to be adjusted to reflect the proportion relating to the youth work activities and taiohi aged 12-24 within the scope of this SROI. Where this required judgement, low, base and high estimates were developed within the input model. Testing these alternatives shows how sensitive the final SROI is to the reasonable range of assumptions used in establishing the total investment.	Test the final investment denominator using the low/base/high apportionment assumptions from the final input model. Volunteer and in-kind value treatment is held consistent with the headline model	Low investment: \$14.23:\$1 Base: \$12.69:\$1 High investment: \$11.75:\$1
Quantity Calculation Assumptions	The quantity calculation starts with the estimated annual reach of each organisation, then narrows this to the proportion of taiohi likely to be involved in activities relevant to	Test uncertainty in the assumptions used within the quantity calculation, rather than changing the formula itself. Tests include: (1) documented organisation	Reach LOW \$10.66:\$1 / HIGH \$14.96:\$1 Imputed reach LOW \$12.13:\$1 / HIGH

	each outcome (assigned reach), before applying an incidence estimate for the proportion expected to experience the change. Because organisations report reach and participation differently, and assigned reach and incidence require structured modelling judgement, alternative assumptions were retained for these components. Testing each component separately shows its influence on the result, while the combined conservative scenario tests the robustness of the SROI when more conservative assumptions are applied across several components at the same time	reach LOW/HIGH; (2) LOW/HIGH reach for imputed organisations only; (3) lower/higher assigned reach assumptions; and (4) lower/higher incidence assumptions. A combined conservative scenario was also tested by applying the LOW organisation reach estimate together with the lower assigned reach and lower incidence assumptions where these relied on structured modelling judgement. This deliberately combines the more conservative assumptions across the main components of the quantity model to test the effect if several assumptions were simultaneously overstated. It is a stress test rather than an alternative expected case.	\$13.35:\$1 Assigned reach -10% \$11.42:\$1 / upper capped \$12.74:\$1 Incidence -10% \$11.42:\$1 / +10% \$13.96:\$1 Combined conservative \$8.64:\$1
Check proportionally larger outcomes - worth x% of total value	The following outcomes are the top 4 outcomes that represent the most value in the SROI model therefore the model could have higher sensitivity to changes to the variables for each of these outcomes.	We have tested the most significant variable relevant to each outcome: 1. Stronger sense of belonging (Tūrangawaewae): Quantity -	1. \$12.13:\$1 2. \$11.73:\$1 3. \$12.23:\$1 4. \$11.96:\$1

	1. Stronger sense of belonging (Tūrangawaewae) 17.79% of model value 2. Improved ability to meet everyday needs 15.62% of model value 3. Stronger network of positive relationships (Whanaungatanga) 14.46% of model value 4. Reduced suicidal harm – strengthened mental resilience subgroup 11.61% of model value	Decrease number of taiohi experiencing the outcome by 25% 2. Improved ability to meet everyday needs: Proxy - Base case models the equivalent of 15 hours paid work financial equivalent. Sensitivity test a reduction to 7.5 hours paid work financial equivalent. 3. Stronger network of positive relationships (Whanaungatanga): Quantity - Decrease number of taiohi experiencing the outcome by 25% 4. Reduced suicidal harm – strengthened mental resilience subgroup: Proxy - Base case models 40 weeks at 1 hour per week of counselling/mentoring. Sensitivity test a reduction to 20 weeks at 1 hour per week of counselling/mentoring.	
Discounts Counterfactual and Attribution	Counterfactual and attribution assumptions were primarily informed by qualitative interviews with taiohi, which involved a relatively small sample and reflected	Test the discount ranges applied for attribution and counterfactual +10 percentage points	10 percentage point increase on counterfactual only \$11.00:\$1

	participants' individual experiences and perceptions. Given these two filters represent the highest discount filters applied, particularly for attribution which was informed by some of the percentages taiohi applied in their workbooks, it is reasonable to test the possibility of under-claiming by decreasing the discount filters applied. We have also tested increasing the discount filters in the possible case of over-claiming given the sample size.		10 percentage point increase on attribution only \$10.41:\$1
		Test the discount ranges applied for attribution and counterfactual -10 percentage points	10 percentage point decrease on counterfactual only \$14.39:\$1 10 percentage point decrease on attribution only \$14.98:\$1
Volunteer hours	Volunteer hours are reported by organisations and may be under reported by organisations due to difficulties tracking this data which could understate the total investment supporting youth work. Testing higher levels of volunteer contribution shows how sensitive the final SROI is to this possibility.	Test the changes resulting from volume of volunteer hours captured in the model increasing by 25%, 50%, 100% and 200%	+25%: \$12.57:\$1 +50%: \$12.49:\$1 +100%: \$12.34:\$1 +200%: \$12.03:\$1

Quantity and depth produced the largest downward movements in the ratio.

Reducing depth assumptions by 25 percentage points lowered the SROI to \$8.75:\$1, while the combined conservative quantity scenario reduced it to \$8.64:\$1. The quantity tests also demonstrated the effect of uncertainty in sector reach, imputed organisation reach, assigned reach and outcome incidence, with individual scenarios producing ratios ranging from \$10.66:\$1 to \$14.96:\$1. Restricting the test to organisations where reach had been imputed produced a narrower range of \$12.13:\$1 to \$13.35:\$1. Adjusting assigned reach assumptions resulted in ratios between \$11.42:\$1 and \$12.74:\$1, while varying incidence produced a range of \$11.42:\$1 to \$13.96:\$1. These results confirm that the estimated number of taiohi experiencing each outcome is an important driver of modelled social value, particularly where organisation-level reach data varies in completeness or requires structured modelling judgement.

Alternative duration assumptions produces a relatively narrow sensitivity band of \$12.48:\$1 when considering possible scenarios where consistent support could be required to maintain the change, and \$12.99:\$1 for outcomes where we could have underclaimed the value as the change relates to skill developed which cannot be taken away and therefore are more likely to last without ongoing support.

Investment assumptions also influenced the ratio within a relatively narrow range. Testing the low, base and high investment assumptions resulted in SROI ratios ranging from \$11.75:\$1 to \$14.23:\$1, compared with the base case of \$12.69:\$1. This demonstrates that the positive return is maintained across the alternative investment scenarios modelled.

Volunteer contribution had a relatively limited influence on the ratio. Holding the hourly value constant and increasing the volunteer hours captured in the model by 25%, 50%, 100% and 200% reduced the SROI to between \$12.03:\$1 and \$12.57:\$1. Volunteer contribution would need to be approximately 11.3 times the value currently captured for the SROI to fall to 10:1. This indicates that potential under-reporting of volunteer hours does not materially alter the overall result.

