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How well public organisations are supporting Whānau Ora and whānau-centred approaches



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# How well public organisations are supporting Whānau Ora and whānau-centred approaches

Presented to the House of Representatives under section 20 of the Public Audit Act 2001.

February 2023

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# Auditor-General's overview

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā karangarangatanga maha o te motu, tēnā koutou.

Whānau Ora was introduced in 2010. It comprises a group of whānau-centred initiatives, including the Whānau Ora commissioning approach, that are intended to put whānau at the centre of decision-making. The Whānau Ora commissioning approach involves Te Puni Kōkiri contracting three commissioning agencies to invest in whānau-centred services throughout the country. Providers of these services work with whānau and support them to achieve their goals and aspirations.

There have been several reviews of Whānau Ora that found it has been successful for many whānau. This includes my Office's 2015 audit of Whānau Ora after its first four years. In 2018, the Minister for Whānau Ora commissioned a review that found Whānau Ora creates positive change for whānau and creates the conditions for that change to be sustainable.

The Cabinet paper that set up the Whānau Ora commissioning approach stated that public organisations should carry out “complementary effort” to support Whānau Ora.

However, since Whānau Ora was introduced, concerns have been consistently raised about how well public organisations are understanding, supporting, and learning from it. There have also been concerns about whether public organisations have adapted their systems and processes to enable whānau-centred ways of working (for example, by changing their funding, contracting, and reporting requirements).

In 2019, the Minister for Whānau Ora advised Cabinet that he wanted to grow whānau-centred approaches to policy development and service delivery and increase public organisations' investment in Whānau Ora. Te Puni Kōkiri is the department responsible for Whānau Ora and now has a strategic focus area reflecting these aims.

I wanted to know what progress Te Puni Kōkiri and other public organisations have made in supporting and implementing Whānau Ora and whānau-centred approaches more generally.

## What we found

Some public organisations have taken steps towards supporting and implementing whānau-centred approaches. However, much of this work involves trialling small-scale and time-limited initiatives. Overall, we did not see a significant shift, nor did we see systematic consideration of where and when whānau-centred approaches would be appropriate.

This means that many whānau might not be getting all the support available to address their needs and help them achieve their aspirations. To realise the aims of the Minister for Whānau Ora, public organisations need to do more to support and implement whānau-centred approaches, including Whānau Ora.

In my view, public sector processes and practices need to change to create a more enabling environment to implement these types of approaches where they are appropriate.

I acknowledge that there is work under way that indicates public organisations are intending to address some of these issues. For example, the Social Wellbeing Board, comprised of a group of public sector chief executives from social sector public organisations, is currently overseeing work to implement a new relational approach to how public organisations commission social services.

The relational approach places trusted, meaningful relationships at the centre of the commissioning process. This makes it more likely that the commissioned activity will contribute to positive well-being outcomes for individuals, whānau, and communities. This work could create a more enabling environment for whānau-centred approaches to be put in place (where such approaches are likely to lead to improved outcomes).

Public organisations need clear expectations for how they should support Whānau Ora and other whānau-centred approaches. In my view, there should also be a clearer and stronger mandate for the role of Te Puni Kōkiri.

Overall, the compounding effect of the lack of clear expectations for public organisations and the barriers created by some public sector processes and practices means that Te Puni Kōkiri has made limited progress on its strategic focus area of expanding the use of whānau-centred approaches by public organisations.

In my view, regardless of whether public organisations partner with providers and community organisations, or whether they develop a new whānau-centred service on their own, whānau-centred services need to be co-ordinated and complement one another.

This means that in some instances designing a new whānau-centred service will be the right approach. In others, public organisations should consider whether to make greater use of the Whānau Ora commissioning infrastructure before developing alternatives.

Te Puni Kōkiri should also prioritise completing its work to improve its ability to measure and report on impacts from Whānau Ora and its contribution to improved whānau outcomes. It should also make monitoring, research, and evaluation information on Whānau Ora and whānau-centred approaches more accessible to public organisations and others.

I acknowledge that it can be challenging to change public sector norms and conventions. This can even be the case when there is consensus that significant changes are needed and, if implemented effectively, will likely make a difference in outcomes for whānau. I have made recommendations that are intended to support the public service to broaden its understanding and development of approaches that give whānau the ability to achieve their aspirations and live well.

During this audit, the providers, commissioning agencies, and public organisations my staff engaged with were working under extraordinary circumstances responding to outbreaks of the Delta and Omicron variants of Covid-19.

