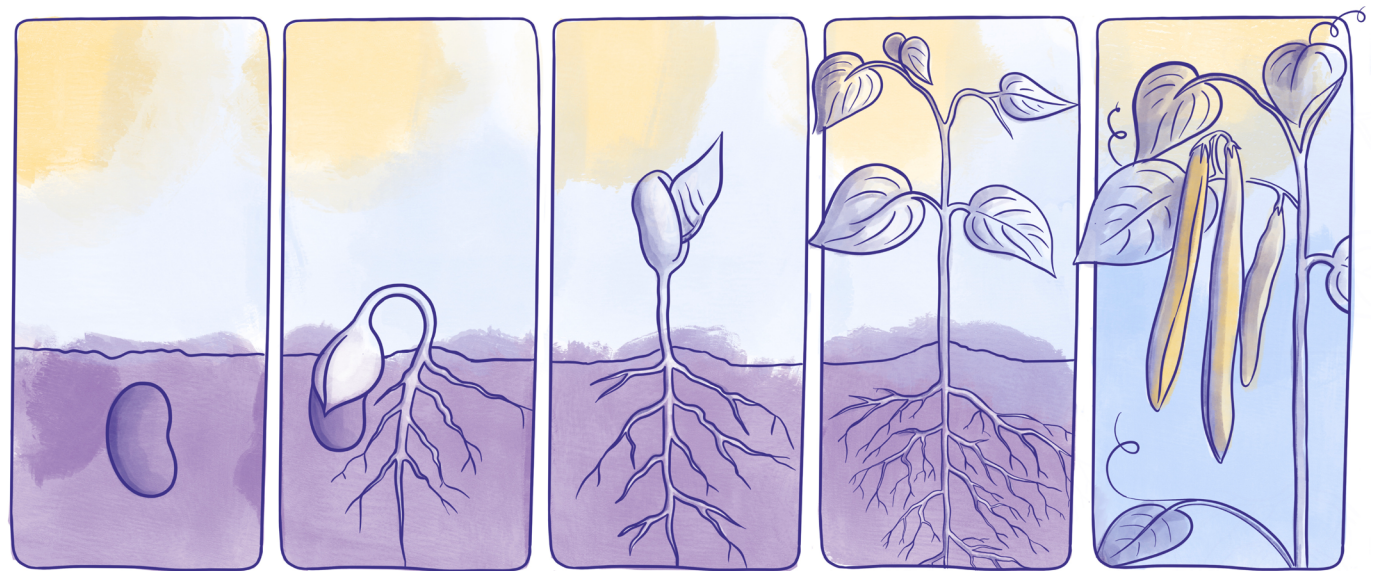


# The Workshop

## Measuring our impact 2019 – 2021

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Version 1.0 October 2021

[www.theworkshop.org.nz](http://www.theworkshop.org.nz)



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# Strategic framing leads to change

New Zealand could be a country where all children experience a thriving, happy childhood. But too often that doesn't happen, despite parents' best efforts. The Workshop was originally founded out of a desire to improve family wellbeing by addressing issues that occur because of poverty:

- the exclusion of children and whānau from opportunity
- not being able to set and pursue their own goals for their lives
- the loss of potential and joy

The types of changes that make the biggest difference to family wellbeing were clear from the evidence. They include changes in laws and policies related to housing, employment, the environment and the tax and welfare systems. We also need upstream changes to remove barriers to wellbeing caused by racism, gender bias, ableism and other biases built into our systems and structures.

Families need more resources. They need money to help them reach their life goals, including caring for their children. They need stable jobs with a career path. They want to support their children to reach their aspirations.

For example, experts are clear that the current welfare system, far from helping families out of poverty, acts as a major constraint on their ability to plan, reach their goals and thrive. It hurts these families and children, but it also hurts all of us as a result.

One barrier to these changes is a shallow public understanding of the causes of poverty, leading to a lack of public support for the solutions needed. To build support for the changes needed, people's understanding of poverty need to deepen. Their mindsets need to shift. Shifting mindsets is the focus of our work at The Workshop.

We research and develop ways to communicate with people to help shift their mindsets to support changes that make the most difference to unlock whānau and children from poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand. This includes:

- deepening people's understanding of the upstream causes of poverty
- shifting mindsets
- sparking hope in advocates to drive change.

We've done this work across a range of aspects of family wellbeing. However, this report focuses on one case study – our work to shift mindsets about income support and benefits. This work has contributed to change in the public discourse and at the government level, resulting in increased benefits.

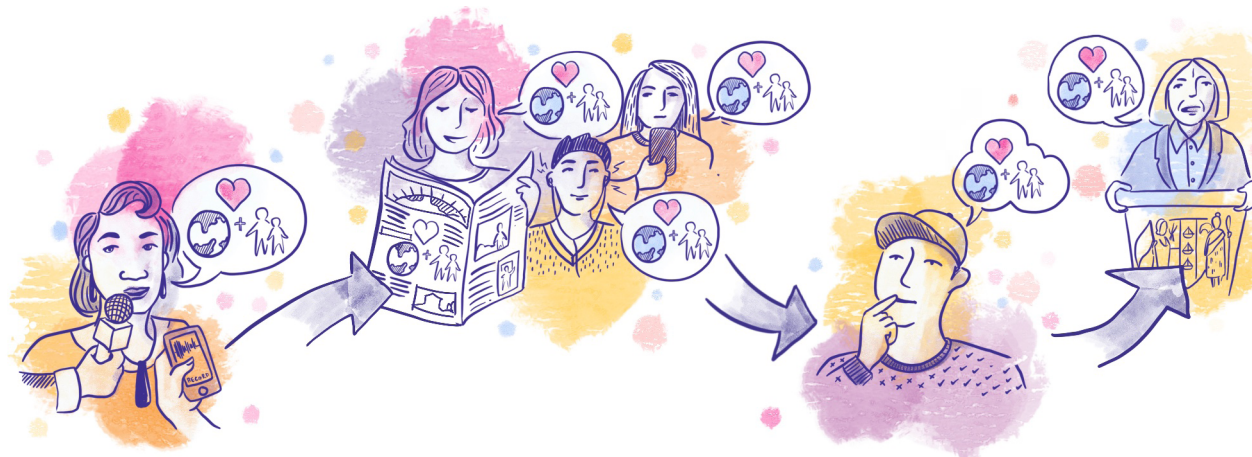
This is the work of The Workshop. It leads to change. In this report, we show the contribution and impact of our work on family wellbeing. In just the first two and a half years of operation, we have had some crucial wins. However, we have not finished this work. In this impact report, we show our lessons and suggest directions for the future.

