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Insights from Motu's Just Transitions Dialogue

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Disclaimer

The inclusion of the ideas in this document does not imply any recommendation, consensus, or endorsement by Just Transitions Dialogue participants or presenters, their affiliated organisations, or the programme funder. All opinions, errors, and omissions are the authors' own.

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Abstract

Over 2022–2023, Motu Economic and Public Policy Research led a team of researchers and practitioners in developing “A guide to just transitions for communities in Aotearoa New Zealand.” The guide was commissioned by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment with the goal of creating a practical resource that would help communities and organisations run their own just transition processes. With the aspiration to make the development of the guide itself a just transition process, Motu broadened engagement on the guide with co-funding from the Aotearoa Foundation through a cross-sector dialogue process. This paper summarises the objectives and design of the Just Transitions Dialogue and reviews the impact it had on the development of the guide. The Dialogue surfaced valuable insights into just transitions concepts, challenges, opportunities, and enablers in the unique context of Aotearoa. This had a profound effect on shaping the form and content of the guide to make it more accessible and relevant for prospective users. In addition, by building relationships and understanding across participants, the Dialogue strengthened the foundation for a diverse community of practice on just transitions in Aotearoa New Zealand.

JEL codes

Q01, Q54, Q58, Z18

Keywords

Just transition, Aotearoa New Zealand, climate change, sustainable development, social justice

Summary haiku

Talking together

builds understanding and trust

for just transitions

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1 Background on the guide

In July 2022, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) commissioned a team of researchers and practitioners, led by Motu Economic and Public Policy Research (Motu), to develop a guide that would help communities run just transition processes in Aotearoa New Zealand. Under the terms of reference, the guide was intended to support agents of change working at a local, sectoral, or organisational level to develop a collective vision and pursue intentional change to achieve just outcomes. The potential user groups included iwi, hapū and other Māori entities, diverse communities and community organisations, workers and unions, businesses, educators, central and local government, and intermediaries (e.g., researchers, facilitators and coordinators).

A just transition ensures a more equitable distribution of the impacts and opportunities of shocks, upheavals, and shifts that threaten jobs, homes, investments, and ways of life. It can also help address existing societal inequalities and contribute to increased wellbeing. Just transition processes can be used to address issues such as mitigating or adapting to climate change, reducing inequalities, providing decent work, delivering affordable and clean energy, responding to financial crises, pandemics or natural disasters, and other drivers of change.

The guide was to include practical ideas, methods, tools, and case studies. Reflecting the unique context of Aotearoa New Zealand, the guide was to draw upon Te Tiriti o Waitangi¹ as well as te ao Māori the Māori worldview, including tikanga customary values and lore and mātauranga knowledge.² The guide was to be produced in both web-based and print formats. Based on initial scoping, the project team planned for sections of the guide to focus on establishing the context for just transitions, building relationships, planning processes for collaboration and partnership, taking action, and sustaining change.

The project team wanted the development of the guide itself to be a just transition process. The team included over 25 contributors with diverse backgrounds in research, policy design, facilitation, community development, communications, and tikanga and mātauranga Māori.

¹ Te Tiriti o Waitangi, signed in 1840, guides the relationship between the Crown and Māori. Notably, the reo Māori text (Te Tiriti o Waitangi) and the English text (the Treaty of Waitangi) significantly differ. To avoid confusion, this paper and the guide do not translate the term Te Tiriti o Waitangi to be clear that it is a reference to the reo Māori text.

² This guide includes concepts and terms from te reo Māori the Māori language. The first instance of each term in a chapter is immediately followed by an English translation.

To lay the groundwork for the guide, the team conducted an international literature review on just transition issues.³ While this work influenced the content of the guide, it was not sufficient to identify and explore the broad range of challenges, opportunities, and enablers for just transitions in Aotearoa New Zealand. Future just transitions will need to emerge from Aotearoa New Zealand's current economic, political, social, cultural, and environmental realities.

To broaden engagement beyond the project team, Motu leveraged co-funding from the Aotearoa Foundation to adapt and expand a user needs survey at the start of the project, design and conduct a cross-sector dialogue process during the writing of the guide, and enable external peer review as part of finalising the guide. This paper focuses on the dialogue process.

