

# A Creative Platform That Connects

## Mixit Impact Evaluation Report 2022-25

August 2025



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*“Fundamentally, young people the world over respond to the same things - they wish to have fun and socialise, be accepted as part of their peer group and strive for a better future”.*

*Wendy Preston, Mixit: It's all of us (2017 P67)*

*“...at Mixit, we believe that creativity and connection are vital to protecting the social fabric of Aotearoa New Zealand - for all of us”.*

*Mark Easterbrook, Chair - Mixit Charitable Trust Annual Report 2023/24*



# Introduction

*“Mixit is an arts project for young people with refugee backgrounds, mixing it up with migrants. We celebrate diversity through creativity...once on the Mixit floor you’re mates for life. It’s freedom, it’s safe, it’s family”.*

Wendy Preston, 2017 p18

Mixit is a multicultural creative platform where former refugee youth connect through art with other migrant and local youth. Established in 2006, Mixit offers creative expression, empowerment and connection for former refugee youth aged 13 to 20+. Over the years Mixit has created a huge extended family through more than 10,000 engagements with young people and their families.

This impact report presents Mixit’s context, activity and impact between 1 April 2022 to 31 July 2025. It covers Mixit’s Core Programme in Auckland, and the Mixit Aotearoa Outreach Programme (MAO), which piloted sharing the Mixit approach with other regional resettlement areas nationwide. The MAO Programme was made possible due to funding from the JR McKenzie Trust and The Tindall Foundation.

The evidence base informing this impact report is:



**Mixit activity data.**



**Mixit documentation**  
(See references),  
including annual  
reports, statements  
of service performance,  
programme evaluation,  
funding applications  
and reporting.



**Interview feedback**  
from 24 key  
informants close  
to Mixit.  
(See list at  
appendix one)



**A reflection event**  
unpacking Mixit’s  
impact with 21 people:  
‘Mixers’ or youth  
participants,  
family members,  
Youth Leaders, Alumni,  
Mixit board members,  
staff and guest artists.  
(See list at appendix two)

# Mixit Whakapapa

Mixit emerged from in-depth community research by Wendy Preston in 2005, funded by the Fledgling Trust, into the potential of an arts based approach to supporting former refugee youth in Aotearoa. Wendy has an extensive professional background as a leading arts educator, which includes utilising performing arts cross culturally with young people. Wendy immersed herself in the former refugee community and its ecosystem and built valuable relationships during this process.

The Chair of Fledgling Trust at the time, Charmaine Barnett, had witnessed challenges for refugee and migrant youth in Europe and was concerned about the growing needs of former refugee youth in New Zealand. The Fledgling Trust sole-funded Mixit during its first six years.

Mixit's founding beliefs are that a strong, healthy, equitable society can only be achieved when its most vulnerable members are supported; and that the arts are one of the most powerful mediums for connection, support and education (Preston 2017).

Since establishing its core programme in 2006, Mixit milestones have included:



# COVID-19 and Mixit's Landscape

COVID-19 lockdowns temporarily halted Mixit's face to face work. Mixit took the opportunity to complete a Scoping Report in 2021, which explored the Mixit landscape and how Mixit can best support former refugee youth in Aotearoa. Contributors were Mixit youth, their families, government representatives, community sector partners and artists, through 36+ events and 22 interviews.

## It described the Mixit landscape as follows:

- < Mixit's reputation is strong.
- < Mixit's programmes and approach remain relevant, valued and in-demand (with a trend for this to increase).
- < There is a lack of alignment between government, community organisations and youth voice, platforms and pathways.
- < Young people's needs have been amplified by the COVID-19 epidemic, as have existing social inequalities.
- < Demand is high for inspiring, socially-based learning activities and better trained youth workers.

Current societal changes, including through COVID-19, the growth of Artificial Intelligence, economic recession, global conflict and polarisation, social media and neoliberal and far right agendas, are affecting the health and wellbeing of young people. Refugee and migrant communities in Aotearoa are also changing - with fewer multi-ethnic African communities (of mainly Christian faith), and more diverse multi-ethnic Middle Eastern communities arriving (often of Islamic faith).

Following a period of orientation on arrival at the Māngere Resettlement Centre, former refugees arriving in New Zealand are resettled into communities across the country, including the main resettlement centres of Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch, Dunedin and Invercargill; as well as smaller centres including Levin, Masterton, Blenheim, Ashburton and Timaru.

A range of government agencies and NGOs provide resettlement support services across these centres, which typically focus on health and mental health, education and English language, housing, income and employment. Other forms of community-based support are unevenly provided, and support outside of the main urban centres is particularly limited. Some former refugee families who were resettled outside of the Auckland region are choosing to self-settle back in Auckland, due to the greater diversity of support and opportunities on offer.

The needs and issues Mixit encounters in 2025 are very different to ten years ago and are constantly evolving. At the same time, Mixit finds that the foundational needs of young people remain constant - safety, fun, friends, learning, a sense of belonging and inclusion and hope for the future.



## Critical needs identified by Mixit through talking with youth from former refugee and migrant backgrounds were for:

- < Mental health support, mentorship and role modelling.
- < More creative activities and opportunities for growth - needs are high nationwide.
- < Being enabled to participate in decision making, initiate and lead projects and develop leadership skills. Young people want to contribute to their communities.
- < Financial needs and language barriers can prevent young people from succeeding in life and many expressed a need to support their families.
- < Young people are frustrated with being asked for their opinions but not seeing any change as a result, and are not feeling valued. It is vital to put youth lived experience at the centre of decision making and organisational structures.



# MAO Programme Context

The 2021 Scoping Report identified a need for Mixit to network, develop partnerships and share its knowledge and model of practice nationwide. Mixit's MAO Programme emerged from this research, to help address significant gaps in former refugee youth provision outside of Auckland, and support local providers to build ecosystems of support for former refugee youth and their families.

*“The smaller cities and regions need more access to grassroots, fun and youth-led activities for young people... There is not a lot of support, and not much diversity which means young people are struggling being the only ones from that background. The model of sharing the Mixit philosophy is key”.*

*Mixit team*

*“Many former refugees aren't resettled in Auckland anymore. We are realising when we turn up to some places that the support infrastructure is poor, and people can struggle to know how to support young people there”.*

*Mixit team*

Regional resettlement surfaces some unique challenges for young people, including low ethnic diversity which can leave them feeling isolated. Services focus on basic resettlement needs, meaning youth infrastructure is underdeveloped. The youth engagement opportunities that do exist tend to come through school or community sports and are not tailored to the unique needs of former refugee youth.



