



# Evaluation of the Queenstown Lakes District Council Welcoming Communities Programme

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*01 August 2024*

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## Main messages

This report presents the findings of an analysis of evaluation data on the Queenstown Lakes District Council Welcoming Communities programme. The key findings are:

- The Welcoming Communities programme is filling a gap in supporting migrants and newcomers who intend to settle in the Queenstown Lakes area, acting as a mechanism for connecting and supporting newcomers.
- The Welcoming Communities programme has united the organisations and activities that support newcomers, and taking a planned and strategic approach that enables the relevant organisations to take a more joined-up approach.
- The Advisory Groups were an important mechanism to guide programme development, providing guidance and expertise and ensuring diverse perspectives are reflected. The groups were described as a safe environment in which honest and forthright kōrero was encouraged, and provided an important two-way communication channel between newcomer communities and Council.
- Mana whenua contribution to the QLDC Welcoming Communities programme has to date been less extensive than is intended in the Welcoming Communities Standard. Mana whenua are aware of the Welcoming Communities programme, and supportive of its aims, but had little active involvement in the programme.
- The business community has had limited involvement in the programme, and that there is an opportunity for stronger involvement to unlock the potential economic benefits of the programme.
- The Welcoming Communities Coordinators are a key enabler of programme success. QLDC has two Coordinators, one covering Whakatipu and one covering Upper Clutha. This is unique in Aotearoa, with very few councils employing more than one dedicated Welcoming Communities staff member.
- The Coordinators have been vital in guiding the establishment of the programme, and driving it to the point of developing the initial draft Welcoming Plan. The Coordinators are described as highly active in the community, establishing networks that can then be drawn on to identify newcomer needs and ensure the programme is meeting these.
- The programme has enhanced newcomer perception and understanding of Council. Newcomers said they had been reluctant to engage with Council, due to being uncertain of Council's role, feeling intimidated, or not knowing how to navigate Council processes. Having a direct connection to Council, through the Welcoming Communities Coordinators, has helped to overcome these barriers.
- The Welcoming Communities programme has helped newcomers to grow cultural celebrations and events, supporting them to access funding, venues, and promotion, which had increased community attendance and support for these events.



- The programme offers a mechanism for increased visibility and connection between newcomers and the receiving community. There have been shifts in newcomer perceptions between 2022 and 2024 regarding the extent to which newcomers feel visible and valued within the Queenstown Lakes community.
- There has been progress made towards the outcomes of inclusive leadership; welcoming communications; connected and inclusive communities; welcoming public spaces; civic participation; and culture and identity. However, there has been slower progress in equitable access, with a need for a strategic approach to align Welcoming Communities activities to address identified access barriers. Similarly, the potential economic benefits not yet observable, and a focus on demonstrating economic outcomes is recommended for the next phase of the programme.

# 1 Introduction

## The Welcoming Communities programme

The Welcoming Communities programme - Te Waharoa ki ngā Hapori<sup>1</sup> is led by Immigration New Zealand (INZ) in collaboration with the Ministry for Ethnic Communities and the Human Rights Commission. The Welcoming Communities programme brings together councils and their communities to make the area more welcoming and inclusive for newcomers and local residents so they can participate fully in the social, civic, cultural and economic life of the community. 'Newcomers' include recent migrants, former refugees and international students.

Queenstown Lakes District Council ('QLDC' or 'Council') joined the Welcoming Communities programme in 2021, signing a Statement of Commitment on 2 November 2021. Council met the requirements to be accredited as a Committed Welcoming Community on 9 February 2022.

## The evaluation

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) has commissioned *Allen + Clarke* to conduct a four-year evaluation that assesses the national Welcoming Communities programme. The evaluation is investigating the delivery of the programme, and the extent to which the anticipated outcomes, as described in the Welcoming Communities Standard, have been achieved. The purpose of the national evaluation is:

*To evaluate the degree to which the expanded programme delivers anticipated short to longer-term outcomes and desired impacts. Findings from this evaluation will be used to inform Ministers about the ongoing programme and to inform the ongoing operation and delivery of the programme to ensure its continued success and to maximise its impact. (Extract from the Consultancy Services Order.)*

As part of the national evaluation, the *Allen + Clarke* team undertook two site visits to QLDC; one in July 2022 and one in February 2024. The evaluation also included an online survey, which sought responses from stakeholders involved in the programme, including stakeholders of the QLDC Welcoming Communities programme.

Council has commissioned *Allen + Clarke* to re-analyse these data, to create a specific report that focuses on findings related to the QLDC Welcoming Communities programme. The analysis recognises that QLDC is in the first three years of programme delivery. It focuses on the early implementation of the programme, the progress it has made, and actions to inform the ongoing delivery of the programme.

The analysis of the QLDC-specific data has been undertaken to address two Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs), which have been adapted from the full set of KEQs that frame the national evaluation. The KEQs are:

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<sup>1</sup> Translates as "The Gateway to Communities"



1. How effectively is the QLDC Welcoming Communities programme being implemented?
2. To what extent is the QLDC Welcoming Communities programme on track towards the intended outcomes described in the Welcoming Communities Standard?

This report presents a summary of the findings arising from the re-analysis of the QLDC-specific data, to answer the two KEQs.

## 2 Data collection activities

The evaluation findings have been informed by three main data collection methods: site visits to undertake qualitative interviews and focus groups with a range of stakeholders; an online survey; and a review of contextual documents and data. A summary of these methods is provided below.

### Site visits

The evaluation team undertook two site visits to the Queenstown Lakes district. The first site visit was in July 2022, when the programme was in the early stages of its establishment. The second visit was in February 2024. Two evaluators attended each site visit.

During the site visits, the evaluators conducted interviews and focus groups with stakeholders that were involved in the Welcoming Communities programme. The first site visit focused on seeking information about the processes associated with the establishment of the programme, including drivers for joining, the establishment and functioning of the Advisory Groups, the Coordinator role, and the planning processes for the programme. The second site visit focused on the extent to which progress was being made towards the intended outcomes.

As a first step in the re-analysis of the data, we contacted the interviewees that had participated in these site visits, and sought their consent to re-use the data they had provided to the national evaluation, to inform the QLDC-specific analysis. A total of 46 participants (out of the total sample of 54 interviewees) agreed to their data being re-analysed. Details of these participants are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: Evaluation participants that consented to QLDC-specific analysis**

Site visit	NGOs and stakeholder organisations	Council personnel	Newcomer community leaders	Total
July 2022	8	7	5	20
February 2024	8	5	13	26
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>46</b>

Of the 34 interviewees with representatives from NGOs, stakeholder organisations and newcomer community leaders, 23 were from Whakatipu and 11 were from Upper Clutha. The

interviews with representatives from Upper Clutha were all conducted in the 2024 site visit, as the programme in this specific area had not been established during the first site visit in 2022.