"A guide to just transitions for communities in Aotearoa New Zealand" was published in July 2023 (Just Transitions Aotearoa Group, 2023). The guide can be read online and downloaded from MBIE's website.⁴ The guide and supporting materials can also be downloaded from Motu's website.⁵

2 Motu's dialogue model

Motu has developed an innovative stakeholder dialogue model for investigating challenging issues that are the subject of polarising public debate. A Motu dialogue is not a decision-making body, but a group with a wide range of perspectives. The aim is to provide a basis for more constructive and informed public discussion. A Motu dialogue does not aim to create consensus among participants, although consensus on some issues is often reached.

Dialogue groups work together over an agreed period to frame challenges associated with a focus issue and create ideas on how to move forward. The group meets in person or online for a series of half- or full-day meetings with the aim of:

- developing a shared understanding of the issue and current knowledge
- identifying creative ideas to address challenges associated with the issue
- building mutual trust among participants
- developing potential effective, efficient, and fair solutions to the identified challenges as well as further research questions.

³ An annotated bibliography is available online at <https://www.motu.nz/assets/Uploads/Just-transitions-bibliography-FINAL.pdf>.

⁴ See <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/business-and-employment/economic-development/just-transition/just-transitions-guide/>.

⁵ See <https://www.motu.nz/our-research/environment-and-resources/just-transitions>.

Participants are selected with the aim of including a wide range of perspectives and experiences, not to represent specific decision-making interests or the broader population of Aotearoa New Zealand. This typically involves both the communities affected by the issue – from business, government, civil society organisations, and iwi/Māori – and technical experts. Participants are selected based on their knowledge and characteristics such as critical thinking, open-mindedness, and ability to work as part of a group.

Trust in one another underpins these dialogues. Participants attend dialogues in their individual capacity (i.e., not as a representative of their organisation), although government officials may have some constraints in this regard which are acknowledged and managed transparently. Discussions are held under the spirit of the Chatham House Rule, where participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s) may be revealed.

The small number of participants and the consistent attendance of members over time allow a strong group rapport to build. This rapport, and the length of time given to the process, allow the issues to be discussed honestly and in depth. Group discussion and thinking can progress – and in some cases converge – rather than be subject to a polarised debate that solidifies existing views and positions.

The dialogue process creates a more informed policy and research environment. Motu typically communicates the results of the work using working papers and non-technical notes, presentations, teaching resources, blogs, games, and short videos. The dialogue process also creates a network of well-informed and connected people who are experts on the issues discussed. Published outputs acknowledge the members' participation if they choose but represent the opinions of Motu researchers (and any co-authors) alone.

Past Motu dialogues have focused on issues such as mitigating agricultural greenhouse gas emissions, managing water quality in Lake Rotorua, shaping New Zealand's low-emission future, improving the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme, adapting to climate change, exploring future options for the voluntary carbon market, and managing the distributional impacts of climate change mitigation policies.

3 Features of the Just Transitions Dialogue

3.1 Sequencing and objectives

The Just Transitions Dialogue consisted of a series of five half-day meetings with the overarching goal of drawing upon the knowledge and experience of a broad range of practitioners and experts in Aotearoa New Zealand to help inform the development of the guide. The meetings were held in two phases: early in the process of writing the guide and after preparation of a refined draft.

The first three meetings took place in November 2022 to introduce the purpose of the guide and test the project team's initial scoping of the guide's structure and content. Participants were encouraged (but not required) to attend all three meetings to enable progressive discussions.

The final two meetings took place in March 2023. These were held as duplicate rather than progressive sessions, and both original and new participants were invited to join the meetings. This enabled a greater number of people to participate while keeping the groups of manageable size. A refined draft of the guide and an executive summary were distributed in advance of the final meetings.

The specific objectives of the dialogue meetings were:

- **Meeting 1:** Introduce the goals, scope, and process for developing the guide; help shape user entry points to the guide; identify case studies and resources; and explore the concept of a "just transition process" from diverse viewpoints
- **Meeting 2:** Discuss building blocks for inclusive just transition processes and explore potential design features of just transition processes in different contexts
- **Meeting 3:** Discuss drivers and solutions for resistance to change and provide recommendations for action plans supporting just transitions
- **Meetings 4 and 5:** Review the draft guide at a high level, identify areas for the further development of the guide, and provide direction and recommendations for how the guide could be used.

3.2 Participation

Participation was by invitation to keep the group size manageable while enabling a diversity of perspectives. Participants were selected through a "spiral" process through which team members offered suggestions from across their networks and received further suggestions

as people learned about the process. Each dialogue was attended by 20–28 external participants and 15–20 team members. Participants were associated with the following groups: business, central government, community organisations, education, independent Crown entities, iwi/Māori, local government, research, rural communities, and unions/workers. Many participants were associated with multiple groups. Across the series of five meetings, there were over 70 people who joined at least one meeting.

