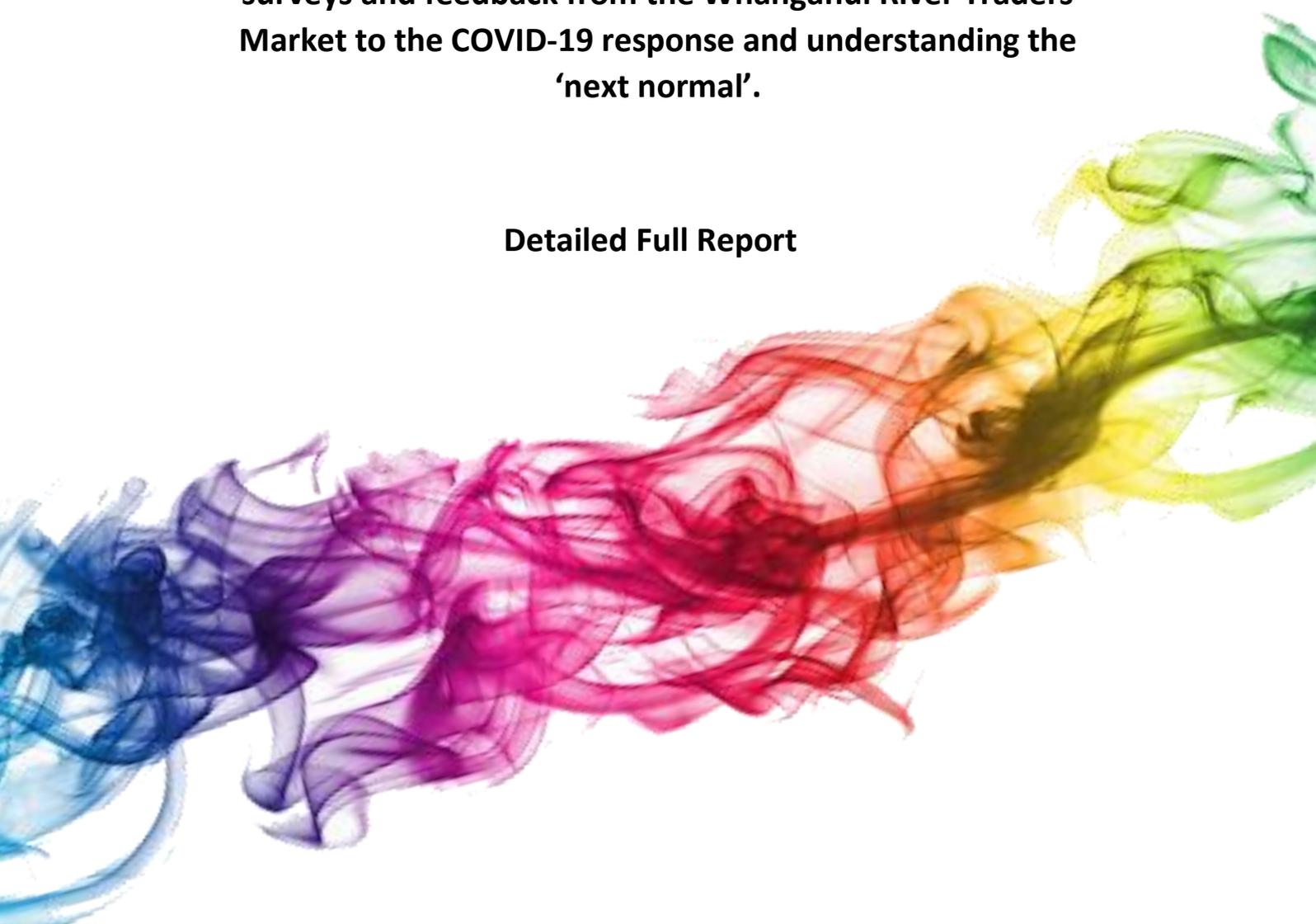


# COVID-19

## From Response to Recovery – the next normal.

Cross sectional design and Thematic analysis of 372 individual surveys and feedback from the Whanganui River Traders Market to the COVID-19 response and understanding the 'next normal'.

Detailed Full Report



## Abstract

This report seeks to provide further clarity to the Reset, Redesign – Recovery team in terms of understanding what the ‘next normal’ looks like to the people of the Whanganui DHB rohe. This document follows on from the Strategic Leaders analysis and merges and provides interpretation to 372 Community Survey responses and feedback from the Whanganui River Traders market Day through a cross sectional study design and thematic analysis. These forms of analysis allow us to determine the relationships between individual survey response concepts and compare them with the wider survey data. By using a cross sectional study design and thematic analysis, there is the possibility to link the various concepts of the individuals and organisations and compare these with the data that was gathered through the strategic leaders interviews and continues to be gathered through the focus groups and wider community engagement.

Report Team

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## Background

The impact of COVID-19 on New Zealand has been far-reaching and profound. As at the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2020, about 1,757 people have contracted the virus and 22 people have died. Across the globe, over 26 million people have contracted the virus and over 858,000 people have died. Health systems have been overwhelmed in many countries and the economic impact is huge and unfolding. The global pandemic and the measures taken to control it have disrupted the lives of all New Zealanders. This has created the need to support the health and wellbeing of the whole population and also ensure we support and address the needs of those most severely impacted, whether that be health and wellness, socially or economically.

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested all aspects of New Zealand society, but with every emergency new opportunities are created. A Whanganui integrated emergency operations centre was opened on the 16th of March 2020 in response to the pandemic. This brought the health, social and economic aspects into pandemic response. As this response moved towards recovery, an Integrated Recovery Team was established to lead the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. The intention was to plan for recovery from COVID-19 by thinking strategically about 'reset and re-design'. The Kaupapa behind this helped form the Integrated Recovery Team (IRT), which also includes Ruapehu District Council and Rangitikei District Council, alongside iwi, government and non-government organisations and other community partners.

As the IRT moved from crisis response to recovery mode, it canvassed the community, both individuals and organisations, about their experience of lockdown, what could be done better throughout our region to support people in future, and how organisations can best work together to achieve the best outcomes for our communities.

The next step in this process is to use this feedback, as well as ongoing critical reflection with community groups, to develop a more cohesive structure where health, community, social and economic organisations work together on achieving the aspirations shared with us by the people through this survey and our wider community engagement.

## Method

In this report, a cross-sectional study was designed to assess the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic for members of the community. This study was conducted through the use of self-administered surveys and invitational feedback at the Whanganui River Traders Market. Analysis of the data was conducted through both descriptive and thematic analysis.

### Participants

All participants were self-identified and participated either through completion of the survey online, via a paper copy, or by engaging with the Integrated Recovery Team at the Whanganui River Traders Market. Participation in the survey had representation from across a range of genders, ages, ethnicity and territorial location. The individual surveys were available online on the Whanganui District Health Board and Whanganui District Council websites, with media coverage directing people to the survey to participate.

