

TE MANA AROTAKE | OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR-GENERAL

# MĀORI PERSPECTIVES ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

FINAL REPORT

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Public accountability is a cornerstone of our system of government. It is about how public organisations demonstrate to Parliament and the public their competence, reliability, and honesty in their use of public money and other public resources. It is fundamental to the role of the Office of the Auditor-General (*the Office*).<sup>1</sup>
2. This research looks specifically at Māori perspectives on public accountability and asks, “*What views do Māori have about effective public accountability?*” Through this study, the Office is seeking to understand:
  - a. What good public accountability means and looks like to Māori.
  - b. The implications these views might have for the future of public accountability.
3. The report shares the voices and views of 35 Māori participants who engaged in wānanga and interviews during January – April 2022. Semi-structured discussions explored notions of trust and confidence as the foundation for accountability, and the implications for public accountability.
4. Participants represented a range of Māori voices, including iwi, hapū, whānau, public servants, professionals, academics and recipients of public services. All views were shaped strongly by cultural identity and participants’ experiences as Māori in, and with, the public sector.
5. Four key ideas emerged from the discussions with participants about *trust and confidence*:
  - i. Trust is relational.
  - ii. Trust is reciprocal.
  - iii. Tikanga builds trust and confidence.
  - iv. The power imbalance thwarts trust.
6. Participants’ perspectives on *public accountability* are discussed through four themes:
  - i. Multiple lines of accountability.
  - ii. Accountability and money.
  - iii. Māori voice in the monitoring system.
  - iv. Consequences and accountability.
7. These themes and key ideas are the foundation for a discussion towards the end of the report on what the study may mean for the public sector and the Office of the Auditor-General. The discussion on implications is framed around issues of: power and equity; auditing for Māori outcomes; increasing capacity and capability to monitor Māori outcomes; and building connections with Māori.

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<sup>1</sup> Office of the Auditor-General. *Request for Proposal to Undertake Research on Māori Perspectives on Public Accountability*. Issued 13/07/2021. P 3.

## INTRODUCTION

The Office of the Auditor-General (the Office) has committed to a programme of research focused on the future of public accountability in New Zealand. As a cornerstone of our system of government, public accountability is foundational to building and maintaining public trust and confidence in public services. The Office's research programme aims to identify areas for improvement in the current system of public accountability in order to support public organisations to better demonstrate to Parliament and the public their competence, reliability and honesty in the use of public funds and resources.<sup>2</sup>

The Office is concerned that previous research suggests that Māori have low levels of trust in the public sector.<sup>3</sup> The current study explores this issue and looks specifically at Māori perspectives on trust and confidence in relation to public accountability.

## BACKGROUND

In 1998, the Office published a report on how public sector organisations could deliver effective outputs for Māori<sup>4</sup>. The report set expectations for public organisations to involve Māori and Māori perspectives in strategic planning, policy advice, service delivery, human resource management, organisational structure, and the working environment. The intention was to improve public sector accountability for Māori and, ultimately, outcomes for Māori.

More than 20 years later, the extent to which the public sector has met these expectations is still unclear. A 2018 report by Te Arawhiti | Office for Māori Crown Relations indicated that many Māori feel that the public sector is failing them and that the Crown has not fulfilled its obligation under Te Tiriti o Waitangi to meaningfully partner with Māori.<sup>5</sup>

The Public Service Act (2020) recognises that the public service has a significant role to play in improving outcomes for Māori and supporting the Crown to meet its responsibilities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The Act expects that the Public Service will develop and maintain its own capability to engage with Māori and understand Māori perspectives and actively seek greater involvement of Māori in the Public Sector. The Act also makes explicit that Public Service leaders and the Public Service Commissioner are accountable for these responsibilities.<sup>6</sup>

The 2019 Waitangi Tribunal report into the WAI 2575 claim on health services recommended that the Crown commit to reviewing and strengthening accountability mechanisms and processes in the

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<sup>2</sup> Office of the Auditor-General, *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission. 26 January 2022. *Kiwis Count* <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/our-work/kiwis-count/>

<sup>4</sup> Office of the Auditor-General New Zealand. *Third report for 1998. Part 4: Delivering effective outputs for Māori.* [www.oag.parliament.nz/1998/3rd-report-1998/part4.htm](http://www.oag.parliament.nz/1998/3rd-report-1998/part4.htm)

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Justice. 2018. *Crown/Māori Relations Summary of Submissions.* [www.tearawhiti.govt.nz/assets/Maori-Crown-Relations-Roopu/3ca45b2b2b/Final-Submissions-Summary-Report.pdf](http://www.tearawhiti.govt.nz/assets/Maori-Crown-Relations-Roopu/3ca45b2b2b/Final-Submissions-Summary-Report.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Public Service Commission. (2021). *Te Whakapakari i te Hononga i Waenga i te Māori me te Karauna | Strengthening the Māori Crown relationship.* <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/assets/SSC-Site-Assets/SAPG/Public-Service-Reform/Factsheet-3.pdf>

primary health care sector that impact upon Māori. The report signals a wider issue in the public sector, “that public information on the effectiveness of Government policies and programmes is insufficient, denying Māori communities any real opportunity to monitor the Crown’s performance”.<sup>7</sup>

The Office is looking to consider the public sector’s settlement obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi more specifically, in the context of public sector performance and accountability. To do this, the Office has prioritised the development of a Māori strategy aimed at building internal capability and improving the relevance of its discretionary work to Māori. Also, as part of this preparatory work, the Office has identified a need to understand what effective accountability looks like to Māori, and how the public sector can better demonstrate its competence, reliability, and honesty to Māori communities.

## PROJECT SCOPE

This study seeks to gather views of Māori regarding how the public sector can be more accountable. This extends to identifying expectations Māori have in engaging in relationships with the public sector and the information that Māori seek about accountability. The study does not seek to define a single authoritative “Māori” view on public accountability – we should expect that Māori hold as many diverse views as any other group.

In essence, the study is intended to help the Auditor-General to understand the full range of views that Māori hold on accountability as it applies to public organisations, and what this might mean for the work of the Office. Accountability as it applies to non-public organisations (e.g., iwi, public and private companies) is beyond the scope of this study.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary research question for this project was: “*What views do Māori have about effective public accountability?*”

At the heart of public accountability is *trust and confidence* in the public sector. Therefore, in seeking to respond to this research question, participants were specifically asked about their views on trust and confidence – what trust means, how trust and confidence is increased or undermined, and the implications for public accountability.

These views have been analysed to understand what good public accountability looks like to Māori, what implications these views may have on the future of accountability and what this could mean for the public sector and the work of the Office of the Auditor-General.

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<sup>7</sup> Waitangi Tribunal. 2019. *Hauora: Report on Stage One of the Health Services and Outcomes Kaupapa Inquiry*. Legislation Direct. P 64.

## METHODOLOGY

Too often, Māori have not benefitted from research by non-Māori organisations. The impacts of western forms of knowledge and research have even been detrimental to indigenous peoples, including Māori, and, for some, this has led toward a rejection of ‘all theory and all research’. Kaupapa Māori-based research methodology aims to gain back trust through implementing ‘culturally safe’ practices undertaken by Māori researchers grounded in their cultural identity and guided by tikanga (cultural protocols).

