

He Pātaka Marohi: A cross-sectoral approach to addressing reliable access to vegetables and fruit

Venessa Pokaia¹ Geoff Kira² Anette Kira³

¹Te Wakahuia Manawatu Trust, Palmerston North

²School of Health Sciences, Massey University, Wellington

³Independent Scientist, Manawatu

Objectives: Less than 40% of all Māori households have reliable access to nutritious foods, such as vegetables and fruit (VF) (Ministry of Health, 2012). Communities living in poverty have less people meeting the VF guidelines (30.5% vs. 43.9%) than more affluent communities (Ministry of Health, 2017). The aim of this abstract is to describe the collaborative process of intervention design aimed at improving access to VF.

Cross-sectoral collaboration: Public health academics approached Te Wakahuia Manawātū Trust (TWMT), a Māori-led health and social services organisation. A collaborative period of six-months, including three hui (meetings), took place with TWMT staff. This allowed four actions to take place: 1) knowledge exchange, 2) development of trust, 3) collaborative research process, and 4) development of an appropriate research design.

Intervention: Forty households (n=189 participants), that had visited a food bank in the last year and had at least one child, were recruited within two weeks. All households were provided with free VF for three months and were offered the opportunity to purchase \$5 bags of VF for another three months. Half of the participants were offered eight food workshops (cooking demonstrations, gardening workshops, and foraging).

Results: After six months, thirty-five households remained (88%) in the study. A very high amount of VF (88% of VF delivered) was consumed. The top two reasons for taking part in the project was free food (94%) and a trusted recruiter (TWMT) (89%). Workshops (education) made little difference to VF consumption patterns.

Conclusion: Working collaboratively across sectors with community agencies added high value by accelerating recruitment rate, increasing intervention efficacy, and enhancing communication generally. The greatest influence for success was the trusted relationships (academia-TWMT-community) and the resolve to modify the research process and design to a model that was community-appropriate.

Funding source: Health Research Council Explorer grant (17/659)