### Data Collection

#### *Individual Surveys*

A self-administered survey was developed which asked questions about experiences of COVID-19 and checked on personal welfare (see appendix 1). The survey was then subjected to a review and validation process by members the Integrated Recovery Team to ensure that the survey was sufficiently comprehensive. A pilot of the survey was then carried out with members of the Tamaūpoko Community Led Development team to determine the validity, reliability and clarity of the questionnaire. The feedback was analysed, and a finalised survey was created accordingly.

The survey variables covered demographics and welfare questions before asking about COVID-19 experiences. Eligible participants were self-nominated through participation in the surveys or market, and the objective of the engagement was explained. The participants' names were not recorded (unless they requested contact at the end of the survey), and data kept confidential to protect the privacy of the participants. Informed consent was assumed from all participants through engagement participation and all responses were kept anonymous.

#### *Whanganui River Traders Market Feedback*

The Integrated Recovery Team set up a site at the Whanganui River Traders Market on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2020. The team worked in three shifts from 0700hrs through to 1300hrs and invited people attending the market to review the feedback that we had received from the focus groups up till the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2020, and then provide support to or dissonance from the existing feedback. They were further invited to provide additional feedback on their experiences of COVID-19. Four questions were asked of them:

- What do you think worked well during lockdown?
- What were your main concerns during lockdown?
- What stopped that you missed?
- What would you like to keep following lockdown?

People who we engaged with were encouraged to write on post it notes and stick them to the feedback board (figure 1), or place longer responses in the response boxes provided. Demographic information was not collected for the Whanganui River Traders Market feedback.

Figure 1: Members of the Integrated Recovery Team and the feedback board at the Whanganui River Traders Market



### Data Analysis

The depth and richness of the data is best reflected through the use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. In order to objectively analyse the survey and market responses, descriptive demographics are presented and then the non-binary question responses were put through a text analyser to provide the exact number of times that a phrase or word was mentioned throughout the survey responses and market feedback. We then conducted a qualitative analysis of the survey and market responses by way of thematic analysis. This was to ensure that the stories, experiences and concepts provided insights by way of themes, into the areas of importance for the members of our community.

### Text Analysis

Text Analysis, sometimes called text mining, is a type of quantitative analysis. Text mining is the process of exploring and analysing large amounts of unstructured text data aided by software that can identify concepts, patterns, topics, keywords and other attributes in the data. For the purposes of this report, we have structured this analysis as a complete word analysis (number of times mentioned) and an artificial intelligence (AI) key theme identification based on the text analysis. The key theme analysis is reported in terms of identified themes and percentages. These percentages can total greater than 100, due to the text analysis enabling sentences to be applied against multiple themes where appropriate. These themes were then collated into larger theme groupings where the same topics were mentioned.

## Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis is a type of qualitative analysis. It is used to analyse and present themes (patterns) that relate to the surveys and feedback. It illustrates the data in detail among diverse subjects via interpretations. Thematic Analysis is considered most appropriate for studies that seek to discover using interpretations - providing a systematic element to data analysis. It allows us to associate an analysis of the frequency of a theme with one of the whole contents. Thematic Analysis gives an opportunity to understand the possibility of other issues more widely. Namey et al. (2008) stated, *“Thematic [analysis] moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas.”*

Thematic Analysis allows us to determine subjectively the relationships between concepts and compare them with the replicated data. By using thematic analysis, there is the possibility to link the various concepts and opinions expressed in the survey and feedback and compare these with the data that has been gathered in focus groups, strategic leader interviews and wider community engagement.

The process for thematic analysis will follow a method of coding and verifying triangulation thematic mapping. Guest et al. (2012) describe four basic steps in undertaking thematic analysis:

1. Familiarisation with, and organisation of, survey responses and market feedback.
2. Identification of possible themes (coding)
3. Review and analysis of themes to identify structures (coding and thematic analysis)
4. Construction of themes, constantly checking against new data (thematic analysis and triangulation)

## Coding

The data consisted of the direct quotes taken from the survey and market feedback. Drawing on principles and techniques from grounded theory, the data were read and reread several times and open coding was used to initially mark parts of the survey responses and market feedback that suggested a theme. The constant comparison method was used to determine whether a chunk of text would be placed in an existing theme or a new one. During this phase, we reviewed the coded data extracts for each theme to consider whether they appear to form a coherent pattern. The validity of individual themes was considered to determine whether the themes accurately reflect the meanings evident in the data set as a whole (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this phase, some themes did not have enough data to support them or the data was too diverse. Some themes collapsed into each other while other themes needed to be broken down into separate themes. Selected themes needed to be refined into themes that were specific enough to be discrete and broad enough to capture a set of the ideas contained in numerous text segments.

## Verifying triangulation thematic mapping

This process consisted of having two other people within the team read and then re-read the survey responses and market feedback notes and undertake a thematic mapping process. These were then matched against the initial thematic analysis to ensure that the themes were consistent across the verifiers and the initial reported themes. If they matched, the theme was identified as a core theme, if they did not match these were moderated to either form part of a larger theme or became a subtheme within this report.

## Results

### Descriptive Analysis

#### Demographics

A total of 372 individuals completed the individual community survey and we received 111 unique feedback responses at the Whanganui River market. Participant socio-demographic data was obtained during the survey. Percentage of the cohort who fit into each category has also been included.

ETHNICITY PROFILE		
Ethnicity	Count	Percentage
NZ European/Pakeha	265	71
NZ Māori	57	15
Pasifika	5	1
Asian	4	1
Other	40	11

LOCATION PROFILE		
Location	Count	Percentage
Rangitikei	74	20
Ruapehu	26	7
Rural Whanganui (including the river road)	31	8
Whanganui City	241	65

#### Closed Questions

The survey presented a number of closed questions to ascertain the levels of information and comfort that members of the community had during the Level 4 Lockdown. Follow-up exploratory questions were then presented to ask the participants to think and reflect on what things could have been done better.

#### **Question 1: In the lead up to lockdown Level 4 did you receive enough information about what was happening in your location?**

Of those surveyed, 300 participants (81 percent) outlined that they received enough information about the lockdown in their region. Of the 72 participants that responded that they did not receive enough information, 15 were located in the Rangitikei, 8 in the Ruapehu, 45 in Whanganui City and 4 in the Whanganui Rural area. Furthermore, of those who did not receive enough information, 24 percent were Māori, 4 percent Pasifika, 1 percent other and 71 percent were NZ European/Pakeha.

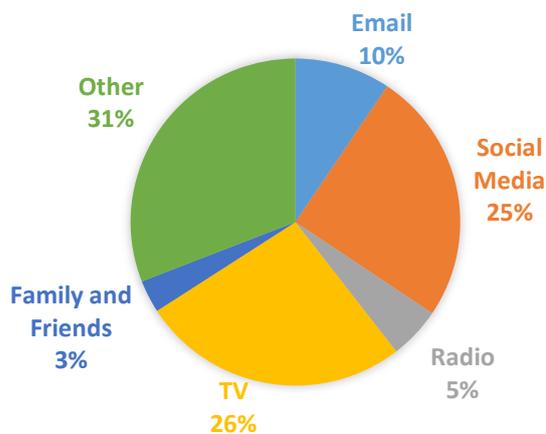
#### **Question 2: During Lockdown level 4 did you know where to go for support and information?**

337 participants (91 percent) acknowledged that they knew where to go for support and information during the lockdown. The majority of those participants who did not know where to go were located in the Whanganui City (60 percent) and NZ European/Pakeha (71 percent).

