

What can **local government** do to help?



Social Cohesion Guide for Local Government

Belonging in local government

Local government represents local communities, it helps people feel like they belong, are included, can be themselves and take part in society. Local councils work directly with residents on local issues, including community-led solutions with specific community support programmes. These programmes can include support for:

- housing, homelessness
- accessibility for disabled residents
- community centres
- volunteering
- community safety
- diverse, Māori, Pacific Peoples, senior citizens, youth, faith communities
- arts and culture.

Whatever community you are in – whether it be your street, your neighbourhood, club, professional association, school, place of worship or cultural group – it feels good to belong, feel included, to be yourself and be part of something.

We're all different but we want to get along, celebrate our diversity and respect others when we disagree. This is important because not everybody feels that they can be who they are or trusts that their voice will be heard.

We are an increasingly diverse country with many different communities and we need to find ways to listen to each other and hear each other. We want to commit to understanding our differences and strengths and to work on what unifies us and what brings us closer.

Belonging

What it looks like

In a society where people get along well, we: know each other, know our neighbours, feel included in our workplaces, and know where to go to get help when we need it.

We feel that we are able to talk to people we might not normally talk to, speak up when we hear people saying discriminatory things, and feel free to share who we are, where we are from, and how we do things.

In a crisis we leave no one behind; everyone is included.

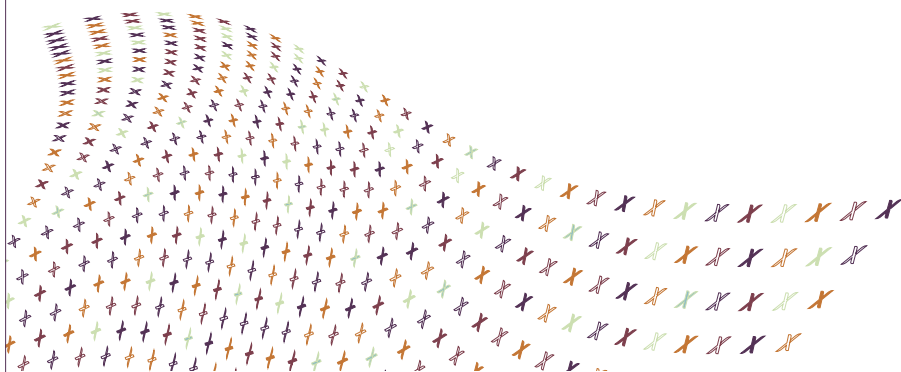
Building more belonging

What you can do

So, what can we do in our communities to help more people belong, embrace diversity, feel connected, take part, trust others, feel respected?

Belonging, trusting others

- Collaborate with Iwi and pan-Māori organisations, and NGOs to create locally-led approaches to helping people belong, at a local level.
- Take time to meet with communities in their spaces at times that suit them to build trust and relationships
 - for example, the Southern Initiative in Auckland Council brings together local council staff, families, communities, NGOs and businesses to find solutions to social and economic challenges in South Auckland.



Embracing diversity, feeling respected

- Encourage inclusive leadership and cultural competency training for staff, and provide accessible community spaces for communities to connect. Examples include
 - joining Immigration New Zealand's Welcoming Communities Programme
 - using Taituarā's (formerly the Society of Local Government Managers) diversity and inclusion competency building programme 'Leap'.
 - using Taituarā's Community Wellbeing Data Service to understand the current state of wellbeing in your community and where you could focus your efforts to improve it.

Feeling connected

Encourage diverse groups to work positively together to provide

- accessible grant funding for community events with proportionate reporting requirements
- free or discounted community centre hire services
- free community events
- funding or a free space for neighbourhoods and communities to run Neighbourhood Day events.

Taking part

- Have simpler and more accessible consultation events at times that work for people (after 5pm on weekdays, and weekends), reach out to 'hard to reach' communities, strengthen Māori representation in decision-making, and provide free civic education workshops in the lead up to elections or provide funding for civic education more broadly.
- Hold weekend drop-in sessions on the development of a long-term local government plan for social cohesion.
- Learn more about Te Reo Māori, the history of Aotearoa New Zealand and Te Tiriti o Waitangi, using free online apps such as Kōrerorero, Kupu and Ako Tahi or sign up to a course through Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, visit the history exhibitions at your local museum, or borrow books on NZ history from your local library.

- Have a courageous conversation with someone who is displaying discriminatory behaviour. Resources on the Human Rights Commission website can be helpful, such as Responding to Racism.
- Look at training initiatives for staff and other representatives.
- Apply for funding applications to government agencies to fund your community project, COGS or Lotteries through the grants management system or through the Community-Led Development Programme.