# The Mixit Approach

## A Scaffolded Youth Development Pathway

*“The first thing that grabs your attention is only 30% of what Mixit offers. The longer you stay, the more you benefit”.*

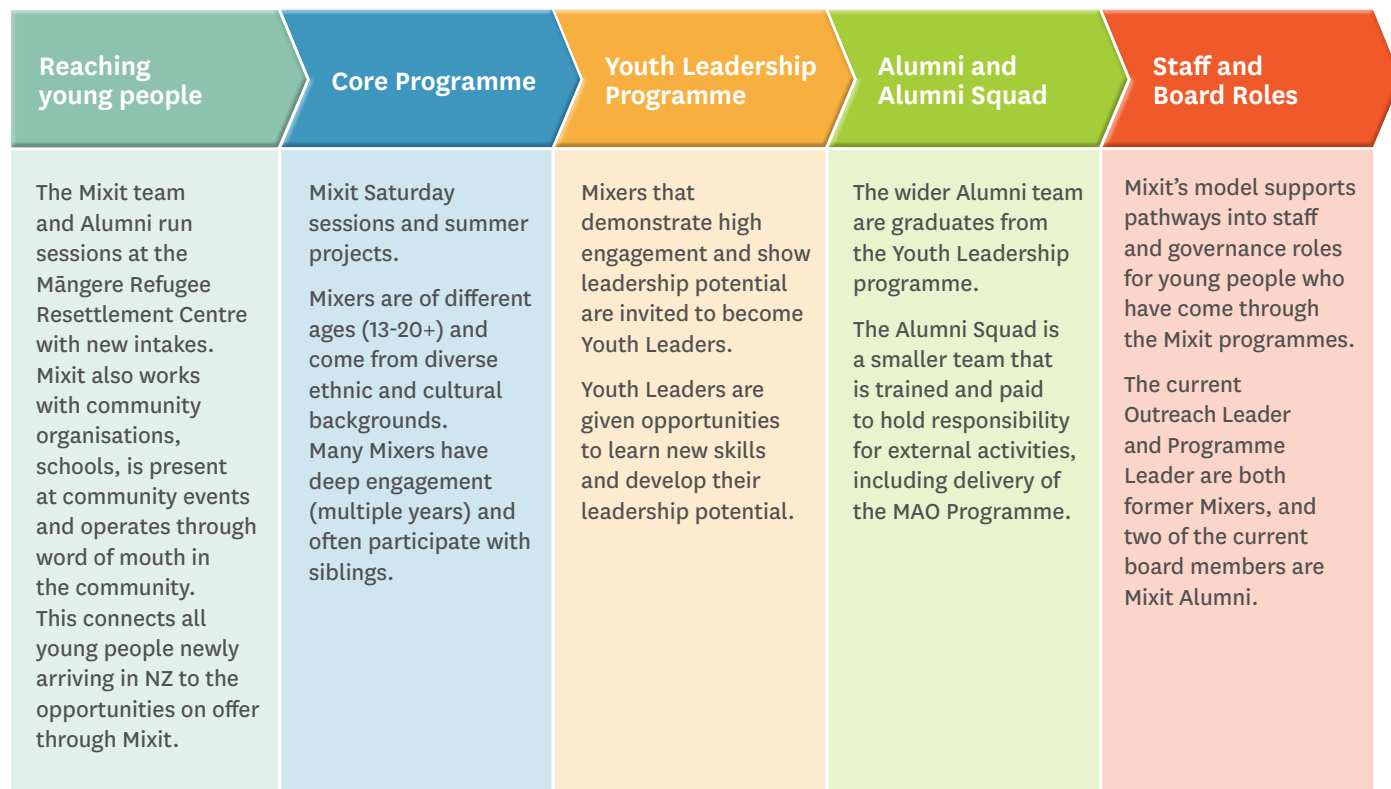
*Mixit participant*

Mixit’s Core Programme has developed over time from a youth arts initiative into a deliberately scaffolded youth development pathway.

Mixit is committed to the vision that participants will become future leaders of the organisation, with older youth guiding those who follow in a tuakana-teina model. Mixers with leadership potential are invited to join its Youth Leadership Programme, where they are inducted into Mixit’s model of practice and given opportunities to plan and lead sessions with the Mixit team.

When young people transition into higher education or work but wish to stay engaged, they become part of the Alumni Squad, where responsibilities and opportunities include the mentoring of youth leaders and paid work as guest artists or outreach facilitators. Alumni are also prioritised for Mixit staff roles, and the Mixit trust board has Alumni board members.

For many members of the Mixit community it’s a lifetime journey as they stay connected, forming a wider ecosystem. At every step of the pathway, Mixit provides wrap-around support and mentoring.





## Core Programme Structure 2022 – 2025

The core programme is delivered through two full-time and three part-time roles, supplemented by contractors and volunteers (six volunteers on average per week). Volunteers contribute an average combined total of 20 hours per week (2023/24 Mixit Statement of Service Performance Report).

### Saturday programme

Mixit offers free and accessible, entry level creative workshops from 2pm to 4.30pm every Saturday during school terms. There is a creative focus and theme each term and invited guest artists work with young Mixers. This is the anchor programme of Mixit, with fun at the heart at all times. Participants are transported to and from the workshops by a paid driver in a Mixit owned van. Mentoring and support of young people and their families is provided where needed.

### Summer Project

The Summer Project is an annual immersive summer programme delivered over two weeks in January. It is devised from scratch using participant ideas and creativity and culminates in a performance. Engagement is intensive over this period, typically 10am to 6pm daily around a key theme. The performance outcome is shared publicly with family, friends and supporters.

### Youth Leadership programme

The Youth Leadership team actively supports delivery of the Saturday programme, with Youth Leaders coordinating transport, driver liaison, shopping for catering needs and co-facilitation of sessions with guest artists and Alumni. They support external activities, community partnerships, take part in the annual residential training retreat and annual Mixit strategic hui. They receive one-to-one mentoring for career pathways, studies and other areas of support.