# How narratives help change mindsets and build support for change

Mindsets shape what we see as normal, or a problem, in how the world works or how our society is structured. They shape what we understand to be the cause of a problem, and what we support as a solution. Mindsets can change in the same way they are formed – through conversations, media, and social influences.

Narratives reflect and shape our mindsets. Narratives that already exist in our public conversations and stories we tell shape mindsets. Changing those dominant narratives can shift how people think about issues, society, and themselves. Changing dominant narratives involves introducing or amplifying counter narratives, which can emerge from grassroots experiences or be created by narrative strategists.

Narrative change means a change in the type of narratives used, how often different narratives are used, or both. To change narratives, identify and replace existing unhelpful narratives. The process of narrative change means first identifying those narratives you want to sideline or transform because they encourage mindsets that are unhelpful to the issue. Once you have identified these unhelpful dominant narratives, you need to identify new or transformed narratives. Then you need to put these new narratives into the centre of the discourse and hold them there. This can happen when they are used consistently by people across a sector.





# Our approach to assessing evidence of impact

This impact report focuses mainly on the work to make the biggest difference to the lives of children and whānau experiencing poverty. The Workshop is active in over ten topic areas, all of which relate to family wellbeing. However, this report mainly focuses on our work on poverty reduction – as it was the first topic on which we worked. In describing the impact of poverty reduction, we show how our approach can create meaningful change over time.

We have also included brief overviews of some other projects, as case studies, to show what we are learning and how we are changing and adapting our approaches in response to what we learn.

This impact report uses an evaluation-specific methodology. We use a performance rubric and a mixed-methods approach to assess performance. We collated data for the impact report between June and September 2021.

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## The key questions for this impact report are:

- To what extent and in what ways is the work of The Workshop producing valuable outcomes and impacts?
- What are we learning from our work, and from our collaborators, as we go? How are we changing our approach in response to what we have learned?

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## On the following pages, we summarise:

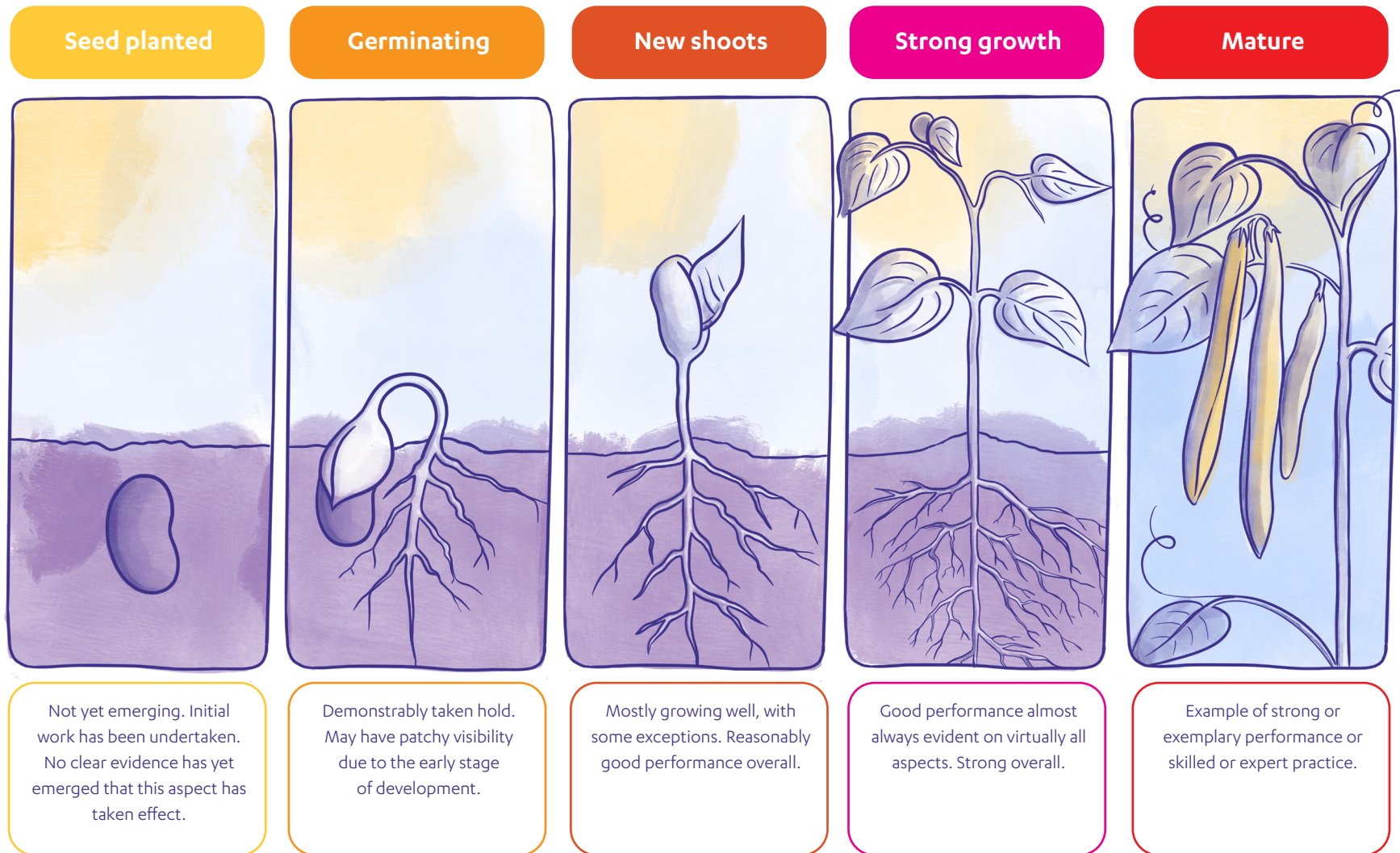
- The Workshop's high-level outcomes for poverty and welfare work show how we expect our work to effect change.
- The performance and impact framework is used to judge the impact of the work.
- Our sources of evidence included in this impact report were multifaceted and robust.