Throughout this project, Haemata has held a responsibility both to the Office and to the research participants to uphold principles of cultural safety, integrity, trust, and respect — principles inherent to any Māori-centred research approach. A Māori-centred research design approach also involves ensuring a high level of Māori participation in all aspects of the research methodology, including in key roles such as researchers, advisors, participants, data analysts, report writers and quality assurers. In a Māori-centred research approach, te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori are “givens”.

In this study, kaupapa Māori research principles, as described by Dr Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012)<sup>8</sup> have guided the research process, alongside Haemata’s own principles-based approach. These principles are:

- Aroha ki te tangata (a respect for people).
- Kanohi kitea (the seen face; that is, present yourself to people face-to-face).
- Titiro, whakarongo, kōrero (look, listen, speak).
- Manaaki i te tangata (share and host people, be generous).
- Kia tūpato (be cautious).
- Kāua e takahi i te mana o te tangata (do not trample over the mana of the people).
- Kāua e mahaki (do not flaunt your knowledge).
- Mā te Māori (there must be benefits for Māori in undertaking this project).
- Kia ngakau pono, kia mākohakoha, kia manawanui, (work with integrity, an open-mind and commitment).

These principles have underpinned our work throughout this study and have guided our discussion of the findings.

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<sup>8</sup> Smith, L.T. (1999). *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Zed Books, New York, and Otago University Press, Dunedin.

## Overview of the Approach

The study involved three phases: Ngao Pae (Planning and Establishing Project), Ngao Tū (Data Gathering and Emerging Findings) and Ngao Matariki (Data Analysis and Key Findings).

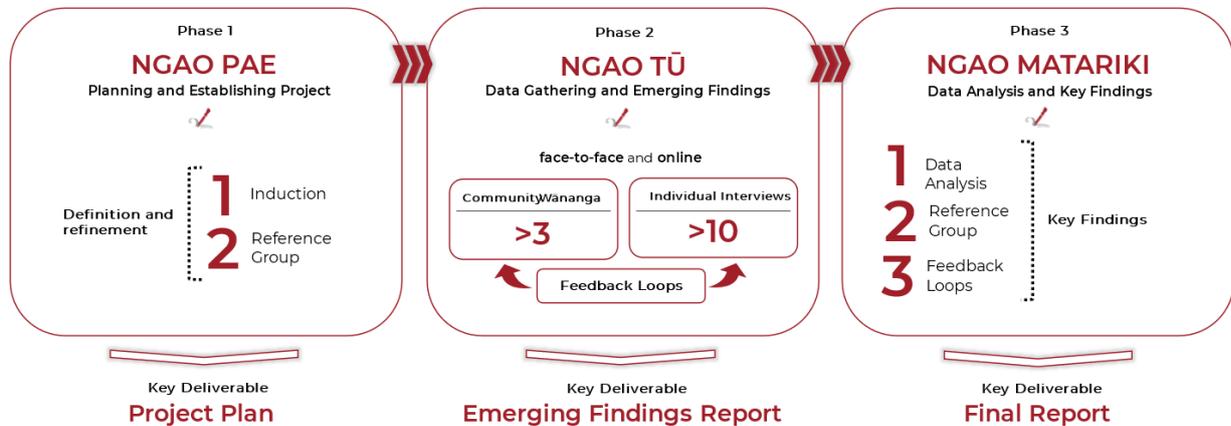


Figure 1: Three-phased approach to the research.

### Te Ohu Whāiti

Te Ohu Whāiti was established during the planning phase of the project as a reference group to provide oversight and ongoing guidance to the project team. Te Ohu Whāiti was an important verification mechanism in the methodology, to substantiate the methodology and interpretation of the findings.

Members of Te Ohu Whāiti included:

- Ria Earp (Māori community, public sector).
- Dr Mere Skerrett (Māori community, academic).
- Luke Crawford (Māori community, kaumātua).
- Leeanne McAviney (Assistant Auditor-General, Sector Performance, Office of the Auditor-General).
- Greg Schollum (Deputy Controller and Auditor-General, Office of the Auditor-General).

Te Ohu Whāiti meetings were attended and facilitated by members of the Haemata research team, with the lead researcher facilitating the meetings.

The role of Te Ohu Whāiti as defined in the Terms of Reference included contributing to any matter relating to the scope of the research, ethical guidelines, research design, methodology, data analysis and implications.

### Fieldwork

The fieldwork phase of the study, Ngao Tū, utilised two key data gathering approaches – wānanga and interviews. Given the restrictions of undertaking the study in a COVID-19 environment, online

platforms (namely Zoom and Microsoft Teams) were the primary channels of connection with participants and communities.

Each wānanga was supported by a video recording of the Auditor-General and Deputy Auditor-General discussing the role of the Office. A presentation with guiding questions and discussion points also supported the delivery of wānanga. Because online wānanga were necessarily more intensive than may have otherwise been possible in a face-to-face setting, Jamboards<sup>9</sup> (interactive digital whiteboards) were utilised as a data gathering tool, allowing participants who wanted more time to think through their responses, or who preferred to contribute ideas in written form, to do so. This maintained our commitment to a kaupapa Māori research approach by respecting the right of participants to determine how they want to engage, and providing multiple options for that engagement. Access to the Jamboards was available post-wānanga for those participants who wanted to continue contributing views after the face-to-face discussion, and some took up that opportunity.

Interviews took a semi-structured format and were used to delve deeply into an interviewee's perspectives as well as 'test' ideas and issues emerging from wānanga.

A semi-structured approach to the fieldwork was purposely applied to enable participants the ability to shape the direction of the discussion, and to share what was most important to them. This contrasts with other more structured research approaches (e.g., surveys and structured interviews) which position the control in the hands of the researcher and deny participants the opportunity to influence the research and have their true voices heard. Arguably, such approaches are also contrary to Māori-centred research principles.

### Wānanga as a Research Approach

Wānanga as a research approach to data gathering provides a format for open and honest discussion embedded in Māori cultural practices. Central to wānanga are values of whanaungatanga (relationships), mihi (acknowledgements), discussion (kōrero), and ako (learning). Whare wānanga (universities or places of higher learning) as we know them today are derived from this cultural mechanism for discussion and learning. But as Nēpia and Rangimārie Mahuika offer, 'wānanga are much more than just schools of instruction'.<sup>10</sup> Wānanga are a dynamic living tradition that has developed across generations.

Prevalent in our *pūrākau* (cultural narratives), there are several different claims of the 'first-ever wānanga'. One account identifies *Rangiātea* as the first wānanga – 'a building in the 12th heaven where the baskets of knowledge were suspended and gifted to Tāne'. Another account describes the first wānanga as an event held by the children of *Ranginui* (Sky father) and *Papatūānuku* (Earth mother). Trapped in the darkness of their parents' embrace, the offspring of Ranginui and Papatūānuku gathered to debate a solution that culminated in the first whānau (family) community governance meeting in the Māori world and the separation of the earth from the sky.<sup>11</sup> *Mātangireia* is recognised as the original 'Whare Wānanga' (place of learning and wānanga), and the foundation

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<sup>9</sup> Google Workspace. n.d. *Jamboard*. [www.workspace.google.com/products/jamboard](https://www.workspace.google.com/products/jamboard)

<sup>10</sup> Mahuika, N., Mahuika, R. (2020). *Wānanga as a Research Methodology*. Pp 1-2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

from which subsequent traditional whare wānanga were built, and from whence came all knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

In a contemporary sense, the practice of wānanga involves engaging in active and collective thinking and problem solving to create new understanding and knowledge.