### Question 3: Where did you go to get this information?

Many of the respondents (31 percent) sourced their information from sources 'other' than Social Media, Radio, TV, Family and Friends or Email (figure 2). Those participants who indicated 'Other' outlined that they got their information from the COVID-19 website, Local provider (i.e. Balance) and Council websites, and a combination of multiple sources "People seldom (hopefully) get information from only one source". Three participants indicated that they received no information at all (no access to TV, radio, internet etc), and two participants outlined that the flyer they received rurally (Rangitikei) didn't arrive until week three of lockdown.

Figure 2: Source of information during COVID-19 Lockdown



### Question 4: Did you request support during this period?

The majority of the participants (89 percent – 330 participants) indicated that they did not request support during the Level 4 lockdown. Of the 42 who did, 25 were located in Whanganui City, 12 in Rangitikei, 3 in Ruapehu and 2 in the Whanganui Rural area. Although Māori comprised 15 percent of the overall participants, they represented more than 28 percent of those that requested support, with the majority of others requesting support (54 percent) identifying as NZ European/Pakeha. The Integrated Recovery Team did some further exploratory questioning around support throughout the Level 4 lockdown, these results are presented in questions 6 and 7 – in the survey, these were presented in sequence as shown in Appendix 1.

### Question 5: Did you suffer from anxiety or stress as a result of the Level 4 Lockdown?

A significant number of participants (40 percent – 150 participants) indicated that they suffered from anxiety or stress during the Level 4 Lockdown. Over half of the Pasifika (3 out of 5 participants) and Māori participants (29 participants - 51 percent) indicated that they suffered from anxiety or stress during the lockdown, this is in contrast to 37 percent of NZ European/Pakeha. The Integrated Recovery Team did some further exploratory questioning around support throughout the Level 4 lockdown, these results are presented in questions 8 and 9 – in the survey, as with the questions around support, these were presented in sequence as shown in Appendix 1.

## Exploratory Questions

### **Question 6: If yes [to question 4] who did you request support from and how was this experience for you?**

#### *Text Analysis*

The text analysis for this question had 894 words analysed. The breakdown of the top five words mentioned were:

1. Council
2. Civil Defence
3. MSD
4. Te Oranganui
5. Great

Collectively they attributed 6 percent of the total word count.

#### *Key theme identification based on text analysis:*

##### Main Topics:

- Support for local government agencies [68.31%]
- Wages [29.28%]
- Support from local non-government agencies [34.16%]
- Neighbourhoods working together [31.72%]

#### *Thematic Analysis Summary*

The coding of the survey data for this question resulted in a total of 48 coded units. Through this coded data, two themes were developed. The themes combined both the positive and negative reported experiences. The themes were:

1. Support from agencies
2. Neighbourhoods working together.

The themes are further outlined in the discussion section of this report.

### **Question 7: Do you have any suggestions on how the support could be improved?**

#### *Text Analysis*

The text analysis for this question had 5318 words analysed. The breakdown of the top five words mentioned were:

1. Information
2. Community
3. Access
4. Communication
5. Confusion

Collectively they attributed 5 percent of the total word count.

#### *Key theme identification based on text analysis:*

##### Main Topics:

- Clarity of communication for support [58.73%]
- Unmet Community needs/Making access easy for those with a need [38.45%]

### *Thematic Analysis Summary*

The coding of the survey data for this question resulted in a total of 202 coded units. Through this coded data, two themes were developed. The themes were:

1. Knowledge of where to get support and communication
2. Understanding our communities needs and addressing them.

The themes are further outlined in the discussion section of this report.

### **Question 8: What were your main concerns during Level 4?**

#### *Text Analysis*

The text analysis for this question had 4848 words analysed. The breakdown of the top five words mentioned were:

1. Family
2. Work
3. Health
4. Support
5. Safety

Collectively they attributed 9 percent of the total word count.

#### *Key theme identification based on text analysis:*

##### Main Topics:

- Concerns for, and missing family and friends [50.48%]
- Fears for safety [44.27%]
- Change in working conditions (work from home or loss of work) [16.04%]

### *Thematic Analysis Summary*

The coding of the survey data for this question resulted in a total of 200 coded units. Through this coded data, two themes were developed. The themes combined both the positive and negative reported experiences. The themes were:

1. Concerns for safety – Individual, whānau and friends
2. Change to working conditions.

The themes are further outlined in the discussion section of this report.

### **Question 9: What were the causes of your anxiety or stress?**

#### *Text Analysis*

The text analysis for this question had 2295 words analysed. The breakdown of the top five words mentioned were:

1. Family
2. Work
3. Children
4. Uncertainty
5. COVID

Collectively they attributed 6.3 percent of the total word count.

*Key theme identification based on text analysis:*

Main Topics:

- Concerns for the safety of whānau and friends [61.26%]
- Uncertainty around the virus [56.47%]

*Thematic Analysis Summary*

The coding of the survey data for this question resulted in a total of 200 coded units. Through this coded data, two themes were developed. The themes combined both the positive and negative reported experiences. The themes were:

1. Concerns for safety – Individual, whānau and friends
2. Uncertainty around the virus.

The themes are further outlined in the discussion section of this report.

**Question 10: What new things happened during lockdown that you think worked well and the Whanganui DHB or Councils should keep doing?**

*Text Analysis*

The text analysis for this question had 5438 words analysed. The breakdown of the top five words mentioned were:

1. Coordinated
2. Together
3. 0800 [Number]
4. Testing
5. Pop-ups

Collectively they attributed 8 percent of the total word count.

*Key theme identification based on text analysis:*

Main Topics:

- Coordination of Agencies [78.09%]
- Community Services in the community [58.59%]

*Thematic Analysis Summary*

The coding of the survey data for this question resulted in a total of 204 coded units. Through this coded data, two themes were developed. The themes combined both the positive and negative reported experiences. The themes were:

1. Co-ordination between agencies is the new Business as Usual
2. Services to the community should be delivered in the community.

The themes are further outlined in the discussion section of this report.

**Question 11: What new things happened that you think Whanganui DHB or Councils should stop doing?**

*Text Analysis*

The text analysis for this question had 2572 words analysed. The breakdown of the top five words mentioned were:

1. Nothing
2. DHB
3. Council
4. Excuses
5. Cancelling

Collectively they attributed 5.8 percent of the total word count.

