

CO-PRODUCTION IN A MĀORI CONTEXT

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Abstract

In June 2006 six iwi and Māori authorities were engaged by Te Puni Kōkiri to participate in a trial to develop an understanding of co-production (joint development of policy and service delivery to realise shared strategic outcomes) in a Māori context. Co-production reflects a new approach, which is neither prescriptive nor intervention based, but is a shared outcomes method in which relationships are strengthened through redundant planning and action for joint outcomes. It is expected to become a way of working with iwi and Māori authorities to enable them to be influential in, if not the co-architects of, the design of policies and programmes that concern their people and their own resources. Te Puni Kōkiri considers co-production has the potential to become a successful way in which iwi and Māori authorities and government joint ventures can accelerate Māori development aspirations. It is also an opportunity for co-production partners to engage in developing new Māori policy. Despite this, undertaking co-production has been, and is likely to continue to be, far more challenging in practice than thinking about it as a concept (Martin and Boaz 2000).

INTRODUCTION

In recent years the New Zealand landscape of government–community relationships has changed significantly from a contract-only environment to one that encourages citizen participation and involvement in government activities. Te Puni Kōkiri's co-production project has emerged from within this environment, primarily from what we have learned from the experiences and evaluations of our past policies and programmes. These have shown that better results are likely when government and Māori organisations are able to jointly plan and build strategies, infrastructure and capability.

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It is this agency's challenge to provide quality advice to government on Māori issues and at the same time support Māori to realise their potential. This project aligns with Te Puni Kōkiri's approach to Māori development, the Māori Potential Approach (MPA)³. The MPA aims, by engaging in positive opportunities for interaction between iwi and Māori and government over the long term, to achieve the shared strategic outcome of *Māori succeeding as Māori*. The MPA is a strengths-based philosophy as opposed to a deficit or problem-centred model.

Te Puni Kōkiri's ultimate aim is to better place Māori to build and leverage their collective resources, knowledge, skills and leadership capability to improve their overall life quality. The concept of co-production aligns with the guiding principles of the MPA in that it:

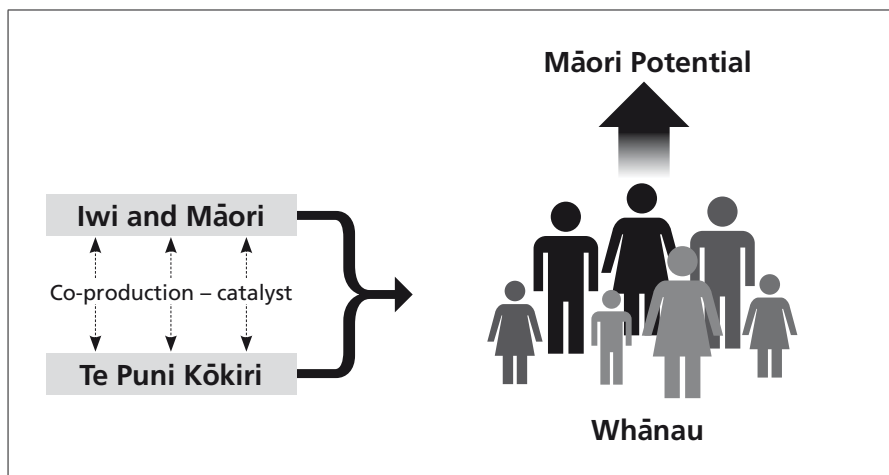
- affirms Māori as a diverse, aspirational people with a distinctive culture and value system
- recognises the Māori community and their indigenous culture as a net contributor to the identity, wellbeing and enrichment of wider society
- affirms the capability, initiative and aspiration of Māori to make choices for themselves.

In addition to the MPA principles, the core assumptions of the co-production project are that:

- it is a catalyst for Māori potential
- iwi and Māori authorities are the primary interface and are best placed for working with whānau
- iwi and Māori authorities of sufficient capability and capacity are the most appropriate organisations to engage with government in a strategic capacity to achieve best outcomes for Māori.

3 Refer to Te Puni Kōkiri's *Statement of Intent 2007–10* for a more detailed description, at: www.tpk.govt.nz/publications/soi/tpk-2007-soi-en.pdf.