This report is an internal evaluation completed by Marianne Elliott, Jess Berentson-Shaw and Sharon Bell. Impact evaluation expert Judy Oakden provided advice and input. The Workshop would like to acknowledge the important contribution to this work made by researchers Helena Avery and Kayli Taylor. We'd also like to thank everyone who completed the survey or gave interviews to our researchers for this report.

## The Workshop's high level outcomes framing for poverty and welfare work



## Performance and impact framework



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## Our sources of evidence used for this impact report were multifaceted and robust



Robust research to better understand and frame unlocking whānau and children in poverty



A survey of people who have done our trainings



Interviews with people who have used our research insights, guides, mentoring and trainings



Communications published by people who have access to our guides, training and mentoring



Unsolicited feedback from people who work with us or use our research insights



Media coverage of ways to unlock whānau and children in poverty



Public opinion surveys



Publicly available information about decisions made by power holders

# Key findings

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## **To what extent and in what ways is the work of The Workshop producing valuable outcomes and impacts?**

Overall, The Workshop has garnered the interest and support of stakeholders and partners to use narrative frames. The Workshop has successfully undertaken research to develop narratives and frames to unlock whānau and children from poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand. This work is an example of strong, expert practice.

The Workshop trained over 265 stakeholders and partners to use and disseminate narrative frames between June 2020 and June 2021. Feedback suggests the lessons have taken hold to a reasonable extent, reflecting good performance overall. However, some participants need more help implementing the techniques and strategies. Participants who have received mentoring and coaching, report and demonstrate more confidence using the techniques. This aspect of The Workshop's offering has yet to mature.

**New narratives helped drive public discourse.** An audit of the Guide to Talking about Poverty and Welfare Reform in Aotearoa found it has seen strong sector engagement and use in third-party advocacy. Several advocacy organisations used this messaging in email, media, social and digital communications. The Workshop's messages allowed sector advocates to coordinate messaging with other organisations, presenting a 'united front,' despite several different organisations running the communications.

**New narratives helped shift public mindsets.** Independent polling found that two in three New Zealanders supported increasing income support. There were clear links between The Workshop's metaphors and public expression of support, as captured in the UMR polling. ActionStation/Child Poverty Action Group also used The Workshop's tested messages in their plans for communication following the release of the Government's Budget 2021.

**New narratives helped shift government policy.** Creating impact at the level of policy shift is long term work. We would not usually expect to see this kind of impact for several years after beginning work on narrative change in a particular sector or on an issue. Occasionally, however, a set of conditions comes together to enable narrative shifts to lead to shifts in public attitudes, and in turn to impact policy in a much shorter timeframe than usual. The Government's decision to increase income support in the 2021 Budget was an example of this kind of early impact.





## Key lessons

What are we learning from our work, and from our collaborators, as we go?

- The process of garnering interest and identifying areas of focus is cyclical and iterative. Each time a community of experts and advocates moves through the cycle they identify extra solutions which need narratives for change, or further unhelpful mindsets to shift. Thus, the cycle begins again, each time with a larger movement of people working together to change narratives.
- Building a research and implementation process that centres on the insights of people with lived experience is essential. It takes time and resources, which needs planning from the outset.
- Movements matter when it comes to shifting narratives and mindsets. To build a movement for change, it's important to build capacity across the sector. It can be very useful for organisations to do training together.
- It isn't easy to implement these new narrative techniques and strategies. The Workshop's guides, checklists and training have all been useful, but some people want more help. People want support in applying research insights to their communications strategies such as drafting press releases and preparing for media interviews. One-on-one coaching and mentoring helps many people and is resource-intensive.



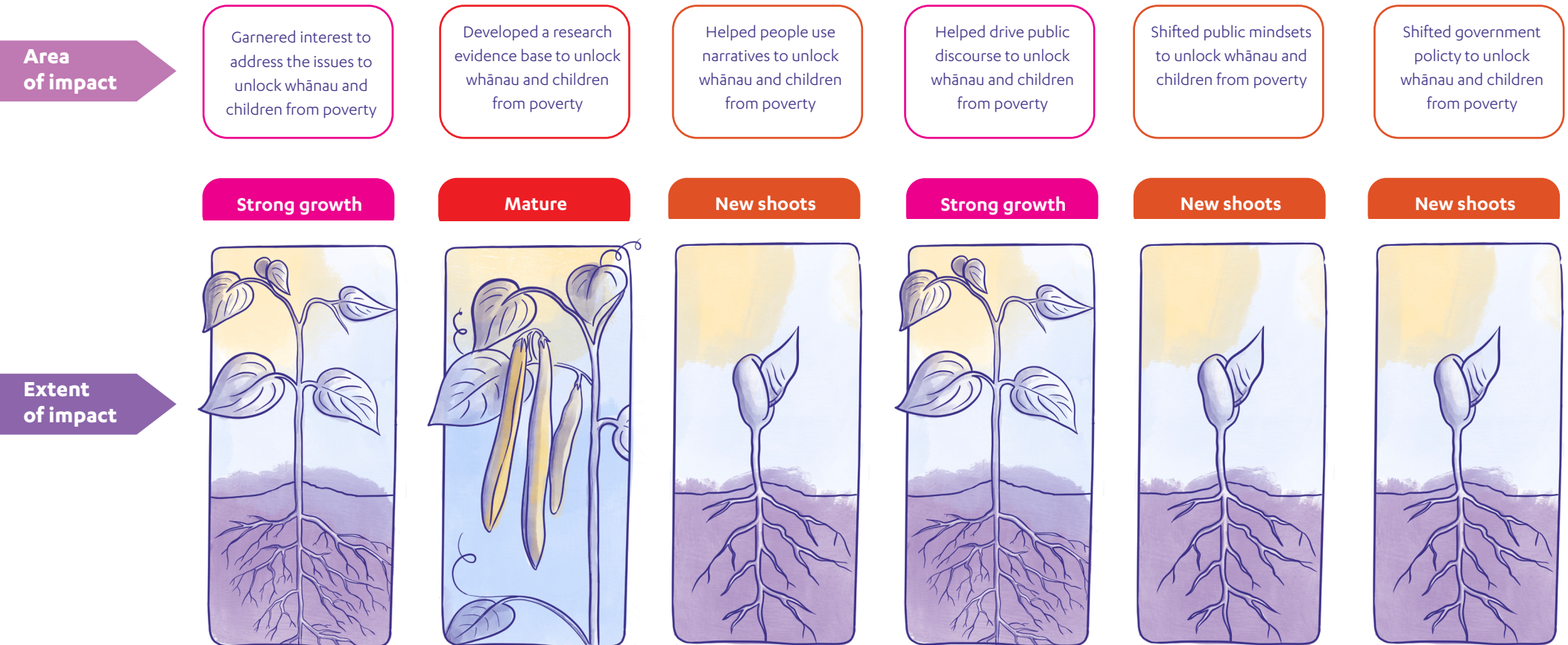
## Next steps

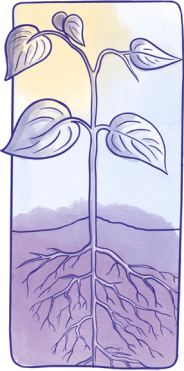
How are we changing our approach in response to what we have learned?