### Alumni Squad

A dynamic team of young leaders, many of whom started with Mixit as teens, form the Alumni Squad. Alumni are present at every level of the organisation – on the Board, in staff roles, in the Summer Leadership Project team and as creative facilitators leading the MAO Programme. They hold responsibilities for leading all Mixit's external activities and are employed in support roles in the organisation. Alumni are paid when funding allows for their contribution, which is vital to succession planning, strategic development and the future of Mixit. The HQ in New Lynn has a leadership space where Alumni can gather, plan, create and socialise together. Some Alumni have created studio spaces there.

### Mixit Scholarships

The Neville Kay Mixit Memorial Scholarship was established in 2024 following a bequest from Neville Kay. Through this scholarship Mixit assists young people from former refugee, migrant or asylum seeking backgrounds to move forward with training and career pathways. It includes contributing to tertiary fees and professional development.



# MAO Programme Structure 2022 – 2025

The MAO Programme is coordinated by the Mixit Outreach Leader, supported by the Mixit team and Alumni Squad.

The goal of the MAO Programme is to ignite opportunities for local former refugee youth across New Zealand to participate in creative activities and connect with their peers. It also provides professional development support for local youth workers. By sharing the Mixit model and values with local leaders and providers, Mixit is equipping communities to respond to their own local context and build supportive spaces for young people to belong. In the longer term, Mixit aims to grow a more connected ecosystem of provision for former refugee youth, by providing peer support and facilitating shared learning.

## Orientation and Relationship Building

Mixit's sessions at the Māngere Refugee Resettlement Centre for new intakes keep Mixit updated about which regions young people are being resettled to, to help connect with them again. Through the MAO Programme, Mixit builds on this initial connection to encourage participation in MAO sessions regionally.

Mixit builds relationships with local NGOs regionally by maintaining a network of community groups, government agencies and former refugee support sector organisations. This involves keeping informed about changing personnel and shifting criteria and focus. It means maintaining relationships to enable connection between regional organisations and Mixit's MAO Programme, and building a collegial network of youth workers nationally.

Within Auckland, Mixit regularly contributes to a consortium group of community organisations with a shared brief to support young people and connect with other community initiatives.

## Alumni Squad

Alumni are brought into the MAO Programme as paid facilitators and guest artists. Their responsibilities include planning and designing outreach sessions, liaising with external partners, facilitating workshop sessions and participating in session debriefs/reflections. Alumni often stay connected to youth participants who are interested in being more involved in other Mixit projects, or more generally in youth leadership opportunities, providing informal mentoring and support.

## MAO Workshops

Mixit partners with local providers to host a one or two day creative workshop for local young people from refugee backgrounds. Staff and Alumni travel into different regions and facilitate sessions alongside workers from local NGOs and, where possible, local volunteers and youth leaders. Typically, 15-25 youth participate in each workshop.

## Professional Development and Peer Support

Working closely with local providers is a key element of the MAO approach. Regional youth workers are invited to Auckland to participate in facilitation training and summer projects. Mixit role models effective youth engagement approaches, and games and resources are gifted to the host provider. Mixit staff and Alumni also provide longer-term peer support to providers via phone and email. A key aim is to grow and strengthen the relationship through annual visits.





## The Heart of Mixit and Key Strengths

*“Creativity is the skeleton but the people are the heart”.*

*Mixit team*

*‘It’s like a divine spark that connects people and fosters a universal space between us’.*

*Mixit Alumni*



Mixit has evolved and refined its approach over 20 years. Key Mixit strengths identified in this impact review included:

- < **Creating a safe, accessible space:** Mixit is an empowering space for young people to explore, be brave and express themselves. Access is ensured through free transport and a free programme.
- < **Consistent and long-term engagement:** Weekly sessions enable young people to engage with Mixit for longer time than is common for youth programmes, sometimes for many years. Long-term engagement is coupled with personal development progression.
- < **Authentically youth-led:** Mixit believes in young people and creates opportunities for their engagement to deepen via the scaffolded pathways it has developed. This supports succession so that Mixit can sustain its youth-led approach and impact over time.
- < **Flexibility:** Mixit combines consistent programme structures with space to respond to the needs of young people. The MAO Programme adapts to local contexts and cultural sensitivities, for example Islamic religious observation.
- < **Reflective practice:** Mixit regularly reflects on its approach and programming. Each session ends with young people reflecting on what worked and could be strengthened. MAO workshops end with a partner debrief and annual strategic development hui are held with the wider Mixit team and Mixers.

# Delivery 2022 – 2025

## Core Programme

The Mixit Core Programme is delivered in Auckland across the four school terms of the year. In 2022, Mixit relocated from its home base of ten years at Corban Estate in Henderson, to The Dance Studio in Morningside, and then to The Auckland Academy of Dance in New Lynn, which is closer to its HQ.

Youth Leader and Alumni engagement in core programme delivery each year was as follows. Their core responsibilities are co-facilitating on Saturdays and at other regular Mixit workshops, attending monthly meetings, an annual leadership retreat, a strategic development stakeholders hui and participating in regular training.

2022	2023	2024
5 regular Youth Leaders	4 regular Youth Leaders	4 regular Youth Leaders
10 Alumni Squad members	9 Alumni Squad members	10 Alumni Squad members

Saturday sessions average a weekly attendance of 15–20 young people. Detailed activity across each year is captured in the table below. Participant engagements refer to how many times all of the Mixers and Youth Leaders were part of the sessions for the term.

2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 <sup>1</sup>
Term 1		
<b>Step with style</b> (exploring dance styles)  <b>Guest artist:</b> Andrew Cesan  99 participant engagements	<b>Dance to the beats</b> (dance performance for International CultureFest)  <b>Guest artist:</b> Gemma-Jayde Naidoo  154 participant engagements	<b>Groove to the flow dance</b> (fusion performance for International CultureFest)  <b>Guest Artists:</b> Andrew Cesan and Kaviesha Abeysinghe-Perera (Alumni)  141 participant engagements
Term 2		
<b>The art of story telling</b> (devising and creating stories from life)  <b>Guest artists:</b> Ben Crowder, Miriama McDowell, Ella Becroft  111 participant engagements	<b>Art in a garden</b> (landscaping and murals)  <b>Guest artists:</b> Behtan Marshall, Masiei Conway and Claire Talbot  136 participant engagements	<b>Finding fun thru' drama</b> (building worlds through comedy and melodrama)  <b>Guest Artists:</b> Kalyani Nagarajan and Karishma Grebneff  135 participant engagements

<sup>1</sup> At the time of this report, Mixit is halfway through 2025 and will complete Terms 3 and 4 and a Summer Project in early 2026.