The interview notes and transcripts of those who consented to re-analysis of their data were uploaded to NVivo software for coding and analysis. The raw data was coded using an open coding approach to sort the data into broad thematic categories, under the two KEQs. As the evaluation team coded the transcripts, each new piece of data was compared to the previously coded data, looking for similarities and differences between the experiences of each participant group. The evaluation team then reviewed the viability of each theme, until agreement was reached on the key insights.

## Stakeholder survey

The evaluation has also drawn on data gathered through an online survey that targeted Welcoming Communities stakeholder organisations. The survey sought respondents' views on the extent to which they agreed with statements related to the eight outcomes in the Welcoming Communities Standard.

The survey was set up in the SurveyMonkey online platform. After testing the routing and user friendliness, a link to the online survey was emailed to Welcoming Communities Coordinators for distribution. The survey was live from 16 April to 10 May 2024.

The survey received a total of 214 valid responses from 20 councils, of which 30 were received from QLDC stakeholders. A breakdown of respondents by type is provided in Table 2.

**Table 2: QLDC survey respondents by type**

Stakeholder group	Count	Percentage
Local government	4	13%
Non-government organisation	8	27%
Newcomer or ethnic community leader	7	23%
Business, employer or business sector organisation	1	3%
Central government organisations	2	7%
Other community stakeholders	6	20%
Other	2	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

The survey output was downloaded to Excel for analysis, supplementing the analytics provided within the SurveyMonkey tool. The results are presented as bar charts describing the percentages of respondents that agreed or disagreed with the various statements.



## Review of documents and data

The qualitative interview data and quantitative survey results were supplemented with an analysis of available documents and data related to the QLDC Welcoming Communities programme. Inputs included the six-monthly Coordinator reports to INZ<sup>2</sup>, an initial draft QLDC Welcoming Plan<sup>3</sup>, and supplementary material from the QLDC website. These sources were mostly used for fact checking and providing context to the primary data gathered during the evaluation.

## 3 Evaluation findings

### 3.1 KEQ1: How effectively is the QLDC Welcoming Communities programme being implemented?

***The Welcoming Communities programme is filling a gap in supporting migrants and newcomers who intend to settle in the Queenstown Lakes area***

The evaluation found that the QLDC Welcoming Communities programme has provided a vehicle for connecting and supporting newcomers. Prior to the programme, there were a range of organisations in the district that provided support to migrants, such as charitable trusts, community groups and ethnic associations. There were also organisations that focused on attracting and supporting visitors in the area. However, these existing organisations and activities often targeted a sub-set of the migrant community (such as a specific ethnic group), and were not necessarily connected to each other. In our 2022 data collection, several stakeholders discussed how they felt that there was a need for a more cohesive approach to supporting newcomers.

*I've definitely noticed a gap for Queenstown community. There's a lot of opportunity for us to improve to be more welcoming as a community, and have an information hub for people to connect and make the transition easier, whether [they are] kiwi or from overseas. – Business owner (Whakatipu)*

The Welcoming Communities programme has filled this gap by uniting the previously disparate organisations and activities, and taking a planned and strategic approach to supporting newcomers. By 2024, the majority of people we interviewed stated that the Welcoming Communities programme enabled the relevant organisations to take a more joined-up approach. This minimises duplication of effort and enables the programme to build on and

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<sup>2</sup> Six-monthly progress reports are a reporting requirement for member councils that are receiving seed funding. They are completed by the Coordinator and cover outputs, outcomes, activities planned over the next six months and issues, risks, and challenges. Councils that are no longer receiving seed funding provide such progress reports annually.

<sup>3</sup> Allen + Clarke received an initial draft QLDC Welcoming Plan at the time of writing this report. The draft plan will be released in August 2024 for community engagement.



enhance the newcomer support activities and organisations that existed prior to Welcoming Communities.

*It's brought us all together and helps not just tourists, but those living here, especially from different nationalities, to make sure they have access to facilities, help, and support. –Advisory Group member (Whakatipu)*

### **The Advisory Groups were an important mechanism to guide programme development**

The Advisory Groups are a core component of the Welcoming Communities programme design. These groups are intended to provide guidance and expertise, ensure diverse perspectives are reflected, support and represent the interest of the programme, socialise the programme, and oversee planning and delivery. Advisory Groups should be representative of the community, and members are expected to draw on their networks and relationships to drive the programme forward.<sup>4</sup>

The QLDC established two Advisory Groups; one to represent Whakatipu and one to represent Upper Clutha. The groups were comprised of volunteers from a range of organisations, representing newcomers, support services, arts, culture and faith-based groups, tertiary institutions, business and central government, as well as a QLDC councillor.

Interviews with Advisory Group members found that people appreciated that it was clear from the start why the various members had been selected, and stated that they had been given a clear terms of reference. Interviewees told us that the groups were comprised of 'the right people' and were 'diverse and inclusive.'

While attendance reportedly shifted over time, the groups mostly functioned effectively to guide programme planning and development. This included having robust discussions and debates. The Welcoming Communities Coordinators and Advisory Group chairs were praised for creating a safe environment in which honest and forthright kōrero was encouraged.

*So many cool ideas, it has been interesting to hear from a diverse range of people and nationalities about what we are doing well, but it was also everyone was very honest about what we are not doing so well. – Advisory Group member (Whakatipu)*

Group members also appreciated that Council had made the commitment to join the programme, and was willing to commit resources to it.

The Advisory Group monthly meetings provided an important communication channel from newcomer communities to Council (and vice versa); something that had previously been missing.

*Migrant communities need to tell the programme what they need, through us as representatives. The Advisory Group has been a good platform for that. – Advisory Group member (Upper Clutha)*

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<sup>4</sup> Welcoming Communities Coordinators Toolkit.

### ***There is potential for increased involvement of mana whenua and the business community***

The evaluation analysis found that mana whenua contribution to the QLDC Welcoming Communities programme has to date been less extensive than is intended in the Welcoming Communities Standard.<sup>5</sup> Council has made efforts to engage with mana whenua. The draft Welcoming Plan recognises the seven Papatipu Rūnaka of Kāi Tahu<sup>6</sup> as holding shared mana whenua status, and the Advisory Group included Māori representation.