The four outcomes contributing the greatest proportion of total present value were tested independently using more conservative assumptions for their most material variables. Reducing the quantities for 'stronger sense of belonging (tūrangawaewae), and 'stronger network of positive relationships (whanaungatanga)' by 25%, and applying more conservative financial proxy assumptions for 'improved ability to meet everyday needs' and 'Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm - strengthened mental resilience subgroup', produced ratios between \$11.73:\$1 and

\$12.23:\$1. This indicates that the base case SROI is not dependent on any single high-value outcome or valuation assumption.

Counterfactual and attribution tested both increases and decreases to the base case applied discount percentages. Increasing each discount by 10 percentage points produced ratios of \$11.00:\$1 for counterfactual and \$10.41:\$1 for attribution. Conversely, decreasing these assumptions by 10 percentage points increased the ratio to between \$14.39:\$1 and \$14.98:\$1. These tests demonstrate that assumptions about what may have happened anyway and the contribution of other actors have a moderate effect on the estimated value, but even the more conservative combined scenario continues to generate a substantial positive return.

Across all sensitivity scenarios tested, the SROI ratio ranged from **\$8.64:\$1 to \$14.98:\$1**, with the base case of \$12.69:\$1 sitting within this range. The lower bound resulted from the combined conservative quantity scenario, while the upper bound resulted from applying the high organisation reach estimate.

Overall, the sensitivity analysis indicates that the SROI result is robust across a broad range of plausible alternative assumptions. While the magnitude of the estimated return varies depending on assumptions relating particularly to quantity, depth and impact discounts, every scenario tested continues to demonstrate that the social value generated is significant. The results also identify quantity and outcome evidence as important areas for continued improvement in future sector-wide impact measurement.

10.3 Stakeholder Verification of Analysis

Stakeholder verification was embedded throughout the SROI process to ensure that the analysis remained credible, material, and grounded in the experiences of those working across the youth development sector. Rather than occurring as a single validation exercise, stakeholder engagement was undertaken iteratively at key stages of the analysis, including outcome mapping, development and refinement of the Theory of Change, validation of outcome indicators, testing of impact assumptions, and review of the draft findings. This iterative process strengthened both the evidence base and the materiality of the analysis, ensuring that the outcomes and valuations reflected what stakeholders considered most important.

Ara Taiohi provided governance and sector oversight throughout the project. As the commissioning organisation and national peak body for youth development, Ara Taiohi

reviewed project materials before they were shared more broadly with stakeholders, ensuring that the engagement approach, language, and emerging findings accurately reflected the youth development context and were appropriate for sector-wide consultation.

The Working Group comprising 13 youth development practitioners from across Ara Taiohi member organisations provided ongoing stakeholder verification throughout the analysis. The group participated in three facilitated online workshops and one in-person workshop, supported by validation surveys between workshops. Members contributed to identifying and refining outcomes, verifying the Theory of Change, testing the materiality of outcomes, validating outcome indicators, and reviewing key impact assumptions, including attribution, duration, and drop-off. The Working Group also facilitated the direct taiohi engagement and reviewed the draft SROI report and headline findings to confirm that the analysis accurately represented the realities of youth development practice and the experiences of organisations delivering mahi with taiohi.

The independent Peer Review Network of 14 experts across youth development, government policy, philanthropy, evaluation, and Social Return on Investment (SROI) was engaged alongside the Working Group. Peer reviewers participated at the same key stages of the analysis, providing independent challenge and technical review of the Theory of Change, outcomes, valuation approach, assumptions, and emerging findings. This process strengthened the methodological rigour of the analysis while ensuring that the conclusions were credible across practice, policy, and evaluation contexts.

An additional taiohi verification process was undertaken to ensure that the outcomes identified through stakeholder interviews genuinely reflected the lived experiences and priorities of young people. A separate group of taiohi, distinct from those who participated in the qualitative interviews used to identify outcomes, completed a structured validation survey. Using a separate validation cohort reduced the risk of confirmation bias by testing the identified outcomes with taiohi who had not participated in the original outcome elicitation interviews. Participants verified the relevance and accuracy of the proposed outcomes and provided relative importance weightings, enabling the analysis to prioritise the outcomes that matter most to taiohi.

The validation survey was completed by 10 taiohi. Sixty percent of participants identified as male and 40% as female. Participants represented a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds, with 30% identifying as Māori, 40% as Pacific, 50% as Pākehā, and 10% as Indian (participants were able to identify with more than one ethnicity). This diversity

strengthened confidence that the Theory of Change, outcome framework, and relative importance weightings reflected a range of young people's perspectives rather than solely those of practitioners or a single cohort of taiohi.

Collectively, these verification processes provided multiple sources of evidence to test the materiality, credibility, and reasonableness of the SROI analysis. By incorporating iterative feedback from sector leadership, practitioners, independent experts, and taiohi throughout the process, the analysis aligns with Social Value Principle 1: Involve stakeholders while also strengthening the evidence, transparency, and methodological rigour expected under the Social Value International Assurance Framework.

11. Conclusion & Recommendations

This analysis shows that youth work across Aotearoa New Zealand creates significant and measurable social value for taiohi.

The SROI analysis estimates that youth work creates **\$12.69 of social value for every \$1 invested**. This demonstrates that youth work generates substantial value through the positive changes experienced by taiohi.

The SROI ratio is one measure of value. More importantly, this research identifies how youth work creates that value and the conditions that enable positive change.

11.1 Sector Findings

Sustained relationship-centred youth development is critical to achieving a broad range of outcomes: The foundation of youth work's impact lies in trusted, consistent, and responsive relationships. Youth workers create spaces in which taiohi feel accepted, supported, and able to be themselves. These relationships are the primary mechanism through which wider change becomes possible. Sustained engagement is also associated with a broader range of outcomes, reinforcing the importance of continuity in these relationships over time.

The pathways of change are interconnected: Improvements in relationships, identity, belonging, emotional wellbeing, safety, participation, and future direction often reinforce one another. This reflects the holistic and developmental nature of youth work practice.

Youth work recognises and adapts to the context of the taiohi: Outcomes are experienced differently across groups, places, and youth work settings. Culture, identity, geography, disability, whānau circumstances, discrimination, developmental stage, and previous experiences can influence which outcomes matter most and how change occurs.