*Key theme identification based on text analysis:*

Main Topic:

- The main response was “nothing, NA or Nil”, which contributed to over 60% of the text.
- Cessation of services (Recycling, Operations, Visitors etc.) [32.08%]

#### *Thematic Analysis Summary*

The coding of the survey data for this question resulted in a total of 124 coded units. Through this coded data, one theme was developed. The theme combined both the positive and negative reported experiences. The theme was:

1. Changes to our ways of operating.

The theme is further outlined in the discussion section of this report.

**Question 12: What are some of the services that the Whanganui DHB or Councils used to do, that due to COVID19 we stopped providing, that we should now restart?**

#### *Text Analysis*

The text analysis for this question had 2725 words analysed. The breakdown of the top five words mentioned were:

1. Recycling
2. Kindness
3. Food [rescue]
4. Services
5. Appointments

Collectively they attributed 8.6 percent of the total word count.

*Key theme identification based on text analysis:*

Main Topics:

- Restarting of Services (Library, Recycling, Surgery, Food Rescue etc.) [68.47%]
- Suite of Communication Mediums (Social, Paper and TV/Radio) [18.23%]

#### *Thematic Analysis Summary*

The coding of the survey data for this question resulted in a total of 133 coded units. Through this coded data, two themes were developed. The themes combined both the positive and negative reported experiences. The themes were:

1. Restarting services as quickly as possible
2. Ensuring that communications are through multiple mediums, not just online.

The themes are further outlined in the discussion section of this report.

**Question 13: What are some of the services that Whanganui DHB or Councils used to provide, that due to COVID19 we stopped doing, that we should stop doing permanently?**

*Text Analysis*

The text analysis for this question had 1471 words analysed. The breakdown of the top five words mentioned were:

1. Nothing
2. Top-down
3. Bureaucratic
4. Travel [to Whanganui City]
5. Appointments [face-to-face]

Collectively they attributed 7.4 percent of the total word count.

*Key theme identification based on text analysis:*

Main Topics:

- The main response was “nothing, NA or Nil”, which contributed to over 66% of the text.
- Stop bureaucratic/top-down models and become more community centric [54.05%]
- Offer suites of services via different delivery models (not just face-to-face). [17.76%]

*Thematic Analysis Summary*

The coding of the survey data for this question resulted in a total of 51 coded units. Through this coded data, two themes were developed. The themes combined both the positive and negative reported experiences. The themes were:

1. Supporting community-led solutions
2. Changes to our ways of operating.

The themes are further outlined in the discussion section of this report.

**Question 14: What else are we missing – here is your chance to tell us what we can do better**

*Text Analysis*

The text analysis for this question had 5373 words analysed. The breakdown of the top five words mentioned were:

1. People
2. Community
3. Support
4. Local
5. Rates

Collectively they attributed 9.3 percent of the total word count.

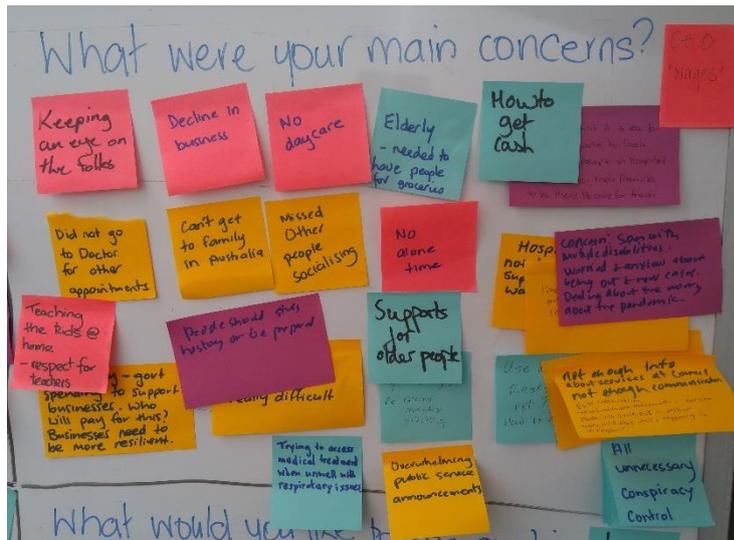
*Key theme identification based on text analysis:*

Main Topics:

- The need to work across the system (Community) [50.43%]
- Acknowledge and Support Local [33.52%]
- Rates freezes [26.41%]
- Sustainability – economic, environment and physical [23.44%]



## What were your main concerns?



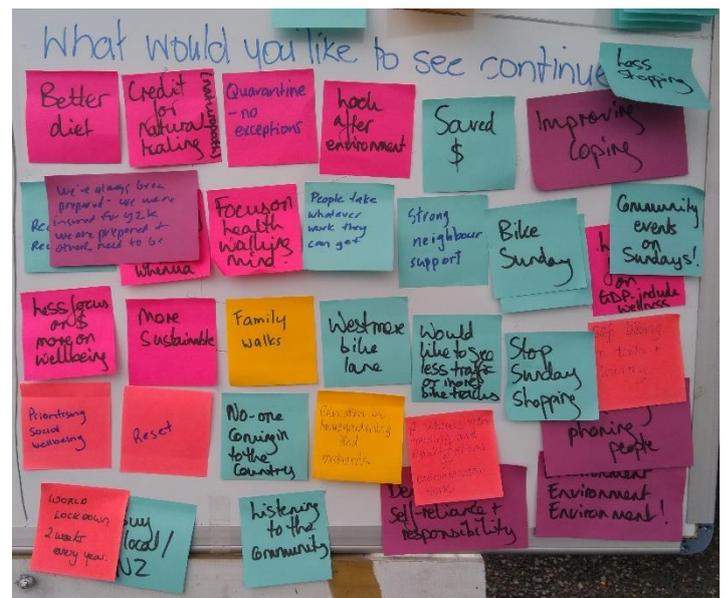
30 pieces of individual feedback was received in conjunction to this question. The primary themes from the feedback were:

- Couldn't see family, no socialising
- Support for older people and people with disabilities.
- Decline in business, job uncertainty.
- Overwhelming and conflicting messaging.
- No school and childcare.
- Health – not being able to see loved ones in hospital and missed doctor's appointments/surgeries.

## What would you like to see continue?

35 pieces of individual feedback was received in conjunction to this question. The primary themes from the feedback were:

- Focus on wellness and better health and hygiene.
- Spending time with the whānau and being able to reset.
- More sustainability, recycling, education in home gardening, self-reliance, looking after the environment
- People connecting, strong neighbourhood support, community events and listening to the community.



## Discussion - Themes

The analysis of the survey responses and the river market led to the formulation of four core themes and nine subthemes. These themes were:

### *Core themes*

- Concerns about COVID – the uncertainty.
- Changes in the way we operate as organisations.
- Understanding and supporting our communities
- Ensuring our communities are informed

### *Subthemes*

- Changes in the way we operate as organisations.
  - Co-ordination between agencies.
  - Restarting services as quickly as possible.
- Understanding and supporting our communities
  - Understanding our communities needs and addressing them.
  - Supporting community-led solutions and how these are delivered in the community.
  - Support whānau, communities and neighbourhoods to work together.
- Ensuring our communities are informed
  - Ensuring that communications are through multiple mediums
  - Knowledge of where to get support and its communication
- Concerns about COVID – the uncertainty.
  - Concerns for whānau and friends
  - Uncertainty around the virus.