I recognise the additional effort needed to engage with my staff during this period, and I express my sincere thanks to the many staff at public organisations, commissioning agencies, and providers who shared their expertise and experience for this work. I would also like to thank Kura Moeahu, who advised and supported my audit team, and Sir John Clarke, who reviewed drafts of the audit findings and the final report.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JMR Ryan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Ryan  
Controller and Auditor-General | Tumuaki o te Mana Arotake

8 February 2023

# Our recommendations

We recommend that:

1. Te Puni Kōkiri seek to clarify the mandate for the role that it has for broadening whānau-centred approaches;
2. Te Puni Kōkiri prioritise the completion of work to improve how it measures and reports the impacts and outcomes that whānau-centred approaches are achieving, and consider drawing on broader information about whānau successes;
3. Te Puni Kōkiri continue to identify the various available sources of monitoring, research, and evaluation information about the implementation and effectiveness of whānau-centred approaches and improve the accessibility of this information to public organisations, non-government organisations, and the public;
4. Te Puni Kōkiri seek to clarify expectations for public organisations to support whānau-centred approaches;
5. the Social Wellbeing Board consider how to better enable whānau-centred approaches in developing and implementing the Government's new relational approach to commissioning social services;
6. the Treasury and Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission provide more proactive guidance to public organisations about joint working and funding arrangements available that would support the use of whānau-centred approaches; and
7. Te Puni Kōkiri seek to clarify the nature of the "complementary effort" that public organisations are expected to provide for Whānau Ora.

# Introduction

- 1.1 In this Part, we describe:
- what whānau ora is;
  - why we did our audit;
  - what we looked at;
  - how we carried out our work; and
  - the structure of this report.

## What is whānau ora?

- 1.2 Whānau ora is a concept that reflects a self-determined, strengths-based, and holistic view of collective well-being. People use the term “whānau ora” to refer to:
- a state of being or outcome;
  - an approach or way of working to improve whānau well-being that works towards whānau ora as an outcome (Te Puni Kōkiri uses the term “whānau-centred approaches”); and
  - Whānau Ora, which is a whānau-centred approach that the government funds.<sup>1</sup>

## Whānau ora as an outcome

- 1.3 Whānau groupings have been fundamental to Māori society, culture, politics, and life for generations.
- 1.4 Broadly speaking, when whānau experience whānau ora, they are living thriving and healthy lives as defined by them and are able to support whānau members in need. Experiencing whānau ora also means that whānau can define their own goals and aspirations and have access to the information, resources, tools, and networks to achieve them.
- 1.5 Whānau ora is intergenerational. Every whānau member benefits from whānau ora, and sustaining whānau ora often means focusing on the well-being and aspirations of mokopuna. As such, part of whānau ora is the experience and support that mokopuna have access to through regular contact with older whānau members.
- 1.6 Whānau has a broader meaning than “family”. Whānau can be groups of people linked by whakapapa, culture, language, or life experience. Importantly, whānau themselves define the nature and make-up of whānau.
- 1.7 Whānau ora can also be about whānau empowering and supporting other whānau. One person described this to us as the “concentric circles” of many overlapping whānau.

<sup>1</sup> Taskforce on Whānau-Centred Initiatives (2010), *Whānau Ora: Report of the Taskforce on Whānau-Centred Initiatives*, paragraph 4.1.2, at [msd.govt.nz](http://msd.govt.nz).

- 1.8 We were told that whānau ora as a concept is also applicable to the diverse Pasifika communities in this country. The Pasifika application of whānau ora is based on Pasifika strengths and leadership. For Pasifika, the application of whānau ora is similarly driven by opportunities to support families to meet their aspirations and identify, understand, and support them to improve their outcomes.

### **Whānau-centred approaches**

- 1.9 Whānau-centred approaches aim to support whānau to experience whānau ora. Whānau-centred approaches put whānau at the centre of decision-making. They empower whānau to identify and work towards their goals and aspirations, building on existing strengths.
- 1.10 To avoid confusion between Whānau Ora and other approaches with the same or similar aims and characteristics, Te Puni Kōkiri tends to use the term “whānau-centred approaches” (rather than “whānau ora approaches”) to refer to the general approach and intent of services aimed at achieving and sustaining whānau ora. We have used this terminology in this report. Unless stated otherwise, when we refer to “whānau-centred approaches”, we mean all whānau-centred approaches – including Whānau Ora.
- 1.11 As Te Puni Kōkiri describes it, whānau-centred approaches:
- start by asking whānau and families what they want to achieve for themselves and respond to those aspirations to realise whānau potential;
  - provide flexible support for whānau and families to move beyond crisis to identifying and achieving medium- and long-term goals for sustained change;
  - focus on relationships, self-direction, and building skills for whānau to achieve positive long-term outcomes;
  - use a joined-up approach of all factors relevant to whānau wellness – economic, cultural, environmental, and social;
  - recognise that each whānau has different needs and that what works well for one whānau might not work well for others;
  - recognise that whānau and families have skills, knowledge, and experiences that will contribute to becoming more self-managing and independent; and
  - are based on kaupapa Māori approaches and ways of working.
- 1.12 Whānau-centred approaches are collective in nature – they take a holistic approach to the well-being of the whole whānau and strengthen collective capabilities and resilience.