3.3 Format of the meetings

The half-day meetings were held online, enabling individuals across Aotearoa New Zealand to participate without the time, cost, and greenhouse gas emissions from travel. Standard worksheets for taking notes and inviting feedback were shared online so all participants had access and could contribute. The “chat” function was used for informal interactions. Small breakout groups were used to enable deeper engagement between participants. These breakout groups typically consisted of 3-6 participants plus a team facilitator and notetaker. An initial breakout was used for participants to introduce themselves.

Each dialogue began in a plenary format with a mihi whakatau welcome, team introductions, and a short presentation on creating a safe space for working together and adhering to the spirit of the Chatham House Rule. Meetings were guided by an experienced facilitator (Mary-Jane Rivers from Powerdigm). An initial presentation from the project team was used to lay out the purpose of the guide, the process for development, and the role of the Dialogue. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions.

Once this foundation was in place, the meetings moved into substantive dialogue sessions. After short team presentations to frame challenging issues and introduce discussion questions, participants moved into breakouts. Discussions were allowed to flow organically for 30-60 minutes before the plenary reconvened. Rapporteurs from each group shared key insights with the wider group. Small group discussions allowed group rapport to build, while report-back sessions allowed cross-fertilisation of ideas. Each meeting closed with reflections on outcomes from the dialogue and an outline of next steps.

Convening the meetings online using this breakout format enabled broader, more equitable, and more efficient participation than the conventional in-person approach while maintaining high-quality discussions. This made it possible to include participants from a greater diversity of geographic areas and roles.

3.4 Meeting summaries

Meeting summaries were prepared to capture the range of ideas that surfaced from group discussions without attempting to record all that was said. Ideas were not attributed to individuals unless express permission was given. The meeting summaries were shared with the dialogue participants with a request that they not be distributed more widely. Participants also received a copy of the presentations.

4 Participant insights on just transitions in Aotearoa New Zealand

Dialogue participants brought with them decades of cumulative experience working with communities and managing transitions from different perspectives. The following are examples of participant insights on just transition concepts, inclusive participation, process design, strategies and actions, and resourcing in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. Selected examples were particularly influential in shaping the content of the guide. They show a range of responses, not a consensus view.

Just transition concepts

- The overarching outcomes of a just transition should include oranga wellbeing, reduced inequality, restored relationships between people, and ecological justice. Important principles include mana motuhake self-determination and taking an intergenerational view.
- Just transition principles can be linked to existing organisational values and strategies.
- We need to work from a positive vision for the future and be brave.
- We need to act with foresight; these are mokopuna grandchild decisions.
- We must look backward as well as forward and discuss the whakapapa lineage of the challenges we face. It is important to address historical legacies of injustice as well as injustices that continue today.
- Transitions involve redistribution of power and resources.
- Just transitions are messy and we should expect that things will not go perfectly.
- We need to be willing to experiment and fail.
- We should work to establish just transitions as a mainstream way of thinking rather than as an isolated concept.

- Shocks don't just occur; they have been signposted in advance. The role of local leadership is to watch and listen for these signs and act, hear everyone, deliver for the future, build trust, and allow conversations to take place.
- The term 'just transition' may not resonate with some users and alternative terms could be explored which draw on the underlying concepts.

Inclusive participation

- Relationships underpin everything. This includes Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a foundation. Before we should expect funding, time, or commitment, we need a good relationship. We are too often trying to fix urgent problems with relationships that do not yet exist.
- People most impacted by the transition should be involved from the beginning. It is important for people's voices to be heard, and to meet people where they are.
- Partnering between Māori and non-Māori needs to happen very early. It is important to understand historical and differential access to engagement structures as well as inequitable resourcing and capacity to engage.
- Asking people focused on survival to look forward and contribute to a transition process is challenging. Meaningful co-benefits for participants need to come back to them from the engagement process. This could be agency or a material outcome. Tangible outcomes should generate and sustain buy-in over time.
- People bring different capabilities and must be resourced to participate. This can include helping people build the skills and knowledge to participate, speak in public, and make informed decisions. Creating a network of individuals can help address challenges of capability and capacity.
- Authentic relationships require trust and understanding, must be nurtured, and will evolve over time.
- Inclusive processes require equitable access to engagement alongside fair processes for identifying leaders, stakeholders, and key players.
- Meaningful inclusion of tangata whenua people of the land is essential. Iwi tribes, hapū subtribes, and Māori trusts may have differing interests and opinions and it is important to include a diversity of participants within these groups.
- Visionary leaders are needed to help create and share positive visions for the future. They must be willing to listen to a diverse range of voices within a community.
- We need to find leaders with mana status who can enable a safe space for emotions to be both expressed and processed and manage disruptions when they arise.