Youth work is a flexible and responsive practice: Taiohi enter youth work with different strengths, identities, aspirations, and circumstances. Effective youth work responds to what matters to each young person rather than applying a standardised pathway. This flexibility enables youth workers to support both broadly shared outcomes and outcomes that are specific to particular groups or contexts.

Preventative value: Many of the outcomes identified in this analysis strengthen protective factors that support positive development and healthier life pathways. While the one-year scope does not capture longer-term system outcomes, the findings demonstrate that youth work creates the foundations from which these wider benefits are expected to emerge over time.

11.2 System-Level Findings

Workforce capability is central to value creation: The analysis demonstrates that the value created through youth work depends on skilled practitioners who build trusted relationships over time. Maintaining this capability requires not only committed volunteers but also sustainable career pathways, professional development, supervision, and workforce retention. The findings suggest that investment in the workforce should be considered alongside investment in programmes and services, recognising that the quality of relationships is fundamental to the outcomes achieved.

Current funding structures may not align with how youth work creates change: Youth work depends on trusted relationships, continuity, flexibility, and sustained engagement. Short-term, output-focused, or narrowly targeted funding may make it harder for organisations to provide this continuity and maintain trusted relationships with taiohi over time. Where funding is tied to specific programmes or activities, it may not support the ongoing relationships through which many youth work outcomes are created. Funding approaches that allow for greater continuity and flexibility are therefore better aligned with how youth work creates change.

Youth work helps connect taiohi with the wider support system: Trusted relationships mean youth workers are often well placed to identify when additional support is needed and help taiohi navigate and access it. Through referrals, warm handovers and ongoing support, youth work can strengthen connections between taiohi and the wider services around them, supporting earlier and more coordinated responses when additional help is needed.

Preventative youth work is not always visible in conventional reporting: Much of the value created through youth work lies in strengthening protective factors and reducing the likelihood or severity of later challenges. These benefits are not always captured through reporting focused on activities, attendance, or immediate outputs.

Policy and funding volatility affect sector consistency: Changes in government priorities and funding criteria can make it difficult for youth work organisations to maintain consistent relationships and respond holistically to taiohi.

11.3 Using the Results

The findings from this analysis can be used by funders, government, sector leaders and youth work organisations to support better decisions about youth work. They show where youth work creates value, how that value is created, and the conditions that support positive outcomes.

Funding and investment: Funders can use the findings to consider how funding can better support the conditions that help youth work create change, including trusted relationships, continuity, flexibility and a skilled workforce. The Theory of Change and outcome framework can also support funding and reporting that focuses on outcomes that matter to taiohi, rather than activities and outputs alone.

Government policy and planning: Government agencies can use the findings to understand how youth work contributes across wellbeing, education and employment, justice, housing and other areas affecting young people. The findings can support policy, funding and service planning, including decisions about where youth work can connect taiohi with wider services, support earlier responses, and help reduce escalation into crisis or other high-cost services.

Sector Adaptation: The Theory of Change and valuation framework can be adapted by grassroots organisations to strengthen their own impact measurement, share learning with peers, and contribute to a stronger collective evidence base and voice for youth development in Aotearoa.

Sector Advocacy: The findings provide a shared evidence base for sector advocacy, showing the preventative contribution of youth work and its links to outcomes including stronger engagement in education, expanded employment pathways, and reduced risk of justice system involvement. They also help make visible how trusted relationships, flexibility and sustained engagement contribute to these outcomes.

11.4 Recommendations

This section presents practical recommendations based on the findings of this report that if implemented would support the full potential of youth work to be enabled. To

achieve this there is a wero to all stakeholders to work together, each playing a significant role.

We acknowledge that young people themselves are stakeholders as they hold expert knowledge and have actively participated in this research. They too have a role in seeing the potential of youth work realised as they embrace Whai Wāhitanga.

There is also a wider recommendation around the promotion of and advocacy for youth work that is also a shared stakeholder responsibility. This sits across all the recommendations below.

We note that the Government has both a funding and policy function and therefore sits across two stakeholder groups.

Table 19: Recommendations by stakeholder

Recommendation One	Finding from the Research	Role of Stakeholders	Examples of how we get there
Fund the relationships, not just the programme Back long-term relational youth work, and the people and organisations that allow trusted relationships with taiohi to last.	Current funding structures do not always align with how youth work creates change.	Funders: Fund long-term, strengths-based, relational work that supports youth worker positions and organisational infrastructure, not just programmes and activities.	Strong investment in youth development to complement more clinical or deficit-focused services.
		Government: Invest in contract and work conditions that enable relational, strengths based and participatory youth work.	Multi-year funding with inflation adjustment.
		Sector Leaders: Use this evidence to establish relational youth work as a core requirement of good youth development investment.	Prioritisation of supervision, management and admin roles as well as youth work practitioner roles.
		Managers and Governance: Prioritise contracts that protect the relational, flexible and strengths-based foundations of youth work. Make visible where funding structures constrain effective practice, organisational sustainability and ability to achieve programme deliverables.	Programme deliverables reflect positive outcomes determined by young people.

		Youth Workers: Commit to ongoing professional development and supervision to strengthen your youth work practice.	
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Recommendation Two	Finding from the Research	Role of Stakeholders	What this could look like
Connect youth work into the wider support system Create clear escalation and warm-handover pathways, equip youth workers to navigate increasing complexity, and expand youth work presence in youth related settings.	Youth workers are increasingly responding to serious disclosures and complex challenges, including significant mental distress experienced by taiohi. This highlights the need to better equip youth workers to respond as well as the importance of youth worker presence.	Funders: Balance funding grassroots with systems change initiatives.	Recognition of youth workers as important players in frontline response. Youth workers supported and equipped with clear escalation pathways. Upskilling of youth workers to be able to safely respond during moments of disclosure and enable faster access to primary and secondary healthcare. Better interlinking of taiohi support systems through an increase in the number of youth workers operating in settings
		Government: Identify spaces where youth work is needed and ensure the infrastructure to deliver this is in place.	
		Sector Leaders: Ensure access to resources, training, and expertise in conditions required to support youth work in its various contexts.	