## Whānau Ora

- 1.13 The concept of whānau ora has its origins in te ao Māori. We understand that the first reference to it in government policy was in 2002, in the Ministry of Health's He Korowai Oranga: Māori health strategy.
- 1.14 In 2010, the then Government introduced Whānau Ora. It comprises a group of whānau-centred initiatives and includes the Whānau Ora commissioning approach. The commissioning approach involves Te Puni Kōkiri contracting three commissioning agencies to invest in whānau-centred services throughout the country.
- 1.15 The providers of these services work with whānau and support them to achieve their goals and aspirations. Whānau Ora services are available to all people.
- 1.16 Te Puni Kōkiri contracts the Whānau Ora commissioning agencies to achieve outcomes rather than provide specific services or outputs. The intent is that funding decisions are made as close as possible to local communities and that the commissioning agencies have flexibility to invest in different types of initiatives and services to best meet the needs of whānau.
- 1.17 Whānau Ora navigators play a key role. They build strong relationships with whānau and service providers. They also help people identify and access the support needed to achieve their goals and aspirations, including services that public organisations provide or fund.
- 1.18 In Part 2, we provide a more detailed overview of Whānau Ora, including the roles and responsibilities of Te Puni Kōkiri, the Whānau Ora commissioning agencies, and navigators.

## Why we did this audit

- 1.19 Several reports note that Whānau Ora has been a success for many whānau. This includes our 2015 report *Whānau Ora: The first four years*.
- 1.20 In 2018, the Minister for Whānau Ora commissioned a review of Whānau Ora (the Whānau Ora ministerial review). This review found that Whānau Ora creates positive change for whānau and creates the conditions for that change to be sustainable.
- 1.21 Because public organisations play an important role in the success of whānau-centred approaches, they also play an important role in enabling better well-being outcomes for whānau.
- 1.22 However, since Whānau Ora was introduced, concerns have been consistently raised about how well public organisations understand, support, and are learning

from it. There have also been concerns about whether public organisations have adapted their systems and processes to enable whānau-centred ways of working (for example, by modifying their funding, contracting, and reporting requirements).

- 1.23 In 2015, we found that, at best, there were mixed signals from different parts of government.<sup>2</sup> In 2018, the Whānau Ora ministerial review found that government agencies lacked an understanding of Whānau Ora, which affected their commitment to it. The ministerial review was also concerned that public organisations were opting out of their responsibilities to provide services to whānau.
- 1.24 In response to the Whānau Ora ministerial review, Te Puni Kōkiri made encouraging public organisations to invest in Whānau Ora and broaden their support and implementation of whānau-centred approaches a strategic focus area.
- 1.25 We wanted to know what progress Te Puni Kōkiri has made towards this.

### What we looked at

- 1.26 We looked at how well public organisations are supporting whānau-centred approaches to policy development and service delivery. Specifically, we looked at:
- how well Te Puni Kōkiri is exercising its roles and responsibilities in relation to whānau-centred approaches; and
  - how well public organisations are supporting whānau-centred approaches.
- 1.27 Consistent with our mandate, we looked only at the performance of public organisations and did not audit the performance of Whānau Ora commissioning agencies or providers. Numerous evaluations, research papers, and reports have looked at the effectiveness of Whānau Ora, including the 2018 Whānau Ora ministerial review.

### How we carried out our work

- 1.28 In carrying out our audit, we spoke with each of the three Whānau Ora commissioning agencies – Te Pou Matakana (also known as Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency),<sup>3</sup> Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu, and Pasifika Futures.
- 1.29 We also spoke with several of the commissioning agencies' partners and providers that work with whānau, including:
- six organisations working with whānau in the North Island;
  - 10 organisations working with whānau in the South Island; and
  - nine organisations working with Pasifika communities throughout the country.

<sup>2</sup> Office of the Auditor-General (2015), *Whānau Ora: The first four years*.

<sup>3</sup> Te Pou Matakana is the legal name of the organisation responsible for Whānau Ora commissioning in the North Island. The organisation trades as Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency.

- 1.30 We also talked to two providers that are not part of the Whānau Ora network but take a whānau-centred approach to their work.
- 1.31 We collected evidence on the views and experiences of organisations and people involved in designing and providing services for whānau.
- 1.32 We spoke with national and regional office staff of Te Puni Kōkiri and 26 public organisations, including from the health, social, education, justice, environment, and economic sectors.
- 1.33 We reviewed a wide range of documents, including Cabinet papers, briefing papers, strategies, plans, evaluation reports, workshop material, and accountability documents.
- 1.34 The audit team benefitted from the advice and guidance of Kura Moeahu and Sir John Clarke throughout the audit (see Appendix).

### **The structure of this report**

- 1.35 In Part 2, we outline the context for our audit.
- 1.36 In Part 3, we discuss how well Te Puni Kōkiri is exercising its roles and responsibilities in relation to whānau-centred approaches.
- 1.37 In Part 4, we discuss how well other public organisations are supporting and implementing whānau-centred approaches.
- 1.38 In Part 5, we discuss how well other public organisations are supporting Whānau Ora.

# 2

## Context for this audit

- 2.1 In this Part, we outline:
- how Whānau Ora works;
  - the findings from the 2018 Ministerial review of Whānau Ora;
  - the strategic focus area of Te Puni Kōkiri for broadening whānau-centred approaches; and
  - the roles and responsibilities of Te Puni Kōkiri in relation to Whānau Ora.