- Intermediaries can play an important role in bringing different individuals and groups together.
- Power imbalances between local communities and central government can be a barrier to effective collaboration. Imbalances in information and expertise may also exist between and within groups. Currently, those with resources are in a position of power to establish 'permission' for processes and dialogues.
- Assigning (and accepting) responsibility can be a key barrier to progress. It can often be difficult to determine who is responsible for decisions and the consequences of these decisions.
- It is important to have cross-party support and continuity. Trust can enable ongoing relationships to form with a focus on long-term goals, even in the face of short election cycles.

Just transition processes

- Principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and te ao Māori should be integrated into just transition processes from the beginning.
- Just transition processes should be accessible, transparent, honest, holistic, deliberative, iterative, and evolving. Effective facilitation and listening are critical.
- Applying consensus can be a useful way of making decisions within diverse groups.
- Just transition processes need to reflect ecological as well as social and economic interests.
- Just transition processes can be confronting and uncomfortable. Challenging normative practices and views is key.
- New processes should support those who are already working in the just transition space.
- Effective narratives can inspire others by highlighting the opportunities that come with a just transition. We need to move beyond narratives of blame to authentic narratives of hope.
- We can appoint 'guardians of the principles' to ensure they are maintained throughout a process.
- We can learn to disagree with each other but still trust each other.
- Both top-down and bottom-up processes offer their own strengths and limitations. Alignment and coordination can be important. In some cases, bottom-up processes can help inform top-down, systemic policy development.

- Trusted data infrastructures should allow information (e.g., plans and outcomes) to be shared and seen. It is important for multiple knowledge systems to be represented and valued in these infrastructures.
- Drawing from non-violent communication, we often run into difficulty when we rush to debating strategies instead of understanding people's needs. When people truly understand each other's needs, a solution will often emerge for meeting those needs. That process takes time.

Just transition strategies and actions

- Achieving just transitions will likely require changes at multiple levels. System change will be required alongside individual action.
- We need to enable action through systems design thinking with continuous iteration.
- We need to acknowledge the role of place in the discussion. Positionality is very important.
- We have opportunities to shift from deficit models to strengths-based approaches.
- Planning fatigue is a serious factor. It is important that plans result in action.
- Action plans need to manage tensions between immediate reactions versus long-term solutions, and between spontaneous, dispersed action and deliberate planning. We need to enable both overall coordination and heterogeneous action.
- We need to build comfort with complexity and avoid over-simplifying just because these issues are complex.
- We need to plan for the full spectrum of needs and empathy across age and disability. Solutions need to work for everyone.
- We need to consider business transitions in different sectors; explore the impacts on employers, workers, and communities of choosing alternative transition pathways; and identify the investment opportunities.
- We face multiple intersecting crises which cannot wait for each other; we cannot wait to solve crisis X while we solve crisis Y. We need integrated responses within a systems framework.
- Iterative processes may allow us to respond to complex issues reasonably quickly while ensuring we do not become locked into faulty initiatives.
- Feedback is key to adaptive approaches. It is important to validate and check in with people throughout the process. When people can see the progress being made, they will be encouraged to continue making changes.

Resourcing

- Resourcing for process design, participation and implementation is critical. Resource limitations can lead us to default to existing structures and processes.
- It is important for resourcing agencies to have strong relationships with leaders who are being resourced.
- There can be tensions between flexibility and accountability regarding how funding is used. It is important to move away from having projects funded on an output level or requiring that outputs be defined at the start of the funding.
- We cannot throw money at something at the beginning of a process and expect it to be self-sustaining from that point forward. Ongoing funds are required to keep initiatives going.
- Combining disparate sources of funding can be essential but difficult and burdensome to administer.
- Funding sources are needed beyond government. Philanthropy is a potential source of funding, although this can give single individuals a high level of influence. Private firms and community groups have important roles to play.
- The challenge is not just about obtaining resources but also about mobilising resources.
- Money is not the only resource. Time and capacity are also important.

