

WELCOMING COMMUNITIES PILOT PROGRAMME

Final Evaluation Summary Report July 2017- June 2019

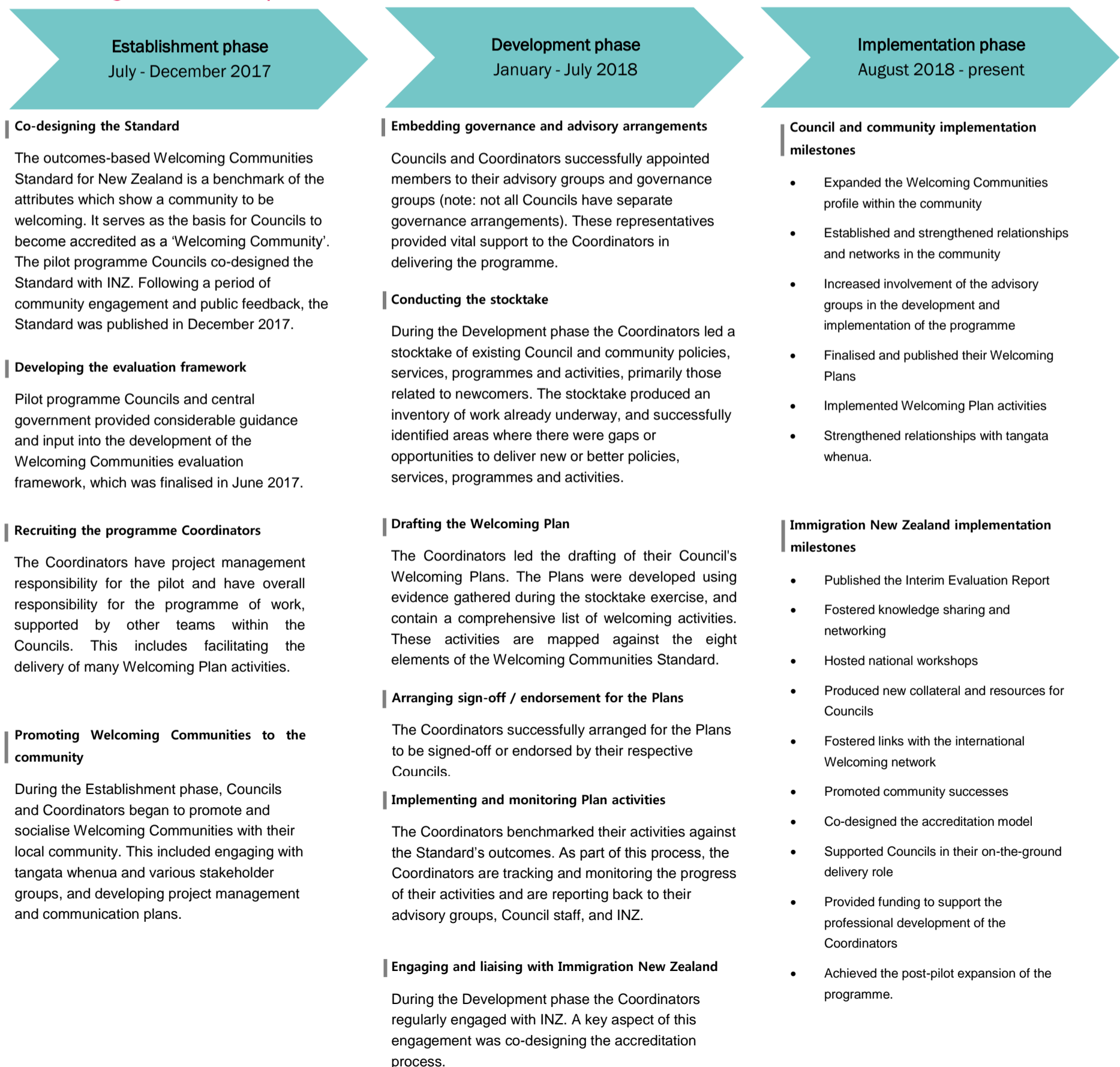
Overall findings

Welcoming Communities – Te Waharoa ki ngā Hāpori – has been piloted in New Zealand since July 2017. Welcoming Communities is a settlement programme that supports local government Councils and their communities to create welcoming and inclusive environments for newcomers.

Over the course of the pilot, the Council pilot programme teams and Immigration New Zealand (INZ) have achieved considerable progress and success. A stocktake of existing policies, services, programmes and activities led to the successful drafting and adoption of local Welcoming Plans, which list the range of activities designed to make newcomers feel welcome. Local relationships and networks have been strengthened, resulting in a diverse range of locals and newcomers engaging in welcoming activities. Each pilot Council has demonstrated considerable progress towards achieving many of the sub-outcomes associated with the programme: newcomers are more confident about engaging with Councils; information on local policies, services, programmes and activities is more readily accessible by the community; Councils are increasingly considering the needs of newcomers in their planning and decision-making, and there are an increasing number of programmes and activities which support and demonstrate diversity in local communities.

Evidence collected throughout the evaluation shows that the pilot programme has had a meaningful impact in shifting local communities to becoming more welcoming and inclusive. Newcomers feel more confident to display and be proud of their culture, their religion, and their history in their new homes.

Welcoming Communities pilot timeline



About the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the establishment, development, implementation and early outcomes of the Welcoming Communities pilot programme. The evaluation also summarises the lessons learned during the pilot programme, to help inform the wider roll-out of the programme.