### How Whānau Ora works

- 2.2 Whānau Ora was introduced after the Taskforce into Whānau-Centred Initiatives' 2010 report was published.<sup>4</sup> The Taskforce developed an evidence-based framework designed to create a joined-up and cost-effective approach to improving whānau well-being.
- 2.3 The framework suggested overarching outcomes for whānau. The framework also outlined some characteristics that the Taskforce considered should underpin the development of other whānau-centred approaches.
- 2.4 Soon after the 2010 report, the then Government set up Whānau Ora.
- 2.5 Whānau Ora was implemented in two phases. The first phase focused on developing the capability of community organisations to deliver whānau-centred services. The second phase involved setting up an approach to commissioning services from those community organisations.
- 2.6 During the first phase, Te Puni Kōkiri set up the Whānau Integration, Innovation and Engagement Fund. Any whānau could apply for this fund by completing and submitting a plan for achieving their aspirations and/or improving their well-being.
- 2.7 As part of building the capability of community organisations and administering the fund, Te Puni Kōkiri contracted community organisations to employ Whānau Ora navigators. The navigators would provide “a coordinated approach to whānau development and provide a dedicated resource to help whānau planning”.<sup>5</sup>

### The Whānau Ora commissioning approach

- 2.8 The second (and current) phase began in 2013, when Cabinet agreed to set up the Whānau Ora commissioning approach. Under this approach, community organisations would become responsible for commissioning whānau-centred services.
- 2.9 The intent of the commissioning approach is that funding decisions are made as close as possible to local communities. This gives the commissioning agencies the

4 Taskforce on Whānau-Centred Initiatives (2010), *Whānau Ora: Report of the Taskforce on Whānau-Centred Initiatives*, at [msd.govt.nz](http://msd.govt.nz).

5 Te Puni Kōkiri (2015), *Understanding whānau-centred approaches*, page 24, at [tpk.govt.nz](http://tpk.govt.nz).

flexibility to invest in different initiatives and services designed to best meet the needs and aspirations of the whānau they serve.

- 2.10 In 2014, Te Puni Kōkiri contracted three commissioning agencies:
- Te Pou Matakana (which now trades under the name Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency);
  - Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu; and
  - Pasifika Futures.

#### **Te Pou Matakana/Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency**

- 2.11 Te Pou Matakana is responsible for commissioning Whānau Ora services to support families and whānau throughout the North Island. It was co-founded by three Māori organisations.

- 2.12 The first two co-owners are Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust and the Manukau Urban Māori Authority. These are both non-government organisations focused on supporting the well-being and aspirations of Māori in Auckland. They were established in the mid-1980s.

- 2.13 In 2008, several Māori organisations throughout the North Island formed the National Urban Māori Authority. The National Urban Māori Authority is a collective focused on “influencing and advancing Māori economic and social development”.<sup>6</sup> It is the third co-owner of Te Pou Matakana.

#### **Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu**

- 2.14 Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu is responsible for commissioning Whānau Ora services to support whānau throughout the South Island.

- 2.15 It was founded by all nine South Island iwi: Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Rārua, Ngāti Kuia, Ngāti Apa ki te Rā Tō, Rangitāne o Wairau, Ngāti Tama ki te Waipounamu, Te Ātiawa o te Waka-a-Māui, Ngāti Toa Rangatira, and Ngāti Koata.

- 2.16 It is governed in partnership by a council of iwi representatives known as Te Taumata.

- 2.17 In June 2022, Ngāi Tahu and Te Taumata jointly announced that Ngāi Tahu would be leaving the partnership. They intend to exercise their kaitiaki responsibilities and rangatiratanga by partnering directly with the Crown.

#### **Pasifika Futures**

- 2.18 Pasifika Futures is responsible for commissioning Whānau Ora services to support ‘aiga Pasifika throughout the country. It was set up by the Pasifika Medical Association Group.

6 National Urban Māori Authority, “About us”, at [numa.co.nz](http://numa.co.nz).

- 2.19 The Pasifika Medical Association Group is a collective founded by Pasifika medical professionals in 1996 as a forum for Pasifika health workers and students. It also owns two integrated primary care, mental health, and well-being providers in Christchurch and Auckland, which are also Whānau Ora providers.

### **The Whānau Ora Outcomes Framework**

- 2.20 Te Puni Kōkiri contracts with the Whānau Ora commissioning agencies to progress and achieve outcomes.
- 2.21 In 2015, the Whānau Ora Outcomes Framework was agreed between the Iwi Chairs Forum and the then Government. Under the framework, Whānau Ora initiatives and services aim to support whānau to:
- be self-managing;
  - lead healthy lifestyles;
  - participate fully in society;
  - confidently participate in te ao Māori;
  - be economically secure and successfully involved in wealth creation;
  - be cohesive, resilient, and nurturing; and
  - be responsible stewards of their natural and living environments.
- 2.22 The framework outlines short-, medium-, and long-term goals for these seven outcome areas.