The Workshop needs to further develop our capacity to support the implementation of these new narrative techniques and strategies.

- A key part of this will be expanding our capacity for coaching and consulting to meet the demand to support partners and stakeholders. We want to develop new tools for implementation, make it easier for people to access and use our research insights in ways that suit them and get the help they need to implement them.
- Practically, we plan to hire and train more people in the work needed to support narrative implementation. This includes capacity at a senior level to deliver coaching and mentoring, and capacity at a more junior level to provide critical support to our research implementation work. We also plan to improve the way we capture, organise and present our key research insights so that we can make them more accessible to more people.

# Summary of evidence of impact for poverty and welfare work





## Garnered stakeholder and partner interest

Stakeholders and partners became interested in trying a narrative approach to unlock whānau and children from poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand

Overall, The Workshop has garnered the interest and support of stakeholders and partners to use narrative frames. On this aspect there is good performance overall with no weaknesses of any real note. Therefore, we gave this aspect a “strong growth” performance rating.

### Evidence to support this claim includes:

- A group of advocates wanted to explore ways to talk about poverty and welfare.
  - The Peter McKenzie Project funded setting up The Workshop as one way to address this need.
  - In our first year, we used the funding to produce a guide on how to talk about poverty and delivered training on this topic.
  - After using The Workshop’s guide to talking about poverty, and attending our training workshops on using narratives for change, some advocates identified they needed more specific narrative strategies on income support.
  - Experts and advocates identified income support as a change that would make the biggest difference but had trouble building public and political support for this change.
  - With The Workshop, they identified that one of the barriers was shallow public understanding of the causes of poverty, and why income support was an important solution.
- All parties identified that advocates needed specific ways to talk about income support and the causes of poverty.
  - In 2019, The Workshop used our baseline funding from the Peter McKenzie Project, and some extra funding for external research costs, to develop and test messages that would deepen public understanding of poverty and welfare.
  - Throughout this process, experts and advocates also identified a need for guidance on how to talk about ‘system change’ to deepen public and political understanding of those changes that will make the biggest difference.
  - Again, using baseline funding from the Peter McKenzie Project and some more funding for a new Kairangahau role, The Workshop developed a guide to talking about system change.



## Key lessons about building interest on narratives

What are we learning from our work, and from our collaborators, as we go?

- This process is cyclical and iterative. Each time a community of experts and advocates moves through the cycle they identify extra solutions which need narratives for change, or further unhelpful mindsets to shift. Thus, we start the cycle again – each time with a larger movement of people working together to change narratives.
- There are certain ‘enabling factors’ which indicate that a sector or field of practice is well-placed to collaborate on developing and using new narratives. These enabling factors include:
  - » some agreement across the field of practice that public mindsets and shallow thinking about their issue are one of the barriers to achieving the changes that will make the biggest difference, and
  - » some understanding that shifting those mindsets will require collaboration and cohesion across their field.



## Next steps

How are we changing our approach in response to what we have learned?

- We are more thoughtful about which groups, communities and organisations we commit to working with on large, resource-intensive research projects.
- Suppose a sector doesn’t appear to have these two ‘enabling factors’ (above) in place. In that case, we recommend training workshops bringing together people from across the sector as a starting point, rather than embarking directly on narrative development through research.

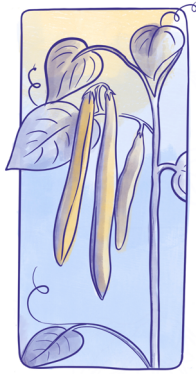


## Key lesson: The Workshop is learning to be a good Treaty partner

- The Workshop is a Tangata te Tiriti led organisation, intent on being a good treaty partner.
- Māori staff and Board members led the organisation to identify a set of appropriate Māori values to sit alongside Pākehā ones. These are aroha, mōhiotanga, kotahitanga, manaakitanga, rangatiratanga, wairuatanga, and whanaungatanga. These values frame and guide conversations and decisions about our practice.
  - » An example of this was when the Champions Group on one of our projects challenged some of the findings of our literature review. By drawing on the values of mōhiotanga and rangatiratanga, we saw a need to recognise and honour these different sources of knowledge in our report rather than trying to reconcile them.
- We appointed a Kairangahau, and offered cultural support and mentoring for Māori staff, recognising different needs from non-Māori staff
- In the Workshop's research and implementation work, we are building relationships with Kaupapa Māori organisations, seeking and undertaking work that supports Māori-led aspirations (e.g. co-governance for our biological heritage and antiracism narratives).
- We set up a pilot “champions group”. This group works alongside our research to ensure our work is meaningful to and safe for Māori (as well as other traditionally excluded groups). A principle of reciprocity drives the champions group. As well as benefiting from knowledge and wisdom from Māori and other traditionally excluded groups, we share our knowledge with them.



Mature



## Developed research-based narratives and frames

The Workshop undertook research to discover and develop the narrative and frames to unlock whānau and children from poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand

The Workshop has successfully undertaken research that determined and supported developing narratives and frames to unlock whānau and children from poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand. This work is an example of strong, expert practice. Therefore, this aspect is rated as “mature” to signal the mature stage of implementation.