However, interviews with council staff and community organisations found that mana whenua involvement in the programme had not been extensive. The evaluation findings indicate the mana whenua are aware of the Welcoming Communities programme, and supportive of its aims, but had little active involvement in the programme. It was noted that there are some barriers to engagement; as was found in the national evaluation, tangata whenua are called upon to contribute to a range of kaupapa and often do not have a capacity to engage.

Council is taking steps to enhance its engagement with mana whenua, having created a Māori Strategy and Partnerships Manager role in late 2023. This may assist the Welcoming Communities programme to strengthen Iwi engagement and relationships. An interviewee with Māori whakapapa considered that there was strong potential to enhance engagement with tangata whenua, given strong alignment of the Welcoming Communities programme intent with kaupapa Māori mātāpono (values) such as manaakitaka.

*Welcoming Communities is about enabling and empowering all newcomers in the district, and helping to set up structures or support them in what they're trying to do. For mana whenua, that's the manaaki we should be doing. – Māori interviewee (Whakatipu)*

The evaluation data also indicates that the business community has had limited involvement in the programme, and that there is an opportunity for stronger involvement to unlock the potential economic benefits of the programme.

### ***The Welcoming Communities Coordinators are a key enabler of programme success***

The Welcoming Communities Coordinators lead the Welcoming Communities programme within their council. They manage all requirements for participation in the programme including reporting, applying for accreditation and contributing to the development of community networks. They are responsible for guiding Council and the community to become a Welcoming Community.<sup>7</sup>

The Coordinator roles sit within the broader Community Partnerships team at QLDC. The Coordinators play a 'connector' function, acting as link between newcomers and Welcoming

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<sup>5</sup> The Welcoming Communities Standard states that "as the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori – represented by tangata whenua, mana whenua, iwi, and hapu and/or other hapori Māori – have a prominent role in Welcoming Plan activities" p16.

<sup>6</sup> Please note that QLDC uses the local Kāi Tahu dialect which replaces the 'ng' with 'k', e.g., tākata (people) instead of tāngata

<sup>7</sup> Welcoming Communities Coordinators Toolkit.



Communities stakeholders and a range of other QLDC departments such as libraries, events, and sport and recreation.

Newcomer community leaders, NGOs and Council staff and elected members considered that the Coordinators have been vital in guiding the establishment of the programme, and driving it to the point of developing the Welcoming Plan. The Coordinators were described as highly active in the community, establishing networks that could then be drawn on to identify newcomer needs and ensure the programme is meeting these. Their ability to connect with people from a range of cultures and background was praised. Representatives from newcomer communities discussed how the Coordinators in each area made an effort to regularly communicate and seek their ideas.

*He listens to us...and is very encouraging of small groups to grow. – Newcomer community leader (Upper Clutha)*

*She is very good at keeping us updated, we have a regular chat. To me it's good communication both ways. – Newcomer community leader (Whakatipu)*

The national evaluation of the Welcoming Communities programme found that the Coordinator role incorporates a substantial workload, with much of the work it takes to drive programme implementation falling to the Coordinator. This was also raised by interviewees in QLDC, with several comments made about the Coordinators appearing to have a large workload.

*I think [Coordinator] is very busy, with everyone coming and asking for help. We need more [Coordinators]! – Newcomer community leader (Whakatipu)*

The Welcoming Communities programme in QLDC incorporates several key strengths that have supported the Coordinator roles to function effectively. Firstly, there are two Coordinators; one covering Whakatipu and one covering Upper Clutha.<sup>8</sup> This is unique in Aotearoa, with very few councils employing more than one dedicated Welcoming Communities staff member. It enables the workload to be shared, and the programme delivery to be tailored to the specific needs and contexts of the two communities. Council has also committed to provide external support to the programme, such as using a consultant to support tasks such as the stocktake. While this model of programme delivery involve a higher financial investment, it enables the Coordinators to focus on community outreach work, which has contributed to improved Council perception from newcomer communities (see below).

### ***The programme has increased newcomer perception of Council***

Several newcomers that participated in the evaluation discussed how they had previously been reluctant to engage with Council, due to being uncertain of Council's role, feeling intimidated, or not knowing how to navigate processes such as venue booking systems. Having a direct connection to Council, through the Welcoming Communities Coordinators, has helped to overcome these barriers. Several newcomers emphasised that the Welcoming

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<sup>8</sup> The Upper Clutha role is currently a one year fixed term role, through to November 2024. This role is co-funded by Council with the support of Te Hau Toka Southern Lakes Wellbeing Group.



Communities Coordinators undertake active outreach, meeting with newcomer community leaders to ask how they can help.

*They ask, what can I do for your community? They support everything; they gave us space in the community hall, unbelievable energy. – Newcomer community leader (Upper Clutha)*

Council staff members also observed the key role of the Coordinators in assisting newcomer groups to understand Council processes, such as how to apply for community funding grants. One Council staff member described how prior to the programme they sometimes received applications from newcomer groups that had appeared to fit the criteria, but with details missing or incorrect budget information. This staff member observed an improvement in the quality of applications since the Welcoming Communities programme had been in place. In alignment with this finding, a newcomer community leader recounted how the Coordinator had provided advice on how to complete a grant application.

*We have to do the paperwork, and we have to get the timing right, as grants are given out at certain times of the year. We know how to do that now. – Newcomer community leader (Whakatipu)*

We also heard examples of community projects on which newcomer groups had not been able to get traction on until their involvement with Welcoming Communities. This included supporting a religious group to present to Council on a project that had been placed on hold, and assistance with a cultural festival.

*[Project] was put on hold, there was no one to really push for it. When [Coordinator] was appointed she said she was keen to have it as a milestone for Welcoming Communities. – Newcomer community leader (Whakatipu)*

### ***The programme is a mechanism for increased visibility and connection between newcomers and the receiving community***

The evaluation found that there have been shifts in newcomer perceptions between 2022 and 2024 regarding the extent to which they feel visible and valued within the Queenstown Lakes community. Newcomers considered that the Welcoming Communities programme had helped them to grow cultural celebrations and events, helping them to access funding, venues, and promotion, which had increased community attendance and support for these events. This made the newcomer communities feel visible, and proud to share their culture. For example, one newcomer community leader described the growth of a cultural event, which had previously been mostly attended by members of a specific ethnic community. The most recent event had grown substantially and was now well attended by members of the receiving community.