Figure 1 Core Assumptions of Co-Production



Co-production is more than a “bottom up” community development model and does not aim simply to promote community planning and user-focused services. It involves a more active role for iwi and Māori authorities in designing and delivering local services, as well as providing the opportunity to influence the policy process by working with government to invest in shared outcomes for Māori.

Because little was known of what co-production in a Māori context involves, Te Puni Kōkiri has engaged in a multi-year trial in conjunction with six iwi and Māori authorities to test this approach. Thus far, it is clear to us that co-production is a shared outcomes method, characterised by an emphasis on high-quality, long-term relationships that are more than working or contractual relationships.

Part of this work has meant establishing a working definition, which states:

Co-production is a shared outcomes method premised on a long-term values-based relationship between organisations of sufficient capacity and capability with the ability to represent a Māori collective. This means each partner works together, within their distinctive and unique environments, to realise mutually agreed beneficial outcomes for the realisation of whānau, hapū and iwi potential.

A values-based relationship in a Māori context necessarily involves acknowledging the importance of Māori cultural concepts and values to iwi and Māori authorities. Any engagement must therefore recognise the mana of all partners and the difference between “lore” and “law”. Each partner must also have, or be able to develop, the

organisational capacity and capability to undertake long-term, strategic policy and programme development and implementation. Although there are similarities with the Government's Managing for Outcomes strategy, the difference is in the kinds of organisations involved and, more particularly, the non-material rewards from participation.

In summary, co-production is both relationship and activity, both concept and process. Developing relationships, strategic planning, creating policy and implementing programmes all require time to be effective. A phased or measured approach is therefore most likely to yield the best results. Te Puni Kōkiri regards co-production as a real opportunity to achieve best outcomes for Māori.

BACKGROUND

The concept of co-production was developed by a group of academics at the end of the 1970s in reaction to what they considered were problems with dominant theories of the time about urban governance and centralisation, and to address the failure of conventional development programmes (Ostrom 1996, Whitaker 1980). These academics were concerned with the idea of engaging citizens in both the design and production of public services. At the same time, Edgar Cahn was developing his concept of an alternative currency he termed "time dollars". Cahn developed a theory to explain why and how this currency could change the dynamics of social welfare programmes, which he too termed co-production (Boyle n.d.). Both models have similar aims: to give responsibility to and involve those who have in the past been regarded as "the problem" in creating solutions for themselves. It is the opposite of deficit thinking and offers an alternative to only public or only private service provision (Boyle n.d.).

Recent interest in the concept of co-production has coincided with a desire for increasing citizen involvement in the design and delivery of government services by many Western and other democratic governments. The form of participation is also an important factor in the kinds of activities undertaken. There are operational challenges for both government and citizens because co-producing and participation may take various forms. There can, for example, be a difference between consultation and engagement, and in the level and degree of obligation between partners (Martin and Boaz 2000). Co-production also requires a high level of active engagement by all partners in time, resources and energy that many may be unable or unwilling to commit. Such involvement may not suit everyone due to this high degree of activity, and there is the potential for it to be seen as a burden rather than a benefit as not all co-producers will have the same capacities and capabilities.

Evidence for the effectiveness of co-production varies with the kinds of activities or projects, but also with the social, economic and political environment in which they are situated.⁴ There is also a high degree of variability in the reasons why citizens and public organisations may decide to work together as co-producers (Martin and Boaz 2000). Co-production is not a process that occurs simply because of any potential monetary benefit (Ostrom 1996), so there is a wide variation in the willingness and abilities of citizens and government agencies to engage in meaningful “citizen centred” government (Martin and Boaz 2000). For iwi and Māori organisations, for example, benefits are collective rather than individual, so the advantage in participation may in fact be motivated more by non-material rewards or intangible reasons (e.g. the potential for involvement in policy development) than by monetary returns (Alford 2002).

PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

In the New Zealand context co-production may be compared to what is most often referred to as partnership or collaboration.⁵ A number of factors have influenced this trend. These include:

- partnership as represented by the Treaty of Waitangi (although there is often confusion about what this response means or even looks like (McIntosh 2003))
- historical government relationships with NGOs and the community sector
- international trends stemming from ideas such as social cohesion and social capital in the growing use of inclusive methods for social change (Matheson et al. 2005).