### Evidence to support the claim that The Workshop’s research is mature includes the following:

- ➔ We are enacting our value of mōhiotanga. This means bringing understanding, intelligence and insight about what narratives “work” to shift mindsets and build support changes to make the biggest difference. We use a mixture of research methods to find and test new narratives to provide these insights.
- ➔ We undertook qualitative research to find narrative frames and messages in 2018. We then designed a set of narratives and messages to deepen people’s understanding:
  - » about the causes of poverty (systemic and structural)
  - » which causes them to express increased support for raising welfare payments to overcome poverty.
- ➔ In 2019, The Workshop tested a series of messages adapted from those successfully applied in the UK. A Randomised Control Trial (RCT) of 2500 general public in NZ helped identify two messages that would cause changes in the “potentially persuadable”. See more detail on these two messages below.
- ➔ We continue to develop our research methods to ensure we are doing the best quality research we can with the resources available. We use a wide range of mixed methods depending on the project.
- ➔ Most recently we combined a review of international literature on ways to talk about ‘system change’ with interviews with experts and practitioners in Aotearoa.

## Strong experimental evidence that these messages work

When we tested messages in Randomised Control Trials, two messages in particular caused changes in the attitudes of people who were not already firmly opposed to any changes in the welfare system and firmly attached to the idea that poverty is caused by individual failings.

- ➔ People who read the Compassion and Justice message were less likely to agree that poverty is caused by people being lazy and that lower benefits help people stand on their own two feet. They were less likely to think benefits should be lower.
- ➔ People who read the Underinvestment in Families message were more likely to think poverty was caused by housing problems, bad luck or low wages. They were less likely to think benefits should be lower or that there is very little poverty in NZ.

### Compassion & Justice Values (Persuadables)



### Compassion and Justice narrative, constricts and constraints metaphor

“As New Zealanders, we believe in justice and compassion. We want everyone in New Zealand to have the opportunity to thrive. But, right now, hundreds of thousands of people in our country are living in poverty.

Despite our differences, we share a responsibility to make sure everyone in our country has a decent standard of living and the same chances in life.

Poverty in New Zealand affects people of all ages and situations. Children and their parents, young adults, people in and out of work and people with disabilities.

The stress that comes with poverty can erode people’s mental and physical health. Showing compassion as a society means making sure no one has to endure the harms of poverty.

By providing good income support that gives real options in life, the government can make it possible for everyone to do well. Strengthening benefits would help people escape the constraints of poverty.”

### Underinvestment in Families narrative, with unlocking metaphor

“We all want children in New Zealand to experience a thriving, happy childhood. But too often that doesn’t happen, despite parents’ best efforts.

We’ve had a long period of low wages and high housing costs. At the same time, people in government have under-invested in key services that help the lowest income families, like public housing and income support. Instead, governments have prioritised policies that help the already well-off, including property speculators. As a result, too many parents are under-resourced, over-stressed, and unable to give their children real opportunities to thrive.

The government can release the pressures on families and children by providing good public services to all families with children. And by increasing benefits, which can unlock opportunities for those doing it hardest.”



## Key lessons about developing narratives

What are we learning from our work, and from our collaborators, as we go?

- Building a research and implementation process that centres on the insights of people with lived experience is essential. However, it takes time and resources, which need planning from the outset.
- One of the ways we can center the insights of people with lived experience is to work with them to identify effective counter narratives in their existing advocacy and storytelling to develop effective narratives. This is known as a 'ground up' or a 'flax roots' narrative development approach.



## Next steps

How are we changing our approach in response to what we have learned?

The Workshop has continued to learn ways to work with people with lived experience more effectively.

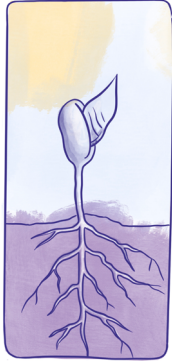
Many studies show that implementation of research insights are more likely when sector champions are involved. Also, people are more likely to champion work they helped to develop.

We have piloted 'champions groups'. We fund, resource and support a dedicated group of advocates and people with lived experience to be part of the research, from design through to implementation.

### These champions groups:

- Ensure we understand the story, told from the perspectives of people most impacted.
- Help identify the new frames and stories that are most resonant to their lives.
- Ensure new narrative techniques are safe and apt.
- Champion the recommended narratives strategies across their sector.

**Key lesson:** building a research and implementation process that centres the insights of people with lived experience takes time and resources, and these need planning from the outset.



## Helped people learn to use and disseminate narratives and frames

Stakeholders and partners learned how to use and disseminate new narratives to help unlock whānau and children from poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Workshop has trained some stakeholders and partners to use narrative frames. The learning has taken hold to a reasonable extent, reflecting good performance overall. However, some participants still need more help with implementing the techniques and strategies to increase the effectiveness of their communications. The Workshop has provided one-on-one coaching, mentoring and consulting support to some of these stakeholders. Stakeholders report the extra support is very helpful in improving their use of the new narratives. This coaching and mentoring aspect of the Workshop's work may need to intensify going forward. The "new shoots" rating for performance reflects the growth phase of this work. Evidence for this performance claim is based on the following observations:

- ➔ Between June 2020 and June 2021, the Workshop ran training for 265 people (this covers participants working on poverty as well as those working on other narratives).
  - ➔ Training participants came from a range of types of organisations including government agencies, academic and research organisations, advocacy groups, and creative agencies and professional communicators who work with all of the above.
  - ➔ Specifically, we have delivered training to groups working on public health (including COVID), poverty reduction and family wellbeing, housing, transport, environment, human rights, creative arts and culture.
- ➔ More organizations are choosing to continue on to more advanced training with The Workshop, and some also opt to commission consulting, coaching or research to support their development and use of narratives for change

Evidence of the impact of The Workshop's teaching includes:

- ➔ Results from The Workshop training participants who were surveyed online.<sup>1</sup>
- ➔ Qualitative feedback from interviews conducted by interns.
- ➔ Feedback from clients The Workshop continued to work with.

<sup>1</sup> Fieldwork between 17 June and 2 July 2021. Received 25 responses from 137 who opened emails, an 18% response rate



## After attending the Workshop's training

Almost all survey respondents had changed or were intending to change the way they framed their communications

*"... staff are willing to embrace a different way of thinking to work towards better outcomes."*

*"I'm getting different questions after I have presented – where people are prepared to do something and genuinely want me to suggest ways to them (that can help)."*

When we asked about key narrative strategies we teach (the building blocks of effective framing), the majority of survey respondents claimed they actively used them in their day to day work following the training. Most were using at least three of the building blocks.