*I saw how many people came last year, I thought it was amazing. Now people know us and they support us. It was an incredible feeling. – Newcomer community leader (Upper Clutha)*



### ***There is evidence of increased community cohesion and connection***

Newcomer representatives, council staff, and NGOs described the benefits that the programme offers in establishing connections between groups that were not necessarily aware of each other or interacted prior to the programme. The Welcoming Communities programme, particularly the Advisory Groups, functioned as a mechanism for different migrant groups to engage and interact.

*Communities here, in my experience, tend to stick together... A spinoff of Welcoming Communities is that all the communities come together...rather than just being part of their ethnic group, they can be part of a bigger welcoming community. – Newcomer community leader (Upper Clutha)*

In our 2024 site visit, representatives of different newcomer groups and organisations described how, during the course of the programme, they had begun to contact and support each other outside of the formal programme structures such as the Advisory Groups. One newcomer community leader described the benefits of now knowing who to contact for information and support, when undertaking activities such as planning multicultural events.

*The programme is a platform for all the ethnic groups and backgrounds to share culture with each other, and supporting and helping in a way where it's safe. Now, if find it hard to find people or information I call [fellow Advisory Group member]. We work together. –Advisory Group member (Whakatipu)*

More broadly, the programme was perceived to have enhanced equity amongst newcomer groups, in reaching out to and supporting the needs of smaller newcomer that were described as previously lacking visibility. The Coordinators actively seek out representatives of a range of migrant groups, discuss their needs, and connect them to services, funding and sources of support.

Reflecting on the progress that the Queenstown Lakes community has made in the time the programme has been in delivery, several newcomers stated that they considered the area was now well placed to continue to advance community cohesion.

*The whole place is a peaceful loving atmosphere and there is feeling of inclusion. That's the ultimate achievement, as opposed to cities that don't have initiatives like Welcoming Communities. – Newcomer community leader (Whakatipu)*

## 3.2 KEQ2: To what extent is the QLDC Welcoming Communities programme on track towards the intended outcomes described in the Welcoming Communities Standard?

This section provides a summary of evaluation findings related to each outcome of the Welcoming Communities Standard. It should be noted that the QLDC Welcoming Communities programme is in the first few years of its establishment, so it is not anticipated that the expected outcomes will be fully realised. This report presents a brief summary of data related to any early outcomes.

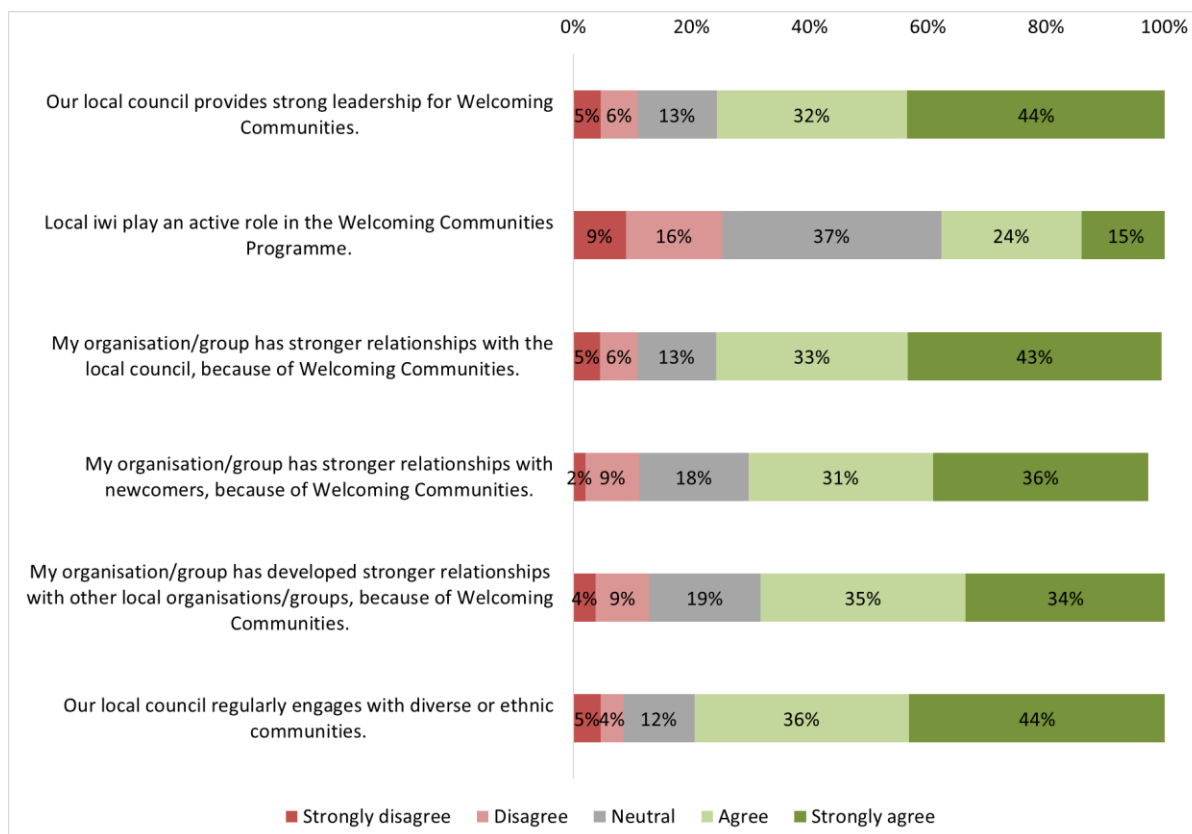
### Inclusive leadership

The QLDC Welcoming Communities programme is mostly performing well against this outcome. The Advisory Groups were comprised of community leaders, across newcomer groups, NGOs and support services, community organisations and local and central government. However, as discussed above, the programme would benefit from deeper engagement with mana whenua in the near future. This would enable the programme to benefit from mana whenua understanding of the history of the area and the *mātāpono* (value or principle) of *manaakitaka*. More involvement with business leaders would support the realisation of economic development outcomes.

The programme leadership, through the Advisory Groups, has functioned effectively, guiding the development of the draft Welcoming Plan. Interviewees appreciated that leadership of the programme was not driven by Council, but a shared responsibility, in recognition that *“Council cannot effect all change, its role is to support and facilitate communities to do the work.”* (Advisory Group member, Whakatipu)

The survey results for QLDC show that there was strong levels of agreement amongst stakeholders that Council provides strong leadership for the programme, and regularly engages with diverse communities. There were lower levels of agreement regarding whether *Iwi* play an active role in the programme, with a high proportion of respondents being unsure.