5 Participant insights on shaping the guide

Participants reviewed an initial draft of the guide and provided constructive feedback which resulted in significant changes to both the structure and content. The following discussion highlights key areas where suggestions were provided and explains how the guide was improved following participant feedback. These included narrowing the intended audience of the guide, clarifying the purpose of the guide, making the guide more accessible, improving the reflection of te ao Māori throughout the text, refining the content, and applying and updating the guide.

Narrowing the intended audience of the guide

The draft guide had been targeted to potential leaders of just transition processes across a very broad range of user groups. However, in practice, the intention to be so widely inclusive made it difficult for many readers to identify themselves as the intended audience. Some participants struggled to see themselves as leaders within the framing of the guide.

The revision focused more explicitly on communities and community organisations as the primary user group while encouraging the application of the guide by others. The text acknowledged that more targeted guidance could be required for user groups with specific needs and considerations.⁶ It also reframed the concept of leadership so the guide would feel relevant to participants and stakeholders holding diverse roles in just transition processes as well as nominal process leaders.

Clarifying the purpose of the guide

Participants discussed the purpose of the guide and types of information that would best support that purpose. They questioned whether it was intended to be a practical how-to manual or a set of principles and resources. Some felt the draft content was too conceptual – a plan for a plan. Some wanted to see more of a step-by-stop process, whereas others countered that just transitions are not linear in nature or suited to a prescriptive process. Some suggested the material on process facilitation was useful whereas others found it too specialised for a general audience. Some wanted to see recommendations to central government on policy design and resourcing to enable community-led just transitions. Participants recommended including more information on explaining key elements of transition, shaping strategy, resourcing participation and action, and empowering communities to begin a process. There was also support for ensuring the guide was applicable to challenges beyond climate change mitigation and adaptation (e.g., the biodiversity crisis, plastics, and healthcare). A key suggestion was for the guide to be more practical and inspiring.

The team took these suggestions on board. The revision was prepared as a practical guide enabling communities and community organisations to understand key concepts, form collectives, develop strategies and plans, take action, and adapt their approach over time. The revision presented a core project cycle but was clear that just transition processes are nonlinear and sometimes participants need to loop backward to move forward together. The revision did not present policy recommendations to central government as that was the focus of other processes.⁷ The guidance on process facilitation was retained but shortened. The revision

⁶ Examples could include iwi/Māori, Pasifika, businesses, youth, and people with disabilities.

⁷ In the Emissions Reduction Plan for 2022–2025, the Government committed to develop an Equitable Transitions Strategy (New Zealand Government, 2022). Engagement and consultation on that strategy was conducted in 2023. For more information, see <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/business-and-employment/economic-development/equitable-transitions-strategy/>.

included stronger narratives about the necessity and value of just transition principles and processes.

Making the guide more accessible

The draft guide was nearly twice the size of the final product. Many participants suggested the length and depth of the content would be overwhelming for busy community members. Suggestions for improvement included shortening or removing the more technical content, making the language more accessible to community members, layering information so key messages could be reviewed quickly, providing better navigation tools so people could target the material most relevant to them, developing effective infographics, reducing repetition, and providing links to further resources.

The team took these suggestions on board. The text was condensed and the language simplified. Technical content was replaced with links to more resources. Supported by outstanding designers led by Katie Brown at Social Good, the project team developed a layout that was easy to follow and illustrations that engaged readers, communicated key concepts, and helped with navigating the text. A long-form executive summary was replaced by a short overview to help readers determine quickly how they and their networks could benefit from reading the guide.

Suggestions which were not implemented due to time and resource constraints included developing a short version of the guide, worksheets, templates, topic summaries and worksheets; translating the full text into te reo Māori; producing informative videos; and providing sign language and easy-read options.

Improving the reflection of te ao Māori throughout the text

As noted above, a key goal of the guide was to present the concept of just transitions within the framework of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, reflect te ao Māori, and draw on tikanga and mātauranga. Within the project team, a kaupapa Māori team was formed to lead the reflection of te ao Māori in the guide. One of the first questions asked by Dialogue participants was whether this was a guide to just transitions for Māori communities. Consistent with the terms of reference and previous team deliberations, the team explained the intention for this guide to provide a foundation applicable to all of Aotearoa New Zealand. The team also acknowledged the critical need for more in-depth guidance for Māori communities prepared by a different team through a different process that was led by Māori and properly resourced. Dialogue participants emphasised the importance of further work on just transition needs specific to iwi, hapū, and Māori communities.

