
Community Boards Executive Committee

// Resource Document

// December 2025



Preface

This document is designed to support incoming Community Board Executive Committee (CBEC) members, as well as all community board members, by providing an overview of community boards, CBEC's role, and the work we have undertaken over the term.

Over the past three years, CBEC has focused on strengthening the voice, capability, and impact of community boards across Aotearoa. We have championed research-informed frameworks, built relationships with councils and central government, coordinated national events, and worked to ensure boards are empowered to advocate for their communities effectively.

This resource outlines our work, achievements, and guidance for the new term. It is intended as a practical tool to support continuity, provide context, and help incoming members continue the important work of strengthening local democracy and community voice.

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Message from outgoing chair to new members

Kia ora koutou,

Thank you to every community board member across Aotearoa. It has been a privilege to serve alongside you and advocate for the work you do, helping strengthen the voice of local communities in local government.

Over this term, CBEC has worked hard to elevate the role of community boards, sharpen our collective practice, and build the evidence base that shows empowered, well-connected boards improve outcomes for everyone. Our ambitious work programme included research into board effectiveness, strengthening training and leadership pathways, progressing the Better Together framework to improve council-board partnerships, and championing the essential role of local decision-making in vibrant, resilient communities.

As community board members you are the eyes, ears, and heart of your communities, knowing their strengths, challenges, and opportunities better than anyone. Never underestimate the value of that local knowledge.

As you begin a new term, focus on what matters most: relationships with your community, local groups, councils, and each other. Trust and collaboration are the foundation for real, lasting change.

To the incoming CBEC, I wish you every success in carrying forward the kaupapa of local democracy and community voice with integrity, courage, and optimism.

Ngā mihi nui,
Sarah Lucas
2022–2025 Chair, Community Board Executive Committee



What are community boards

Community boards are unincorporated bodies that are neither local authorities nor committees. They exist to give a voice to specific communities within a council/kaunihera catchment and act as representatives, advocates, and connectors for those communities.

A board's purpose is to engage with its community and advocate on its behalf in council/kaunihera discussions and decision-making. Councils may delegate responsibilities and decision-making powers to boards if they choose.

Community boards were established in the 1989 local government reforms to ensure smaller communities retained a clear and accessible voice within larger council structures.

Statutory Reference: Sections 49–54 of the *Local Government Act*, with Section 52 outlining core roles.

Role of community boards

Community boards are tasked to:

1. Represent and act as advocates for community interests.
2. Consider and report on matters referred by the council, or issues of local concern.
3. Maintain oversight of services provided by the council in the community.
4. Prepare annual submissions for expenditure within the community.
5. Communicate with community organisations and special interest groups.
6. Undertake additional responsibilities delegated by the council.

What This Means in Practice / Why It Matters

- Advocacy Role: Community boards are expected to push for what their communities need. They're not just advisory – they are a formal voice.
- Consultative & Reporting Role: They must actively consider issues that the council gives them and raising things themselves, so they can bring local issues up even if not directly asked to.
- Oversight: By keeping an eye on services (e.g. parks, libraries, local infrastructure), boards help ensure councils deliver in ways that meet community needs.

- Budget Influence: Through the annual submission, boards can directly influence the council's budgeting for their local community.
- Connection to Community: Regularly engaging with local groups helps boards stay grounded in grassroots issues and helps different parts of the community feed into decision-making.
- Flexible Role Through Delegations: The “other responsibilities” clause is powerful: it means a board’s role depends a lot on what its territorial authority delegates to it. This makes each board’s actual work quite variable depending on its council.

Where are our Community Boards?

We have 106 Community Boards across 39 Councils in Aotearoa New Zealand. Community Boards can only be established in Territorial Authorities, and not within Regional Councils. [Click here](#) to see where all the boards are. *Refer to appendix A.*

Diversity Across Aotearoa:

- Size and structure
- Delegations and decision-making powers
- Budgets, work programmes, and authority
- Relationships with councils and chief executives
- Community expectations and local priorities

This diversity is a strength: boards reflect the unique needs of their communities and embody localism in practice.

History and Role of CBEC

The first national Community Boards Conference, held in Christchurch in 1997, brought together representatives from across the country. Delegates agreed that a national body was needed to strengthen collaboration and representation.

At the second national conference in 1999, this working group was formalised as the New Zealand Community Board Conference Liaison Team. Its purpose was to coordinate future conferences and advocate for community boards at a national level. The group then subsequently voted to rename itself the New Zealand Community Boards’ Executive Committee (CBEC). *See Appendix B for more details.*

Today, CBEC functions as an advisory committee to LGNZ’s National Council, with a mandate to support, connect, and champion community boards nationwide.