Moreover, the discourse of partnership or engagement with communities is taking over from the contracting environment common in the 1990s (Matheson et al. 2005) as a means of delivering social goals through a “whole of government” approach aimed at shared outcomes (Local Partnerships and Governance Research Group [LP&GR] 2005). Some recent examples include Housing New Zealand’s community renewal interventions; Waitakere City Council’s community partnerships, such as Building the Waitakere Way; and the Ministry for Economic Development and Industry New Zealand’s Regional Partnerships Programme.

The form partnership takes may also depend on whether the activity is to do with policy development and planning, or service delivery. It also varies in the level of formality and desired outcome of the relationship. However, to get any real advantage from collaboration, “something has to be achieved that could not have been attained by any of the organisations acting alone” (Huxham 2003:403). Key factors include the

4 Martin and Boaz (2000) illustrate their argument with an example set in the United Kingdom. Ostrom (1996) uses cases from developing nations Nigeria and Brazil.

5 For a discussion of these terms, see Majumdar 2005.

level of complementarity, the commitment to mutual understanding and the capacity to engage effectively in a collaborative venture (Majumdar 2005).

Values

Implicit in the concepts of partnership and/or collaboration are trust, respect and reciprocity that “denote a particular set of values attributable to these relationships” (Matheson et al. 2005:3). Trust is the basis on which all quality relationships are founded (Huxham 2003:408), but is also often about the exercise of power (ie control).⁶ Matters of power and control raise a series of issues around who makes the decisions, who determines what resources are allocated to regional and local areas, and the potential impact on local collaboration efforts (LP&GR 2005). Answers to these questions depend on the level of trust, commitment and honesty that underpin the relationship between government and community groups.

Representation

Representation must be appropriate for the context in which partners engage. For example, representatives of all organisations need to turn up and have the power to make decisions and speak for their organisations (Craig 2004). This may require the use of a “strategic broker” (Craig 2004). Their role is to enable community networks and forums to achieve better “mandated representation” and to support co-ordinated action around shared outcome indicators. It is important that any collaboration with government agencies does not become a burden for community organisations (Craig 2004:62). For iwi and Māori authorities, this also means substantiating the particular groups they claim to represent and the way in which they are accountable to them.

Research and Measurement

A key aspect of co-production for government – and indeed for any partner – is the opportunity to develop a robust and convincing evidence base. Partnerships are a way of eliciting local knowledge and gaining understanding of the local context. Participatory methods of inquiry such as action research are often a productive way to measure outcomes (Matheson et al. 2005). A strategy and action plan to evaluate the effectiveness of co-production is a component in Te Puni Kōkiri’s investment with all six co-producer partners. Depending on the initiatives involved in each investment in this trial, it is probable that new social indicators specifically designed for the collaborative environment will be an element in the design of these evaluations (Craig 2004:56). It is also likely that participation by other central and/or local government

6 This is often due to accountability measures, especially those required of government agencies.

agencies will be desirable. Determining how and when to involve other groups will occur on a case-by-case basis and depend on the characteristics of each investment.

Accountability

A “common accountability platform” means a shared commitment to common goals to ensure ongoing local participation and political support, but this needs time to develop good processes and demonstrate tangible gains (Craig 2004). Iwi and Māori authorities must be able to confirm that any government funding has been effectively and prudently spent, and for government agencies it means demonstrating the transparency and accountability required for any expenditure of taxpayer funds. Government agencies must be able to provide evidence of commitment to the sustainability of good relationships through mechanisms other than contracts.

Iwi and Māori Authorities

“To thrive independently is the objective of most Māori organisations although the road for organisations in achieving tino rangatiratanga will be undertaken through their relationships and alliances with others” (Knox 2004:20). Tensions stemming from power imbalances between government and NGOs, as well as their differing organisational and cultural values, have the ability to influence and shape the outcomes of successful partnerships. For example, the extent to which tino rangatiratanga can be exercised will be constrained by the environments and mandates that determine how both government and iwi and Māori authorities function. However, the potential to influence and co-develop policy is a significant incentive for iwi and Māori authorities to become involved in co-production.