The draft guide included a section written by the kaupapa Māori team which spoke directly to Māori community leaders and explained just transition concepts through the lenses of te Tiriti and te ao Māori. During the Dialogue, the team got consistent feedback that while this material was excellent, its positioning as a distinct section addressed specifically to Māori left many readers feeling “othered” – whether Māori or non-Māori. Many participants felt strongly this material should be core to shaping just transitions in Aotearoa New Zealand. That had been the team’s original intention but the approach in the draft had not hit the mark.

In the revision, the team drew on the image of a braided river and worked collectively to weave elements of te ao Māori throughout the text. The chapter on foundations drew on both international literature and mātāpono principles from te ao Māori. Case studies from Māori communities were included in the guide to show how mātāpono, mātauranga, and tikanga had been applied in practice in contexts that were relevant to just transitions. The process taken by the team involved respectful communication and collaboration enabling an effective outcome.

Refining the content

Dialogue participants helped the team identify important gaps in the draft’s content and refine key messages. Examples included:

- Making the guide less prescriptive and encouraging people to draw on their own skills, knowledge, and experiences
- Doing more in the guide to acknowledge and build on past and ongoing work rather than suggesting just transitions are something new
- Noting the importance to communities of assessing what is already being done in the just transitions space before launching a new process
- Recognising communities of interest as well as communities of place and missing voices such as the disability community and te taiao the environment
- Expanding the discussion of how to secure funding and other resourcing as this is a key constraint for many communities
- Elaborating more on power imbalances and interactions between government structures and communities across top-down and bottom-up processes
- Encouraging readers to undertake self-reflection in the context of privilege, power, and positionality.

Participants also discussed the selection of case studies. They supported case studies which provided inspiring real-world examples of just transition concepts in practice. However, some

identified problems with draft case studies that highlighted areas of genuine progress but failed to address broader shortcomings and raised concerns about greenwashing. Complex case studies with problematic features proved unhelpful in the practical application of the guide. Participants also questioned whether the placement of some case studies made sense.

In the revision, the team sought to address the gaps and improve the case studies. The case studies were reduced in number, shortened, focused exclusively on communities in Aotearoa New Zealand, and positioned strategically to illustrate key concepts explained in the text. The content was presented simply with links to more detailed information. The case studies were not framed as perfect success stories but as sources of valuable learning. The team acknowledged that even when transition processes are still in progress or fall short of aspirations, they can have huge value from the experiences gained and the relationships strengthened.

Applying and updating the guide

At the final meeting of the Dialogue, participants were invited to contribute to a word cloud based on the question “What did you value most in the guide?” The figure below presents the response.

Figure 1: What did you value most in the guide?



To build on the direct value from reading the guide, participants recommended creating a ‘help desk’ with people who could help user groups apply the guide and identifying ‘champions’ for promoting the guide. They also proposed managing the guide as a ‘living document’ so it could

be updated over time to retain and enhance its relevance by including learnings from its use. These suggestions were beyond the scope of the project. It could be possible for some of this functionality to be supported through the Just Transition Partnership Team at MBIE in the longer term.

6 Conclusion

“A guide to just transitions for communities in Aotearoa New Zealand” was developed by a large and diverse team to support community-led transition processes that could deliver just outcomes within the unique context of Aotearoa New Zealand. In addition to drawing on the collective experience of team members, an international literature review, and a survey of user needs, the team used a process of cross-sector dialogue to get input from a broader group of experts and practitioners into the design and content of the guide and test its usefulness.

Organising five meetings of the Just Transitions Dialogue added significantly to the time, cost, and complexity of preparing the guide. However, this proved an invaluable experience. The Dialogue participants were generous, open-hearted, thoughtful, and often blunt in sharing their wisdom, experience, and advice to help improve the guide. Several Dialogue participants commented that being part of the process had deepened their own understanding of just transition issues and broadened their networks. The Dialogue surfaced valuable insights into just transitions concepts, challenges, opportunities, and enablers in the unique context of Aotearoa New Zealand. This had a profound effect on shaping the form and content of the guide to make it more accessible and relevant for prospective users.

Drawing on the constructive feedback from Dialogue participants, the project team published a final guide that was better designed to support community-led just transition processes across Aotearoa New Zealand. Beyond improving the guide itself, the Dialogue strengthened the foundation for a diverse community of practice on just transitions in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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