		Managers and Governance: Keep sharing your stories of the difference relational, culturally grounded youth development models make for taiohi, and how these approaches respond to the different contexts and realities they bring with them. Youth Workers: Adapt your youth work skills to different contexts, prioritising professional accountability and ensuring strong practice.	where disclosures are likely to take place, for example, schools, primary healthcare, care and protection, and youth justice settings. Youth workers act as navigators with clear referral pathways and entry points for warm handovers.
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Recommendation Three	Finding from the Research	Role of Stakeholders	What this could look like
Enable youth work to respond to what matters Shape policy and funding around youth development expertise and youth voice, giving youth work the flexibility	Youth work's ability to be flexible and responsive is central to how it creates value. Policy (and funding) volatility affect sector consistency.	Funders: Collaborate with the sector to create a unified and evidence-backed case for investment in youth development.	Young people in youth justice and residential settings experience the full value of genuine youth work. The Ministry of Youth Development is involved across government policy development
		Government: Work with sector leaders including Mana Mokopuna and Ara Taiohi to ensure youth development and youth voice informs all policies that impact young people.	

to respond to what matters for taiohi.		Sector Leaders: Continue to engage and contribute to policy development across central and local government.	that affects young people and the youth development workforce. Young people's voice and agency is consistently involved in policy as a first principle and foundational practice.
		Managers and Governance: Continue to communicate the wins of good youth development, what's working and key barriers organisations and youth workers are facing.	
		Youth Workers: Facilitate young people's involvement in policy development and provide spaces for young people to be involved in policy discussions.	

Recommendation Four	Finding from the Research	Role of Stakeholders	What this could look like
Build the evidence base to demonstrate the impact and value of youth work. Invest in shared, adaptable ways to capture youth work's	Preventative youth work is not always visible in conventional reporting.	Funders: Fund monitoring and evaluation capacity for grassroots organisations and sector-wide approaches.	A shared measurement framework based on evidence and able to be used across funders and government. Cohesive and adaptable national approach to ongoing monitoring

wider outcomes for taiohi, whānau and communities; and use that evidence in funding, policy and advocacy.		Government: Use evidence (including from meaningful contract reporting) to inform policy and investment decisions.	and evaluation that tells the story of youth work in a way decision-makers can understand. Further research into the conditions required for youth work to be effective. Access to research tools, expertise for community organisations to evaluate and share evidence of impact.
		Sector Leaders: Champion shared measurement approaches that can be adapted to local and organisational contexts.	
		Managers and Governance: Build your own unique evidence base using these supporting materials to build a basis to form your own theory of change and outcome data tracking processes.	
		Youth Workers: Support communities of practice to engage with and contribute to the evidence base.	

Recommendation Five	Finding from the Research	Role of Stakeholders	What this could look like
Back the people who make youth work possible	Workforce capability is central to value creation. Skilled, supported practitioners	Funders: Fund sector capability, sector-led workforce development and support fair and sustainable salaries.	Equipped and resourced youth work sector engaging meaningfully with every young person in Aotearoa.

Invest in fair pay, supervision, professional development, career pathways, retention and the sector support needed to sustain a strong workforce.	make trusted, responsive and sustained youth work possible.	Government: Recognise the value of youth work and ensure conditions are in place to enable this, including pay equity.	Sector bodies that support the capacity and capability of youth work are equipped and sustainable. Strong youth work career conditions and pathways result in better retention of youth workers.
		Sector Leaders: Continue to build the professionalisation of youth work and support workforce development.	
		Managers and Governance: Commit to understanding, enabling and scaffolding excellent youth work. This includes strong policies and procedures that support the recruitment and ongoing professional development of youth workers.	
		Youth Workers: Grow your professional practice including committing to Korowai Tupu ⁵⁷ and engaging in regular supervision and training.	

⁵⁷ Korowai Tupu is the Professional Association for Youth Work in Aotearoa. <https://www.arataiohi.org.nz/professional-association>

Closing Reflection

Tēnā koutou katoa,

For me, this report marks a landmark moment for Hands for Impact. It reflects nearly two years of work to establish the organisation, produce analyses, support two practitioners through accreditation, and develop an accessible, culturally grounded approach to large-scale social value practice in Aotearoa.

But impact reporting has never been the end in itself. Community organisations must evidence outcomes despite stretched capacity and funding that favours delivery over measurement infrastructure. Hands for Impact was created to fill this gap.

Youth work is skilled, relational, adaptive and preventative work at substantial scale. This report holds taiohi and practitioner experience alongside rigorous evidence. Its estimate of \$12.69 of social value for every \$1 invested is powerful. Deeper still is how that value is created: through trusted relationships that strengthen belonging, identity, safety, agency and future pathways. The ratio gives those experiences weight in the language of investment; it does not replace them.

Equally important is how this work was built. It draws together organisations nationwide; taiohi engagement aligned with Mana Taiohi; practitioner knowledge; sector and specialist leadership; research; transparent assumptions; and independent challenge. It is evidence developed from the grassroots up. To me, this is collaboration and coordination at their finest.

The report is one output of a larger intervention, and the ratio is one expression of its findings. Underpinning both is a clear logic: combining the leadership and reach of a peak body, structured sector engagement, specialist impact measurement expertise and technical mentorship can produce adaptable tools, a clearer understanding of how change happens, and stronger evidence for learning, decisions and advocacy.

This is not about every organisation adopting one shared framework. It is about undertaking foundational work once, for the benefit of many, rather than asking stretched organisations to recreate it independently. Each can adapt what is useful while focusing its capacity on serving its stakeholders and communities. That is the public-benefit proposition at the heart of Hands for Impact: making rigorous impact analysis more accessible and creating evidence, tools and capability that extend beyond any one project or organisation.

The opportunity now is to use each part well: the report in advocacy and funding conversations, the tools for organisational learning, and the underlying logic of change to support better decisions and strengthen the conditions in which youth work can thrive.

To everyone who contributed their knowledge, experience, challenge, care and trust—and to those who supported this work behind the scenes—thank you. This report was built collectively and is stronger because of every contribution.

Ngā mihi nui,



Claudia Wace
Chair and Co-Founder
Hands for Impact

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Appendices

Appendix A. Glossary

Māori & Pasifika Terms

The terms in this glossary hold deep cultural and conceptual meanings. Below we provide simplified explanations relevant to the context of this research, with Māori terms drawn from Te Aka Māori Dictionary⁵⁸, as well as a number of other sources noted. These translations are intended to support international readers, while acknowledging that each term carries rich cultural, historical, and philosophical layers best understood through deeper engagement.