The motivation for Te Puni Kōkiri’s co-production project has emerged from lessons learned, previous experiences, and evaluations of past policies and programmes. Collectively, these showed that successful results were most likely when government and Māori were able to jointly plan and build strategies, infrastructure and capability. Progress began with Te Puni Kōkiri’s Capacity Building (CB) programme (1999–2006), which consisted of a series of seeding grants to build skills and competencies to enable Māori to take part in their own development initiatives. At the time it represented a new approach for government in supporting bottom-up development models. Target outcome areas were based on four categories: social, cultural, economic and infrastructure. The most common social outcome was the identification of an increase in wellbeing resulting in improved individual self-esteem, confidence and motivation. Courses aimed at improving cultural knowledge and practices were also initiated. New business initiatives were developed and people felt more confident in their capability to proceed. Setting up trusts was a common infrastructure outcome.

In 2000 the Government promulgated a set of key goals to guide the public sector in achieving sustainable development, one of which was the Reducing Inequalities Strategy, which combined development strategies with remedial interventions. As part of this, the Local Level Solutions (2000–2008) programme was established. The aim was to reduce inequalities while simultaneously assisting Māori communities to design and plan for their own development needs. As a catalyst this programme was found to contribute to positive outcomes for development within participating communities that gained knowledge, experience and skills. Some groups were also able to improve their circumstances through the implementation of their projects. Overall, it was seen as an effective mechanism through which Māori could progress locally designed and delivered solutions to problems.

Direct Resourcing (2002–2008) was introduced to leverage the advances made by the Capacity Building and Local Level Solutions programmes. As a pilot of a funding mechanism to make resources directly available to Māori organisations, it was best suited to organisations that were already moving towards a fund-holder, contract manager capacity. The aim of this programme was to address dissatisfaction felt by Māori organisations with state sector funding, service purchasing and delivery processes of the time. The programme was found to give confidence to organisations to develop their own solutions, with strategic intervention from government. However, some challenges with reporting and accountability mechanisms meant that instead of Māori organisations becoming autonomous purchasers, they became at best co-purchasers of self-defined solutions.

At the same time as Direct Resourcing for Māori organisations was being implemented, the MPA was being developed to guide Te Puni Kōkiri's future work. Fundamental to the principles of MPA is the assumption that the whānau is the core organising unit of Māori society and the crucial source of Māori cultural identity. The Whānau Development: Action and Research (2004–2005) programme (WDAR) was developed to give whānau the opportunity to identify and develop their own priorities and opportunities. To manage the risks involved for government in engaging directly with whānau groups, a variety of iwi and Māori organisations were funded to assist their whānau in a development planning process. Research findings showed that whānau found involvement in the WDAR programme to be an empowering experience – one that instilled an additional level of confidence. Moreover, productive and collegial relationships were developed between Te Puni Kōkiri and iwi and Māori organisations.

Together, these past programmes and policies have a common thread of collaborative relationships between government and iwi and Māori authorities to developing shared outcomes. The policy aim, rather than the outcome, was to move towards providing a balance between accountability to government and organisational priorities.

Te Puni Kōkiri therefore considers that co-production could well be the mechanism by which this may be achieved. We anticipate that co-production will provide us with an opportunity to develop our conceptual thinking and experiences with a particular focus on the factors, situations and contexts needed to build a collaborative approach to the development of shared outcomes.

Co-Production in a Māori Context

In July 2006 Te Puni Kōkiri commenced a co-production trial in two phases with six iwi and Maori authorities. These organisations were invited to participate based on their long-standing relationship (at a mainly regional level) with Te Puni Kōkiri, their experience in working with government accountability mechanisms and processes, and an organisational infrastructure with the current or potential capacity and capability to include a policy function.

A pre-implementation phase aimed at strengthening relationships between Te Puni Kōkiri and our trial partners ran from July to November 2006. The implementation phase is underway and will run until June 2010. This has involved negotiating a series of outputs aimed at working towards realising a series of shared strategic outcomes. Work is now progressing on implementing the six investments. Co-production for a Māori environment is a broad concept and approach. It can be applied to a range of different contexts but will feature distinctive characteristics that confirm our initial assumptions. Co-production:

- recognises the uniqueness of the Maori perspective, in particular its social structure, values, history, culture and language
- considers iwi and Māori authorities the most appropriate organisations to engage with Māori communities and individuals and facilitate change for them – they have the knowledge, networks and skills to engage with whānau, as well as experience in working with government agencies
- allows Government to work with iwi and Māori authorities to support policy outcomes for Māori
- differs from consultation and engagement, and is more likely to involve a high level of time, trust and involvement from all parties⁷
- enables iwi and Māori authorities to extend their influence, to be recognised and valued, and to make a difference for their communities based on their guiding values and priorities – this intrinsic motivation is more likely to engage them in co-production rather than just providing the opportunity to gain material benefits.