Its key roles include:

- Upholding and advancing the purpose and value of community boards within the local government system.
- Acting as a national advocate for boards, engaging with territorial authorities, LGNZ, and central government when required.
- Encouraging the establishment of community boards as a way to strengthen grassroots democracy and community participation.
- Building capability and effectiveness by identifying national issues, sharing good practice, and supporting professional development.
- Strengthening relationships between community boards and their councils to ensure communities benefit from strong local governance partnerships.

Roles and responsibilities of CBEC members

CBEC members have a national leadership role supporting and strengthening community boards. Their responsibilities include:

- Advocating for community boards within their zones and across the country.
- Acting as a key contact for board members seeking guidance, assistance, or support.
- Sharing regular updates with their zones on CBEC's work, research, and initiatives.
- Attending CBEC meetings both online and in person, contributing to strategic discussions and decisions.
- Assisting with the CBEC work programme, including research, frameworks, and sector engagement.
- Helping plan and deliver the national Community Boards Conference, including direction setting and programme development.
- Being a strong, visible advocate for community boards.
- Providing ideas and input to improve the capability, voice, and impact of boards throughout Aotearoa.

Where does CBEC fit into LGNZ?

To understand where CBEC fits, lets unpack the Zone and Sector Groups of LGNZ.

How LGNZ's Zone Groups Work

LGNZ uses a “[zone](#)” structure to make it easier for councils and elected members to stay connected, share ideas, and learn from one another.

Every council belongs to one of six geographic zones. All elected and community board members are automatically part of your zone as well. Think of it as your regional network, a place to meet others working in local government, hear what's happening around the motu, and raise issues that matter to your community.

Each zone chooses a Zone Chair (and sometimes a small executive team) for the three-year council term. Together with LGNZ staff, they help organise zone meetings. These gatherings are where elected members come together to:

- swap insights
- hear from experts
- discuss challenges and opportunities
- build relationships across councils and communities

Zones also play an important role in national leadership. Every zone elects one person to sit [on LGNZ's National Council](#), which is the governing body that sets LGNZ's strategy and national advocacy direction. That representative is elected after each local government election and serves for the full term.

Your zone is your first step into the wider LGNZ whānau, a place to connect, learn, influence, and be part of shaping the future of local government. You can find the network and events calendar [here](#) to keep in contact with when your Zone meeting is happening. See *Appendix C*.

How LGNZ's Sector Groups Work

Alongside the zone system, LGNZ also groups councils into [sector groups](#). These are designed so councils with similar types of communities can connect, learn from each other, and work together on shared challenges.

Every council belongs to one of four sectors:

- Metro
- Regional
- Rural
- Provincial

These groupings reflect the different demographics, environments, and priorities councils, and their communities, are working with. Being part of a sector means your council is connected to others who "get" the same day-to-day realities your community faces, whether that's growing urban populations, regional development, small-town resilience, or rural infrastructure and services.

Each sector elects a representative every three years (after local body elections) to sit on [LGNZ's National Council](#). This ensures the voice of each sector is heard at the highest level of LGNZ's governance.

Sector groups also set their own priority issues for the term. With support from LGNZ, they work together to advance these priorities while also contributing to the wider interests of local government.

For community board members, sectors help you understand the broader context your council sits within, and how national advocacy is shaped by the different needs of communities across Aotearoa.

LGNZ's Other Member Networks

LGNZ has two other member networks, Te Maruata and Young Elected Members (YEM).

The [Te Maruata](#) whānui is for all Māori elected and appointed members. Its role is to advise National Council and promote increased representation of Māori as elected members of local government, enhance Māori participation in local government processes, provide support for councils in building strong relationships with iwi, hapu and Māori groups, and provide Māori input on the development of future policies or legislation relating to local government.

The [Young Elected Members \(YEM\)](#) network brings together elected members under the age of 40 and advises National Council on matters such as young adult/rangatahi participation in local government, building stronger relationships and issues affecting young people, elected members, and provides a view on any matters of policy and legislation.

A representative from both Te Maruata and YEM sits on CBEC and a representative from CBEC sits on both the Te Maruata and YEM committees.



Strategy 2023-2025

COMMUNITY BOARDS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Community Boards Executive Committee (CBEC) is an advisory committee to LGNZ's National Council representing all community boards in Aotearoa New Zealand, providing advocacy and promoting best practice.

RAUTAKI CBEC: 2023 - 2025

Matawhānui

Ka whakapakari ngā Poari Hapori i te ahurea ā-hapori me te aumangea o te hapori.