## Participants

In total, 69 individuals were invited to participate in the study of which nearly 50% (35) were available and contributed to the findings.

Three separate wānanga were convened, each with a different group of key stakeholders:

Wānanga 1 — Māori public servants in government agencies recently audited by the Office of the Auditor-General.

Wānanga 2 — Māori service providers and Iwi who deal with government contracts and have had experience being audited by the Office.

Wānanga 3 — Whānau members who interact with public services directly or indirectly.

With the support of Te Ohu Whāiti, ten individuals who have a keen interest in public accountability were identified as interviewees. Individuals approached for interviews included:

- Members of organisations that the Office audits (e.g., local government, government departments).
- Members of the accountability system (e.g., auditors).
- Commentators on public sector accountability (e.g., academics, iwi chairs).
- Māori community representatives (e.g., iwi and hapū leaders, whānau, rangatahi).

**Table 1 Number of participants by type of participation**

Type of participation	# Invitees	# Participants
Interview	13	10
Wānanga 1: Public servants	23	11
Wānanga 2: Māori service providers and iwi	17	6
Wānanga 3: Whānau and service users	16	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>35</b>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

## Feedback Loops

Feedback loops were incorporated into the fieldwork process as a further verification and validation mechanism. All participants received a draft copy of the notes for the wānanga or interview that they participated in, with an invitation to correct, amend, clarify or add to any of the points captured. The intention of building this step into the data gathering process is to ensure that participants are comfortable with the way in which their data is captured and interpreted, and that the interpretation is a true, fair, and accurate representation of their views.

## FINDINGS

This section of the report responds to the key research question by exploring notions of trust and confidence and accountability as defined and discussed by participants in the study. It provides an analysis of the data sourced through interviews with ten individuals and three wānanga with key target groups – public sector employees, iwi and service providers, and whānau and service users. It is important to acknowledge that all participants in this study came to the discussion with multiple perspectives. Despite any research approach that prefers to segment participants into representative groups in an attempt to gather a range of potentially disparate perspectives, participants in this study presented first and foremost as Māori — members of iwi, hapū and whānau. In addition, they also represented particular target groups such as public sector employees, service providers, or service users. Sharing this cultural worldview has meant that similar fundamental issues and themes were evident in all interviews and wānanga. These findings are presented as a discussion of those key themes and issues.

### Trust and Confidence

The *Kiwis Count* survey measuring the trust and confidence of New Zealanders in the public service has been undertaken annually since 2012.<sup>13</sup> Results of the survey consistently suggest that Māori have lower levels of trust in the public sector compared to other ethnic groups. This study provided the opportunity to delve into why this may be the case. Participants were asked firstly to define trust at a personal level — a personal definition of trust and then, at a cultural level — a Māori view of trust.

*He aha tēnei mea, te “trust”? What is your personal definition of trust? What are three key words you would use to describe trust?*

*What would be involved in a Māori definition of trust and confidence? What are our tikanga, mātāpono, or concepts that describe or guide trust and confidence? What are our kōrero tuku iho?*

In exploring these questions, participants were also asked to think about what builds trust or gives them confidence in others and what this means for the public sector. These broad questions opened opportunities to inquire into trust from different angles and at different levels.

Four key ideas emerged from these discussions about trust and confidence:

1. Trust is relational.
2. Trust is reciprocal.
3. Tikanga builds trust and confidence.
4. The power imbalance thwarts trust.

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<sup>13</sup> Te Kawa Mataaho | Public Service Commission, *op. cit.*

Participants indicated that, in the current environment, trust in the public sector is fragile and there was concern that the public sector was not focusing enough on this as a serious risk. They also felt that without significant effort to increase trust, more Māori will feel alienated from the public sector.

*“...the opposite of trust is alienation, not mistrust, and seeing that the State is not even relevant to you anymore...”*

## 1. Trust is Relational

*“Trust is built on the relationship rather than the organisation.”*

Typically, participants described trust as relational – personal, interpersonal and built on sound relationships. While participants may have trust and confidence in individuals within an organisation, this does not translate to having trust and confidence in the organisation itself. In fact, most participants could not name any public organisation that holds their trust despite having good relationships with individuals and actively seeking out staff members in whom they can have confidence. Trust, therefore, is built with the people inside an organisation rather than the organisation itself.

This poses an issue for the public sector. For trust to increase, the public sector (and individuals within) needs to do better at forming relationships with Māori that are tikanga-based, sustainable and which, by and large, involve *kanohi kitea*.<sup>14</sup> Participants felt that the public sector is increasingly disconnected from the people it is designed to serve. Efforts to increase efficiencies through greater use of technology are seen as devaluing human connection and relationships. The public sector is, therefore, perceived as becoming more distant. Participants said that Māori want to engage with people in the public sector, rather than interact with a system.

However, participants were also quick to point out that the capabilities of the people in the public sector also matter, particularly the capabilities of those who are delivering services and communicating with the public. The way relationships are formed impacts directly, positively or negatively, on trust and confidence. So, it is vital that individuals within organisations can build good relationships with Māori. This has widespread implications across the public sector at many levels as it impacts on how a service or message is received by Māori. For example, the person fronting a message plays a significant part in whether that message is: a) listened to, b) understood, and c) accepted.

Participants also said that they want leaders to front messages. They want to know who the leaders are, why they should be trusted, and whether they are open to being questioned. It is helpful if the leaders are Māori, but many participants were comfortable with non-Māori fronting public sector messages and initiatives – “as long as we can trust them”. This means that building positive relationships by relating at a very personal level is fundamental and impacts on whether public services will be well received by a Māori audience.

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<sup>14</sup> *Kanohi kitea* - being seen, having a physical presence.

Generally, participants felt strongly that the ability to pronounce Māori words correctly is essential. In fact, many identified that poor pronunciation, with little observable effort toward correct pronunciation, significantly affects whether they even heard a message, let alone understood it. This requires the public sector to be genuine in its attempts to build its capability, to humble itself and to be honest in its commitment to building relationships with Māori. Disingenuity quickly erodes the potential for trust and confidence to be built.

Many participants also identified the 3-year government cycle as a fundamental challenge to building trust. Too many changes, too many new initiatives and a lack of institutional knowledge across the public sector as a result of the 3-year cycle undermine trust and confidence. Participants spoke about the public sector having a “short memory” and an inability to learn from past experiences, to recognise and respond appropriately to iwi and Māori who do not work in 3-year cycles. Continually dealing with the same issues over decades because of short-term relationships and inconsistent responses, only serves to erode trust and confidence of Māori in the public sector. To address this, public sector entities need to be cognisant of their own histories and previous interactions with Māori – both positive and negative. Building their understanding of the past and how it affects the present and the future is necessary to building trusted relationships in order to move forward.