### **Whānau Ora commissioning in practice**

- 2.23 Each commissioning agency can set their own outcomes frameworks, goals, and commissioning approaches to meet the aspirations and needs of the whānau they serve. The only requirement is that the goals and approaches contribute to achieving the outcomes in the Whānau Ora Outcomes Framework.
- 2.24 Pasifika Futures, for example, has an outcomes framework driven by the aspirations of Pasifika families. Pasifika Futures developed its outcomes framework after consulting with 1500 Pasifika families from Kaitaia to Invercargill. The outcomes framework identifies short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes across five domains:
- Succeeding in education through lifelong learning.
  - Healthy lives seeing families living longer and better.
  - Economically independent and resilient families with financial freedom.
  - Supporting community connections through leading and caring for families, community, and country.
  - Resilient and responsive communities to emergencies.

**The commissioning approaches of Te Pou Matakana/Whānau Ora  
Commissioning Agency**

- 2.25 Te Pou Matakana distributes its funding based on the number of Māori in each region of the North Island. Its commissioning approaches include Whānau Direct, Collective Impact, and Ngā Tini Whetū.
- 2.26 The Whānau Direct approach offers annual grants of \$1,000 for each whānau to support them “in moments that matter most to them”.<sup>7</sup> The whānau who tend to access this programme often have very high needs – for example, in 2021/22, about 90% of those who accessed Whānau Direct had a household income of less than \$40,000 a year.
- 2.27 The Collective Impact approach co-ordinates a group of participants from different sectors and organisations for the purpose of solving a specific social issue.
- 2.28 Ngā Tini Whetū, an initiative developed with Te Puni Kōkiri, Oranga Tamariki, and the Accident Compensation Corporation, supports whānau to achieve their aspirations and works with them when they identify early signs of need.

**The commissioning approaches of Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu**

- 2.29 Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu takes a social impact approach to its commissioning. It invests directly in initiatives that whānau or community groups have developed. It operates several workstreams through which initiatives and projects are commissioned, including Wave funding, Ruia, Te Kīwai, Tama Ora, Kōanga Kai, Te Punanga Haumaruru, and Tai Neke, Tai Ora.
- 2.30 Wave funding is available once or twice a year to individuals, whānau, community groups, and businesses wanting to run an initiative or programme that will support them and their hapori (community).
- 2.31 Ruia is a partnership between Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu, the Rātā Foundation, and the Ministry for Youth Development. It provides funding to support rangatahi well-being, intergenerational leadership, succession planning, and cultural development.
- 2.32 Te Kīwai and Tama Ora were both developed in partnership with Sport New Zealand. Te Kīwai involves one-off funding to support Māori well-being through play, active recreation, and sport. Tama Ora are year-long agreements providing pathways for rangatahi to stay active. It has a focus on mental well-being and hinengaro outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi.
- 2.33 Kōanga Kai aims to encourage whānau rangatiratanga by building healthy and sustainable kai production practices. It provides physical resources and coaching to equip whānau to participate in communal gardens or create gardens in their homes.

7 Te Pou Matakana, “What We Do – Programmes”, at whanauora.nz.

2.34 Te Punanga Haumarū focuses on preventing family violence, sexual violence, and suicide.

2.35 Tai Neke, Tai Ora is focused on physical well-being.

#### **The commissioning approaches of Pasifika Futures**

2.36 Pasifika Futures' commissioning approaches include Innovative Pacific Solutions, Strengthen Community Partnerships, Strengthen Community Resilience, and Core Navigation Support.

2.37 The Innovative Pacific Solutions approach works with partners to support families to achieve their aspirations in one or more outcome areas.

2.38 The Strengthen Community Partnerships approach (also referred to as the small grants fund) helps small community organisations that work with largely volunteer groups to support Pasifika families.

2.39 The Strengthen Community Resilience approach supports families to overcome and build resilience to the challenges of living through and beyond the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.40 The Core Navigation Support approach works with families to design, develop, and deploy their own solutions.

#### **Whānau Ora navigators**

2.41 All three commissioning agencies also fund a navigation service. Whānau Ora navigators (sometimes known as kaiārahi) can play a key role in developing whānau strengths. They also build strong relationships with and between whānau, communities, and service providers.

2.42 Whānau Ora navigators can help whānau to identify their goals and aspirations and prepare a plan and the means to achieve them. Depending on what whānau want, Whānau Ora navigators can provide direct mentoring to develop the strengths and capability of each whānau.

2.43 Whānau Ora navigators can also identify other support to assist whānau with their goals and aspirations. This support can come from the wider community and/or services that public organisations provide or fund.

2.44 The ways that Whānau Ora navigators work varies throughout the country, to suit the local needs and aspirations of whānau and to reflect the mātauranga (traditional knowledge and ways of working) of different communities throughout the country.

2.45 In 2019/20, the annual reports from the Whānau Ora commissioning agencies stated that 157,935 whānau received Whānau Ora services. In 2020/21, the year the Whānau Ora commissioning agencies received discrete funding for the

response to the Covid-19 pandemic, 326,809 whānau throughout the country – a total of 978,398 people – received Whānau Ora services.

