



Worksheet #1: Defining Your Intent

Grounding your mahi in values, community voice, and long-term impact

Why Your Why Matters




Your *why* is more than just a mission statement. It's the living pulse of your mahi—the thread that connects your purpose to the people, histories, and futures you care about. In times of change or challenge, it helps you stay grounded and choose with clarity.

A strong *why*:

- Anchors your mahi in authenticity.
- Keeps you aligned when things get complex.
- Strengthens trust and shared purpose.
- Centres those most affected by the work.

Finding Your Why: Where It Comes From

Use the table below to explore your kaupapa from different perspectives:

 Source	 Ask Yourself	 Helpful Tools or Practices
Lived Experience	What are people living through? What matters to them?	Storytelling, hui, talanoa, photovoice
Cultural Wisdom	What do Indigenous and local worldviews teach us here?	Te Ao Māori, Te Whare Tapa Whā, Fonofale, value cards
Data & Evidence	What do the numbers, reports, and trends show?	Local data, wellbeing reports, outcome evaluations
Systems Thinking	What structures or histories shape this issue?	Systems mapping, power analysis, and policy review
Relational Accountability	Who do we answer to, and how will we show up for them?	Whānau panels, co-design, partnership agreements
Future Generations	What do we want to leave for those who come next?	Ka mua, ka muri, intergenerational frameworks

Questions to Help Unearth Your Why

Take time to reflect on these with your team or community:

- What injustice or pattern are we here to shift?
- What strengths are being overlooked?
- What do we know in our bones that needs to change?
- If we do this right, what will be different in 10 years?
- If we stopped tomorrow, who would feel it most?

Writing Your Why: A Simple Frame




Use this sentence as a starting point:

We are responding to [clear issue or opportunity], because [insight or evidence].
Guided by [values or kaupapa], we aim to [intended change rooted in community voice].

Example:

We are responding to high school disengagement among rangatahi Māori because both research and community voice show that disconnection from whakapapa undermines identity and motivation. Guided by whanaungatanga and manaakitanga, we support mentoring that strengthens cultural identity and leadership, enabling long-term success.

Strengthen Your Why: Signs It Needs Revisiting

 Signal	 What It Might Mean	 Try This
The team can't explain your purpose	Your why isn't clear or shared	Pause and revisit it together
Funders push you off-course	You're drifting from your core kaupapa	Reground in values before adjusting direction
The work feels scattered or reactive	You've lost strategic focus	Use your why to realign priorities
The community feels disconnected	Your why no longer reflects lived realities	Hold space for kōrero, talanoa, or co-design

Bring Your Why Into Daily Practice

- Start meetings by revisiting your why.
- Display it in your workspace or on your team's platforms.
- Share it when onboarding new kaimahi or volunteers.
- Let it guide your stories, funding proposals, and evaluations.

Honour Indigenous and Intergenerational Ways of Knowing

Your why isn't just strategic—it's spiritual, cultural, and collective.

- 🌀 *Ka mua, ka muri* – Walk backwards into the future, led by the past.
- 🌸 *Teu le vā* – Nurture sacred space between people.
- 🔥 *Wairua, mauri, mana* – Purpose lives in our spirit, vitality, and dignity.

Final Check: Is Your Why Working?

- Is it clear and specific?
- Does it reflect both data and lived experience?
- Does it honour cultural and community wisdom?
- Can your team explain it in their own words?
- Is it felt and used in your everyday mahi?