**Figure 1: QLDC survey responses related to Inclusive Leadership**



## Welcoming Communications

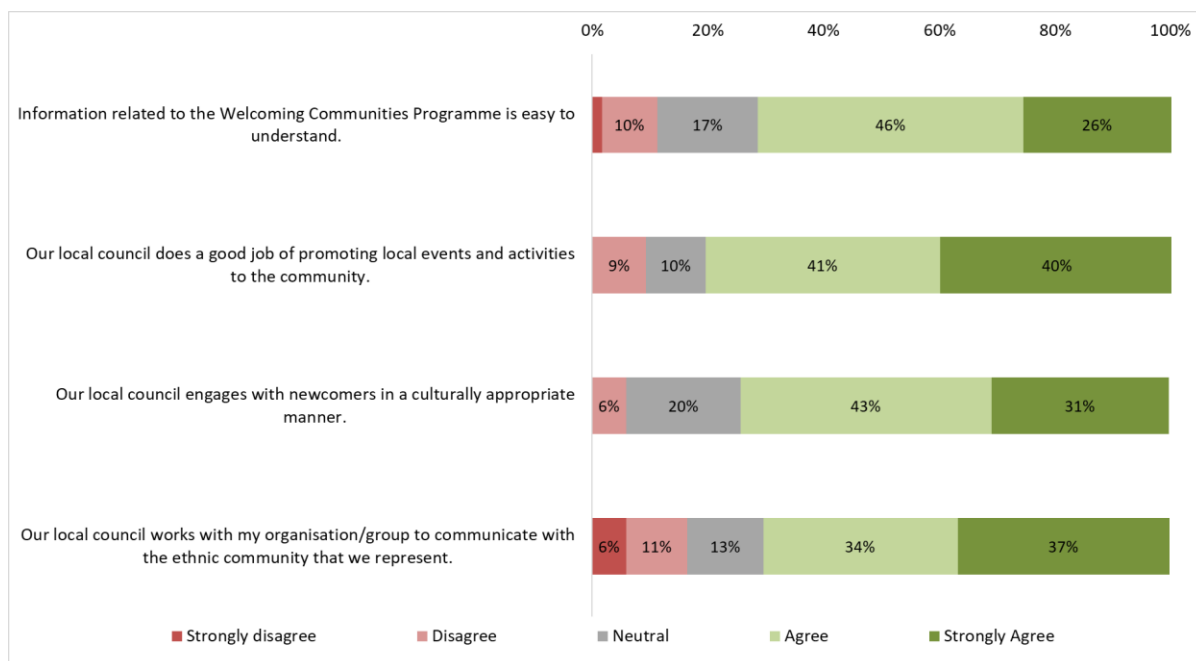
The 2024 site visit gathered newcomers’ perceptions on the extent to which they felt listened to and well informed, that diverse communication needs are taken into account. The results indicate that there has been progress, although there is room for further action. Newcomers highlighted that having limited English proficiency or fluency is a barrier for some in the community, and that Council has made efforts to ensure its communication and promotion materials are in plain language. The Coordinators were identified as an important communication channel, providing key messages to their networks of newcomer community leaders, who can in turn disseminate the information to their communities.

*[Coordinator] sends out information and I share it with members of my ethnic community through our own Facebook group and via a group chat. – Newcomer community leader (Whakatipu)*

However, newcomers considered that some communication mechanisms could be improved, noting that many cultures value face to face communication, rather than written materials. They suggested that it would be beneficial to broaden the language capabilities of front facing council staff, such as customer services and library staff, noting that even the ability to greet customers in a range of languages would help them to feel welcome and included.

The survey results show high levels of agreement with statements related to the Welcoming Communications outcome, with 70-80% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with each statement.

**Figure 2: QLDC survey responses related to Welcoming Communications**



## Equitable Access

In line with the findings of the national evaluation, progress towards this outcome has been limited by the barriers that newcomers can experience in accessing services in the community. These barriers include limited fluency in English, and cultural barriers such as not trusting services or institutions due to negative experiences in home countries. While addressing these barriers is much broader than the mandate of the Welcoming Communities Programme, newcomers considered that there was a place for the programme to act as a conduit for information regarding available services, and to help services to be more accessible and appropriate in their engagement with different cultural groups.

Interviewees considered that *“things are happening to support equitable access, but they’re ad hoc”* (Newcomer community leader, Upper Clutha). They appreciated efforts to get information out to increase awareness of the services and activities that are available, including using social media, library notice boards, and posters around town.

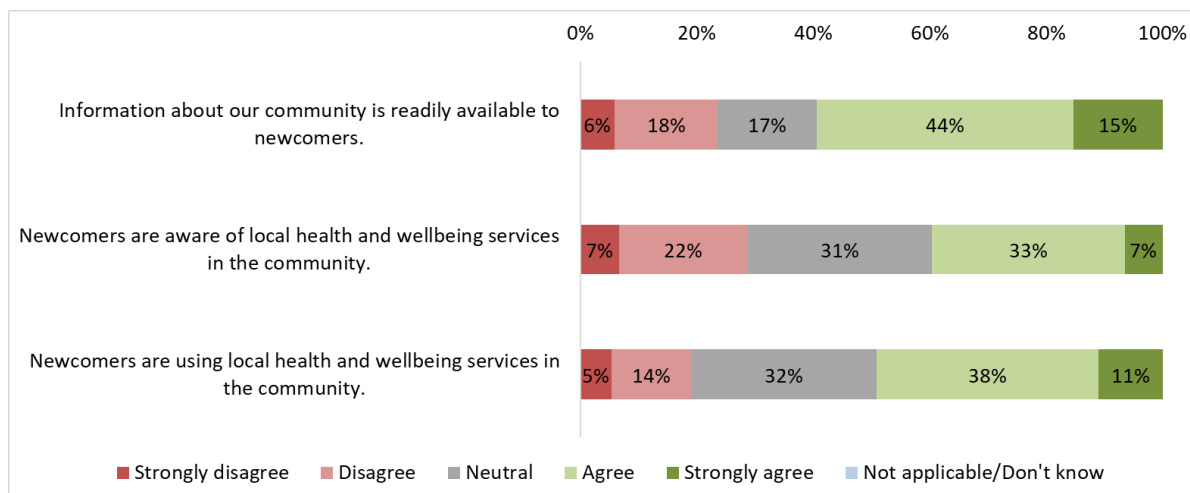
It was suggested that a more strategic approach could be taken to enhance access to specific services, when a need is identified. For example, several interviewees described a rising need for mental health support within migrant communities, but that there are access barriers related to lack of awareness and stigma. One interviewee suggested that migrants might be concerned that seeking help could affect their residency status.