Table continues on next page



2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Term 4</b>		
<b>Say it all:</b> poetry into songwriting <b>Guest artists:</b> Julia Deans, Gino October, Mel Bailey 93 participant engagements	<b>I am...I can</b> (identity exploration through dance and drama) <b>Guest artists:</b> Ahi Karunaharan, Ray Santiago (Alumni), Gemma-Jayde Naidoo 130 participant engagements	<b>Say It Out Loud</b> (spoken word poetry, In association with Te Kahui Youth Arts) <b>Guest Artists:</b> Eric Soakai, Sherry Zhang, Siobhan Awatere 170 participant engagements
<b>Summer Projects</b>		
<b>HOME - It's where the heart is</b> An exploration of what home means. A moving and funny performance using dance, drama, freestyling, poetry and music Mixit Participants: 15 Alumni Participants: 8 Production Team: 6 Creative Leadership Team: 4 Performances of HOME: 3	<b>I AM...AND...I AM</b> Honouring all of the multi-faceted identities people juggle in a whole identity Mixit Participants: 16 Alumni Participants: 5 Creative Leadership Team: 3 Production Team: 8 Performances of I AM...AND...I AM: 4	<b>No Summer Project due to funding constraints</b>



# MAO Programme

The MAO Programme was established in 2022, via three year funding from JR McKenzie Trust and The Tindall Foundation. It delivers Mixit workshops for former refugee youth in Auckland and in regions outside of Auckland, alongside training opportunities for Alumni and partner organisation staff. Core activity between 2022 to early 2025 is captured below.

## 2022/2023 - Groundwork and establishment

- < Four sessions with new intakes at Māngere Resettlement Centre
- < Successful school holiday outreach programme in Auckland
- < Secured MAO funding for three years
- < New MAO partnership formed in Palmerston North
- < Developing a one and two day workshop package for regional delivery
- < Alumni leaders immersive residential training retreat
- < Outreach Activator and one Alumni undertook code of ethics training
- < Participation in Ara Taiohi Youth Development National Conference, including a Mixit style workshop for youth workers
- < Home: It's where my heart is Creative Leadership involvement

## 2023/2024 - Develop and deliver

- < Two Alumni appointed into MAO and Core Programme leadership staff roles
- < Alumni leaders immersive residential training retreat
- < Four sessions with new intakes at Māngere Resettlement Centre
- < Successful delivery of regional MAO engagements in Dunedin and Palmerston North
- < Three MAO workshops with international students at Mt Albert Grammar School
- < Post-workshop debriefs with regional partners spark valuable discussions on navigating religious restrictions in creative participation
- < MAO Partners Pack developed on outcomes, logistics and partnership agreement
- < Two participants from the Dunedin workshop were invited and hosted to join the 2024 Summer Project I AM & I AM
- < I AM & I AM Creative Leadership involvement



## 2024/2025

- < Five sessions with new intakes at Māngere Resettlement Centre
- < Successful delivery of regional MAO engagements in Christchurch, Hamilton, Invercargill and Ashburton
- < A participant studying Youth and Community Leadership from Christchurch travelled with the Mixit team to Ashburton to shadow Alumni facilitators and role model leadership
- < MAO workshop with ESOL students at Avondale College and One Tree Hill College
- < MAO workshop as part of World Refugee Day at Māngere College
- < Participation in Red Cross Youth Workers' Hui and Festival for the Future
- < Alumni hosted and performed at the Mixit Profile Raising Event
- < Alumni leaders immersive residential training retreat
- < Mental Health training facilitated by a Clinical Psychologist
- < Participation in Ara Taiohi Youth Development National Conference, including a Mixit style workshop and discussion on MAO outcomes



# Mixit Highlights 2022 – 2025

## 2022

- < Film premiere of VOICES (the 2021 summer project)
- < Successful outreach holiday programme in Auckland
- < Three year funding approved for national outreach programme (JR McKenzie, Tindall)
- < New Operations Leader appointed
- < Received bequeathment from Neville Kay
- < Found a new national headquarters for Mixit HQ
- < Strategic Development Stakeholders Hui
- < Resumed providing free workshops for the Māngere Refugee Resettlement Centre (paused during Covid-19)

*"These were the best days I have ever had in New Zealand. In Mixit I can represent honourably, with integrity and real knowledge".*

*Mixit participant, 2022*

*"This has been the best experience of my life".*

*Mixit participant, 2023*



*"Lots of Mixers are now leaders within their communities. The impact ripples out from them – we can't get to everyone directly in Mixit, but we are helping to build amazing individuals that go on to impact others through their leadership".*

*Mark Easterbrook, Mixit Chair, 2025*

## 2023

- < Contracted Alumni as facilitators for the outreach work
- < Profile raising event at Te Pou Theatre, including a re-edited film and performance presentation

## 2024

- < Former Mixers step into key staffing roles, as Programme Leader and Outreach and Alumni Squad Leader, with the latter also shadowing the Director's role, supporting delivery of the core programme
- < Supported three young people to begin their tertiary academic journey through the Neville Kay Mixit Memorial Scholarship (this was the first year of the scholarship)
- < Active contribution and participation in national conferences, forums, meeting and events with community partners
- < Attended national forum led by JR McKenzie Trust and Todd Foundation
- < Held an immersive Leader's training retreat at Matapouri, Northland
- < Curated a Mixit Art Exhibition for public attendance
- < Alumni-led profile raising event at Grey Lynn, including a performance and family involvement
- < Invitation to showcase Mixit on a Podcast 'The Optimist Lunch'

*"I was 16 years old and new to New Zealand without any other family members, arriving during Covid, feeling really isolated".*

*"I got invited along to Mixit through Immigration NZ and thought there would be people like me there and that I could make friends. I was shy at the beginning and scared to put myself out there. It took a while".*

*"I felt that warmth and welcoming vibe of community and friendship. Mixit began to feel more like a family or a community. I was able to express myself more and when you can put your true self out there, Mixit sees that potential in you".*