*“The Crown does not have a good memory. Agencies don’t have memory – which stops them from being a good Tiriti partner. Iwi stay the same.”*

*“I trust the person and that they have my best interest at heart and will be proactive and act with empathy.”*

*“I don’t trust CEOs of government agencies... you want trust, you gotta earn it, front up.”*

*“Also, pronunciation is important, and this can be a big red flag for Māori.”*

*“As a public organisation I do not trust the [name of organisation] - the people I do trust in there are not the ones calling the shots.”*

*“No-one has trust with a faceless bureaucracy – it [trust] is a very human scale, so it needs to be the relationships we have at an individual level that create the cumulative effect of collective trust.”*

*“Iwi are consistently frustrated when people change and there is no continuity. People can change but you still maintain continuity. There are some simple respectful steps that someone who is new takes or their organisation prepares them for. Don’t ask Iwi what is important to them when you have access to their strategy!”*

*“Don’t assume because you are the Crown you are in charge of the room – know your tikanga.”*

## 2. Trust is Reciprocal

*“Mutual trust is really important – standards that build trust include accessibility, inclusion, full provision of information, timely information, authenticity, participation and a right to participate.”*

Participants talked about trust being reciprocal. To gain trust from Māori, the Crown, through the public sector, must also trust Māori.

While this study focuses on helping the Office to understand what is needed to build the trust and confidence of Māori in the public sector, participants equally expressed the need for greater understanding of what is needed for the public sector to demonstrate its trust in Māori. Participants felt that the Crown did not trust Māori and gave examples of how this lack of trust has been exhibited.

*“A recent example was the first round of Covid funding. After the Crown struggled to gain high numbers of Māori vaccinations, Māori providers were asked to help. The providers appreciated the flexibility and were able to move with agility. They felt like government were finally coming to the party, showing trust - then subsequently, after strong outcomes were achieved, the Crown required providers to complete new retrospective reporting - that was really diminishing of people’s trust and confidence. Minister Henare publicly acknowledged that frustration”.<sup>15</sup>*

They also described public services as a response to deficits, social problems and economic woes, and felt that this approach was contrary to Māori having trust in the public sector, or the public sector having trust in Māori. The context that is created from a deficit approach does not engender positive relationships, nor build relational or reciprocal trust. Participants suggested that a public sector that focuses instead on building on Māori strengths and innovation was more likely to engender trust and confidence from, and of, Māori.

*“There needs to be investment in Māori capability and solutions – otherwise it is western deficit modelling. If the Crown does this – we will trust you.”*

*“What annoys me about the public sector is that it primarily serves to provide services to those categorised as mad, bad, or sad. We need to flip this and invest in what is working and where Māori have strengths.”*

### 3. Tikanga Builds Trust and Confidence

*“Go and really understand the tikanga to get an awakening and achieve a genuine relationship.”*

The feedback strongly indicated that, if the Crown utilised tikanga and Māori values to guide engagement and build relationships, trust and confidence would improve. At the heart of tikanga are concepts such as *tika* (true, right, fair, just), *pono* (honest, genuine, sincere), *aroha* (empathy, compassion, care), *mana*, *whanaungatanga*, *kotahitanga* and *manaakitanga* - principles that were highlighted by the participants as necessary in building trust. Participants felt that if Māori could see these values and tikanga authentically understood, embedded, and demonstrated, trust and confidence would increase. This theme extends the idea that trust is relational, to describe the need for relationships to be tikanga-based, i.e., guided by a set of culturally embedded principles that define behaviours that are “tika”.

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<sup>15</sup> Te Hiku Media. n.d. *Māori Health Authority Discussed at Tā Māui Pōmare Day* [www.tehiku.nz/te-hiku-radio/kuaka-marangaranga/19459/maori-health-authority-discussed-at-ta-maui-pomare-day](http://www.tehiku.nz/te-hiku-radio/kuaka-marangaranga/19459/maori-health-authority-discussed-at-ta-maui-pomare-day)

This involves public sector employees and organisations developing cultural understandings, histories, and practices and how these impact in a practical way on day-to-day engagement. Participants talked about the importance of the Crown doing its ‘homework’ before engaging with Māori to understand the history and context within which any engagement is taking place. Too often, public servants seek to engage with Māori (as individuals or as a collective) in ignorance of tikanga, history, iwi authority, mana whenua, and connections that may impact on the development of a relationship. In a tikanga-based trust-enhancing relationship these things are “givens”. Ultimately, trust is lost when the public sector engages with Māori without acknowledging the history and lived-experience that has impacted on where we are today – a person’s whānau, hapū, iwi and any previous challenging relationships with the Crown.

While participants acknowledged that, at times, this could be difficult and uncomfortable for the public sector (e.g., by fronting to Māori at marae rather than at corporate offices), they quickly pointed out that Māori are expected to operate within two different worlds on a daily basis. It would go a long way to garnering trust and confidence if the Crown was more flexible in its approaches and operationalised its commitment to Treaty relations in real and observable ways.

Attempts by the public sector to create a brand that is uniquely Aotearoa by adopting Māori names for public organisations were noted by participants. Participants cautioned, however, that giving an organisation a Māori name does not make it Māori. Rather, it is the integrity in the way the organisation operates, its embedding of tikanga and Māori values in its culture, operations and interactions with the community and with its own staff that dictates whether it is a valid brand for Māori.

The examples shared by participants iterate that that how something is done (the process) is often more important than outcomes achieved. A positive outcome or achieving set targets does not justify poor process. This speaks to the notion of integrity and accountability and questions whether accountability should be so strongly focussed on outcomes or whether there should be a greater focus on process.

*“While it is all good that CEO’s are learning to mihi – this is not the mahi. It’s not just about agencies looking more Māori, with their name, use of reo etc. It is about doing their job for Māori.”*

*“I would ask that they (Crown) immerse themselves in a setting they feel uncomfortable in. We are often expected to do that – walk in worlds where we are not comfortable.”*

*“It is about integrity – a balance of tika, pono and aroha. If behaviour consistently sits in that zone, then there is an opportunity for trust to be established in a reciprocal way.”*

#### **4. The Power Imbalance Thwarts Trust**

*“You have to level the floor before you lift the ceiling.”*

Participants identified a link between power and trust and, specifically, the issue of power imbalance between Treaty partners as the basis for mistrust. Participants then questioned the ability to establish

true Treaty partnerships in an environment where one “partner” holds the governing power. While constitutional change is a much wider discussion and outside the scope of this study, what is possible is a discussion on the way in which the public sector serves the people it is meant to serve and how power impacts negatively on that service.

The power imbalance is felt at both macro and micro levels. Participants spoke about the Crown having the power to shape the narrative to suit its own story. They felt that too often statistics do not convey an honest picture of the real problems or outcomes, with many participants citing examples of when the picture they are presented with does not reconcile with ‘how things feel on the ground’.

Individuals noted difficulties in engaging with public entities. Some participants spoke about needing resilience and emotional strength to engage, feeling that any engagement would require them to ‘jump through many hoops’ and navigate overly bureaucratic processes. For those without support, or who lack confidence or sufficient communication skills, this power imbalance presents as a lack of care and empathy and can mean they are not able to engage with the public services they may require. Te Arawhiti | The Office for Māori Crown Relations has been purposefully named to depict the relationship between Māori and the Crown as a bridge (arawhiti). The name recognises the need for the public sector to build its capability to step onto the bridge in order to build a relationship with Māori. What that requires is a deep understanding that Māori are already on the bridge and each time they seek to engage with the public sector they have crossed over that bridge. In general, public agencies have yet to develop their collective capability as a sector to step on to the bridge. This type of understanding along with a commitment to address the current imbalance of power identified by participants is needed if engaging with public entities is to become easier for Māori.