### *Changes in the way we operate as organisations*

As organisations, communities and individuals, we seek comfort in what is known, and what is 'tried and true' – the comfort zone (White, 2009), and therefore want to return to 'Business as usual' as quickly as possible. Throughout the survey responses and market feedback, the 'new normal' which seeks out collaborative engagement inter-agency and with the community, was a consistent theme. Whilst resetting services that were identified as working well pre-COVID; i.e. Surgery, Recycling and Rubbish Collection and Libraries; was outlined as important, further support was provided that working in organisational and territorial 'silos' was not only not optimal, but was not representative of the community. The clear need to work in a more flexible, agile and integrated manner was outlined from how we interact with individuals and whānau, through to engaging with Iwi, non-government organisations and providers, and that a greater emphasis on a community-led, less bureaucratic method of operating is required.

#### *Co-ordination between agencies.*

The thematic analysis of the 24 strategic leaders emphasised the important role that the intersectoral partners, Iwi and our partners in care had in working together - the ability for agile, flexible and less bureaucratic decision making to occur, the breaking down of organisational and territorial barriers and the capacity to work for the benefit of the community. Throughout the

survey responses and the market feedback, the same emphasis and acknowledgement that agencies, organisations and the community need to work together to support our communities became clear.

*“Collaboration & cooperation of people, groups & agencies. Early engagement, response & action on-the-ground by Iwi. Open communication to coordinate service & execute within communities to support those vulnerable & in-need.”*

*“Working in collaboration with all our local organisations”*

*“Good information flow - working collaboratively.”*

*“[There was much] better communication and collaboration across sectors (e.g. DHB with regional health network (WRHN) and community providers such as Age Concern and Sport Whanganui)”*

*“Working together and working with Iwi in a Whanganui-wide collective response.”*

*“Iwi network support - Te Ranga Tupua forum. Being kept up to date.”*

*“the links between Council, Iwi and Ministry agencies (MSD and Police) was very good. The Iwi hub response had a very good system that anyone could have engaged with”*

*“Strong coordination and information sharing between all agencies and services must continue. No more isolated responses which means no duplication of services, and equally no gaps in service delivery”.*

*“There’s always a lot of ‘talk’ about breaking down the silos and working across agencies/organisations. It’s difficult to know how much this really happened prior to or even during COVID but my perception is that there was a concerted effort during the pandemic response. That has got to be a more efficient and effective way to think/ plan/fund/work.”*

*“Local agencies and services, being able to swiftly provide a coordinated service along with the same message.”*

*“Great collaboration with sharing of information across print media and on social media”*

#### [Restarting services as quickly as possible.](#)

The IRT, organisational and provider leaders and members of the community acknowledge that there are many services and businesses that were operating pre-COVID that needed to return to normal as quickly as possible – resetting of services. However, it was further recognised that simply returning to business as usual in all aspects without considering what the impact of COVID had on the services, or the ability to change/be agile/more community-led was an incorrect course of action (or inaction). The IRT identified this early on and focused on reset, redesign – recovery and set about creating a strategic direction, outlining:

**Reset** was about acknowledging the services and systems that are in place and existing that are working well and are strategically aligned; enabling them to reset as quickly as possible.

**Redesign** was about identifying opportunities to deliver services and systems differently. This included redeveloping, redesigning or ceasing existing services, or developing and designing new services which are more aligned to our communities’ needs. It is about working closely with our communities to identify their social, economic and health/wellness goals and aspirations, and supporting and enabling thriving communities.

**Recovery** meant the coordinated efforts and processes to bring about the immediate, medium and long-term holistic regeneration and enhancement of our community following this COVID-19 pandemic. It is composite of all systems and services under Reset and Redesign. Recovery is about the community; the community is our future.

Major concerns were raised about the cessation of surgery during COVID, and that it was important to 'reset' these as quickly as possible, however, throughout the responses, the resetting of bars, hairdressers and community activities were also mentioned on multiple occasions in order to lift the 'community spirit'. Through enabling the resetting of community organisations, people outline how it would reduce the feelings of isolation and enable them to reconnect with family and friends.

*"In some areas, such as cancelling outpatient appointments etc., very little info was given beyond the fact of cancellation, and given the low risk of cases in our region I think they were a bit slow to reinstate those appointments"*

*"Visitors in hospital - Having to go into WAM alone was awful. Should always let a support person be there no matter the age."*

*"Recycling services and the libraries"*

*"Clinics and non-urgent services should not have stopped - unless we had a big outbreak of Covid-19 (which we didn't!)"*

*"Cancer treatment and other important hospital services should resume urgently. Am glad the recycling centre and libraries are open again"*

*"Cancer treatment, other treatment. Wangas needs to stop being the poor relation of Palmy and have everything here for our whānau"*

*"Everything, we should be heading back to normal"*

*"Socialisation was the main thing that was missed especially by those living by themselves... get clubs etc started up ASAP...60s Up club, Probus, Churches etc"*

#### *Understanding and supporting our communities*

Being part of a community is a part of the human condition, towards a sense of belonging. What a community 'is', how it 'behaves' and what the needs are, are dependent on the individual communities and the people that they comprise of. A traditional model of territorial boundaries as the defining factor of what a community 'is' came to the fore during lockdown, with a sense of community being presented by Iwi (Te Ranga Tupua Hub and Ngati Rangi Response) and Churches (responses in Marton and Taihape) which was across boundaries. The support that was received by the community was welcomed, however, some of the methodologies that we used to provide the support were identified as problematic. Whilst some members of the public came forward for support, there were reports that people were not coming forward because of stigmatisation, or a sense that they were being judged for seeking help. It is therefore important to work with communities and our organisations to recognise where help is needed, the types of help, and how we can support our communities through a non-judgemental approach. The full effects of COVID are yet to be realised in New Zealand with the wage subsidy providing a 'splint' to our economy to date, however once that ceases, and the individual whānau use up the last of their savings, the likelihood of an increasing

number of people seeking support is expected – many of whom will have never had to seek support in the past, and will feel the stigma of seeking it out.

Furthermore, the survey responses and feedback from the markets identified the importance of working together across the economic, social and environmental elements that make up the ‘wellbeing’ of a person, and how as organisations we should collectively work with our communities to develop solutions to identified concerns from the community.

#### [Understanding the communities needs and addressing them.](#)

The IRT, organisational and providers have been challenged by the members of the community to gain a better understanding of the community needs and then working with the community to develop solutions. Some members of the public outlined that the needs of the community were being met during COVID, but that those needs were there before and will remain post COVID. Others mentioned that we need to work with the community more to identify where the need is, and then proactively reach out to those members of the community in the future. A number of responses indicated that rates relief is required to support them into the future.