7 However, this does have the potential to create a burden on co-producers and iwi and Māori authorities, in particular those with limited resources and constrained capability, to meet their existing priorities and strategic intents. It can also create difficulties in managing capacity issues and commitments to other projects for government agencies.

Co-production can be a complex process to negotiate given the range of variables at play: relationship building, an outcomes focus, capability development and project management. But the principles underpinning co-production in a Māori context are clear. For iwi and Māori authorities they:

- affirm each iwi and Māori authority's cultural identity as a source of pride, strength, confidence and purpose
- recognise important Māori cultural concepts such as tikanga, mana whenua and mātauranga Māori
- recognise the relationships and influence iwi and Māori authorities have in their rohe, and their responsibilities to Māori whānau, hapū, marae, communities and individuals.

The principles fundamental to co-production for government are to:

- support Māori to realise their potential through long-term committed relationships with iwi and Māori authorities
- develop an evidence base to provide policy leadership and quality advice on issues affecting Māori
- ensure accountability and transparency for any and all expenditure of taxpayer funds.

More than a community development model, co-production involves an active role for Māori in designing policy and delivering services through joint ventures in which activities, reporting and lessons are shared.

By testing a co-production approach in a Māori context, we aim to determine whether it is indeed the most productive approach for achieving an equilibrium between competing accountabilities and responsibilities, and a willingness for government and iwi and Māori authorities to engage. The concept of co-production therefore requires a conscious shift in the way that central government and iwi and Māori authorities currently engage with each other to initiate development.

Te Puni Kōkiri has identified that working with iwi and Māori authorities in a co-production environment is more about:

- working closely with iwi and Māori organisations to jointly develop policy solutions that contribute to better outcomes for Māori
- acting as a key driver for improved programme delivery and design

and less about:

- being service-delivery focused
- being programme-design driven
- a programme
- a funding model.

This does not necessarily mean a change in current procedures and processes, but rather a change in priorities and focus when engaging with iwi and Māori authorities. Co-production is considered to be best suited to organisations with the capacity and capability (or the potential to develop these) to engage effectively with government to do more than deliver services. It gives priority to joint outcomes and policy development. It is a way of government working with iwi and Māori authorities and enabling them to be influential in, if not co-developers of, policies and programmes that concern their people and their own resources.

PRE-IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

The pre-implementation phase of the co-production trial focused on four key elements:

1. **relationship building:** building stronger relationships between the national and regional offices of Te Puni Kōkiri and the six iwi and Māori authorities as a platform for co-production
2. **planning and investment:** scoping and planning what co-production means to each group, and what might be co-produced to align with each partner's social and economic priorities
3. **policy leadership:** developing a draft policy rationale for how to co-produce and why
4. **research and evaluation:** developing a strategy and action plans to provide the evidence base that will support our understanding of co-production and how it occurs in a diverse range of Māori contexts.

Although the literature and our past experiences defined our starting point and gave support for the trial, the most significant evidence in the first phase of this trial in helping determine what co-production in a Māori context might look like was an action research component undertaken during the pre-implementation stage.

Research Component

The research component of the pre-implementation phase was informed by a concept report from each trial authority, the experience of conducting four wānanga (workshops) and a review of the literature on co-production. A team of independent researchers was commissioned to act as a resource for our co-production trial partners in deciding what co-production might mean to them, and to help them produce an environmental audit scan and investment proposal. In doing so, they explored the co-production pre-implementation trial experience from the perspective of each authority. This meant the research method evolved from simple observation and description in the initial stages to a more participatory, action-oriented method. This also required a greater degree of analysis, reporting, and investment of time in relationships by the researchers as the trial evolved.

These research projects, like any high-quality research, involved building good working relationships and establishing a rapport with those participating. Due to the nature of the trial, it was a process of discovery as researchers became a resource for the authorities; in several instances this meant the researchers formed very close working relationships with them. Although this entailed extra effort at the later stages for national office staff (rather than regional staff, who have existing long-term working relationships with each authority) to form similar working relationships, results have proved very productive.