*Mixit Youth Leader, 2025*

# Evaluation of Mixit's Impact

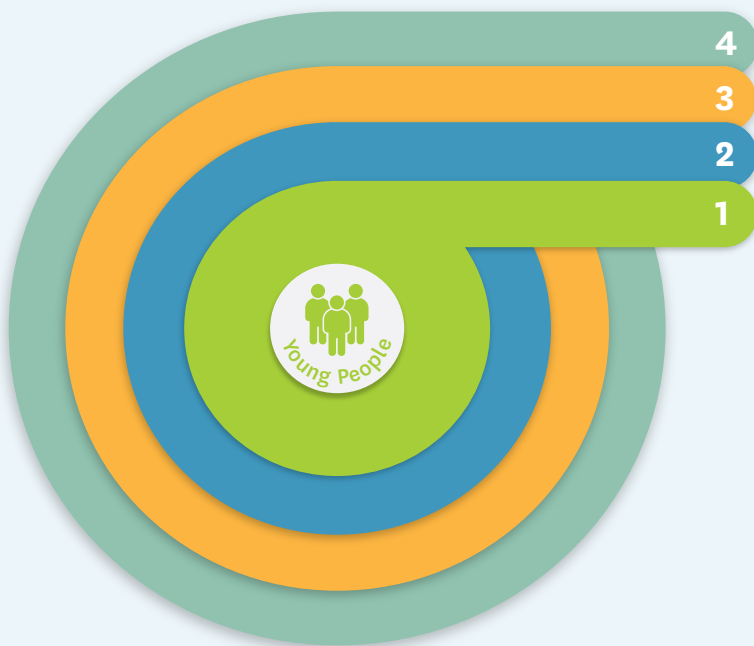
## 2022 – 2025

The evolution of the Mixit Core Programme over 20 years gives visibility to the depth and breadth of its impact. There is long-term engagement and progressive leadership pathways, which are transformative for individual young people and their families.

The practice of leadership at the centre of the Mixit model means that its impact has much deeper and wider ripples. Mixit is shaping a community of young leaders who are going out into the world with well developed leadership skills, intercultural fluency and a sense of citizenship and service.

In Auckland through the Core Programme and regionally through MAO, Mixit is catalysing stronger locally-led youth activity, building the capability of local providers to offer more engaging and impactful activities for young people, providing ongoing advice and support for these to become embedded, and growing a more connected former refugee youth support sector. Note that current funding for MAO ends in September 2025.

### Mixit Impact Model



#### 1) Impact for Young People

Via Mixit, young people feel included, connected, valued and uplifted. They gain confidence, skills and identity through creative expression and are better equipped to navigate their new context. Youth leadership skills are nurtured through leadership pathways into education and employment (including paid work opportunities for Alumni via Mixit's MAO Programme). Impact deepens through longer term engagement.

#### 2) Impact for Families

Mixit feels like a second home for Mixers and their families. Deep, long-lasting connections are built. Parents trust the opportunities Mixit creates for their young people. Mixit is a constant for young people as they navigate their transition to adulthood.

#### 3) Community Impact

Mixit empowers generations of young leaders as active participants and contributors to their community. MAO youth are connected to a network of former refugee youth across the motu. Audiences and communities value the intercultural creative expression and engagement. Mixit strengthens intercultural connection and understanding.

#### 4) Sector impact

Through its MAO Programme, Mixit is building local/regional capability to meet the needs of former refugee youth. MAO strengthens locally-led responses to enhance the wellbeing of local former refugee youth.



# Impact for Young People

## Confidence, Belonging and Inclusion

Mixit is a place for young people to feel seen and understood, to connect with others from shared backgrounds, share their culture and form lifelong friendships. It is a space of fun that helps lift the stress that young people often experience as they resettle in a new country, where they can take a break from school, family and community obligations.

*"A girl I engaged with arrived as a quota refugee, didn't speak English but had a high level of responsibility within the family for things like appointments, translating. She was so shy and withdrawn, but through Mixit she has transformed".*

Mixit team

Participation in the Mixit programme lifts the confidence of former refugee youth. It offers a safe environment for young people to explore who they are and to grow. English can be a key barrier for young people's confidence in other spaces, but Mixit creates a level playing field.

*"I have to assimilate in other spaces, but with Mixit you can be yourself".*

Mixit participant

Mixers feel that their contribution is valued. They can express themselves without judgement, enabled by Mixit's values, which are discussed with participants and embodied in the practices of staff, alumni and emerging youth leaders.

Mixit helps grow young people's confidence to a place where it can naturally extend into other spaces – home, school, work and community. There are many stories shared of people overcoming shyness, anxiety and low self-esteem through engaging with Mixit:

*"Those two girls were super shy before coming to Mixit, they didn't do drama, now they can see the potential they have".*

Mixit partner

*"Those that have been involved in Mixit are out there confident, achieving and open to society".*

Mixit partner

*"I loved doing the activities, getting out of my comfort zone, developing skills you need in real life, helping us navigate things".*

Mixit participant

Through participation in the MAO Programme, young people see that there are others like them. They feel more connected to each other, and that they are part of a larger connected network across New Zealand.

*"Once we integrate into regional communities by doing MAO workshops, young people could see there were other people they hadn't met before but who had similar experiences. Doing a workshop like Mixit is one way to connect them, building connections and bridges. In the first year of MAO, we realised the need, the disconnection that exists and it's now part of our mission to keep and build on those relationships".*

Mixit team

*"The workshop boosted me and my energy. It was fun, I met new people and socialised".*

Mixit MAO participant



## Identity and Voice through Creative Expression

The Mixit programme is founded on creativity and creative expression. Guest artists are “paragons in their field”, which ensures that young people are exposed to creative excellence. Offering sessions that look and feel professional shows young people that they matter and ensures that diverse young people engage meaningfully.

*"The social good of Mixit is really clear to me and it is obvious the impact it has on young people in terms of confidence and sociability... I've really watched them find themselves, find out who they are through creative work... It's really formative in their lives as teenagers - to find that sense of belonging with diverse and creative people is so exciting".*

Mixit team

Mixit is using storytelling to empower young people to use their own voice and express their identities. Through creativity, their horizons are stretched. They are supported to open up and share different parts of themselves.

*"I think Mixit is important because you can be, for example, a young Muslim woman and a joyful performer, and both sides are part of who you are and will be respected. Any place, any faith, any family situation, and any other parts of who they want to be. At Mixit, they are learning to navigate who they are versus who the world expects them to be".*

Mixit team

Alongside their peers, Mixers can become better equipped to walk between worlds – navigating the duality of their family culture and new community context.