Word / Phrase	Simplified Meaning / Translation
Aotearoa	New Zealand.
Ara Taiohi	Youth pathway; also the name of the national peak body for youth development in Aotearoa.
Haerenga	Journey.
Hauora	Health, wellbeing and vitality.
Hui	Gathering, meeting, assembly.
Iwi	Extended kinship group, tribe or people, often comprising people descended from common ancestors and associated with a particular territory.
Kai	Food or a meal.
Kaimahi	Worker, employee or staff member.
Kaitiakitanga	Guardianship, stewardship and the responsibility to care for and protect.
Kapa Haka	Māori cultural or performing group; collective performance of Māori performing arts, including forms such as haka and waiata.

⁵⁸ Te Aka Māori Dictionary definitions accessed via maoridictionary.co.nz.

Karakia	A traditional spoken chant, blessing, or prayer.
Kaupapa	Purpose, programme, agenda, subject, initiative, policy.
Kaupapa Māori	A Māori approach, set of principles, practices or philosophy grounded in the knowledge, values, skills and perspectives of Māori society.
Kōrero	Speech, narrative, story, news, account, discussion, conversation, discourse, statement, information.
Kotahitanga	Unity, togetherness, solidarity and collective action.
Mahi	Work, operation, activity, function.
Mana	Ara Taiohi (2020)⁵⁹ provides the most applicable description for how we consider Mana in the context of this youth-focused analysis. <i>“Mana is the authority we inherit at birth and we accrue over our lifetime. It determines the right of a young person to have agency in their lives and the decisions that affect them. Enhancing the mana of young people means recognising what is right with them, as well as the reality of their world. Young people are supported to have a voice, work to their strengths and step into leadership”.</i>
Mana Taiohi	A principle-based framework developed in Aotearoa that informs how people work with young people. It centres the mana young people already hold and how youth development practice can enhance that mana.
Manaakitanga	Hospitality, kindness, care for others.
Māoritanga	Māori culture, practices and beliefs; Māoriness or a Māori way of life.
Marae	Traditionally the courtyard in front of a wharenuī where formal welcomes and discussions take place; the term is also commonly used for the wider complex of buildings and spaces associated with it.

⁵⁹ Ara Taiohi. (2020). Code of Ethics for Youth Work in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Mātauranga	Knowledge, wisdom, understanding and skill. Within Mana Taiohi, it refers to the rich and diverse knowledge, wisdom and understanding that informs work with young people.
Mauri	Life force, vital essence.
Pacific Peoples / Pasifika	'Pacific peoples' is a collective term used to describe the diverse cultures of people from Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesian countries. ⁶⁰
Pepeha	A structured way of introducing oneself and expressing connections to people, ancestors and places of significance.
Rangatahi / Taiohi	Youth, young person.
Te Ao Māori	The Māori world and worldview, encompassing Māori beliefs, values, customs and ways of understanding the world.
Te Reo Māori	Reo means language, voice or speech; te reo Māori refers specifically to the Māori language.
Te Taiao	The natural world, environment, nature or Earth.
Tangata Whenua	Local people, hosts or Indigenous people who hold ancestral connection and authority in relation to the whenua or place.
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	The Treaty of Waitangi.
Tikanga	Custom, correct procedure, protocol - the customary system of values and practices that have developed over time and are deeply embedded in the social context.
Tino Rangatiratanga	Self-determination, sovereignty and autonomy; the authority and ability to exercise control and make decisions for oneself or one's people.
Tipuna	Ancestors. Tipuna is an eastern dialect form; tūpuna is another commonly used form.
Tūrangawaewae	A place where one has the right to stand; a place of belonging and connection through kinship and whakapapa.

⁶⁰ Ministry for Pacific Peoples. (2022). *Yavu: Foundations of Pacific Engagement*. Wellington, NZ.

Waiata	Song, chant or psalm; also, to sing.
Wairua	Spirit or soul; the spiritual dimension of a person. In a wellbeing context, wairua can encompass spiritual wellbeing and connections to meaning, faith, culture, people and the natural world.
Waka	Canoe, vehicle or conveyance.
Wero	Challenge.
Whai Wāhitanga	Participation and having a place or role. Within Mana Taiohi, it recognises young people as valued contributors to society and creates space for participation, agency and responsibility.
Whakamana	To empower, enable, affirm or give authority or prestige to. Within Mana Taiohi, Ara Taiohi describes whakamana as empowering, encouraging and affirming young people.
Whakapapa	Genealogy, lineage and descent; the relationships and connections through which people locate themselves in relation to ancestors, whānau, people and place.
Whānau	Family/extended family.
Whanaungatanga	Building relationships, kinship and connection between people.
Whenua	Land or country. The word also carries important relationships with identity, belonging and ancestry within te ao Māori.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) Terms

The terms and definitions included in the following glossary have been sourced from the SVI Glossary 2.0 published October 2023⁶¹.

Term	Definition
Attribution	An assessment of how much of the outcome depth was caused by the contribution of different organisations or people.
Counterfactual / Deadweight	A measure of the amount of outcome that would have happened even if the activity had not taken place. For example, there is often the chance the people could have experienced the same changes by working with another organisation, or even without the support from anyone
Depth	The amount of change in an Outcome experienced by people affected between two points in time. An indicator is required to measure two different Outcome Levels. E.g. self-esteem at t1 and self-esteem at t2.
Discounting	The process by which future financial costs and benefits are recalculated to present-day values.
Discount rate	The interest rate used to discount future costs and benefits to a present value.
Displacement	An assessment of how much of the outcome has displaced other outcomes. For example, if our activities prevent people experiencing the same changes somewhere else we should take account of this.
Drop off	The rate of decline in the Outcome Depth over time. The rate is expressed as a percentage in relation to the Outcome Duration.
Duration	The length of time that a person affected continually experiences the Outcome Depth.
Monetary Valuation / Financial proxy	A monetary representation of the value of an outcome.
Impact	The amount of change in an outcome attributed to an activity. This requires an estimation of how much change is contributed by others and/or would have happened anyway (counterfactual).
Indicator	Metrics, instruments or tools that capture changes in an Outcome to determine Outcome Depth.
Inputs	The financial and non-financial resources required to deliver the activities. Inputs may be owned by the organization or by those it is dependent upon.
Materiality	Information is material if its omission has the potential to affect the readers' decisions. For the purpose of optimising social value, material information is all relevant and significant impacts on

⁶¹ Social Value International. (2023). Glossary 2.0.