Newcomer community leaders suggested that increasing access to services requires a joined-up, strategic approach, such as collating information about available services, working with services to ensure they are culturally responsive, and disseminating key messages such as that services are confidential.



The survey findings for QLDC on this outcome are similar to those of the national evaluation, with the statements having lower levels of agreement than other outcomes. This indicates that there is scope for greater focus on this outcome in the programme.

**Figure 3: QLDC survey responses related to Equitable Access**



## Connected and Inclusive Communities

As was discussed in under KEQ1, there is evidence that QLDC has made good progress against this outcome. Several of the newcomers that were interviewed considered that Queenstown Lakes was more connected and inclusive than other communities in Aotearoa that they had lived in, noting that in other areas different cultural and ethnic communities tended to stick together. Queenstown Lakes was perceived as friendlier and more inclusive, with newcomer groups and the receiving community fostering connections.

*New Zealanders are grateful to us for bringing all these ideas, and food and dancing. Queenstown is very open, welcoming, super-kind, and happy to meet people of new cultures. – Newcomer community leader (Whakatipu)*

*We try to meet kiwi people and people from other ethnic communities. We take care of each other, and I don't think this happens so much in other places. People are keen to help. That's Queenstown! – Newcomer community leader (Whakatipu)*

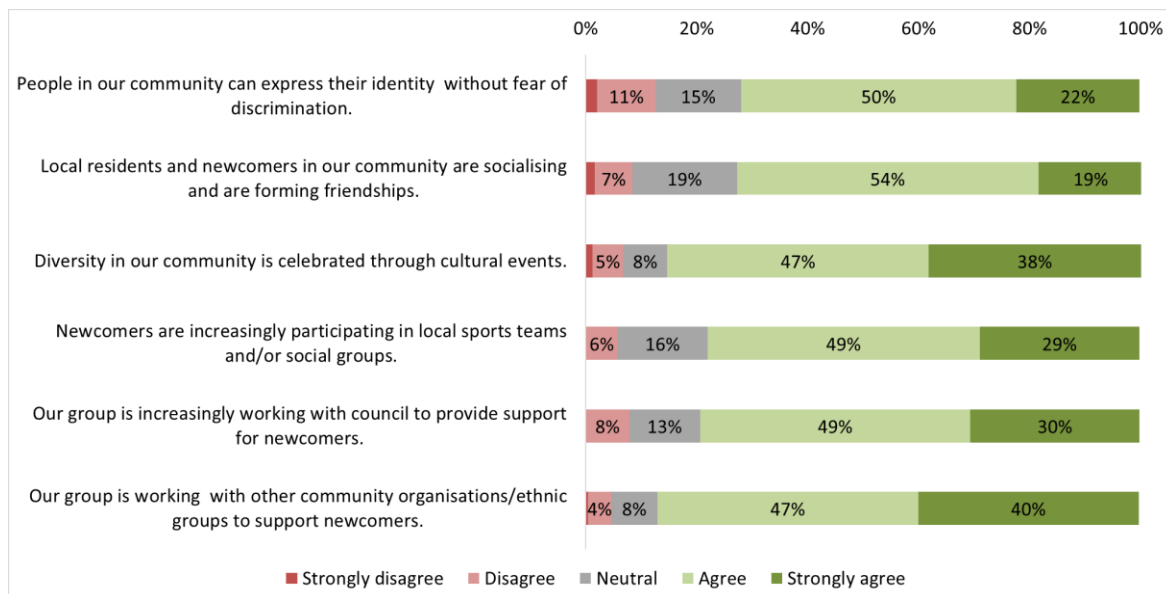
Some of the newcomers that were interviewed attributed this directly to the programme, specifically the efforts of the coordinators in forging links and 'going to extra mile' to encourage visibility and connection within the QLDC community.

*[Coordinator] came to my home for three hours to talk about the forthcoming [cultural] celebration. This wouldn't happen in other places. – Newcomer community leader (Whakatipu)*

The survey results for this outcome align with the qualitative findings; Queenstown Lakes had higher levels of respondent agreement with these outcome statements than the national average.



**Figure 4: QLDC survey responses related to Connected and Inclusive Communities**



## Economic Development, Business and Employment

The evaluation results indicate that there is potential for the Welcoming Communities programme to place more emphasis on the economic development benefits of the programme. Evaluation participants noted that involvement of the Queenstown Lakes business community in the programme has been limited to date, but that there are strong potential economic benefits from attracting and retaining skilled migrants to the district.

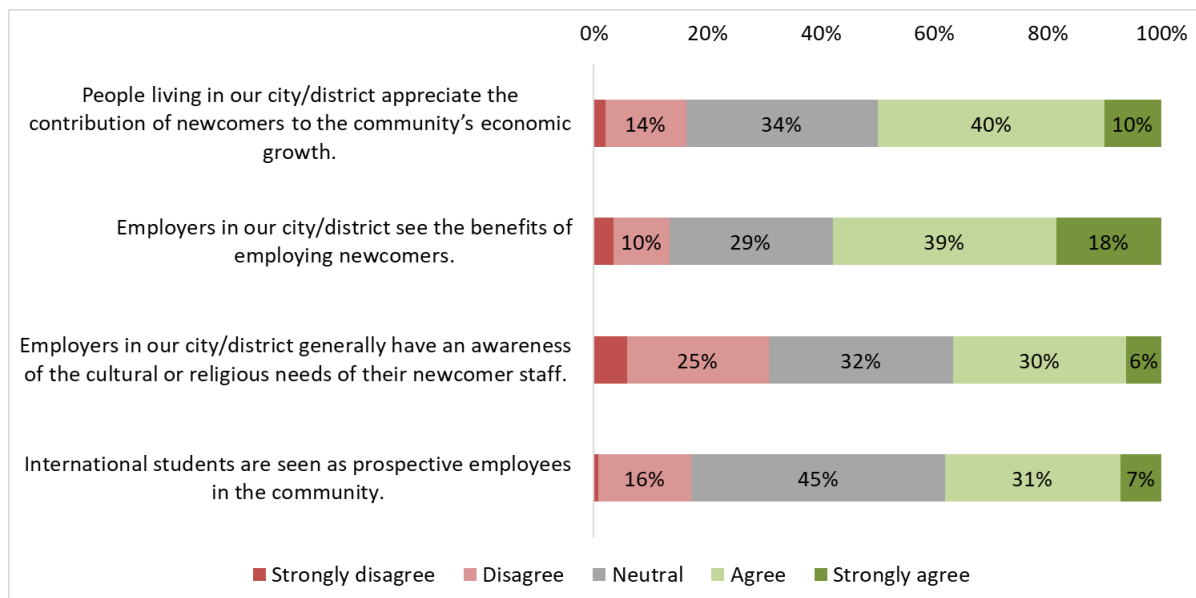
Newcomers and NGOs provided some examples in which they, or people they were supporting, had struggled to gain work or had poor employment experiences. They considered that there was opportunity for the programme to engage with employers to publicise the benefits of employing migrants.