These findings again highlight the desire of iwi and Māori authorities to be involved in strategic government policy as a way to create a sustainable future for their people. The desire is for more engagement – for more participation in government processes, not less. Now that relationships have been cemented, six investments, each consisting of a number of initiatives, have been jointly developed, all with the common goal of realising the shared outcome of Māori success.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Based on our definition of co-production in a Māori context, there are significant issues for the implementation phase of the trial and for future investment in co-production.

Relationships: all parties must be able to demonstrate a willingness to engage and to commit to the risk in doing so, especially within the context of a risk-averse government sector (LP&GR 2005). To ensure relationships are sustainable, constant and consistent engagement (both formal and informal, and face to face whenever possible) must occur to insure against collaborative drift. This has required the establishment of co-production teams that include representatives from all partners, who regularly engage for varying purposes and keep activities focused on outcomes.

Outcomes: contracting the six iwi and Māori authorities to produce evidence for a co-production policy rationale and evidence base created initial confusion at the beginning of the project. Considerable time was spent by Te Puni Kōkiri and the researchers reiterating that co-production is neither a funding model nor simply a relationship, but a shared outcomes method executed through a strategic alliance to pursue jointly negotiated outcomes. This has shown the importance of a pre-implementation stage so that joint understanding can be achieved and relationships have the time and space in which to mature.

To demonstrate the rewards intrinsic to a willingness to co-produce, joint outcomes must be negotiated and shared. The challenge is to realise these outcomes while reflecting both the diversity and the commonalities of Māori groups. Measuring outcomes and the efficacy of outputs will require monitoring and research. New measures may have to be designed to reflect both Te Puni Kōkiri's MPA and quality of life measures for Māori communities and individuals.

Policy leadership: Te Puni Kōkiri's role will be to keep co-production partners informed, through good working relationships with other agencies, of any potential policy issues and changes to government objectives. This will also help to identify opportunities for other agencies to become involved. To jointly develop effective Māori policy, iwi and Māori authorities and government must create policy that not only accommodates the aspirations of Māori collectives but also makes provision for individuals. For a policy to be successful it must reflect the needs of all those for whom it is designed. The potential to influence and co-develop policy is a significant intrinsic benefit of involvement in co-production for these organisations.

Representation: each partner to co-production must demonstrate the endorsement of the groups or institutions they represent. However, indicating this for iwi and Māori authorities may take more time and involve much more effort than for a government agency. Each partner organisation will have its own accountability mechanisms. New measures and reporting requirements will need to be negotiated if all stakeholders and constituencies are to be convinced of the efficacy of co-production. Maintaining the endorsement of a constituency may require demonstrating the effects of positive change in order to find ways to capture the interest and imagination of whānau.

Capability and capacity: differences in capacity, infrastructure, knowledge, resources and access to political processes can result in imbalances between partners (Matheson et al. 2005:9), which are most likely to be weighted in favour of government. However, this can be mitigated by ways of engaging that support the mana of all partners and respect each other's obligations, rights and responsibilities. Moreover, iwi and Māori authorities that choose to engage with government will do so not because of any legislative requirement or funding imperative, but because they are known to be the most effective and capable partner with whom government can develop Māori policy. The biggest risks in co-producing for government are the constraints of its own operational capability and systems and processes, and the extent to which the expectations of iwi and Māori authorities can be met.

CONCLUSION

Although the trial is still running, indications are that successful co-production does not have to be just an ideal. Having said this, there may be risks we are not yet aware of and have still to discover. However, from what we have learned, we envisage that effective and robust policy can be developed from such engagement. Through enhanced understanding based on good working relationships with each of our six co-production partners, we anticipate that we will all learn new things about our own and each other's operating environments and collectives. Although it is still too early to tell what the direct costs and benefits of co-production may be, expectations for the future of this approach will be met if all partners are committed to work towards Māori succeeding as Māori. To achieve this goal, ongoing research and monitoring and the creation of new measures of collective and individual change, as well as continuous advances in policy, are essential. It must also be kept in mind that any future co-production activity is both a considered and a phased approach, as befits strategic alliances based on high-quality relationships.

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