	wellbeing. Relevance is determined by the organisation's policy, needs of people affected, existing social norms and financial consequences. Significance is determined by outcome depth, scale, value and causality.
Net present value	The value in today's currency of money that is expected in the future minus the investment required to generate the activity
Net social return ratio	Net present value of the impact divided by total investment.
Outcome	Change(s) people experience as a result of an activity.
Outputs	The summary of activities in numbers.
Ranking	Putting outcomes in order of importance from lowest to highest, from the perspective of the stakeholders experiencing the changes. Ranking can be considered a form of equal weighting.
Scope	The activities, timescale, boundaries and type of account or analysis.
Sensitivity analysis	Process by which the sensitivity of an SROI model to changes in different variables is assessed.
Social return ratio	Total present value of the impact divided by total investment.
Social Value	The importance people place on different aspects of their wellbeing and the changes they experience (in these aspects of wellbeing).
Stakeholders / People Affected	People who experience impact. <i>Guide to SROI definition:</i> People, organisations or entities that experience change, whether positive or negative, as a result of the activity that is being analysed.
Valuation	An approach, process or methodology that assesses relative importance of outcomes to people affected. Valuations can be monetary or non-monetary.
Weighting	Giving outcomes a weighting (e.g. on a scale of 1 to 10) to allow comparisons to be made about relative importance. For example, an outcome with a weighting of 6 out of 10 would be considered three times as important as an outcome with a weighting of 2 out of 10.
Well Defined Outcome(s)	The specific aspect(s) of wellbeing that provide(s) the best opportunities to increase or decrease overall state of wellbeing. These should be identified and defined with the people affected.

Appendix B. Stakeholder Interview Support Resource



Understanding Change

What feels relevant and significant to you

Why we're asking this

We want to understand what feels different for you now compared to before being involved in youth work — from your point of view.

What we mean by...

- **Change:** something that feels different now compared to before
- **Relevant:** it matters to you
- **Significant:** it has made a real difference in your life

There are no right or wrong answers. Changes don't have to be big to matter.

Activity

What's changed?

How does it show up?

You can write, draw, map, or just talk this through.

When do you notice it?

Other Influences on Change

Who else contributed, and what might have happened anyway

Why we're asking this

Change rarely happens because of just one thing. This page is about recognising all the people, places, and things that may have played a part.

It's okay if this service wasn't responsible for everything.

Activity 1 - Who or what helped create these changes?

Use this space to fill in the people, organisations, environments, or experiences that supported these changes.



How much feels linked to other people or things?

How much of the change feels linked to this organisation?

Activity 2

What might have happened without this service?

Shade or divide this pie chart in a way that feels right to you.

There are no numbers or right proportions — this is just about what feels true to you

Relative Importance

What matters most to you

Why we're asking this

Some changes might all be important — but some matter more than others. This page helps us understand what feels most important from your perspective.

Activity

Start by thinking about the changes you identified earlier.

Work through the circles and add the changes that feel most important to you, other changes that matter, and anything else that changed. You can use more space for the changes that feel more important.

What feels most important to me ★

Other changes that matter

Anything else that changed

What feels important to you about these changes?

You can use this space to add any thoughts or reflections:

Appendix C. Follow Up Validation of Taiohi Outcomes

Note - The following outcome names were refined further following stakeholder feedback after the issue of the below survey. The naming conventions were updated as follows:

Old Outcome Name	New Outcome Name
Improved ability to keep self safe when mental distress escalates	Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm - Subgroup: Acute Suicidal Risk
Improved emotional wellbeing	Precursor to 'Increased will to live and reduced risk of suicidal harm'
Improved material stability	Improved ability to meet everyday needs
Greater financial security and wellbeing	Expanded Education and Employment Pathways
Greater life satisfaction	Strengthened ability to shape own life path (Whai Wāhitanga)

Taiohi Outcomes Survey

The following survey was issued to taiohi to participate in.

Taiohi Survey

Section 1: Before you start

We want to understand the kinds of changes youth work can create for taiohi (young people) - what matters most to you, what feels helpful, and what might be missing.

There are no right or wrong answers. Just answer in a way that feels true for you. You can skip any question you do not want to answer.

Your answers will be combined with other young people's responses so please do not include your full name or anyone else's name in written answers.

Some questions may touch on difficult experiences or emotions. If anything feels upsetting, you can take a break and talk with a trusted adult, youth worker, counsellor, or another support person.

* Indicates required question

Section 2: Check the overall story of change

We've talked to many taiohi who have been involved in youth work, and they shared some of the changes they've experienced.

Thinking about your experience with youth work, how true does each of these changes feel for you?

1. Change 1: Stronger network of relationships

*

What this means: Having more trusted, supportive, positive people around you, such as friends, youth workers, mentors, or people who feel like whānau/family.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Quite a lot
- ☐ A lot

2. Change 2: Positive community contribution *

What this means: Being a part of positive activities, groups, or spaces, and feeling able to help, support, or add value to others or the wider community.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Quite a lot
- ☐ A lot

3. Change 3: Stronger sense of belonging *

What this means: Feeling accepted, welcomed, and able to be yourself in a group, space, or community.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Quite a lot
- ☐ A lot

4. Change 4: Improved emotional wellbeing *

What this means: Feeling emotionally better overall, such as feeling calmer, happier, more settled, or more able to cope with what is happening in your life.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Quite a lot
- ☐ A lot

5. Change 5: Improved ability to keep self safe when mental distress escalates *

What this means: Feeling more able to keep going, stay safe, and see reasons to be here or stay connected, even during really hard times.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Quite a lot
- ☐ A lot

6. Change 6: Increased personal stability *

What this means: Life is feeling more settled, safer, and more manageable, with more routine, structure, and healthier day-to-day choices.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Quite a lot
- ☐ A lot

7. Change 7: Improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing *

What this means: Feeling more spiritually grounded, peaceful, connected, or aligned with your values, culture, faith, wairua, or mauri.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Quite a lot
- ☐ A lot

8. Change 8: Stronger sense of self *

What this means: Having a stronger understanding of who you are, what matters to you, your strengths, your voice, and the choices you want to make.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Quite a lot
- ☐ A lot

9. Change 9: Stronger connection to cultural identity *

What this means: Feeling more connected to your culture, language, tikanga, whakapapa, roots, or cultural practices, and feeling more pride or confidence in your cultural identity.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Quite a lot
- ☐ A lot

10. Change 10: Improved material stability *

What this means: Having more access to income, resources, housing stability, food, transport, or essentials needed for day-to-day life.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Quite a lot
- ☐ A lot

11. Change 11: Greater financial security and wellbeing *

What this means: Being more engaged in education, training, work, or future pathways that support future income, independence, and choice.

Mark only one oval.