### ***Tipu Matoro ki te Ao: The 2018 Whānau Ora ministerial review report***

- 2.46 In April 2018, the Minister for Whānau Ora appointed an independent panel to review Whānau Ora. The review panel was to:
- assess the ability of the Whānau Ora commissioning approach to effect sustainable change in the well-being and development potential of whānau;
  - explore the extent to which the Whānau Ora service delivery model and commissioning approach is accountable and transparent in the achievement of outcomes for whānau; and
  - scope the applicability of a whānau-centred approach as a useful exemplar for improving outcomes for whānau across government with an emphasis on the social sector.<sup>8</sup>
- 2.47 In November 2018, the review panel completed its final report, *Tipu Matoro ki te Ao*. The review found that Whānau Ora has created positive change for whānau and created the conditions for that change to be sustainable.
- 2.48 The review concluded that Whānau Ora meets the requirements of a structured accountability system and operates in a transparent manner.
- 2.49 However, the review also said that government agencies lacked understanding of Whānau Ora, which had affected their commitment to it. The review was also concerned that government agencies were opting out of their responsibilities to provide services to whānau and expecting Whānau Ora providers to provide those services instead.
- 2.50 The 2013 Cabinet paper establishing the Whānau Ora commissioning approach made several references to the anticipated roles of public organisations. The Cabinet paper included a general expectation that Ministers and public organisations provide “complementary effort” for Whānau Ora. It also outlined a general expectation that public organisations identify opportunities for the Crown and iwi “to support the shared development aims and aspirations of iwi and their whānau and hapū membership.” For example, it identifies the following action as a “critical success factor” for the Whānau Ora commissioning approach:
- Lead sector departments continue to foster and build service capability, delivery and partnering opportunities with the Whānau Ora collectives in order to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable families and their members.*

8 Whānau Ora Review Panel (2018), *Tipu Matoro ki te Ao*, paragraph 3, at [tpk.govt.nz](http://tpk.govt.nz).

- 2.51 The Whānau Ora ministerial review pointed to several decisions made by the Whānau Ora Partnership Group<sup>9</sup> that indicated the nature and extent of the complementary effort expected from other public organisations. For example, the Partnership Group agreed:
- to develop a tool kit and guideline for effective regional engagement with iwi and Whānau Ora providers and improved uptake of Whānau Ora; and
  - that government agencies and iwi report to the Partnership Group annually on the nature of their engagement with each other and their uptake of Whānau Ora.
- 2.52 The Whānau Ora ministerial review recommended that the Government:
- continue and grow the investment in the Whānau Ora Commissioning Approach;
  - ensure that government agencies meet their own service delivery responsibilities and commit to engaging with Whānau Ora; and
  - extend the effort of Te Puni Kōkiri to provide a greater sense of leadership of Whānau Ora within government, and to better support other agencies to engage in Whānau Ora.<sup>10</sup>
- 2.53 The review also noted that whānau-centred approaches could be applied more widely throughout government and made several recommendations to achieve this. These recommendations included completing a whānau-centred policy framework for all of government and improving the quality and availability of data about whānau.
- 2.54 The review considered that a culture shift within government was needed. It recommended that Te Puni Kōkiri work with other public organisations to capitalise on opportunities and address the perceived barriers that are preventing public organisations from supporting Whānau Ora and whānau-centred approaches more generally.

9 The Whānau Ora Partnership Group was set up at the direction of Cabinet in 2014 to provide governance of Whānau Ora. It was made up of six iwi representatives nominated by the Iwi Chairs Forum and six Ministers, and was supported by public officials. However, the partnership group stopped operating in 2017. In 2019, the Minister for Whānau Ora indicated to Cabinet that he wanted to reconsider governance arrangements but that he had not yet put permanent alternative arrangements in place.

10 Whānau Ora Review Panel (2018), *Tipu Matoro ki te Ao*, page 8, at [tpk.govt.nz](http://tpk.govt.nz).

## Te Puni Kōkiri has a strategic focus on whānau-centred approaches

2.55 The Minister for Whānau Ora considered the recommendations of the Whānau Ora ministerial review at the same time Te Puni Kōkiri was being repositioned to increase strategic impact. In June 2019, the then Minister for Māori Development advised her Cabinet colleagues of her intention to:

*... position Te Puni Kōkiri to exert greater leadership and influence on the public sector system to support our government to gain momentum in impacting Māori wellbeing outcomes.*<sup>11</sup>

2.56 Later that month, the Minister for Whānau Ora informed Cabinet of his response to *Tipu Matoro ki te Ao*. He outlined his vision for:

*... Whānau Ora and whānau-centred approaches to be integral to policies, programmes and services throughout the government to improve the wellbeing of New Zealanders.*<sup>12</sup>

2.57 The Minister for Whānau Ora signalled that achieving this vision needs greater investment “beyond just Vote Māori Development”.<sup>13</sup> He said that a whānau-centred approach to policy, programmes, and services needs to be embedded in all government agencies. He noted that Te Puni Kōkiri was continuing to provide strategic leadership for Whānau Ora and whānau-centred approaches throughout the public sector.