There was agreement that these things need to change if trust and confidence are to be achieved. Participants acknowledged that this requires innovation and transformation, concepts that participants felt are stifled in the public sector due to its inability (by nature) to tolerate risk and share power.

*“We had a roundtable with a group of Wellington officials... the data they produced did not at all reconcile to what we are hearing and seeing out there. It was almost offensive – it showed they hadn’t been listening, hadn’t done their homework and were just trying to sell us the good news story. That made us feel ignored and we just lost a lot of trust.”*

*“I feel before I even engage with a Public Entity, I have to armour myself up because my experience with them hasn’t been very good.”*

*“There is a power imbalance. Until they give up their assumed power over minorities, we are going to have to keep having these reviews about how to do their process. But once they get their review what are they going to do about it?”*

*“We know that in contracts there is a hierarchical view that if I am contracting you, I have power over you. That is not a relationship of trust – that is a master/slave relationship.”*

## Accountability

*“If you want to know what accountability means to Māori, start with the Declaration of Independence.”*

The concept of accountability is not new to Māori. It has long been seen within the Māori world and evidenced in *pūrākau* (cultural narratives). While the nature of accountability has changed and evolved over time, the fundamental principles remain the same and apply across contexts.

This section starts with a short description of accountability within *te ao Māori* (a Māori worldview) and sets the context for the key themes which have emerged from discussions with participants.

### Accountability Within Te Ao Māori

Within *te ao Māori* (the Māori world) the concept of *accountability* is prevalent throughout our *pūrākau*. One of our origin stories tells of *Hinetītama*, the first-born human, being deceived by *Tāne* (also referred to as *Tāne-Māhuta*, *Tane-nui-a-Rangi*, as well as several other names),<sup>16</sup> the God of the forest – who is her husband, but also her father. After finding out that *Tāne* is her father, she then becomes *Hine-nui-te-pō*, goddess of the underworld, and holds *Tāne* to account for his deception of her. She asserts that he may remain father to their children whilst they are on earth, but when they die, they will join her in the afterlife for eternity.

In the battle of *Te Paerangi*, *Whiro-te-tipua*, lord of darkness, evil and bad omens is held accountable for his actions against *Tūmatauenga*, God of mankind and war, and sent to reside in the underworld.

In another of our stories, *Māui*, the demi-god, tricks his grandmother *Mahuika* in to handing over four of her five ‘nails of fire’. *Mahuika* finds out about *Māui*’s deception and holds him to account. Punishing him by burning him with her last remaining nail.

Māori customary law also sets out accountabilities. *Rangatira* are held accountable to the people – their *whānau* and their *hapū* – through *mana*. *Mana* can be translated to mean many things – authority, prestige, control, power, reputation. *Mana* is the control or power you have over some things, someone, or some people. Through your *whakapapa*, or line of descent, you may be afforded more *mana* than others. But it is primarily through your actions that you build up your *mana*. This *mana* can only be afforded to you by other people. You, yourself, cannot claim to have *mana*, or that you are a person of *mana*. That is only something that can be said about you. So, it serves you well if you remain a trustworthy figure amongst your people. This concept of accountability was well and truly engrained within *te ao Māori* in pre-colonial times and still shapes the way in which Māori think about accountability today.

If these concepts are applied to the context of public accountability, they suggest that for Māori, when trust or promises are broken and expectations are not achieved, there needs to be tangible and visible consequences that acknowledge and address the fault and work to achieve resolution, or “*ea*”. Until this is done, productive and trusting relationships cannot progress forward. Additionally, every person

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<sup>16</sup> Best, E. 1976. *Maori religion and mythology part 1: The names of Tane*.

holds mana, and this can be earned through actions in service of people. What the Public Sector achieves with and for Māori (utilising correct tikanga) can enhance its mana and earn trust. Even when mana and trust is lost, there is potential for trust to be regained through the public sector and the Crown holding itself accountable, owning the responsibility and committing to fix the issue in collaboration with Māori. Trust, mana, and accountability are, therefore, intertwined. There is no trust without accountability and when accountability is not present, mana and trust will diminish.

Participants in this study spoke of accountability in ways that derive from this worldview. Their perspectives and the issues they highlighted can be described through four key ideas:

1. Multiple lines of accountability.
2. Accountability and money.
3. An independent monitoring system.
4. Consequences in accountability.

### 1. Multiple Lines of Accountability

*“Following due process and honouring both sides of the accountability spectrum is important.”*

Participants employed in the public sector spoke at length about multiple lines of accountability as an issue they deal with daily. They explained the tension between being accountable to their iwi, hapū, and whānau as a duty borne out of whakapapa, and their responsibilities as a public sector employee derived from an employment arrangement. Thus, they are not only accountable to their employer (the Crown), but they continue to remain accountable to their iwi, to their hapū, and to their whānau for their own actions as a public servant and, at times, for the actions of their organisation.

As a result, participants spoke of feeling compromised when they are required to front or defend a policy decision that is not in the best interests of their iwi, hapū or whānau. This is a tension for participants who work in several sectors, not only the public sector. In the financial audit system for example, finding a place for tikanga Māori in audit standards can be challenging. Expenditure on goods and services for the purposes of *manaakitanga* (hospitality) and *whakawhanaungatanga* (building relationships) is expected, justifiable, and acceptable in a Māori worldview. However, from an auditing perspective based on a western worldview it may be difficult to measure (quantify) and, at times, justify. Participants from the legal system, talked about cases where kaupapa Māori or tikanga were being debated or when there may be Māori lawyers on both sides of the courtroom acting on behalf of the defendant and for the prosecution (often the Crown). While there is accountability to the client (defendant or Crown), there is also a line of accountability to being Māori. Depending on what the case is about, there can be a definite tension between the two sets of accountabilities.

Changes to the Public Service Act 2020 have strengthened expectations of government agencies in terms of engaging in partnerships with Māori. Participants spoke about the impact of Section 14, which explicitly recognises the role of the public sector in supporting the Crown in its relationships with Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Out of this has come a large workstream led by Te Arawhiti. Whāinga Amorangi, the Crown’s cultural capability framework, seeks to honour the Government’s commitment and requires public sector organisations to assess and monitor their cultural capability. Often Māori public sector employees, appointed into Māori Advisor roles, are expected to drive the

required changes and outcomes. This leads to further challenges because of dual accountabilities to both the Crown organisation and their own people who hold high expectations and hope that change in the public sector will be seen. However, when that change is slow or not visible, those in advisor roles can be held to account by their people for not influencing the changes needed. The weight of the cultural responsibility in tandem with employment expectations leave some participants feeling overwhelmed. This feeling can be magnified for those who are in middle management positions that carry responsibility, but which are too far away from the Minister to have any meaningful impact on decision making and outcomes.

Participants also spoke about the response from their whānau, hapū and iwi at times when they are not able to uphold their moral accountability. While in most instances, whānau have remained supportive, participants also spoke of times when they are judged far more harshly than their non-Māori counterparts.