*“A good thing was the oldies hour at the recycle station. Allowed us a bit longer to fumble around and do our bit! Without being hustled by the young dudes with their empty beer bottles and pizza boxes.”*

*“Engage with the people, meet & talk to them. Find out what works for them NOT on them. Show that you CARE. Actions speak louder than words.”*

*“It can't just be support for 'now' but needs to be a long-term plan about how we want our community/city/district to look and function. It must be about resiliency and sustainability: it's pointless putting in something that can't be continued or that creates other problems or barriers.”*

*“Councils beginning to think about the needs of the community more - i.e. considering rates exemptions. Need to go further than that at this time as EVERYONE has been hit financially - Why increase rates? Especially as we already have very high rates...”*

*“Keep working with services, NGOs, iwi building stronger working relationships to support Whānau with all needs”.*

*“A stronger sense of community was evident during lockdown, it would be nice to keep that going”*

*“Having an iwi hub that was able to connect and engage with all of our Whanganui whānau Māori and non-Māori we supported all people that were impacted by covid-19.”*

*“Keep some sort of connection going for those with health issues, social issues, financial issues or mobility issues, to check that they can get what they need. Set up a system, such as the response team phoning at certain intervals - but use community agencies/organisations to do this, maybe with Council/DHB oversight, and key workers ensuring this happens.”*

#### [Supporting community-led solutions and how these are delivered in the community.](#)

A challenge has been laid by many of the respondents in the survey, that as organisations we need to support community-led (rather than organisational led) solutions and then support them to be delivered in the areas that will provide the most impact. The IRT presented the

Reset, Redesign - Recovery operating logo in the Recovery Strategy to outline the change in the traditional operating model, placing the environment, culture and the community at the heart of our decision-making model (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Diagrammatic representation of the IRT operating model for Recovery.



*“The booking appointments for blood tests is great now”*

*“Emulate the Gonville Library idea in every suburb. A place that locals can feel is their own and organisations can use from time to time to involve that particular community in a project. Councillors to take an interest in a suburb and hold clinics like MP's do to get a feel for what is going on in the community. Encourage and empower people to be part of solutions when problems occur. Encourage the Restorative City vision which is "creating the environment for all Whanganui people to thrive and succeed together through respectful relationship." and use the restorative approach to problem solving.”*

*“Now that community links have been established maintain strong community engagement and communication.”*

*“More funding needs to be given to wellbeing and prevention to promote a healthy lifestyle so freedom to develop more engaging activities and programs.”*

*“Now is the perfect opportunity to start thinking outside the box and to stop doing things simply because that's the way they've always been done. more consultation needs to be done before large project spends, and accountability needs to be had for large overspends on projects. Youth programmes need to be developed to get school leavers into jobs, apprenticeships or training/further education. Incentives need to be put in place for new business opportunities. Businesses need be put in touch with mentors to ensure they are successful. derelict buildings need to be removed, and empty stores need to be filled.”*

*“The integrated EOC worked well and it was good to have this off DHB premises. I felt that there is an opportunity to create better community support moving forward - similar to neighbourhood watch but with a focus on wellbeing from an isolation perspective.”*

*“Delivering health services into disadvantaged & Māori communities like Ratana, Pūtiki & Upriver. Flexible 21st century remote working for staff and joint service delivery.”*

*“Community based services taken to the community, telehealth opportunities, increased choice for Māori by investing in Kaupapa Māori service capacity and methods of service delivery.”*

*“Though I wasn't allowed to keep delivering meals on wheels as I'm 71, I'm so glad they kept delivering to those who need it. I restarted doing that today. I believe Ngati Rangi was such a blessing. Also, I enjoyed watching council meetings online.”*

*“Responded quickly, the swabbing centres (these should be winter illness drive through clinics permanently as a winter demand strategy)”.*

#### Supporting whānau, communities and neighbourhoods to work together.

Stories of how the community came together during COVID, how they supported their neighbours (i.e. grocery visits and food parcels) and how some communities worked together to actively reduce the spread of COVID (i.e. communities working with the Police on community roadblocks). Several survey responses indicated that they wanted to know how they could do more to support others and felt that as a region we should have shut off to the rest of the country. Whilst there are some public health, legislative and logistical considerations that would need to be addressed to support this in the future should COVID resurge in our rohe, it is important to acknowledge the sentiment of our communities and the anxiety that is created by COVID-19.

*“My experience of the lockdown was very positive although I appreciate that I did not lose my job or must worry about that. On the whole I felt there was a great “we are all in this together” attitude and people reconnected with each other in old fashioned ways. Kiwis came up with great and inventive ways to keep positive and support each other, and I think we discovered new and better ways of connecting over distance such as Zoom. Environment and wildlife got a well-deserved rest from us”*

*“I didn't feel the need to ask for any. But I would have liked an avenue to support others - elderly etc. I am new to Whanganui so didn't know my neighbours etc and it was not the time to really get to know them but wish I could have supported those nearby.”*

*“For Waiouru any or all information came from NZ Army. Everything was left for them to manage regardless if you worked for them or not, this showed when they declared only those who had an Army ID could use the local 4 square. After a lot of unhappy locals responded this was quickly changed to include proof of address.”*

*“Strong sense of Community, looking after one another & encouraging is to look after elderly.”*

*“I helped out my elderly neighbours with their grocery shopping. This was a positive experience for all. Very little traffic. Roads quiet and safe for cyclists. In general people very kind to each other.”*

*“The opportunity for people to ask for help via the Register. The encouragement to younger people to connect with neighbours and elderly. The general feeling that we were all in it together. The knowledge that we don't need anything other than a roof over our head, food*

*and the ability to connect with others. Also, that it was obvious that the essential services were those that involved the care and concern of others and were often the most poorly paid and we need to keep this in mind and recognise this.”*

*Ensuring our communities are informed.*

**If you don't give people information, they'll make something up to fill the void.  
– Carla O'Dell**

Whilst the majority of those who provided feedback and responded to the survey indicated that they believed they knew where to get information and that there was sufficient information being produced, others identified that the types of mediums we used to disseminate information meant they never received it. It is important going forward, that as organisations we link in with single sources of truth, and enable rapid communications out into our community – outlining the things that are going well, or not going so well, the transparency is the key.

*Ensuring Communications are through multiple mediums.*

A few respondents outlined that they did not receive information until much later in the COVID lockdown, with one individual stating that they received no information at all. Other members of the public outlined that organisations should have issued letter drops, and not just focused online media, with others expecting the mayors to do video updates and radio segments. As organisations we will remain vigilant that all efforts are not solely online, but that we utilise the power of local media (papers, radio and flyer drop) where possible. These considerations will need to be managed in conjunction with Public Health advice if a resurgence of COVID occurs.