2.58 Te Puni Kōkiri has a strategic framework that reflects the Minister’s vision.

2.59 To contribute to its overall vision of “thriving whānau”, Te Puni Kōkiri has three strategic priorities with nine supporting focus areas. The first of these strategic focus areas is to grow the influence of whānau-centred policy and the investment in Whānau Ora across government and into communities.<sup>14</sup>

2.60 Te Puni Kōkiri has four-year performance targets for this strategic focus area. They are:

- an increased number of partnership arrangements to deliver Whānau Ora into communities;

11 Cabinet paper (2019), *Positioning Te Puni Kōkiri for Strategic Impact*, paragraph 4, recommendations 5 and 6, at [tpk.govt.nz](http://tpk.govt.nz).

12 Cabinet paper (2019), *Whānau Ora – Lasting change: Response to the review findings*, paragraphs 5 and 19, at [tpk.govt.nz](http://tpk.govt.nz).

13 Cabinet paper (2019), *Whānau Ora – Lasting change: Response to the review findings*, paragraph 8, at [tpk.govt.nz](http://tpk.govt.nz).

14 Te Puni Kōkiri (2020), *He Takunetanga Rautaki | Strategic Intentions 2020-2024*, pages 5, 6, and 26, at [tpk.govt.nz](http://tpk.govt.nz).

- increased investment and commitment for Whānau Ora policy and investment by public organisations; and
- an increased number of whānau-centred policy approaches across government.<sup>15</sup>

### The roles and responsibilities of Te Puni Kōkiri

- 2.61 Te Puni Kōkiri is responsible for supporting the Minister for Whānau Ora and administering the appropriations for Whānau Ora.
- 2.62 In 2019, the Minister for Māori Development signalled that there would be a strategic repositioning of Te Puni Kōkiri. Shortly after, the leadership team and organisational functions of Te Puni Kōkiri were restructured, including the way it administered Whānau Ora.
- 2.63 In the previous structure, a single team was responsible for administering Whānau Ora and servicing the Minister for Whānau Ora. This meant that work on Whānau Ora had become isolated from the rest of Te Puni Kōkiri.
- 2.64 The restructure was intended to spread responsibility for Whānau Ora policy, strategy, investment, contracts, and Ministerial servicing across several teams. This restructure is now complete and was being embedded when we began our audit.

### Funding for Whānau Ora

- 2.65 The appropriations for Whānau Ora include funding for Te Puni Kōkiri staff to progress the implementation, development, administration, and evaluation of Whānau Ora. They also include funding the outcomes contracts with the three Whānau Ora commissioning agencies. The bulk of the total appropriation is funding for the Whānau Ora commissioning approach.
- 2.66 In 2021/22, the total funding for all Whānau Ora commissioning agencies was about \$214.8 million. This included about \$105.2 million of one-off funding to assist with the Covid-19 pandemic response.
- 2.67 The total budget for all Whānau Ora commissioning agencies for 2022/23 was about \$135 million.

### The work programme of Te Puni Kōkiri for Whānau Ora

- 2.68 Te Puni Kōkiri secured further funding to enable Whānau Ora commissioning agencies and providers to support whānau affected by Covid-19.
- 2.69 Te Puni Kōkiri has also been heavily involved in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It has played a key role in work on Māori vaccination and administering the Māori Communities Covid-19 Fund. This fund supports iwi, hapū, and Māori organisations to achieve higher levels of vaccination and resilience against Covid-19.
- 2.70 This additional work has affected the capacity of Te Puni Kōkiri to grow whānau-centred approaches to policy and service development since 2020. Nonetheless, Te Puni Kōkiri has continued to implement the Whānau Ora ministerial review's other recommendations during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2.71 For example, Te Puni Kōkiri is trialling localised commissioning. This is a model where regional organisations plan and commission Whānau Ora services instead of one of the Whānau Ora commissioning agencies. The trials for localised commissioning are taking place in Tokoroa (with Raukawa Settlement Trust), Te Wairoa (with Te Whare Maire o Tapuwae Charitable Trust), and the Western Bay of Plenty (with Huria Trust).
- 2.72 Te Puni Kōkiri is also partnering with other government agencies for two initiatives: Paiheretia Te Muka Tāngata (see page 35) and Ngā Tini Whetū (see page 49).
- 2.73 Te Puni Kōkiri has also started two other pieces of work as part of its Whānau Ora work programme. The first is an operational review that looks at how various parts of Te Puni Kōkiri support its Whānau Ora work and future work programme. The second is a governance review to consider new governance arrangements for Whānau Ora to permanently replace the Partnership Group that stopped operating in 2017.