In the 2024 site visit, newcomers noted that the programme had taken steps to enhance business community engagement in Welcoming Communities, such as meeting with the local Chamber of Commerce, recruitment agencies, and local businesses. This was seen as a positive step, with encouragement to continue to focus on business engagement with the Welcoming Plan to be adopted this year.

The survey results show that a large portion of respondents felt neutral about statements related to the economic development outcome of the programme.



**Figure 5: QLDC survey responses related to Economic Development, Business and Employment**



## Civic Engagement and Participation

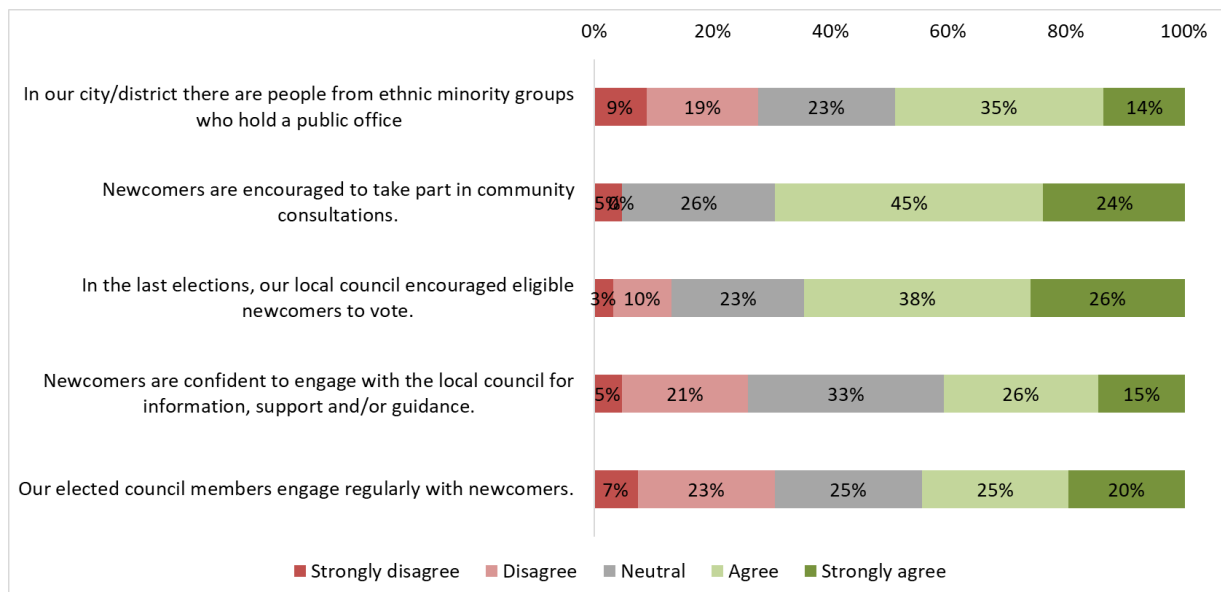
The evaluation found that the Welcoming Communities programme in QLDC, and Council more broadly, has made efforts to encourage full community participation in civic life. This included disseminating consultation materials to community and making efforts to reach communities in spaces in which they feel comfortable.

However, interviewees noted that there remained some reluctance amongst some groups to engage with civic institutions such as Council, due to lack of trust in government, uncertainty regarding how the information will be used, or a perception that their views will not result in action. Changing this perception will be important to enhancing newcomer engagement in civic activities.

The survey results align with these findings, showing high agreement that newcomers are encouraged to participate, but lower agreement that newcomers are confident to engage with Council.



**Figure 6: QLDC survey responses related to Civic Engagement and Participation**



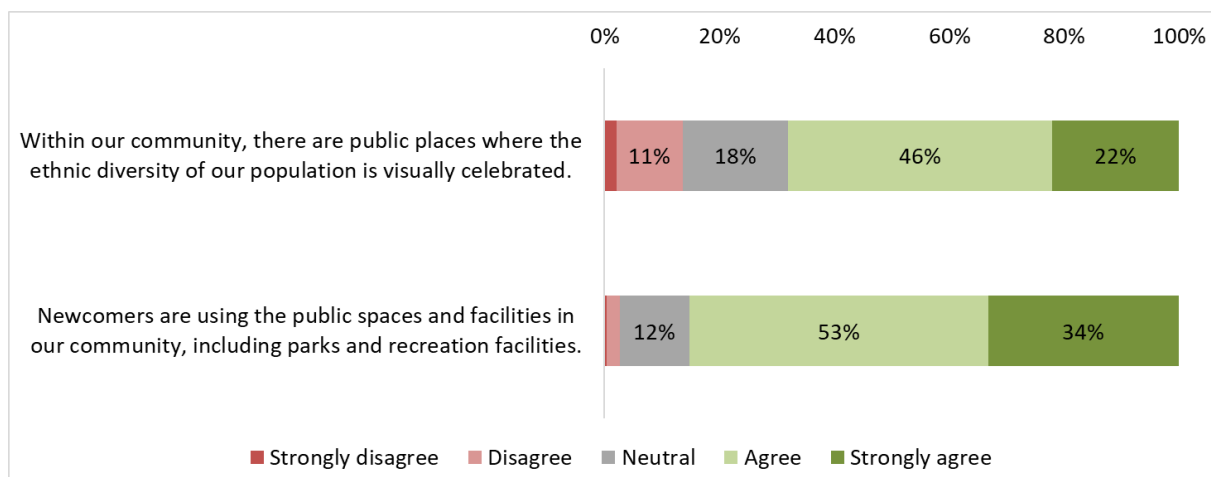
## Welcoming Public Spaces

The evaluation findings indicate the QLDC Welcoming Communities programme has performed well against this outcome. Newcomers appreciated the efforts that the programme has made to ensure public spaces and activities are welcoming to newcomers. For example, the Wānaka Recreation Centre was identified as having made substantial efforts to engage with newcomer communities to ensure the activities they would like to participate in are available and accessible.