*"[In] A verbal conversation with [a core funder]. Painted a picture of a better community and the support they could offer to help create this better community. The use of intrinsic language and the importance of values. Positive conversation."*

Importantly, survey respondents said they had stopped doing some of the harmful practices:

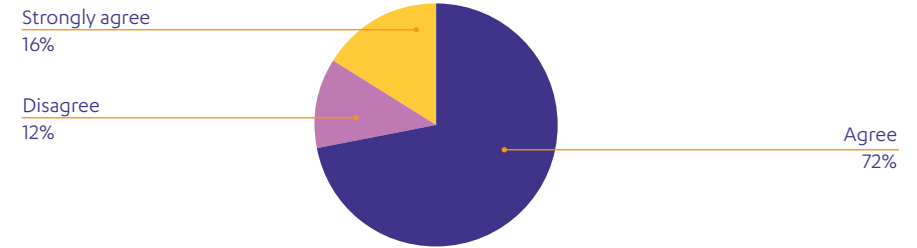
- ➔ One in four people had stopped myth-busting
- ➔ One in five no longer used evidence without a story
- ➔ One in eight no longer reinforced negative assumptions.

Nearly nine in ten survey respondents felt more optimistic and confident about their communications having an impact

*"The whole [name] programme has benefited from your work. We have supported councils to deliver community-led projects by leading with the vision etc."*

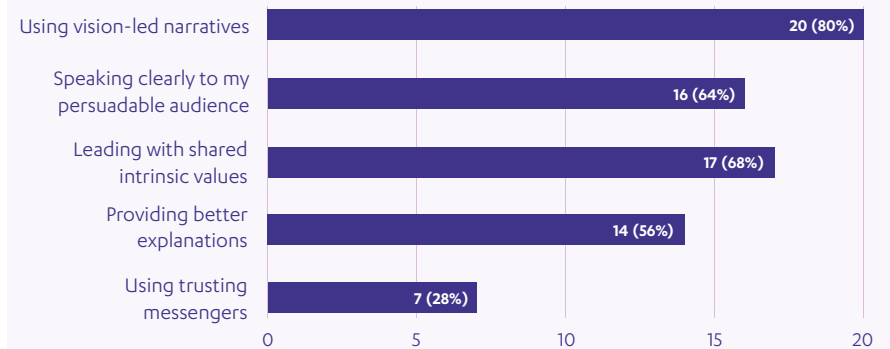
*"[I have been] Trying to paint a picture of the future we'd like to see of more Māori thriving in STEM related careers."*

## I feel confident in my ability to apply The Workshop's 5 Building Blocks when framing communications.

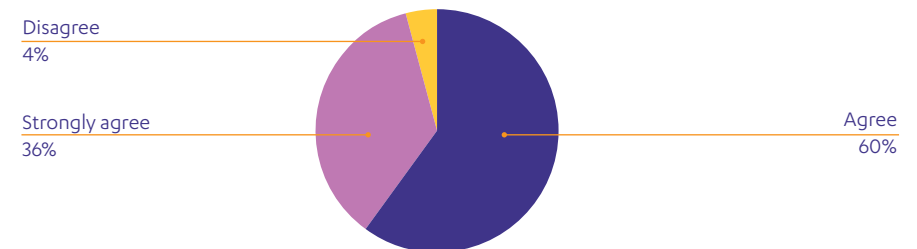


## The Workshop's 5 Building Blocks

Which of the following narrative/communication techniques are you able to apply in your communication work? Please select all that apply.



## Since working with The Workshop I feel more optimistic that my communications can have a positive impact on the issue I am working on.



## Opportunities to better support implementation

While organisations are learning to use narrative framings they still need to embed the training. This aspect of The Workshop's offering has yet to mature.

Some participants need more help to use the techniques and strategies to increase their communications' effectiveness. People are seeking to improve their effectiveness through different theoretical and practical means.

- One in five participants wanted other services such as one-on-one feedback, refresher courses, topic-specific workshops and bespoke feedback on single documents or campaigns.
- One in six participants would like The Workshop to provide extra resources such as checklists, step-by-step guides, semi-regular updates or posters.

*"I'd love some very clear, step-by step guides to particular types of communication. For example – op-eds, speech writing and social media posts. It would be wonderful to have something easy that describes a basic structure I could follow or prompts my thinking with a few questions/provocations/watch outs. Your work is great and I have so much admiration for the depth and breadth of your expertise, but it's often dense and lengthy which means I don't return to it when I'm in the moment of completing a piece of mahi."*

- One in eight participants wanted more variation in the types and examples of good practice. These responses suggest this is an area for further development by The Workshop.

One of the main ways that The Workshop currently supports implementation beyond training is through one-on-one coaching and mentoring. Evidence of the impact of The Workshop's coaching and mentoring in implementing these narratives includes this feedback from Eruera Tarena, Executive Director of Tokona te Raki:

*"I really think it's helpful to be coached by the team to apply the ideas in your mahi. It's really beneficial having them coach you through putting the theory into practice. I have found that this is really meaningful for people and embeds the ideas through practical experience. It also helps you [build] the capability of your team at the same time." Eruera*

Lani Evans, Head of Foundation, Vodafone Foundation NZ, also gave positive feedback on the usefulness of one-on-one coaching and editorial help when applying the narratives for change techniques to an op-ed.

*"The suggestions are amazing and really help me see your framing mahi more clearly... It'll take me a few more goes to get it right, but I think it gets a bit clearer each time." Lani Evans*

The final version of Lani's op-ed ([Aotearoa will thrive if our rangatahi do too](#)) incorporated tested messages from The Workshop's research including:

- **Vision:** 'opportunity to thrive', 'make decisions and shape their own futures';
- **Metaphors:** 'locked in poverty', 'constraints of poverty', 'release pressure';
- **Causes:** 'low wages', 'government underinvestment', 'successive government's inaction'; and
- **Solutions:** 'good income support', 'increase/strengthening benefit', 'raise living wage', and 'good income support'.



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## Key lessons about supporting narrative implementation

What are we learning from our work, and from our collaborators, as we go?

It isn't easy to implement these new narrative techniques and strategies.

- The Workshop's guides, checklists and training have all been useful, but some people want more help.
- People want support in applying research insights to their communications strategies such as drafting press releases and preparing for media interviews.
- One-on-one coaching and mentoring helps many people and is resource-intensive.