☐ Not at all

☐ A little bit

☐ Quite a lot

☐ A lot

12. Change 12: Improved physical health and wellbeing *

What this means: Having healthier habits, more physical activity, improved fitness or physical capability, or reducing behaviours that harm your health.

Mark only one oval.

☐ Not at all

☐ A little bit

☐ Quite a lot

☐ A lot

13. Change 13: Greater life satisfaction *

What this means: Feeling more hopeful and positive about the future, with more direction, choice, opportunities, and ability to shape your own path.

Mark only one oval.

☐ Not at all

☐ A little bit

☐ Quite a lot

☐ A lot

Section 3: Your most important changes

You have 100 points to distribute to represent what matters most to you.

Give more points to the changes that matter most

Give fewer or 0 points to things that don't matter as much

📌 Most people use round numbers like 10, 20, or 30 — you don't need to be exact.

📌 It's completely okay to give 0 points — not everything needs to get points.

📌 Try to focus your points on the things that really stand out to you.

⚠️ Important:

You only have 100 points in total — you can't go over.

📌 Before moving on, check your total adds up to 100

14. Stronger network of positive relationships *

Having more trusted, supportive, positive people around you, such as friends, youth workers, mentors, or people who feel like whānau/family.

I have more trusted and supportive people around me.

15. Positive community contribution *

Being a part of positive activities, groups, or spaces, and feeling able to help, support, or add value to others or the wider community.

I feel able to contribute positively to my community.

16. *

Stronger sense of belonging

Feeling accepted, welcomed, and able to be yourself in a group, space, or community.

I feel accepted and like I belong at my youth work organisation.

17. **Improved emotional wellbeing**

*

Feeling emotionally better overall, such as feeling calmer, happier, more settled, or more able to cope with what is happening in your life.

I feel better able to cope and manage my emotions.

18. **Increased desire to live**

*

Feeling more able to keep going, stay safe, and see reasons to be here or stay connected, even during really hard times.

I feel more able to stay safe and keep going during very difficult times.

19. **Increased stability**

*

Life is feeling more settled, safer, and more manageable, with more routine, structure, and healthier day-to-day choices.

My life feels more settled, stable, and manageable.

20. **Improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing**

*

Feeling more spiritually grounded, peaceful, connected, or aligned with your values, culture, faith, wairua, or mauri.

I feel more spiritually grounded, settled, or connected.

21. **Stronger sense of self**

*

Having a stronger understanding of who you are, what matters to you, your strengths, your voice, and the choices you want to make.

I have a stronger understanding of who I am and what matters to me.

22. **Stronger connection to cultural identity** *
- Feeling more connected to your culture, language, tikanga, whakapapa, roots, or cultural practices, and feeling more pride or confidence in your cultural identity.
I feel more deeply connected to my culture.
-
23. **Improved material stability** *
- Having more access to income, resources, housing stability, food, transport, or essentials needed for day-to-day life.
I have enough income or resources to meet my day-to-day needs.
-
24. **Greater financial security and wellbeing** *
- Being more engaged in education, training, work, or future pathways that support future income, independence, and choice.
I feel more on track toward education, work, or future financial security.
-
25. **Improved physical health and wellbeing** *
- Having healthier habits, more physical activity, improved fitness or physical capability, or reducing behaviours that harm your health.
My physical health, activity, or daily health choices have improved.
-
26. **Greater life satisfaction** *
- Feeling more hopeful and positive about the future, with more direction, choice, opportunities, and ability to shape your own path.
I feel more positive about my future and my ability to shape it.
-

Section 4: Final open-text questions (OPTIONAL)

27. Why did you give the most points to the change(s) you chose?

28. Is there anything else you want us to understand about how youth work creates change for young people?

Section 5: About you

29. **Prior Research Involvement**

Is this your first time taking part in this project?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

30. **Select your age band ***

Mark only one oval.

☐ 12-14

☐ 15-17

☐ 18-20

☐ 21-24

31. **Ethnicity / cultural identity ***

Select all that apply:

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Māori
- ☐ Samoan
- ☐ Tongan
- ☐ Cook Islands Māori
- ☐ Niuean
- ☐ Tokelauan
- ☐ Fijian
- ☐ Pākehā / NZ European
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Indian
- ☐ Middle Eastern
- ☐ African
- ☐ Other: _____

32. **Gender ***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Woman / Girl
- ☐ Man / Boy
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Gender diverse
- ☐ Gender fluid
- ☐ Takatāpui
- ☐ Transgender
- ☐ Cisgender
- ☐ Agender
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other: _____

Youth Work Impact Project Survey

The following survey was issued to youth workers to understand in their experience how many taiohi experienced the material outcomes and for how long the outcomes would last for the taiohi.

Youth Work Impact Project Survey: Youth Work Outcomes

Kia ora,

Ngā mihi for being part of this mahi and helping us understand the impact of youth work for taiohi in Aotearoa.

This survey asks for your views based on your experience working with young people.

We're interested in your honest judgement based on what you've seen in practice.

Please answer based on:

- your experience across your youth work career
- especially with the groups of taiohi you know best.

You do not need exact numbers.

If you're unsure about a question, or don't feel you have enough experience to answer confidently, please choose:

- "Don't know / not enough experience"
instead of guessing.

Your responses will be combined with those of other members.

* Indicates required question

Outcomes for taiohi

Thinking about the taiohi you've worked with across your career, how often do you see the following outcomes through youth work?

Please answer based on the young people and situations you know best.

1. **Stronger network of positive relationships** *

Taiohi have more trusted, supportive, positive people around them, such as friends, youth workers, mentors, or people who feel like whānau/family.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Very few (<10%)
- ☐ A small number (~25%)
- ☐ Some (~40%)
- ☐ About half (~50%)
- ☐ Many (~75%)
- ☐ Most (85%+)
- ☐ Don't know / not enough experience

2. **Positive contribution to community** *

Taiohi are a part of positive activities, groups, or spaces, and feeling able to help, support, or add value to others or the wider community.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Very few (<10%)
- ☐ A small number (~25%)
- ☐ Some (~40%)
- ☐ About half (~50%)
- ☐ Many (~75%)
- ☐ Most (85%+)
- ☐ Don't know / not enough experience

3. **Improved ability to stay safe when mental distress escalates** *

Taiohi feel more able to keep going, stay safe, and see reasons to be here or stay connected, even during really hard times.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Very few (<10%)
- ☐ A small number (~25%)
- ☐ Some (~40%)
- ☐ About half (~50%)
- ☐ Many (~75%)
- ☐ Most (85%+)
- ☐ Don't know / not enough experience