In line with the findings of the national evaluation, libraries were highlighted as a community hub, and several newcomers noted that the programme had instigated activities to make libraries more welcoming to newcomers. This included creating ‘World Languages Lilliput Libraries’ which included a selection of books in a range of languages. The library environment was described as “*welcoming and inviting, helping people to feel they belong.*” (Newcomer). Other library-based events included a games trailer, a ‘living stories’ project, in which people shared stories of their culture, making international book collections more prominent, and children’s story time events in a range of languages. These activities were appreciated by the newcomers that were interviewed for the evaluation, signalling a commitment to ensure public spaces meet the needs of diverse groups.

The survey results also show high levels of agreement that the QLDC Welcoming Communities programme is making progress towards the Welcoming Public Spaces outcome.

**Figure 7: QLDC survey responses related to Welcoming Public Spaces**



## Culture and Identity

The Queenstown Lakes community was described by the newcomers that participated in this evaluation as becoming more diverse, with newcomers feeling increasing confident and safe in their culture and identity.

*We have a lot of new people in the community, and festivals and it shows that we can be a culturally rich and vibrant environment. – Newcomer community leader (Upper Clutha)*

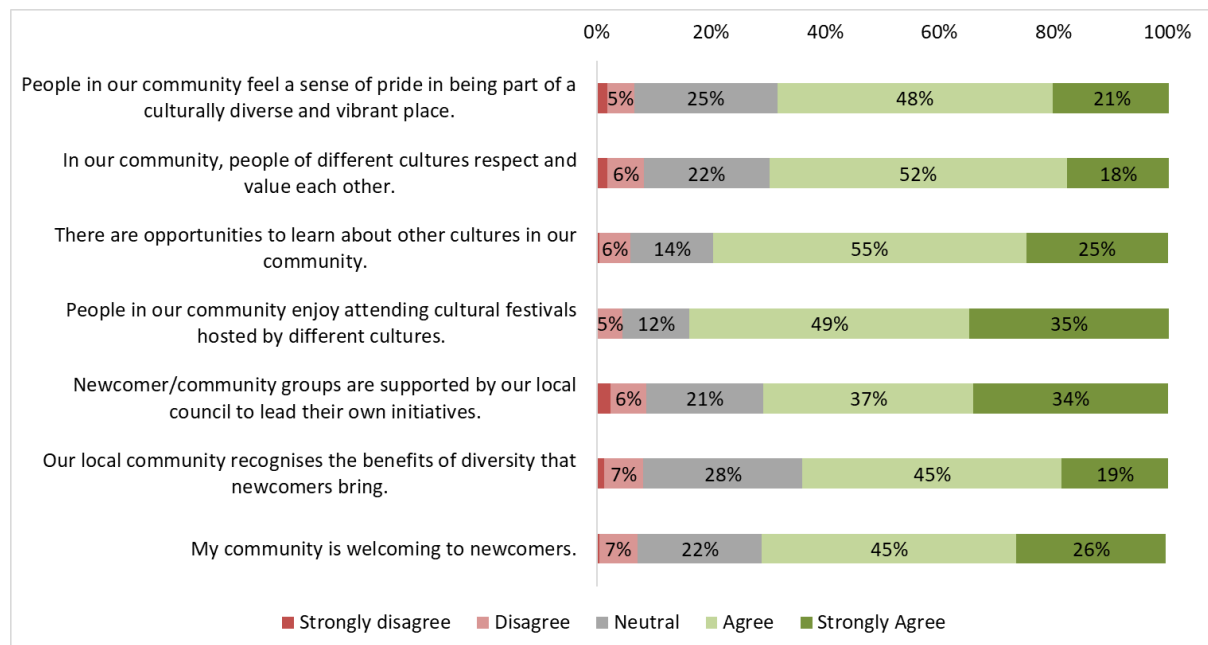
The Welcoming Communities programme has supported activities to showcase positive aspects of cultural diversity within the community. For example, newcomers discussed how The Wānaka Sun newspaper ran a series of articles about newcomers’ culture and contribution to the community. In particular, festivals and events were highlighted as an opportunity to celebrate the range of cultures within the community. The Queenstown Multicultural Festival was described as a “big win”, with attendance numbers having increased annually.

*Festivals give us a great opportunity to interact. [The] impact is that we share, learn about each other. – Newcomer community leader (Whakatipu)*

The survey results also show high levels of agreement with the statements under the Culture and Identity outcome.



**Figure 8: QLDC survey responses related to Culture and Identity**



## 4 Summary and conclusion

The findings of the re-analysis of evaluation data specific to the QLDC Welcoming Communities programme show that the programme is well placed to meet its aims of creating an inclusive, diverse and connected community within the region.

The programme has established effective processes to support its implementation, including a well-functioning Advisory Group that acted as a conduit for identifying and prioritising newcomer community needs and channelling these to guide the development of the Welcoming Plan.

The two Coordinators act as the 'engine room' of the programme, developing networks amongst newcomer communities and stakeholder organisations, spreading the word about Welcoming Communities. The Coordinator roles sit within the broader Community Partnerships team at QLDC and play a 'connector' function, acting as a link between newcomers and Welcoming Communities stakeholders and a range of other QLDC departments such as libraries, events, and sport and recreation. The Coordinators help broker connections between groups, and access to support and funding. The QLDC has been active in responding to the needs of its diverse communities by investing in two coordinator positions to ensure that the programme is tailored to the needs of the Whakatipu and Upper Clutha areas.

The evaluation data indicates that there have been shifts between the 2022 and 2024 data collection points in newcomer perception of Council, with the majority of interviewees indicating that they felt more confident in their understanding of Council's role and their ability to engage with and navigate Council processes. The evaluation also observed shifts in newcomer sense of visibility within the QLDC community and perceptions of cohesiveness.

However, the evaluation findings indicate that there remain some barriers to mana whenua engagement in the programme, and that there is a need to focus on this to fully deliver the programme in line with its intent.

The survey and interview data identifies that there has been progress made towards the outcomes of inclusive leadership; welcoming communications; connected and inclusive communities; welcoming public spaces; civic participation; and culture and identity. However, there has been slower progress in equitable access, with a need for a strategic approach to align Welcoming Communities activities to address identified access barriers. Similarly, the potential economic benefits not yet observable, and a focus on demonstrating economic outcomes is recommended for the next phase of the programme.



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