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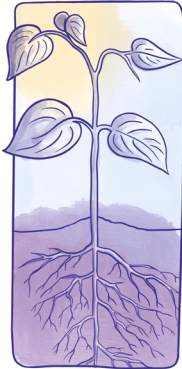
## Next steps

How are we changing our approach in response to what we have learned?

The Workshop needs to develop our capacity further to support the implementation of these new narrative techniques and strategies beyond training.

- A key part of this will be to expand our capacity for coaching and consulting to meet the demand to support partners and stakeholders. We want to develop new tools for implementation, make it easier for people to access and use our research insights in ways that suit them and get the help they need to implement them.
- Practically, we plan to hire and train more people in the work needed to support narrative implementation. This includes capacity at a senior level to deliver coaching and mentoring, and capacity at a more junior level to provide critical support to our research implementation work. We also plan to improve the way we store our key research insights so that we can make them more accessible to more people.

Strong growth



## New narratives helped drive public discourse

New narratives contributed to public discussion to unlock whānau and children from poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand.

An audit of the *Talking about Poverty and Welfare Reform in Aotearoa* guide found it has seen strong sector engagement and use in third-party advocacy. Several advocacy organisations used this messaging in email, media, social and digital communications. The audience was “well-defined”, and there was a clearly expressed message purpose. Using a tested message with a clear causal chain meant audiences better understood the communication focus and desired action. Therefore this aspect of performance is rated as ‘strong growth’.

### Evidence of the impact of The Workshop’s narratives contributing to public discussion draws from:

- Heft Communications Audit completed in February 2021
- Qualitative feedback
- Ongoing feedback from clients the Workshop continues to work with.

### Evidence that supports the performance claim

The Workshop’s messages allowed sector advocates to coordinate messaging with other organisations, presenting a “united front”, despite several different organisations running the communications. *Mahala Pinchen, Barnardos Advocacy Advisor.*

The Barnardo’s Advocacy Advisor also affirmed that using tested messages helped break down the issues into more manageable areas of focus. This was more effective than “... talking about it in a way which makes it sound

overwhelming or insurmountable.” The Workshop’s approach helped the Advisor focus “on how decisions over the past few decades have created the problem, and the fact that decision-makers have the power to take us out of it.” The positive messaging helped advocacy organisations to lead with a vision rather than lead with the problems.

According to the Child Rights Advocacy, Strategy and Research Director, Save the Children New Zealand, The Workshop’s tested messages helped preempt unhelpful frames that advocates might otherwise have used and challenged dominant norms. The frames of a collective community and not singling out a group were particularly helpful and different from previous approaches. The positive messaging around a right to thrive was useful. The messaging affirmed the importance that “every child... deserves the basics, must have the basics today, live good lives today; so they can have a bright future” was a useful frame.

According to the Save the Children New Zealand Advocacy Director, multiple organisations benefited from simultaneously using The Workshop’s report in their communications. It allowed organisations to create a “groundswell of messaging” which helped leverage change.

Ruby Powell, Economic Fairness Campaigner for ActionStation said that The Workshop’s report and tested messages were used repeatedly across communication packs, which ensured continuity in messaging approaches. She said: “It meant we could confidently provide communication packs to the other organisations in welfare collaborations and they could feel confident using them.” Ruby also discussed how it meant the messaging was “more positive, value and visions based”.



## Key lessons about driving public discourse

What are we learning from our work, and from our collaborators, as we go?

- Movements matter when it comes to shifting narratives and mindsets. To build a movement for change, it's important to build capacity across the sector. It can be very useful for organisations to do training together.
- In this case study ActionStation played a key role as a coordinating organisation – providing centralised support to other advocacy organisations. They hosted online coaching sessions with The Workshop, and worked with The Workshop to translate the narrative insights into a communications plan, with talking points and key messages.
- Doing training together was also identified as helping build cohesion and consistency across different organisations and individuals.

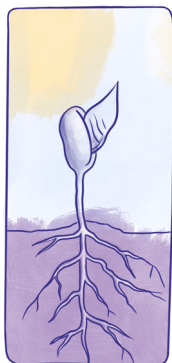


## Next steps

How are we changing our approach in response to what we have learned?

- We try to secure funding that supports a movement-building approach to narrative change. This could mean a central funding organisation (see Waka Kotahi case study below), a pool of funding from a group of collaborators or philanthropic funders committed to long term change in the area.
- We look for those organisations and individuals who really 'get' narrative change, and support them in their work to coordinate narrative change in their sector. Our work with fellow PMP Nga Kaikokiri ActionStation and Community Housing Aotearoa are good examples of the important role of these 'catalyst' organisations.





## New narratives helped shift public mindsets

New narratives help shift public mindsets to unlock whānau and children from poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Raising income support is an essential step in unlocking whānau and children from poverty in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Independent polling found that two in three New Zealanders supported increasing income support. There were clear links between The Workshop's metaphors and public expression of support, as captured in the UMR polling. ActionStation/Child Poverty Action Group also used The Workshop's tested messages in their plans for communication following the release of the Government's Budget 2021. Given the clear evidence of engagement with the messaging by the public, we rated performance as "new shoots" as this report shows the first step of many to unlock whānau and children from poverty.

Evidence of the impact of The Workshop's narratives contributing to shifting public mindsets draws from:

- ➔ UMR polling (June 2021) found that 69% of New Zealanders believed the Government should increase income support. This survey used much of The Workshop's recommended narrative framing including :
  - » metaphors of 'constraints of poverty', 'locked in poverty', and 'unlock from poverty'
  - » vision statements of every child deserving an 'opportunity to thrive', 'happy thriving childhoods', and 'thriving lives'
  - » causes being 'low wages', 'high housing costs', and 'overstressed families'
  - » and offered solutions of 'increasing/strengthening benefit', and 'good income support' in their key messages.

Overall, the focus was positive-focused, looked forward to the future, and relied on the evidence of widespread support from the people of New Zealand to call for change.

- ➔ ActionStation/Child Poverty Action Group used The Workshop's tested messages in their plans for communication following the release of the Government's Budget 2021. This included
  - » values of 'compassion', and 'justice';
  - » metaphors of 'unlock from poverty', and 'constraints of poverty'.