*"The young people live with lots of different layers of responsibility that maybe they are not able to express in a school context or at home, and through the arts there are opportunities for them to do that".*

Mixit team

## Employment and Leadership Skills, Networks and Opportunities

Current and former participants describe how Mixit uplifts young people and is committed to giving ownership to them. Mixit sees their potential, provides tangible opportunities for them to learn and practice leadership skills, and brings their voice through all levels of the organisation. Mixit creates pathways for leadership potential to grow – from session planning to event curation, facilitation, public speaking, paid youth work and governance.

*"Mixit supports you in finding your voice. It gives you courage and confidence in yourself and your opinions. Through the youth leaders programme you learn many skills – time management, planning, public speaking, team work; valuable skills you can't learn from school or uni. It's rare to find a community like Mixit where young people can practice those skills".*

Mixit participant

*"Mixit is always training you for the next role. Each role helped me get to the next. Each step is a different kind of mentorship that keeps on going".*

Mixit participant

Young leaders develop skills that they can take into school, work and community, and Mixers believe that this has helped them to secure university places, apprenticeships and work.

*"Mixit helped me with my first job, where I had to be able to engage with people from different backgrounds and break those barriers. Leadership is a big difference that Mixit has made for me. Every job I have, I can show that I can lead".*

Mixit participant

*"Using the skills and creative thinking that Mixit instills is so transferable to any endeavour you wish to do. If I were to steer away into something else, I know the Mixit values will be there".*

Mixit participant

Mixers have access to advice, tools, opportunities and networks through the Mixit community. Young people who have been involved in Mixit become part of a connected ecosystem of support. They carry the relationships of Mixit with them into the rest of their lives, giving them access to advice, tools and networks. People in the Mixit ecosystem have brokered work opportunities, and the ongoing connection with guest artists gives young people contacts to pursue creative practices across the arts industry and other professional areas.

*"Mixit supported the connections and networks I have even now. I'm a builder by trade and Wendy connected me to someone who was involved in Mixit and needed an apprentice. It made the world smaller – the communities you meet keep widening so you always know someone and have people who can guide you".*

*Mixit participant*

Through the MAO Programme, Alumni Squad members are given opportunities for paid employment through Mixit, through which they can grow their work experience to take forward into other employment pathways.

*"In New Zealand, I learned if you have connections it's easier to get a job. Mixit has so many connections to support you with that".*

*Mixit participant*

## What does it mean to be a Mixit Youth Leader? (2025 Youth Leader Orientation Workshop)





# Impact for Families

## A Second Whānau and Support Network

The young people and whānau who have engaged in Mixit's Core Programme consistently described Mixit as a second home and extended family. Staff go above and beyond the role of youth workers, giving aroha and support in any aspect of life that young people need.

*"They've become our whānau in many ways. My son feels a huge sense of love for the kaupapa and the people... Knowing he had access to non-parent adults who he could talk to about whatever was happening to him was great. Wendy is like a second mother to lots of the young people".*

*Mixit participant*

Mixit is a long-term, stable presence and a place that people can return to whenever they need that sense of connection and support. Mixit's continuity and stability are key anchors in people's lives.

*"Mixit makes our family brighter".*

*Mixit parent*

*"I was involved actively in Mixit for four or five years. I've since started a family and career, but still I can go back when I need to. It is like going home".*

*Mixit participant*

*"We've been involved with Mixit for 10+ years, and some have been longer. There is a bond, trust. It's a small big family, with aunts and uncles and cousins all over".*

*Mixit parent*

## Supporting the Resettlement Process for Families

*"Through Mixit, I've watched my family's world expand. We've got connections outside of our own isolated bubble".*

*Mixit parent*

The sense of deep connection that Mixit builds includes proactive engagement of parents and wider family members. This is vital for families to develop initial trust in Mixit, where the idea of creative engagement or gender mixing can sometimes be challenging. Mixit navigates these issues incredibly well, through being transparent, inviting families in and creating the safety and pastoral care for them to trust in the Mixit process as part of their own journey of adaptation into a new cultural context.

*"Parents can trust that Mixit is going to hold their child in a way that they feel comfortable with and that it's going to allow their child to socialise and meet others in a way that they can trust because there's been face to face connection".*

*Mixit team*

*"I like the community and sense of belonging that I get from Mixit. When you're new in a country it is hard to find a community or have that feeling of belonging. You're starting life from the bottom and want to build it, so having a community is important in that".*

*Mixit participant*



# Community Impact

## Service and Citizenship

The belief in young people's leadership potential, and culture of reciprocity and community that Mixit fosters, means that young people who come through the Core Programme speak consistently of citizenship, responsibility and service. They develop a strong desire to give back and positively impact their communities – as leaders, mentors and even donors. The leadership exchange is intergenerational between Mixers, Youth Leaders, Alumni, staff, guest artists and trustees.

*"... Being a youth leader gives me a space to look out for other young people and see their journeys. That has been really fulfilling. Mixit has helped me and I want to do the same thing with other young people as much as I can. I can sit and talk and listen if they don't have anyone, or offer friendship or any way I can help. I can see our participants have so much potential and it is fulfilling to see them going from being shy to confident. That is so beautiful and I want to have a small role in that"*

Mixit Youth Leader

*"The longer you stay involved, the more you benefit... The leadership I learned is a type that is very rare – being able to allow others to lead, leading from the back, encouraging others to take a step forward without being in the light yourself; becoming a good father, a good community member and citizen, a general good human being".*

Mixit Alumni

The MAO Programme stems from this sense of service, where Alumni are intrinsically motivated to take on the role of tuakana – connecting with and positively influencing young people newly arriving in other regions.

## Community Building and Intercultural Connection

As noted, Mixit is building a community of connected youth and young adults who have moved through its programmes and are staying in relationship with one another. The MAO Programme is also supporting the start of this community building regionally.

*"They don't have activities for refugee background youth in other regions. Us going there teaches them, leaves them with connection and inspiration to carry on and build a community – and Mixit will continue to support them".*

Mixit team

Under the Core Programme in particular, Mixit offers a unique opportunity for intercultural collaboration and creative output that draws from a cultural diversity not typically enabled in other creative spaces. Guest artists and Mixers are empowered to bring their cultural selves and the outcome is a unique telling of the rich stories of New Zealand and its communities. Mixit builds empathy and cross-cultural understanding, particularly amongst young people but also for audiences of its Summer Project.

