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One-stop database project maps work of western Bay's social sector

A one-stop, integrated database for social sector organisations that maps the work they do in the western Bay of Plenty is under development thanks to a project jointly funded by social sector umbrella organisation SocialLink and the SmartGrowth Partnership.

With over 220 agencies providing hundreds of services around housing, domestic violence, poverty, health and mental health in the western Bay of Plenty, the time is right to improve our understanding and awareness of the social sector network, says SocialLink's General Manager Liz Davies.

SocialLink, with funding support from the SmartGrowth Bay of Plenty Partnership, is currently half way through mapping all the work of the agencies within the social sector. The aim is to gain a better understanding of who is doing what and any key delivery priorities across the sector. The project aims to increase understanding of the social sector, their value and contribution to communities and look at ways to enable organisations to work together.

"Several databases exist already, but there is no integrated and in-depth picture of all our social sector organisations and the vital services that they provide," says Liz.

She says the project will provide a better understanding of who is involved – including providers and funders. "We are using desktop research, in-depth interviews and analysis to create a clear map of the social sector. We are also seeking information on what would help the sector improve delivery and support to the community and how to increase opportunities for learning and collaboration," she says.

SmartGrowth's Implementation Manager Bernie Walsh says that SmartGrowth's Social Sector Forum has advocated for a better understanding of the social sector and ways to improve connections and support. "We are pleased to be part of this joint work with SocialLink because SmartGrowth is all about how to make collaborative partnerships work well for the benefit of communities. The social sector is a complex space and so the first step was to map what everybody was doing and hear directly any feedback on opportunities for boosting effectiveness," she says. "This is a priority action in the SmartGrowth Strategy."

Liz says a one-stop, integrated database will provide up-to-date reporting and a clearer understanding of what and how services provided across the western Bay. "So far, our researchers have completed desktop research of 123 organisations. That initial work is already showing that those organisations deliver 275 services. We are now working with the second half of the agencies to complete the research and mapping process. Interim results show that biggest challenge for the communities that organisations work with is housing (40%) followed by isolation, domestic violence, poverty, health and mental health identified by 25% to 30% of organisations."

She says many of the big providers like the Ministry of Social Development, Department of Internal Affairs, the Bay of Plenty District Health Board and the Public Health Organisations have been interviewed, but other social service agencies including Maori and iwi have yet to be contacted.

The full social sector mapping project is expected to be completed and reported back to the SmartGrowth Leadership Group in the New Year.

Ends

Watch a 2 minute [video interview](#) with Liz Davies, General Manager SocialLink.

For more information contact SocialLink General Manager Liz Davies on 022 461 9104 or check out the Social Link [website](#).