In focussing on the causes of poverty, ActionStation/Child Poverty Action Group relied on the Workshop's messaging around 'government underinvestment', 'successive government's inaction', and 'high housing costs', all macro-level causes that eliminate blame from beneficiaries and for which there are clear solutions. These solutions from the Workshop used by ActionStation/Child Poverty Action Group in their communications Post-Budget also included 'increase/strengthening benefits'.



## Key lesson about building movements

Waka Kotahi case study: how a central funder can support movement building

Over the past 18 months, The Workshop has worked with Waka Kotahi to deliver research, advice and training on narrative strategies to build support for changing the way people move around our cities. Waka Kotahi funded this work, but the Workshop delivered training to a range of people working across the sector. As a result, the research insights were widely shared and used, including by councils and community advocates.

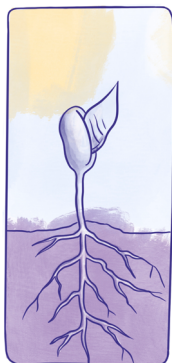
From the outset of this work, we have shown that broad collaborations are essential to long term impact and narrative change.

**The Waka Kotahi case study also illustrated the vital role that a central funding organisation (whether philanthropic like PMP or government agencies like Waka Kotahi) could play in the success of narrative change work. Including:**

- commissioning or funding the deep, resource-intensive work of generating new research insights,
- bringing together or enabling networks of people and organisations who also see the need for narrative change and will use the insights,
- allowing The Workshop to make the insights from our work freely available.

**Together, these factors enable us to:**

- Provide narrative advice and training at low or no cost for under-resourced community organisations, and
- Explore different ways to implement our research insights in ways that work for different groups.



## New narratives helped shift government policy

New narratives shift policy to unlock whānau and children from poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand

Creating impact at the level of policy shift is long term work. We would not usually expect to see this kind of impact for several years after beginning work on narrative change in a particular sector or on an issue. Occasionally, however, a set of conditions can come together that enable narrative shifts to lead to shifts in public attitudes, and in turn to impact policy in a much shorter timeframe than usual.

The Government's decision to increase income support in the 2021 Budget was an example of this kind of early impact. Using the metaphor of the seed growing into a plant, we could compare this decision to one small, early shoot in a plant that has the potential for a lot more growth. Therefore we have rated performance on this aspect as "new shoots".

Raising income support is an important step in unlocking whānau and children from poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand. Accordingly, it was gratifying when the government announced an increase in income support in the 2021 Budget.

Rob Egan (senior communications specialist and former advisor to Labour), noticed the importance of the positive framing used by The Workshop. Rob used The Workshop's framing in a wide range of communications from op-eds to social media posts to briefing papers. He affirmed the benefits of using independently tested messages rather than relying on instinct.



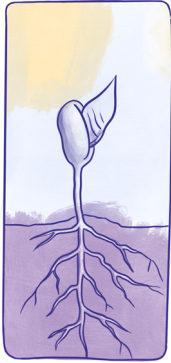
### Key lesson about shifting government policy

What are we learning from our work, and from our collaborators, as we go?

- Strong and consistent messaging helps the media, pushes politicians, and creates an idea of united public perception.

# The Workshop's growth

New shoots



The Workshop has had some early wins with unlocking whānau and children from poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand. This has helped build credibility in our narrative approach. However, other programmes will take longer to effect change, and it is important that funders understand narrative change is long-term work.

The Workshop is no longer a startup. The organisation is maturing. A key strength is the solid governance and management now established.

Staffing has extended from two to nine people – as well as offering work experience to a variety of interns over the past two years. Key lessons related to staffing are:

- ➔ we need more junior staff who can learn and support the work, rather than relying on interns,
- ➔ having built a solid base for our research and training capacity, we need to focus on building our team's capacity in narrative implementation work,
- ➔ we also need to work systematically with partners and with people with lived experience early in message development.

While the focus of this report is on poverty reduction, the scope of The Workshop's work to increase wellbeing and equity in Aotearoa is broader. We have produced 10 narrative guides for public use under creative commons licence, and undertaken five other significant public research reports. Our public guides include:

1. How to Talk about Child and Family Wellbeing
2. Talking about Poverty and Welfare Reform
3. How to Talk about System Change
4. How to Talk about Crime and Justice
5. Talking about Early Brain Development
6. How to Talk about Cannabis Reform
7. How to Talk about COVID
8. How to Talk about COVID Vaccinations
9. Talking about Climate Change
10. Talking about Transport Mode Shift

Seed funding from the Peter McKenzie Project allowed The Workshop to attract funds for work on other areas to grow the overall impact of The Workshop. Most of our other funding is attached to specific research or implementation projects. It doesn't support the crucial work of building our own capacity or experimenting with and learning from new ways of doing this work. Baseline funding from the Peter McKenzie Project has also allowed us to hold firm on our commitment to making all our work publicly available through creative commons licences.

To build a robust evidence base for our work, we frontloaded our funding and capacity into research to develop narratives. The value and impact of our work is documented in this report. We remain committed to developing and testing narratives that work to shift public mindsets. We also remain committed to ensuring the insights of this work stay in the commons, and are freely available to any advocates to use.

Now we need to spend more time and resources helping people to use these narratives. This will require additional capacity and new skills on our team. We will be looking for ways to fund this work.

# Appendix:

## Data sources for this report

Data source	Description of data
Robust research to better understand and frame unlocking whānau and children from poverty	In 2019, The Workshop tested a series of messages adapted from those successfully applied in the UK. Used a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) of 2500 general public in NZ.
Results from The Workshop training participants	Online survey. Fieldwork between 17 June and 2 July 2021. Received 25 responses from 137 who opened emails, a 18% response rate
Interviews with people who have use our research insights, guides, mentoring and trainings	Heft Communications Audit completed in February 2021 with 13 people who had either used one of our message guides or been to a training. In addition, interns conducted four interviews with advocates in 2021.
Communications published by people who have access to our guides, training and mentoring	Tracked through media tracking, and from feedback from clients. Some of this information is stored in the in-house CRM.
Unsolicited feedback from people who work with us or use our research insights	Data stored in the in-house CRM system.
Media coverage of ways to unlock whānau and children in poverty	Tracked through media tracking.
Public opinion surveys of the general public	UMR polling (June 2021).
Publicly available information about decisions made by power holders	Tracked through media tracking.

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