*"Mixit is a really beautiful, fertile collaboration across cultures and across art forms".*

Mixit partner

*"This show was captivating and moving and harnesses the struggles that immigrants endure when pursuing their dreams in Aotearoa".*

Audience comment, I AM Summer Report

New Zealand's resettlement policy concentrates nationalities in specific regional resettlement centres – for example, Afghans in Ashburton, Syrians in Dunedin and Congolese in Invercargill. The MAO Programme enables young people to connect with other youth within their local and cultural communities, and with other diverse former refugee youth across the country through the Mixit ecosystem. The Alumni facilitators are a key conduit for this.

*"It's important that our youth know that it's not only Afghans that are in their situation. It's good to put a multicultural face to it as it isn't very diverse here".*

Mixit partner

## Sector Impact / Models of Practice

### Increased Reach and Strengthened Engagement for Local Provider

Partnering with Mixit through the MAO Programme offers local providers a big drawcard to increase their reach and lift levels of youth participation. Attendance at Mixit MAO sessions is high, and providers have the opportunity to sustain that high engagement by continuing to use Mixit's approaches and resources, which are gifted to them for ongoing use.

*"Mixit has a lot of value to offer, especially to the teenagers that I work with who are new to New Zealand, trying to settle and feel like they can fit in. I probably only had 25 in my youth group last year and now I'm up to about 60 young people".*

*Mixit partner*

*"We have offered youth activities where youth didn't want to participate. We approached Mixit to come and that collaboration has been really positive – all the youth wanted to participate because what Mixit offers is more fun and engaging; they have a speciality to engage youth. We need that expertise in our region, we need their support".*

*Mixit partner*



### Increased Local/Regional Capacity and Capability

Through the MAO programme, Mixit has begun developing a model for building local capacity and capability to engage former refugee youth and build more self-sustaining communities of support. Mixit staff and Alumni act as role models, sharing tools, ideas and resources. Peer support is ongoing, with advice provided throughout the year as needed.

*"We're there to instill a taste, to give local providers skills and games and activities they can use in their own communities and organisations. We give them something super tangible that can be applied to any other youth activity or event. It's not just a drop and go either – we are there to help with ongoing phone calls, messages".*

*Mixit team*

*"Mixit is sharing the model for people to own and make their own".*

*Mixit team*

*"There is definitely a gap in Invercargill for former refugee youth - to have Mixit come in is brilliant. We would love to see an annual visit in the school holidays".*

*Mixit partner*

One participant from a MAO session in Christchurch subsequently became a Mixit volunteer and has supported the delivery of other MAO sessions in Ashburton. This connection has continued without Mixit, and she continues to support local provider Safer Mid-Canterbury to design and run local youth projects and facilitate youth input into their design.

### Emerging Global Reach

Mixit has a respected reputation internationally. Programmes of Mixit's type and longevity are rarely sustained overseas, and the integrated leadership pathways that Mixit has created are acknowledged by providers in other countries as an international model of best practice.

Mixit has recently been invited to develop a global creative collaboration project with artists and community organisations based in Manchester, UK. The project works with young people with parallel backgrounds to those at Mixit, sharing similar life experiences of relocating as children and growing up in urban centres in unfamiliar countries. Development of this project is underway.



# Opportunities for Development

Mixit's Core Programme is well established. It has a clear identity and model of practice, with embedded succession pathways to ensure the organisation's future leadership and continue its commitment to being authentically youth-led.

Mixit's MAO Programme is now coming to the end of a three-year pilot phase, with significant funding uncertainty. There is clear evidence of ongoing need for a youth offering like Mixit across New Zealand's resettlement centres, and evidence that the MAO Programme has begun to create an ecosystem with lots of potential to be developed and embedded.

This evaluation has highlighted several priority spaces where Mixit has potential to evolve, strengthen or expand, as resourcing allows – recognising that the community sector is currently experiencing widespread funding constraint.

## Reach and Scale

Mixit's model is highly impactful for young people and their whānau. Many interviewees had aspirations for Mixit to reach more young people. Delivering more youth development and leadership opportunities via schools is one potential avenue. Continuing and expanding the MAO Programme to increase its reach is another key opportunity. As more families are resettled outside of the Auckland region, there will be a growing need for better youth support infrastructure and access to programmes and approaches like Mixit.

Regional providers suggested that Mixit experiment with offering in-person training of youth leaders and potentially online training of youth and social workers to support former refugee and migrant youth, and provision of peer support and coaching.

Many interviewees believe that Mixit has the potential to be a global influencer, connecting with former refugee youth internationally.

*"We want to grow our international collaborations – for young people to have connections across diasporic refugee-background communities globally".*

*Mixit team*

## Partnerships - Support for Young People and Staff

The depth of Mixit's engagement with young people can sometimes place a high demand on staff to provide wrap-around support. There are likely to be cases where the scope of support needed by a young person and/or their whānau is more than Mixit is equipped to provide, and where partnerships with other providers are essential. Strengthening these pathways proactively is a key opportunity.

Effective partnerships would provide an opportunity for Mixit to develop a more formal model of peer support and external supervision for staff, which would support their wellbeing and keep them safe in their youth work practice.

Mixit could consider opportunities for more formal training for staff and Alumni in particular, to enhance their professional development and formalise their lived and practice-based experience as pastoral care mentors and youth workers.

*"If someone has been a participant of Mixit and become a staff member or paid contractor, one of the challenges and opportunities for Mixit is to allow them to grow and change within the organisation. They would benefit from that supervision role where somebody on the outside can offer another voice and support them to reflect on their new roles, to try new things and bring through their [lived] experience".*

*Mixit partner*

## Succession

With its scaffolded youth leadership pathway, a foundation for long-term succession planning has been well considered and implemented, but it still needs time to become embedded. Founding Director Wendy Preston is working proactively to bring forward Outreach Leader Kaviesha Abeysinghe-Perera into the organisational leadership role. In addition, it is important that Mixit ensures Wendy's strategic thinking role, as well as her creative and global networks, are distributed as widely across the organisation as possible.

*"We have long held the vision that young people at the heart of the project would one day be leading it. This is blossoming into our reality and defining our future".*

*Mixit team*

*"We've developed an incredible team with people who are Mixers at the helm, and we're now watching that flourish. We need to keep the kaupapa really solid"*

*Mixit team*

## Whānau Engagement

Mixit has an inclusive approach that engages family members through events, family days and performance showcases. Interviewees suggested further scope for Mixit to engage parents and whānau, to support their resettlement and build stronger relationships and connections between wider family members. Having a whānau coordinator role or setting up a form of buddy system are options.