*“Paper communication to all residents and rate payers. The reliance on email and social media communications disadvantage a significant number of our residents.”*

*“Find ways to get better dissemination of info about council services e.g. levels of recycling availability.”*

*“Perhaps erect a 'local' news update screens in a few places around town that people will be frequenting during future lockdown-type situation. This information would be helpful for everyone but particularly for the poor and elderly who may not have access to the internet and/or the ability to navigate the net. We often assume 'everyone' is connected in some way, but there are those amongst us who really are not well informed at all due to their personal circumstances.”*

*“Use of regional radio to provide advice/information for the region, rather than at a national level”*

*“Would have been great for the mayor to have had a higher profile, leading/inspiring confidence to the community.”*

*“I think from a business point of view there should have been more positive communication from the Mayor himself. He is the leader of the region so should have been very visual and communicated better.”*

*"Maybe a letterbox drop for elderly who may not access social media or may have been socially isolated."*

*"Community newspaper in Marton stopped during lockdown - this is an essential info channel for those who do not have access to internet e.g. elderly. Councils should find a safe way of having a letterbox drop/s."*

*"Improve communication. The mayor needs to step up as spokesperson and say what's going on otherwise it's all conjecture on fb. And it was."*

*"More personal communication with elderly people. A few people that I know were overwhelmed by the situation and had no idea what the compliance rules with respect to their situation were. They didn't know what to do, or where to find support because they weren't social media savvy and didn't fully understand the Covid19 bullet point messages on TV."*

*"I was disappointed that there was no robust coordination of services available - e.g. what was open and when. This information could have been gathered by council and Mainstreet Whanganui to better support local businesses, with weekly updates in the chronicle/online/Facebook etc."*

*"More printed information for those without electronic access and information knowledge"*

*"Perhaps information about what support was required. I didn't need support but was willing to provide it. I am not connected to Facebook. I know for our Deaf and hard of hearing community, most of the support contact details were phone numbers - it would have been good to have a text option."*

*"Community cohesiveness and extra efforts put into communicating with the community"*

*"Social media communication from Rangitikei District Council was excellent. Not sure how people who didn't have access to that medium received up to date info. Info from the DHB was well represented in the local paper, for those who received it. I certainly didn't get much information via my mailbox."*

#### [Knowledge of where to get support and its communication.](#)

Most responses to the survey indicated that they knew where to get support from should they need it. However, a few outlined that there was confusion around what number to call, and that in some instances you would call one, and they would tell you to call another one. Furthermore, some indicated that they did not know where to go for support, and what support was available if any. Future learnings would be to have a single number that the call taker was working across multiple agencies to get the right welfare support for the individual and have this as a consistent number regardless of the event/hazard.

*"Both the WDHB and councils are not good communicators! I, as part of the wider public, am only vaguely aware of what their roles are. To be honest, I did not know what WDHB (apart from testing) was doing, nor was I aware what measures the council had taken on."*

*"The mayor could have been more active towards the community and keep in touch via community Facebook pages etc offering information and assistance, but we didn't hear anything from him unlike other regions and councils who's leaders were constant with updates and ideas"*

*“As a social worker I was part of the support network and feel there was not a cohesive approach. Lots of agencies available to support whānau, which was good.”*

*“Hard to find the support as everyone was closed.”*

*“Most support was offered by iwi groups and to elderly/vulnerable/large families. We have lost our income but aren't from the iwi and weren't sure if help was available for us.”*

*“Had no idea where CBACs were, or whether they were free. When no CBAC, the doctors would not do test if we weren't the only patients there. We haven't been able to register with doctors here as they are not taking new patients. Couldn't travel out of town to another CBAC as we weren't allowed to travel!”*

*“The only information I could find about what was happening in Wanganui was through word of mouth, social media posts and actually physically going to buy groceries as needed. There could have been more done from leaders of our community to let people know how the local supermarkets were operating, information on cases in Whanganui and also drumming in the message of “stay home, save lives” from the government. Our Mayor during the lockdown periods was a bit of a ghost, as a rate payer I definitely expected to hear more from him. That could have been a live video once a week during level 4, fortnightly during level 3?”*

*“Clearer guidelines within the hospital setting, not enough information was passed down in a timely manner from management to on the floor staff. especially when transitioning between levels.”*

*“Knew where to go if help needed...able to advise friend who needed help.... plenty emails of information from DHB...WDC...Aged Concern...Order of St John ...Neighbourhood Support and local news.”*

#### *Concerns about COVID – the uncertainty.*

It is normal to feel anxious or stressed in times of uncertainty. As the information flow about COVID-19 was changing on almost a daily basis, some individuals felt that the inconsistent information and the ‘myths’ on social media heightened the overall anxiety levels of the community. Most of the concern was not fear for one’s own safety, but of that of friends, whānau and the wider community.

#### *Concerns for whānau and friends.*

Safety from the virus was the main concern from the survey respondents. Many indicated that they were fearful for their elderly whānau, friends and neighbours, and others for their sick and vulnerable whānau members. This message was perpetuated by media with the ‘stay safe, be kind, stay home, save lives’ messaging. Further concerns around loss of employment, loss of livelihood, not being able to visit a hairdresser or bar and becoming a stay at home teacher overnight all contributed to the levels of anxiety felt during the lockdown period. This anxiety has not been limited to the Lockdown period, with feedback at the river market acknowledging that anxiety levels remain high.

*“My initial problem was worrying about how to pay for any form of transaction. For instance if a friend offered to do my supermarket shopping how could I reimburse them when I knew they were not electronically connected and I did not have the cash in the house, or would need to go against stay at home advice to use an ATM.”*

*“Juggling working from home with looking after 6 and 9-year-old and their learning programme, and looking after elderly relatives that we had to physically distance ourselves from but who needed groceries and medical supplies etc.”*

*“Concerns for our elderly in my neighbourhood. Who live on their own, who are not familiar with internet banking or how to pay their bills. “*

*“The first 2 weeks - fear - of the virus for self and family and friends. Concern there would be a steady food supply during lock down. Worry about income and if I would have work after lockdown. Thoughts about criminals taking advantage of lock down in the business area, public areas”.*

*“Fear of contracting the virus .... fear of losing my business and my staff having no job .... fear of not knowing from one day to the next what is going to happen”.*

*“Too much time being ON as a mum. I missed my village of people that help raise my children. I very rarely got time alone.”*

*“Grandfather having surgery and moving into palliative care with my parents - extremely difficult not being able to be there to help and support. Working from home AND having kids at home as well”.*

#### [Uncertainty around the virus.](#)

With the world in the throes of the global pandemic, as New Zealand had low levels of people with the virus, this created some further uncertainty around the virus. Were we going to get a second wave, were we going to be able to stop the spread, were the death prediction models correct, were the supply chains to the supermarket going to be restored? Some of the uncertainty was closer to home however, around things such as when or if weekend sports would restart, or how they were going to support their children’s education at home. Others identified that their uncertainty came from others breaking lockdown and putting people at risk. As a system, we need to prepare for an increase in anxiety, stress, financial pressures and wellbeing concerns which are coming to the surface.