The evaluation covers the Welcoming Communities pilot programme led by (INZ) in partnership with 10 Councils across five regions from July 2017 to June 2019. The evaluation is summarised in two reports. The first report, the Interim Evaluation Report, focused on the Establishment and Development phases of the pilot programme. This report, the Final Evaluation Summary Report, covers the programme Implementation phase, early outcomes, and lessons learned.

Outcomes

Element 1 - Inclusive Leadership

- Overall, Councils are seen as providing strong leadership of the programme.
- Elected officials and Council staff are far more aware of the diversity in their communities.
- Newcomer groups are more confident about engaging with Council.

Element 3 - Equitable Access

- Councils are increasingly considering the needs of newcomers in planning and decision-making.
- Councils are revitalising their services and activities as a result of Welcoming Communities.
- Local information is readily accessible to newcomers.

Element 5 - Economic Development, Business and Employment

- Business owners are more aware of the importance of inclusiveness.
- International students are increasingly seen as vital to the community, bringing increased diversity to the community and as prospective employees.

Element 7 - Welcoming Public Spaces

- New and enhanced existing events are attracting newcomers to spend time in public spaces.
- Newcomers are increasingly engaging in sports and outdoor activities.

Element 2 - Welcoming Communications

- Councils are engaging in deliberate and appropriate communication with newcomers.
- Information on policies, services, programmes and activities is readily accessible to the community.
- Communication with the community is focused and coordinated.
- Welcoming Communities is well promoted to locals and newcomers alike.

Element 4 - Connected and Inclusive Communities

- There are more programmes and activities which support and demonstrate cultural diversity.
- Newcomers are increasingly engaging with the community, and vice-versa.
- Relationships between the Council and newcomers have strengthened.
- There is increased coordination between groups providing support to newcomers.

Element 6 - Civic Engagement and Participation

- Newcomers are more confident in engaging with Council.
- Elected members are engaging more effectively and regularly with newcomers.

Element 8 - Culture and Identity

- Newcomers and locals are more confident to challenge ignorant and bigoted comments.
- There is increased sharing of culture between newcomers and locals
- Newcomer groups are energised and supported to lead their own initiatives.
- Overall, newcomers are made to feel welcome in the community.



Lessons to inform future



Key components of the Welcoming Communities programme

The role of the Welcoming Communities Coordinator is essential to the programme

The Coordinators are essential to the success of the programme. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of having a full-time, dedicated person filling the role of Coordinator: this provides community groups and newcomers with a single point of contact with whom to engage, while also functioning as the key conduit from Council to the community and newcomers.

Events are a vital component of the programme

Community events have proven to be the most successful means of promoting Welcoming Communities and maximising interactions and connections between newcomers and the receiving community. Stakeholders singled-out community events as the ideal vehicle to showcase the multitude of different cultures within communities and encourage newcomers and local residents to be proud of and display their cultures.

Get the right combination of people on the advisory group

Advisory group members need to have mana and established networks and relationships in the community. Advisory group members need to activate their networks and encourage the community to support and engage with Welcoming Communities. It is also important to emphasise that the advisory groups are not governance-focused or 'hands-off'. The advisory groups need to function as working groups, supporting the Coordinator and 'rolling up their sleeves' to establish, develop and implement the programme, and take actions towards achieving the intended outcomes of the programme

The stocktake process is essential to the success of the programme

The stocktake is a comprehensive assessment of "current policies, services, programmes and activities", primarily those which relate to newcomer settlement and cultural diversity. This process is fundamental to developing the Welcoming Plan. It is important that Councils do not undervalue the importance of a comprehensive stocktake and invest the necessary time and resources to make it a success. Of particular importance is avoiding duplicating work already being undertaken in the community, by clearly identifying the existing roles and responsibilities of different groups within the community.



Council engagement in the programme

Identify key programme "champions"

Programme stakeholders agree that having dedicated and supportive "programme champions" among Councillors and community leaders are essential to the success of Welcoming Communities. Identifying Councillors and community leaders with a passion for supporting newcomers with the requisite strategic and people skills to bring others along on the journey, helps to build the credibility of the programme both within Council and the wider community.

Conversations about resourcing and funding need to start early

A key lesson for prospective Councils is to take a long-term view regarding programme funding. The seed funding provided over three years by INZ is intended to help Councils to establish and develop their programmes: however, Councils need to take responsibility for the longer-term funding and resourcing of the programme. Stakeholders highlighted the risk to the programme of taking a year-by-year approach to funding – this results in a lack of programme stability and the surety of the Coordinator position. In starting conversations with prospective Councils as early as possible, it is more likely that Welcoming Communities will be listed in the Long-Term Plan and reduce the uncertainty of ongoing programme funding.

Community engagement in the programme

Community groups and networks are essential to the success of the programme

The stocktake process helps Councils to identify the existing groups in the community, that are working towards the same goals as Welcoming Communities. Once these community groups and networks have been identified, it is essential to draw on these connections for the benefit of the programme: rather than duplicating their efforts, Welcoming Communities needs to build and maintain relationships with these groups and leverage the existing good works being done in the community.

The programme needs to maximise engagement with all areas of the community

The need to maximise engagement with newcomer communities is a key lesson for new Councils. Stakeholders acknowledged that despite their best efforts to reach different groups within the community, they had not always been successful. The need to explore different ways of engaging different groups was highlighted as a key lesson - for example, going into churches to discuss and promote the programme may increase engagement from the Pasifika community. Local Settlement Networks, for example, will be well-placed to facilitate introductions to newcomer groups and to promote the Welcoming Communities programme to their members.