Ngā whāinga

- Ngā rangapū pakari i waenga i ngā Kaunihera me ngā Poari Hapori.
- He hononga hira ngā Poari Hapori i waenga i te Kaunihera, ngā hapori, ngā hapū me ngā iwi.
- He reo hihiri, whai hua hoki tō te Poari Hapori i roto i ngā mahi whakatau take a te kāwanatanga ā-rohe.
- E whakamaiohatia ana, e whakatairangatia ana, e whai rauemi ana hoki ngā Poari Hapori hei wāhanga waiwai o te whakatipu hapori pakari, aumangea hoki.

Ngā Whakaarotau

- Te whakapakari i ngā rangapū Tiriti
- Ka arotahi ki te whakamauru i te huringa āhuarangi, te uruataunga me te aumangea.
- He hihiri te hāpai i te kanorau o ngā mema Poari Hapori.
- He tika te whai rauemi me te tautoko i ngā Poari Hapori kia puāwai, kia whai take hoki i roto i a rātou mahi.
- Te whakamana i te whakaurunga hihiri o ngā mema Poari Hapori ki roto i te whakawhanaketanga o ngā kaupapahere kāwanatanga ā-rohe me ā rātou whakatau.

CBEC STRATEGY: 2023 - 2025

Vision

Community Boards strengthen localism and community resilience.

Goals

- Strong partnerships between Councils and Community Boards.
- Community Boards are a vital link between Council, communities, hapū and iwi.
- Community Boards are an active and effective voice in local government decision-making.
- Community Boards are valued, promoted, and resourced as integral to building strong, resilient communities.

Priorities

- Strengthening Te Tiriti partnerships
- Focus on climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience.
- Actively promote increased diversity of Community Boards' members.
- Community Boards are well-resourced and supported to thrive and make an impact in their roles.
- Enabling active participation of Community Board members in local government policy development and decision-making.

In early 2023, CBEC members workshopped a strategy to lead through the term.

In light of the [Future of Local Government Report He piki tūranga, he piki kōtuku](#), there was a focus on localism, and recognizing how important local decision making is to ensuring sustainable, resilient futures for our communities.

Local government must play a critical role in building place-based resilience that supports communities through the times ahead. This will not be possible under the current system of local government, which faces significant financial pressures, strains on capacity and resourcing, fragmented relationships with central government, and an uncertain mandate to fulfil its purpose.

page 9, Future of Local Govt Review. See Appendix D

CBEC led directly from the strategy for the remainder of the term - and it informed the 2023-2025 work programme, along with conference theme and delivery, both in 2024 and 2025.

CBEC took the view that the Future of Local Government should devolve decision making to place, with a greater emphasis on localism. Community boards are a current, available and effective tool to enable greater localism and place-based decision making, see *Appendix E*.

This focus was reflected in the 2020-25 strategy, and the subsequent Community Boards Conference 2025, and our launch of Better Together in 2025.

CBEC Achievements 2022–2025

Throughout the 2022–25 term, CBEC worked consistently, guided by its strategic plan. The committee provided strong advocacy for community boards across Aotearoa, both through its collective efforts and the individual contributions of each zone member. The term began with co-chairs and transitioned to a single chair midway through the period.

National Hui

A CBEC member coordinated a regular national online hui for community boards. Meeting dates and times were set through the agenda, and the member organised guest speakers for each session. LGNZ supported the hui by sending invitations to all community board members across Aotearoa. Attendance was strong, sessions were recorded, and highlights were occasionally featured in the *Keeping It Local* newsletter. Topics covered included representation reviews, electoral reform, work programme updates, research findings, “Fresh Air with a Mayor,” and an open forum for questions, comments, and discussion.

Frank Advice Research and Background

CBEC commissioned Frank Advice to help us start understanding why Boards around the country seemed to have different levels of impact and effectiveness.

Research, including surveys of Community Board members and Mayors, found two main types of boards: those that are effective, where capabilities and delegations align with community expectations, and those that are less effective, where mismatches exist. Factors reducing effectiveness include limited financial or decision-making delegations, weak council-board relationships, and unclear or inconsistent roles.

In response, CBEC had practical advice and options to help strengthen support for boards, encourage good practice, and enhance the effectiveness of council-community partnerships. This informed our work plan forthwith. Read the Frank Advice report [here](#). See Appendix F.

Better Together Framework

CBEC worked with independent consultants to develop the framework for launch at Superlocal 2025. [Better Together](#) was developed using the Frank Advice Research.