All participants acknowledged that multiple accountabilities are a real issue for Māori employees in the public sector, perhaps more so than other sectors because of the nature of a public sector accountability system that does not recognise competing and, at times, conflicting accountabilities. What participants were also in agreement about, is that accountability to their whānau, hapū and iwi is lifelong and will remain far beyond any employment relationship with the Crown. Nonetheless, managing those, at time conflicting accountabilities is an ongoing challenge.

*“Middle management is where most of us Māori public servants are. There are many things that you agree with and it’s sensible to do, and you provide all the right evidence and support but those who work on the top line, for whatever reason, kill it. While that may be fine, what I find frustrating, is that they expect you to front that message to those who keep you accountable and you try to defend undefendable decisions that you don’t agree with yourself. That’s career limiting and Māori get burnt out from that sort of thing. Why are Māori expected to front stuff [to Māori] when we have no say in the decision?”*

*“...you need to be accountable to your client, but you also have a line of accountability directly back to your ‘Māoritanga’... These are just some of the things that we, as Māori, are faced with on a continual basis.”*

## 2. Accountability and Money

*“Money is the by-product of everything, its over-rated. If you get the people right, the systems right, the deliveries right, then the money looks after itself.”*

Participants agreed on the relationship between accountability and money. They acknowledged that money is critical in that it funds public services and, therefore, should be used responsibly and transparently. However, for Māori, accountability is not just about money, and it was generally felt that the Crown places too much importance on expenditure as an accountability metric, at the expense of other equally important measures. They saw this as an Anglo-Saxon approach to accountability where economic metrics such as return-on-investment (ROI), shareholder value, and gross domestic product (GDP) are overvalued as accountability standards.

Participants were more interested in ensuring equitable funding formulas are being applied and ensuring that investment was being made in areas which address inequity. They were also more interested in accountability of non-financial standards and felt that qualitative non-financial outcomes related to community and whānau initiatives are often overlooked and undervalued. Compounding this are the relatively short political cycles which fail to enable the generational and collective measurement of change in non-financial outcomes.

### 3. Māori Voice in the Accountability System

*“You can’t have the **perception** that the Government is monitoring itself if you want Māori to have both trust and confidence in the accountability system.”*

Many participants saw a need for a more independent monitoring of government which takes in a diverse range of voices, particularly voices from the Māori community. While some participants (particularly those who have worked in or with the Public Sector) understood the position of Auditor-General as an independent officer of Parliament, the positioning of that role within Parliament creates a perception that the Crown monitors itself. It would also be fair to state that participants whose relationship with the Public Sector is limited to utilising public services were unaware of the Office of the Auditor-General, its role and how it reports its findings and holds public entities to account.

Participants felt that the current monitoring system fails to consider independent community voice and if it is to be a system that Māori value, there would need to be a valued place for the voices of whānau, rangatahi (youth), and kaumātua (elders) to be heard. Māori would also need to be involved in making the judgements on accountability and the appropriate forms of redress where accountability measures have not been met. In the absence of these perspectives and roles being validated through the monitoring system, participants felt that monitoring could not provide a ‘true and accurate’ evaluation of the public sector or hold the public sector to account for the things that really matter to Māori.

*“We want to be at the top table, not just on the menu.”*

### 4. Consequences and Accountability

*Hei aha koe e mate noa atu ai, kei te ora tonu ngā toitoi tāhae a Mihi-ki-te-kapua.*

Discussions with participants about accountability typically involved references to ‘utu’. ‘Utu’ is a Māori concept that counterbalances the place of responsibility within the construct of accountability. Possibly the most suitable English equivalent in this context is the notion of consequences. Essentially, “utu means payment for some injury”<sup>17</sup> to bring things back into balance and that if a wrong is done, it is acknowledged and rectified.

Participants spoke about their understanding of accountability as involving elements of both responsibility and consequences. In other words, ensuring that there is an appropriate cost or response for failing to uphold one’s responsibilities. Participants shared examples of how people are

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<sup>17</sup> Walker, R. (2004). *Ka Whawhai tonu matou - struggle without end*. Penguin Books.

held to account in a Māori context. Examples ranged from events in our pūrākau (stories) to roles on a marae and within whānau, hapū and iwi. Each example involved the allocation of a responsibility and an appropriate consequence if a responsibility was not fulfilled.

Kōti Rangatahi (Rangatahi Courts) are an example of utu in action, whereby young Māori who admit offending, or are found guilty of charges, have their consequences agreed in a culturally adapted setting. “The emphasis on tikanga in a Rangatahi Court creates a feeling of inclusiveness and belonging for marginalised young Māori”.<sup>18</sup> The Court strives to be victim-focused by acknowledging the need for an appropriate form of utu or consequence agreed by a range of stakeholders (including the offender’s whānau, marae officials, and court related officials). The “utu” is monitored to balance the fallout from the offence, while at the same time developing a Family Group Conference plan that addresses the underlying causes of the offending.

From participants’ perspectives, the implementation of appropriate consequences for non-performance of outcomes – at all levels of a public agency – is necessary for the purposes of upholding and maintaining accountability. Participants felt that currently in the Public Sector, there is a lack of consequence for failure to meet Māori outcomes, particularly at senior management levels. Participants spoke of cases where senior managers continued to be rewarded with higher remuneration despite continually failing to achieve positive outcomes for Māori. Poor Māori health and Māori education outcomes were highlighted as examples of this with participants claiming that a lack of observable consequences for continual system failures exacerbates issues of mistrust in the accountability system.

Participants also felt that consequences need to be appropriate. Most importantly, the public sector needs to take ownership for failings and past wrongdoings in order to move forward positively to better outcomes. People spoke about needing the Crown, government, and public sector to front up, own and learn from its failings, rather than re-writing or erasing its actions. Participants who spoke to this point, felt that acknowledgement of failures is a first step in the process to improvement and accountability but that the acknowledgement needs to be followed by swift action that is monitored to ensure improvement.

*“I remember an old story about Mihi-ki-te-kapua and her response when their pā was being slaughtered. One of her comments to the attackers was, ‘... hei aha koe e mate noa atu ai, kei te ora tonu ngā toitoi tāhae a Mihi-ki-te-kapua’. In other words, they didn’t care if they died, because their descendants would come back and attack them. To me, that reinforces the concept of utu.”*

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<sup>18</sup> The District Court of New Zealand. n.d. *Taking lessons from the Rangatahi Courts* [www.districtcourts.govt.nz/youth-court/publications/taking-lessons-from-the-rangatahi-courts/](http://www.districtcourts.govt.nz/youth-court/publications/taking-lessons-from-the-rangatahi-courts/)

## Implications

In this section, findings from the study are discussed in terms of their implications for the public sector and for the Office of the Auditor-General. This discussion is organised around four themes:

1. Power and Equity.
2. The What.
3. The How.
4. Learning Through Connection.

In discussing implications and possible steps to address some of the key issues, we acknowledge that the Office has started work on a strategy to improve its internal capability that may already include some of the suggestions below. This is also true of some public agencies which have already committed to becoming Treaty honouring organisations and upholding the Crown's responsibilities to Māori.