## MAO Programme Development

The MAO Programme pilot has generated a lot of learning for Mixit as challenges have been encountered and navigated.

Finding regional communities and partners with sufficient readiness to participate has been difficult, due to a lack of infrastructure and constantly changing personnel.

*"Without continuity to hold the practice that we've offered [in the regions], it can run through fingers. It's not fair on young people for us to come soaring in, give them an experience that tilts their world and then when we go there is no stability to keep it going".*

Mixit team

*"[Our Outreach Project has] meant getting to see, up close, how chronically underfunded youth and community-building work is across Aotearoa, especially for former refugee and migrant communities".*

Mixit team

*"Trying to build social cohesion between groups takes time. We need more sustainable collaboration to support that".*

Mixit team

Mixit has tried to overcome this by focusing efforts on providers that have been most receptive and where staff have been more consistent. Moving forward, resourcing more time up front to build relationships and lay the foundations for more engaged local leadership would be helpful.

Another key challenge with the MAO approach is the funding insecurity. As with most pilots, time is needed to embed learning and refine the approach, which is difficult with a three-year funding horizon. To take the project forward, it is likely that Mixit will need to consider focusing on regional funding opportunities with funders that prioritise social inclusion and outcomes for former refugee communities.

*"I wish we could be all over the country upskilling youth workers. It's started but it's up against a lot of challenges – most are financial".*

Mixit team

*"It would be a good thing for Mixit to come back every year [to Invercargill], for this to be an annual thing with each new intake and with us [former refugee youth who have done the regional workshops before]. They could help us to build our community here, train us to carry on with the group".*

Mixit MAO participant

The programme's delivery cost is impacted by the up-front travel needed for Mixit to run workshops and build face-to-face connections with local providers. Over time, the need for travel may diminish and Mixit could move its focus to providing creative training, mentoring and peer support for leaders of local activations, including young people. More online modes of engagement may also be an option to explore. Both would still provide scope for delivery by Mixit Alumni, which is an important part of the MAO model and impact.

## Financial Sustainability

As with all non-profits, financial sustainability is a key challenge. Mixit is working proactively to engage with private and corporate philanthropy and has established the Friends of Mixit programme to support direct giving. Finding avenues for Alumni to engage with prospective philanthropists may help to support the ongoing success of its direct giving approach. Being more visible to prospective donors/funders was raised by interviewees as a key priority.

Opportunities for income generation from Mixit's tools and creative output may be another avenue to explore, for example licensing resources for use by other youth providers or working with Alumni to provide corporate events or advisory services.



# Conclusion

From 2022 to 2025 Mixit has gone from strength to strength, including bringing Alumni into staff roles and sharing its model of practice successfully around the country. Implications from this impact report are as follows.

- < In the thin landscape of support for former refugee youth in New Zealand and their families, the work that Mixit is doing is critical and high impact.

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- < Mixit meets with every new refugee intake and in these last three years has been able to follow up with some former refugee youth outside of Auckland through the MAO Programme. Continuing this work is strongly desired by young people and the youth sector in resettlement regions.

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- < Mixit would like to connect more with the families of young people and refer them to appropriate supports, as funding and training allows.

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- < As well as continuing its Core Programme and outreach work, there is potential for Mixit to provide more training for youth workers and schools nationally to support former refugee youth.

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- < Connecting with former refugee youth internationally and being a global influencer holds promise for Mixit, in terms of developing its model, its international connections and funding sources.

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- < Diversifying and growing funding sources is the priority going forward. Care will be needed to nurture the key ingredients of Mixit's success in this process - inspired shared leadership, in-built growth pathways for young people, its focus on arts, fun and connection, and being led by the young people who are the heart and soul of Mixit.



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See [www.mixit.co.nz/mixit-its-all-of-us](http://www.mixit.co.nz/mixit-its-all-of-us)

# Appendix One: Interviewees

Interviewee	Relationship to Mixit
1. Mohammad Al-Jamal	Mixit Alumni
2. Graciano Aganze	Mixit Alumni
3. Mahwash Jalal	MAO Programme Volunteer
4. Arezo Nazari	Mixit Youth Leader
5. Shahram Qasimi	Mixit Youth Leader
6. Malika Krishnamurthy	Mixer Parent
7. Kaltam Hassan Yaya	Mixer Parent
8. Marcelino Padayachee	Mixer Parent / Van Driver
9. Younis Ahmat Abdallah	Mixit Alumni
10. Trish Gribben	Friend of Mixit (Donor)
11. Faith Barker	Former staff member, Refugees as Survivors NZ
12. Liaquat Changezi	Refugee Orientation Centre Hamilton
13. Elizabeth Ferguson	Safer Mid-Canterbury Ashburton
14. Deborah and Miracle Vivian Quinones Angulo and Michelle McGee	Invercargill workshop participants 2024/2025 Red Cross Invercargill
15. Tahi Mapp-Borren	Guest Artist / Former Staff
16. Ahi Karunaharan	Guest Artist
17. Mark Easterbrook	Chair of Mixit Board
18. Oscar Arnold	Mixit Alumni / Trustee
19. Fardowsa Mohammad	Mixit Alumni / Trustee
20. Izadine Ahmat Abdallah	Mixit Alumni / Staff
21. Kaviesha Abesyinghe-Perera	Mixit Alumni / Staff
22. Wendy Preston	Co-founder/Director



# Appendix One: Reflection Workshop Attendees

Mixit Participants	Alata Culpan Basma Omar
Mixit Youth Leaders	Jake Easterbrook Rana Dowlaty Rivindee Udugala
Mixit Alumni	Laya Rasooli Rana Arif Sajal Taneja Younis Ahmat Abdallah
Board	Susan Davis Mark Easterbrook Mike Becroft
Staff	Kaye Reihana Izadine Ahmat Abdallah Kaviesha Abeysinghe-Perera Kauthar Eckstein Wendy Preston
Artists	Tawanda Manyimo
Families	Dulani Abeysinghe
Evaluators (Centre for Social Impact)	Kat Dawnier Rachael Trotman



*"Mixit makes me feel important, valued,  
uplifted, surrounded by care to become  
a stronger person and more able to move  
through the world"*

*Mixit Alumni*









# Thank you.

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