Throughout the 2022–25 term, CBEC sought to strengthen the effectiveness and impact of community boards across Aotearoa. A key part of this work was commissioning Frank Advice to undertake research into the current state, challenges, and opportunities for community boards. This research included surveys and interviews with board members, mayors, and council staff, and provided a detailed picture of how boards operate, the barriers they face, and the conditions that support their success.

The research highlighted a clear distinction between boards that are highly effective—where capabilities, delegations, and relationships aligned with community expectations—and those that struggled due to mismatched roles, insufficient delegations, or unclear expectations. Importantly, it identified systemic issues such as inconsistent council support, limited resourcing, and variability in understanding of statutory roles and responsibilities.

CBEC used these insights to shape the Better Together framework, ensuring it addressed the real-world challenges identified in the Frank Advice research. The framework reflects the need for clarity in roles, agreed expectations, effective communication, and robust council-board relationships. It emphasizes co-created relationship accords, shared understanding of

responsibilities, and appropriate delegation models, directly responding to the gaps identified by the research.

By grounding Better Together in empirical evidence, CBEC was able to develop a practical, adaptable framework that councils and community boards could implement to strengthen collaboration, improve governance outcomes, and ensure boards are empowered to represent and advocate for their communities effectively. See Appendix G.



Shared agreements

CBEC has initiated work to develop shared agreements between councils and community boards to embed the principles of the Better Together framework into practice. These agreements are designed to clarify roles, responsibilities, communication protocols, expectations, and delegations, ensuring boards and councils can work collaboratively and effectively.

The development of shared agreements is already underway, spearheaded by Dr Mike Reid, and aims to provide practical tools for boards and councils to formalise their working relationships early in the term. By co-creating these agreements, the work ensures that both parties have a shared understanding of governance, decision-making, and advocacy processes, while also providing a mechanism to address challenges proactively.

This initiative builds on CBEC's strategic goal of strengthening local decision-making and supporting community boards, ensuring that councils and boards can implement the Better Together framework in a consistent, practical, and locally relevant way. The ongoing work aims to foster trust, transparency, and collaboration, enabling community boards to operate at their full potential while improving outcomes for their communities.

Conference history and background

In 2024, CBEC arranged for the national Community Boards Conference to be held jointly with the LGNZ's national conference, SuperLocal 2024.

CBEC's coordination involved integrating community-board-specific sessions and representation within the broader SuperLocal programme. Community-board members gained access to plenaries, workshops, networking, and panels designed for councils, board members, and local-government professionals.

By embedding the Community Boards Conference within SuperLocal, CBEC increased visibility and participation. Community-board representatives could connect not only with each other, but also with mayors, councillors, central-government contacts, and sector stakeholders, broadening the conversation beyond just boards.

The 2024 conference also included the LGNZ Community Board Awards, celebrating excellence in community-board projects, engagement, and innovation. The conference theme was resilience with speakers being approached by CBEC members.



Our work with the Remuneration Authority

From September 2023, the committee maintained regular contact with the Remuneration Authority. In March 2024, we submitted a research paper to support the Authority in setting and reviewing remuneration for community board members. The Authority has been informed that a new CBEC committee will determine how to continue this advocacy work in the future. See *Appendix H*.

Financials

CBEC has its own budget. Administration costs associated with meetings are covered by LGNZ. Project and programme costs are covered by a small annual levy paid by community boards from LGNZ member councils.

Conclusion

The 2022–25 term has been a period of ambitious work and meaningful progress for CBEC. Through research, advocacy, frameworks, and events, we have strengthened the voice, capability, and impact of community boards across Aotearoa. Initiatives such as the Better Together framework, shared agreements, and the national hui programme have laid foundations for stronger council–board relationships, clearer roles, and more effective local governance.

As we hand over to a new committee, the focus remains on collaboration, local leadership, and community-centred decision-making. The work of CBEC is ongoing, but the structures, insights, and partnerships developed over this term provide a solid platform for the next team to build upon.

Community boards continue to be essential to vibrant, resilient, and empowered communities, and we leave the next term with confidence that these foundations will support even greater impact in the years ahead.

Appendices

Appendix A

[Community boards - LGNZ](#)

Appendix B

[Guide to Community Boards](#)

Appendix C

[Events calendar - LGNZ](#)

Appendix D

[<https://www.dia.govt.nz/Future-for-Local-Government-Review>](#)

Appendix E

[FFLG Submission](#)

Appendix F

[Frank Advice Report - Better support for Community Boards Community Board Executive Committee and Local Government New Zealand February 2024](#)

Appendix G

[Better Together: A Framework for Councils and Community Boards](#)

Appendix H

[Community Board Remuneration – Striving for Fairness and Equity](#)