The suggestions, therefore, are just that – suggestions. They are not proffered as a complete nor exclusive set of strategies, but seek to add to what may already be in the minds of those who are committed to a public sector that is accountable to, and trusted by Māori communities. What is important however, is that the Office commits to a set of tangible actions as a result of this research. Māori are increasingly discerning with their relationships and who they give their time to, and participants expect that their voices will make a material difference. As one participant explained:

*“Will there be an outcome? Go back to the people who participated and tell them what you did with this knowledge. Do not use our opinions and then do nothing – else we may stop being willing to give our opinion.”*

### 1. Power and Equity

*“We don't have enough Māori leaders in the Public Sector. We don't have critical mass at the decision-making table so when Māori say something they are a lone voice.”*

In wānanga and interviews, exploring issues of trust and accountability went hand-in-hand with discussions about power, equity, and equality. One of the emerging understandings was that at the heart of mistrust of the public sector was a loss of control, lack of validation, and disempowerment. Another complex issue that participants identified is the apparent lack of trust the Public Sector has in Māori. There was a sense that participants felt the Public Sector feared losing power and control and that the concept of equity was often misunderstood as challenging notions of fairness. Participants strongly advocated for these issues to be addressed. To ignore the causes of mistrust would be to alienate Māori further from the Public Sector.

To discuss Māori perspectives on public accountability, therefore, requires us to understand issues of power and equity. Participants spoke about power and equity interchangeably with *mana motuhake*. From a generic sense, *mana motuhake* can be seen as *Māori* autonomy, independence, self-government, and self-determination. Sir Mason Durie offers a description of *mana motuhake* and self-determination, as being, “... about the advancement of Māori people, as Māori, and the protection of

the environment for future generations”.<sup>19</sup> Mana motuhake is not just about the higher-level constitutional change but is also about Māori being able to self-determine their lives at a very fundamental level. It is about having control and self-determination to advance as a people, as iwi, as hapū, as whānau and as individuals connected through whakapapa.

Current commitments from the Government to building the cultural capability of the public sector were welcomed by participants. However, that commitment will need to be one that changes the way the sector operates in observable, functional and operational ways. The system of public accountability will need to be able to identify and measure those shifts. But this will require identifying the types of shifts that make a difference for Māori and how those that are responsible will be held to account in the event that expectations are not met.

Importantly, addressing power and equity issues starts with the guiding principle that decisions and solutions for Māori need to be designed, implemented and monitored by Māori. Iwi and whānau must have a voice in that process. To do this, greater voice of Māori with cultural intelligence and lived-experience needs to not only be ‘at the table’, but at the top table.

Participants in the study provided some practical suggestions as to how issues of power and equity might be addressed by the Public Sector. These included:

- Changing the focus of services from a deficit-based approach to a strengths-based approach. In practice, this might involve creating opportunities to celebrate and build on good practice and the inherent strengths that Māori have, rather than focusing on the negative statistics.
- Moving away from Māori representatives on a board or advisory group which results in “watered-down” Māori perspectives heard only in the context of the wider group’s “voice”, to establishing new ways of engaging with Māori that enable Māori voice to be heard unencumbered.
- Ensuring that Māori are part of the initial thinking and framing of conversations. Too often a conversation or an initiative starts with universal framing and a ‘Māori-lens’ is applied at a later point. To ensure authenticity and greater equity and equality for Māori, a kaupapa-Māori lens needs to be applied from the outset for initiatives that are to apply to Māori.
- Engaging Māori to supply products and services that require a Māori worldview or Māori voice to ensure that Māori are “holding the pen”, rather than having that view interpreted through a non-Māori worldview.

The Office of the Auditor-General might also seek to address issues of power and equity in a number of ways. For example:

- Ensuring that its Māori strategy directly acknowledges and responds to these issues in functional ways.

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<sup>19</sup> Durie, M. 2003. Ngā Kāhui Pou Launching Māori Futures. Huia Press. P. 356.

- Considering mechanisms to gain input, advice, and guidance on the work of the Office in relation to the capability and process of auditing outcomes for Māori.
- Auditing for issues of equity in the implementation of government policies. For example, monitoring the implementation of the progressive procurement policy and ensuring that contract management of Māori providers is fair and equitable.

## 2. Focus of Audits and Inquiries – The “What”

*“The voice of the people the public service serves should be the measure of success and whether any intervention made a difference to their lives.”*

What is audited affects the extent to which Māori have confidence in the public sector. There are two key considerations:

1. How well the public sector is developing its capability to partner with Māori.
2. How well the public sector is delivering better outcomes for Māori.

With increasing expectations on the public sector to develop its cultural capability in order to be able to engage appropriately with Māori, it is important that those expectations are seen to be important enough to be monitored. Participants suggested that the Office has a role in auditing how well the public sector is doing in meeting these expectations and inquiring into specific statements of commitment to support the achievement of Māori outcomes. Participants felt that Māori are interested in understanding:

- How well CEOs and Crown entities are doing in terms of prioritising and achieving the goals of Te Arawhiti.
- How unified the public sector is in fulfilling its stewardship responsibility to support the Crown’s relationship with Māori (see Public Service Act 2020).

In addition to identifying the public sector’s commitment to improving its cultural capability, Māori want to have confidence that the public sector is committed to achieving better outcomes for Māori. This means auditing public sector expenditure and policies for their recognition of and effectiveness for Māori. For example, ensuring that audits and inquiries identify the level of budget committed to improving outcomes for Māori and measure the impact of that expenditure.

There was also a strong suggestion from participants that auditing of Māori outcomes needs an inter-agency approach which looks at cross-sector impacts (both positive and negative). Issues relating to the way the public sector serves Māori are complex and deeply systemic. As such, participants felt that auditing of single agencies did not adequately identify the impact of public services on Māori. Rather, what is required is a comprehensive monitoring and accountability system that considers the interrelatedness (or lack thereof) and effectiveness of public services.

What this might mean for the Auditor-General is:

- providing space for an explicit focus on outcomes for Māori, and recognising and acknowledging Māori priorities and aspirations (i.e., the things that matter most to Māori) as a normal part of the audit and inquiry process.

### 3. Process is as Important as Outcomes – The “How”

*“For the OAG, it is about ‘how’ they inquire ... e.g., following tikanga standards and protocols. This is the missing link.”*

*“You need to have different ways of checking apart from the traditional channels of written reporting and metrics.”*

The process of how services are delivered, and outcomes are achieved, is just as important as the outcomes themselves. This finding is as equally relevant to the Office of the Auditor-General as it is for the Public Sector. The current lack of Māori staff in the Office led to scepticism amongst participants about the Office’s cultural intelligence and ability to monitor public sector outcomes that matter to Māori in an appropriate (tikanga-based) way. Operating in a way that is cognisant of tikanga is helpful to any organisation that wants to build the trust and confidence of Māori in the organisation’s work. Considering tikanga extends to the treatment of data and information. Māori data sovereignty is an issue for all agencies, researchers, or individuals who work with Māori information and knowledge. Participants felt that for these issues to be addressed through the work of the Office, Māori would need to be involved in the design, implementation, monitoring, and reporting of public sector performance.