4. **Improved emotional wellbeing** *

Taiohi feel emotionally better overall, such as feeling calmer, happier, more settled, or more able to cope with what is happening in their life.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Very few (<10%)
- ☐ A small number (~25%)
- ☐ Some (~40%)
- ☐ About half (~50%)
- ☐ Many (~75%)
- ☐ Most (85%+)
- ☐ Don't know / not enough experience

5. **Increased personal stability** *

Life is feeling more settled, safer, and more manageable for taiohi, with more routine, structure, and healthier day-to-day choices.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Very few (<10%)
- ☐ A small number (~25%)
- ☐ Some (~40%)
- ☐ About half (~50%)
- ☐ Many (~75%)
- ☐ Most (85%+)
- ☐ Don't know / not enough experience

6. **Improved ability to meet everyday needs** *

Taiohi have more access to income, resources, housing stability, food, transport, or essentials needed for their day-to-day life.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Very few (<10%)
- ☐ A small number (~25%)
- ☐ Some (~40%)
- ☐ About half (~50%)
- ☐ Many (~75%)
- ☐ Most (85%+)
- ☐ Don't know / not enough experience

7. **Improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing** *

Taiohi feel more spiritually grounded, peaceful, connected, or aligned with their values, culture, faith, wairua, or mauri.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Very few (<10%)
- ☐ A small number (~25%)
- ☐ Some (~40%)
- ☐ About half (~50%)
- ☐ Many (~75%)
- ☐ Most (85%+)
- ☐ Don't know / not enough experience

8. **Stronger connection to cultural identity** *

Taiohi feel more connected to their culture, language, tikanga, whakapapa, roots, or cultural practices, and feeling more pride or confidence in their cultural identity.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Very few (<10%)
- ☐ A small number (~25%)
- ☐ Some (~40%)
- ☐ About half (~50%)
- ☐ Many (~75%)
- ☐ Most (85%+)
- ☐ Don't know / not enough experience

9. **Stronger sense of self** *

Taiohi have a stronger understanding of who they are, what matters to them, their strengths, their voice, and the choices they want to make.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Very few (<10%)
- ☐ A small number (~25%)
- ☐ Some (~40%)
- ☐ About half (~50%)
- ☐ Many (~75%)
- ☐ Most (85%+)
- ☐ Don't know / not enough experience

10. **Stronger sense of belonging** *

Taiohi feel accepted, welcomed, and able to be themselves in a group, space, or community.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Very few (<10%)
- ☐ A small number (~25%)
- ☐ Some (~40%)
- ☐ About half (~50%)
- ☐ Many (~75%)
- ☐ Most (85%+)
- ☐ Don't know / not enough experience

11. **Greater financial security and wellbeing** *

Taiohi become more engaged in their education, training, work, or future pathways that support future income, independence, and choice.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Very few (<10%)
- ☐ A small number (~25%)
- ☐ Some (~40%)
- ☐ About half (~50%)
- ☐ Many (~75%)
- ☐ Most (85%+)
- ☐ Don't know / not enough experience

12. **Strengthened ability to shape their own life path** *

Taiohi feel more able to shape and pursue the direction of their own lives. They have greater confidence, are more willing to use their voice, have more choice, and have greater clarity about what matters to them. They feel more able to speak up for themselves, advocate for what they need, make decisions, set goals, and take steps toward the future they want.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Very few (<10%)
- ☐ A small number (~25%)
- ☐ Some (~40%)
- ☐ About half (~50%)
- ☐ Many (~75%)
- ☐ Most (85%+)
- ☐ Don't know / not enough experience

13. **Improved physical health and wellbeing** *

Taiohi have healthier habits, more physical activity, improved fitness or physical capability, or reducing behaviours that harm their health.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Very few (<10%)
- ☐ A small number (~25%)
- ☐ Some (~40%)
- ☐ About half (~50%)
- ☐ Many (~75%)
- ☐ Most (85%+)
- ☐ Don't know / not enough experience

Different experiences for different groups

14. Are there any outcomes that are much more common or less common for certain groups of taiohi, based on your experience? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No *Skip to question 16*
- ☐ Not sure *Skip to question 16*

Different experiences across groups

15. Please tell us about any outcomes that are different for certain groups of taiohi. *

Only answer for groups you have direct experience working with.

Please include:

- the outcome,
- the group of taiohi,
- and how their experience differs.

16. Based on your experience, how long do these outcomes often last after taiohi leave a youth programme? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Less than 6 months	6-12 months	1-2 years	3-5 years	More than 5 years	Not something I've seen enough to answer
Stronger network of positive relationships	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Positive community contribution	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improved ability to keep self safe when mental distress escalates	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improved emotional wellbeing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increased personal stability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improved ability to meet everyday needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improved wairua / spiritual wellbeing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Stronger connection to cultural identity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Stronger sense of self	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Stronger sense of belonging	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Greater life satisfaction	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improved physical health and wellbeing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Greater financial security and wellbeing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

17. Please share any **patterns or examples** you've noticed about why some outcomes last longer than others.

For example:

- *Are some outcomes easier to maintain over time?*
- *What helps outcomes continue after youth work ends?*
- *Are there outcomes that tend to fade without ongoing support?*

About your experience

18. Which groups of taiohi have you worked with most across your career? *

This helps us understand the context behind your responses.

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Urban taiohi
- ☐ Rural taiohi
- ☐ Taiohi Māori
- ☐ Pasifika taiohi
- ☐ Asian taiohi
- ☐ Taiohi from migrant backgrounds
- ☐ Rainbow taiohi
- ☐ Taiohi whaikaha (young people with disabilities, health conditions, or access needs)
- ☐ Taiohi experiencing mental distress
- ☐ Taiohi involved with care and protection systems
- ☐ Taiohi involved with youth justice systems
- ☐ Other: _____

19. What kind of youth work do you mainly do? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Community-based youth work
- ☐ School-based youth work
- ☐ Mental health or wellbeing support
- ☐ Cultural programmes
- ☐ Housing or social support
- ☐ Youth justice work
- ☐ Peer-led programmes
- ☐ Advocacy or systems work
- ☐ Faith-based programmes
- ☐ Other: _____

20. How long have you worked in youth work? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Less than 2 years
- ☐ 2–5 years
- ☐ 6–10 years
- ☐ 11–15 years
- ☐ More than 15 years