*“There was a period of panic pre lockdown which could have been mitigated if those in governance had broadly stated, we are very aware of the risks and taking a few days to develop strong responses. Standby for more information in coming days. It felt like nothing was being done when, in fact, governances were working extremely hard.”*

*“There was a lot of controversial information given to all areas.”*

*“There needs to be broader communication on multiple channels from accredited and known sources. There was an incredible amount of anecdotal and here says advice being touted across social media that it was very difficult to differentiate the fact from fiction. Yes, there are the duly appointed government websites, but these were not listed nor encouraged across all platforms as much as they needed to be.”*

*“To begin with that infections would continue to rise, but as they began to flatten concern that lock-down would be lifted too soon”.*

*“Coming in contact with the virus. I have various health issues and have previously had a very poor immune system”.*

*“Other idiots not doing as they were asked”.*

*“Basically, that I was going to catch it and die - being over 70. And shopping for the household - I hated having to leave my bubble.”*

*“Health of family and friends in NZ and around the world. Survival of small businesses.”*

*“Media bombardment causing anxiety and sensationalism feeding into fearful states of mind for those without family support, especially amongst the elderly, mentally and physically challenged and educationally poor.”*

*“More the unknown of the virus and uncertainty at that stage. I worried how my body would respond if I caught the virus.”*

*“Too much media emphasis of the death toll everywhere and pictures of the mass graves etc - once I stopped watching that coverage, I came right. Thought the media sensationalised it to the extent I could understand many people becoming depressed and anxious.”*

*“The unknown details around the virus, the sudden increase in workload and having to implement things at work to protect the staff and dealing with their anxiety and stress”.*

*“Thinking of the ‘worst case’ scenarios personally, locally, nationally & globally. My age & medical conditions & distance from immediate care facilities.”*

## Discussion – Report Findings

**As organisations, individuals and whānau, we have an ability to support our communities in dealing with this ‘next normal’ and understanding that it is anything but normal.**

**- Steve Carey**

Traci Houpapa of the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women and Federation of Māori Authorities writes “while the COVID-19 health crisis may have receded in Aotearoa New Zealand, our attention now turns to the urgent need to rebuild the economy, offering a rare opportunity for a change of focus to ensure social and economic benefits all New Zealanders, wherever they might live and work. COVID-19 has focused our attention on what’s best for our people and our communities. Post-COVID Aotearoa New Zealand is not about getting back to normal, because normal was never good enough for majority of our people. Many Māori, Pasifika, and migrant families have been living with the impacts of deprivation, poverty and social inequity for too long and this needs to change. If we are going to flourish as a nation post-COVID, the Crown and Māori, public and private sector must put our people at the centre of our conversations, discussions and deliberations.”

Throughout this report, the statistics and the narratives have aligned to describe the same community and organisational outlook as Traci, one that requires organisations to be more collaborative, community focused and to “tell the story of the journey” through various mediums.

The importance of communicating to the public, through various mediums, from trusted sources, with local people fronting, will reduce levels of anxiety felt throughout the community. Traditionally organisations have been cautious of ‘overcommunicating’, however with the introduction of various types of media (print, TV, radio, online), we have the ability to link a consistent message through our community and media partners, and provide more up-to-date

information regularly to our communities.

Working in an integrated manner (private, public, iwi and community), across the ecosystems to support our communities with co-design of services, will ensure that the communities are able to partner in the services for success – this will support community resiliency and self-determination. Iwi and the community are seeking out opportunities to participate, and when given the opportunity to partner, have demonstrated that they can have community/iwi-led successes (such as the Te Ranga Tupua Hub and the Ruapehu Whānau Transformation Plan).

Unfortunately, the descriptive analysis indicates that there is more work to be done to reduce inequities in our communities with over representation for Pasifika and Māori in requesting support and coping with anxiety or stress. This supports the Pro-Equity focus of the Thriving Together Impact Collective and is reflective of our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi – how we partner with Iwi and our communities to address over-representation in a number of social, economic and health issues needs to be at the forefront of our minds when supporting the co-designing of services.

The post-COVID environment is going to be very different than our experiences in a pre-COVID era. This is our opportunity to engage with our communities and partner authentically for success in addressing the goals and aspirations for our community. We need a joint approach to our economic, environmental and social recovery plans that include the perspectives of Māori, Pasifika, ethnic communities, business leaders, crown agencies and local government (Houpapa, 2020).

**Too often we speak about people, instead of with them. We think we've understood their aspirations and we make important and often costly decisions based on our assumptions. Worse, we think we know what's best for them, and this removes the need for their input.**

**The ultimate goal of this mindset is not more services, reports, inquiries, programs or policies – but better lives for people, families and our planet. There are many ways to get there if we go beyond the boundaries of our institutions and imaginations. While sharing people's stories can influence decision-making, it's rarely enough to restore the power imbalance in who is helped and who does the helping. We need systems that do with people, instead of for them.**

**Kelly Ann McKercher (2020)**

## Appendix 1



# Whanganui, Rangitikei and Ruapehu Community Survey - COVID19

A Community Survey for individuals from the Whanganui DHB rohe (areas of Whanganui, Rangitikei and South Ruapehu) about support during and following the COVID19 pandemic level 4 lockdown from the Whanganui DHB (and supporting health agencies) or Councils.

All information collected is anonymous and will be used to determine our response efforts. All demographic information collected is for reporting purposes only.

\* Required

### Community Survey

We are keen to hear about your experiences during the lockdown period. We would like to know what worked well for Whanganui and what we can do better. We have some questions below that we would like you to complete.

1. Where do you live? \*

- Ruapehu
- Rangitikei
- Whanganui City
- Whanganui Rural (including the river road)

2. What is your ethnicity? \*

- NZ European
- Maori
- Pasifika
- Asian
- Other

3. In the lead up to lockdown Level 4 did you receive enough information about what was happening in your location? \*

Yes

No

4. During Lockdown level 4 did you know where to go for support and information? \*

Yes

No

5. Where did you go to get this information? \*

Email

Social Media

Radio

TV

Family and Friends

Other

6. Did you request support during this period? \*

Yes

No

7. If yes who did you request support from and how was this experience for you

Enter your answer

8. Do you have any suggestions on how the support could be improved? \*

Enter your answer

## Wellbeing

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9. What were your main concerns during Level 4?

Enter your answer

10. Did you suffer from anxiety or stress as a result of the Level 4 Lockdown? \*

Yes

No

11. What were the causes of your anxiety or stress?

Enter your answer

## Moving into recovery

12. What new things happened during lockdown that you think worked well and the Whanganui DHB or Councils should keep doing? \*

Enter your answer

13. What new things happened that you think Whanganui DHB or Councils should stop doing? \*

Enter your answer

14. What are some of the services that the Whanganui DHB or Councils used to do, that due to COVID19 we stopped providing, that we should now restart? \*

Enter your answer

15. What are some of the services that Whanganui DHB or Councils used to provide, that due to COVID19 we stopped doing, that we should stop doing permanently? \*

Enter your answer

16. What else are we missing – here is your chance to tell us what we can do better

Enter your answer

17. If you would like to be contacted in regards to your responses, please put your name and a contact phone number and one of the team will be in touch.

Enter your answer

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