Participants were also concerned that Māori voice be heard when inquiring into aspects of public accountability. They stressed that evidence generated by people who engage with public services is just as important and valid as evidence provided by the agencies. In other words, evidence provided by agencies needs to be reconciled with ‘the feelings on the ground’. As one participant put it, *“Put the people back in the kōrero.”*

There was suspicion about some of the statistics provided by public agencies to evidence the effectiveness of their policies, particularly where those statistics did not reflect the lived reality for many Māori. Participants were conscious that statistics can be “sliced and diced” and interpreted in multiple ways, and that the interpretation often favours a non-Māori worldview. To this end, participants valued qualitative measures as much, if not more than quantitative.

These findings have implications for both the Office of the Auditor-General and the public sector and suggest that there is work still to do in terms of:

- Developing processes for engagement, monitoring and evaluation that give explicit consideration to tikanga – cultural practices and cultural norms.
- Valuing relationships with Māori and recognising the unique place of Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Addressing issues of Māori data sovereignty.

Specific implications for the Office of the Auditor-General include:

- Giving consideration to how the voice of Māori who are ‘at the coalface’ can be gathered in inquiries and audits, in order to ascertain the extent to which public entity reporting aligns to lived reality.
- Prioritising work on developing its cultural intelligence through building relationships with Māori.
- Formulating a Māori data and information policy.

#### 4. Learning Through Connection

*“There needs to be an independent monitoring system; you can’t have government auditing and monitoring government.”*

Civics is sorely lacking in Aotearoa New Zealand – it is likely that a good proportion of the public is not aware of how public power is exercised and how it is kept in check by officers of Parliament and the Courts. While the Auditor-General is established as an independent officer of Parliament with a role in keeping a check on the government of the day, most participants did not have a real sense of the functions of the Auditor-General, nor the independent nature of the role.

The notion of independence, however, is one that is likely to be viewed differently by Māori, and perhaps not valued in the same way as the Office might expect. Connections and relationships (*whanaungatanga*) represent who one is (including one’s story and identity) and what one stands for – things that are valued by, and culturally important to, Māori. Independence, on the other hand, brings these values into question and can, therefore, create a lack of clarity around the Office’s identity, who it represents, and what it stands for. In the absence of a clear identity, Māori are not likely to value the Auditor-General’s independence or see the role as speaking for them or representing their needs. It is more likely that Māori see the Auditor-General as an instrument of the Crown.

It was also clear from participants that independence, in and of itself, does not equate to trust. Addressing this issue is essential if the Office wants its work to be trusted by Māori. With a legislative expectation on the public sector to engage in partnerships with Māori, there is also an opportunity for the Auditor-General to build connections and relationships focused on establishing trust with Māori. Supporting the community to understand the role of the Auditor-General and what public entities are expected to achieve, is an important initial step. There is much to be learnt by, and about, the Office and the Auditor-General – it is a two-way process that can benefit both the Office and Māori.

To this end, the Office and the Auditor General might consider:

- Committing to learning about and listening deeply to what Māori value in the public sector.
- Undertaking education outreach work (two-way education) that specifically seeks to connect with Māori communities.
- Developing a communications strategy to reach a Māori audience that clarifies the value of the Office and the role of the Auditor-General.

## SUMMARY

Educating the community, forming closer connections, actively listening, learning about Māori worldviews and continuing to ask what else can be done will go some way to addressing misperception in the role of the Auditor-General and building trust and confidence in the Public Sector. However, this does come with one caveat – there will need to be positive and observable shift in the way the public sector and the Office responds to the things that matter most to Māori.

Haemata Limited would like to acknowledge the contributions of all participants who generously gave their time and willingly shared their views and experiences on trust and confidence and the implications for public accountability. Kei te māpu whakaō i te karanga, nā koutou i rangatira ai te kaupapa nei. Nei ā mātou mihi ki a koutou katoa.

We would also like to express our thanks to the Office for having the foresight to inquire into the views that have been expressed in this report. We are of the belief that there is much to be gained from this piece of work and we hope that this has and will continue to contribute to a better public accountability system in Aotearoa New Zealand – one that is unique to us. Kei te Tumuaki o te Mana Arotake, nā koutou te whakakitenga, nā koutou anō hoki te tītoki nei i whakatō, heoi anō tā mātou, he whāngai, he poipoi. Hei te wā tītoki kitea atu ai tōna ātaahua me ōna purapura e puāwai mai ana hei oranga mō tātou katoa.

Nā mātou o Haemata,  
nā Hineihaea Murphy mātou ko Te Aorangi Murphy-Fell, ko Jenny Solomon, ko Atawhai Tibble.

## APPENDIX 1: INVITATION

Kia hiwa rā, kia hiwa rā!  
Kia hiwa ki tēnei tuku,  
Kia hiwa ki tērā tuku,  
kia whakahiwaia hoki te papa tapu e hora nei,  
hei pikinga mai mō taku manu,  
hei kakenga mai mō taku manu,  
nō reira, piki mai, kake mai, nau mai!

Mātua rā te reo o Mihi e rere atu ana ki a tātou...

Haemata Limited is currently working with the Office of the Auditor-General (the Office) to understand more about **what public accountability means to Māori** and how the public sector can better demonstrate its competence, reliability, and honesty to Māori communities.

In order to gather a range of different voices and perspectives we will be facilitating a series of wānanga and interviews with key individuals and groups. The learnings from these kōrero will build the Office's understanding of what is important to Māori in terms of accountability, in order to better inform:

- support for Parliament and Select Committees
- the Office's inquiry function, and audits (performance and financial) of public sector organisations
- an ongoing Māori Strategy programme of work
- an ongoing research programme.

The first wānanga will be for Māori in the public service. We invite you to participate in this online hui as an experienced Māori public servant in an organisation that has extensive dealings with Māori and/or iwi, and which is audited by the Office. Your input and whakaaro about how the public sector can work better for Māori are important, and we hope you are available to participate in this hui.

### **PUBLIC SECTOR WĀNANGA: Māori views on public accountability**

Online hui (link to be sent closer to the time)

Thursday, 27 January 2022

10-12noon

**RSVP by Monday, 17 January 2022 to [tari@haemata.co.nz](mailto:tari@haemata.co.nz)**

If, however, you are unavailable at this time, but would like to nominate someone to attend on your behalf, please let us know.

Heoi, kia tau ngā manaakitanga ki runga i a koutou ko tō whānau i te wā o te hari, o te koa. Tēnā tātou katoa.

## APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANT ETHICAL CONSENT FORM

### Māori Perspectives on Public Accountability

## ETHICAL CONSENT FORM

#### We would like to request your permission to:

- Engage with you on matters of public accountability.
- Use your views to inform our response to the Office of the Auditor-General regarding the project 'Māori perspectives of Public Accountability'.

#### By signing this consent form:

- I agree to participate in this interview/wānanga on public accountability.
- I know that I can refuse to answer any questions and I also know that I can ask any questions at any time.
- I agree to Haemata using my views to inform their response to Office of the Auditor-General regarding the project 'Māori perspectives of Public Accountability'.
- I understand that the notes and audio (if relevant) captured during my interview will be accessible only to the Haemata research team and will be destroyed in the future.
- I understand that my name will not be used in the report or any other publication without my permission.
- I know that I can request a copy of the final research report – or a summary thereof.
- I understand what is required of me as a participant in this study AND I agree to participate.

SIGNED \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

IWI \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any further enquiries, please feel free to contact Haemata via email at [tari@haemata.co.nz](mailto:tari@haemata.co.nz) or by phone on 07 308 6322.