# 3

## How Te Puni Kōkiri supports whānau-centred approaches and Whānau Ora

- 3.1 In this Part, we discuss:
- the progress Te Puni Kōkiri has made in increasing public organisations' support and implementation of whānau-centred approaches;
  - the need for greater clarity about the roles and responsibilities of Te Puni Kōkiri for whānau-centred approaches;
  - the administration of Whānau Ora by Te Puni Kōkiri; and
  - areas where Te Puni Kōkiri could improve the performance story of Whānau Ora.
- 3.2 We wanted to assess how well Te Puni Kōkiri has carried out its roles and responsibilities for whānau-centred approaches generally, and Whānau Ora specifically. We expected Te Puni Kōkiri to:
- have clear roles and responsibilities in relation to Whānau Ora;
  - provide effective guidance to public organisations on supporting and implementing whānau-centred approaches;
  - have accountability arrangements for the Whānau Ora commissioning agencies in place, including clearly stated performance expectations;
  - monitor, analyse, and share information about the delivery and effectiveness of Whānau Ora and whānau-centred approaches; and
  - use information to improve the services that Whānau Ora provides and influence public organisations to support and implement whānau-centred approaches.

### Summary of findings

- 3.3 Te Puni Kōkiri has made a good start on broadening whānau-centred approaches throughout the public sector. It is also administering aspects of Whānau Ora well. However, Te Puni Kōkiri has limited capacity to influence the significant change needed throughout the public sector to achieve its aims for whānau-centred approaches.
- 3.4 In our view, the mandate for the role of Te Puni Kōkiri needs to be stronger. Expectations for how public organisations are meant to support whānau-centred approaches, including Whānau Ora, also need to be clearer. We discuss this in detail in Parts 4 and 5.
- 3.5 Te Puni Kōkiri should bring together existing information on Whānau Ora and whānau-centred approaches so that this information is more accessible to public organisations, providers, and the public.

## Te Puni Kōkiri is promoting whānau-centred approaches

### Te Puni Kōkiri has made a good start on broadening the support for, and implementation of, whānau-centred approaches

- 3.6 Te Puni Kōkiri is taking action to influence public organisations to support and implement whānau-centred approaches.
- 3.7 In 2018, Te Puni Kōkiri was developing a whānau-centred policy framework to help public organisations develop policy in a more whānau-centred way. This includes improving the quality of public organisations' engagement with Māori. Te Puni Kōkiri has now completed this framework.
- 3.8 In 2019 and 2020, Te Puni Kōkiri held more than 20 workshops with public organisations' policy and operational staff. These workshops promoted the whānau-centred policy framework and discussed how staff could apply whānau-centred approaches to their work.
- 3.9 Te Puni Kōkiri told us that the workshops were well received and that public organisations have expressed an interest in further workshops. We also heard positive reports about the workshops from some public organisations. However, some people told us that they would still like more help understanding how to apply whānau-centred approaches to their work.
- 3.10 Because Te Puni Kōkiri was involved in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was too busy to hold more policy workshops. However, it intends to do so in the future. In the meantime, in discussions with other public organisations, Te Puni Kōkiri continues to take the opportunity to encourage whānau-centred approaches to policy and service development.
- 3.11 Te Puni Kōkiri told us that it helps public organisations to articulate whānau-centred concepts and encourages them to work in different ways. It said that it has started to notice a change in language in Cabinet papers as a result.
- 3.12 Te Puni Kōkiri also had a role in increasing investment in the Whānau Ora commissioning approach through Budget 2022.
- 3.13 At an operational level, Te Puni Kōkiri has worked closely with partner public organisations on the Paiheretia Te Muka Tāngata (see Part 4) and Ngā Tini Whetū (see Part 5) initiatives to broker relationships between public organisations and the iwi and Māori organisations involved.

- 3.14 We heard – and evaluations of these initiatives confirm – that Te Puni Kōkiri played a key role in building relationships, improving understanding of whānau-centred approaches, and supporting these initiatives to get started.

### **A stronger mandate for the role of Te Puni Kōkiri is needed**

- 3.15 Te Puni Kōkiri has statutory responsibilities to promote Māori achievement and monitor the services that departments and agencies provide to Māori.
- 3.16 The Minister for Māori Development and the Minister for Whānau Ora have set clear expectations for Te Puni Kōkiri. These are reflected in its aims to promote whānau-centred approaches throughout the public sector and encourage public organisations to invest in Whānau Ora.
- 3.17 However, neither Cabinet nor the Public Service Commissioner have explicitly defined a formal mandate or system leadership role for Te Puni Kōkiri to support greater progress towards these aims.
- 3.18 Te Puni Kōkiri told us it is working with Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission (Te Kawa Mataaho) to provide advice to the Minister for Whānau Ora about this.
- 3.19 Te Puni Kōkiri also developed an enterprise work plan for 2022/23 to guide how it progresses its strategic focus area. The work plan includes an aim to work with public organisations to develop and implement a public sector-wide strategy and plan to support whānau-centred approaches.
- 3.20 Te Puni Kōkiri cannot achieve these aims unless other public organisations play their part. In our view, Te Puni Kōkiri will have more success if it has a stronger mandate for increasing whānau-centred approaches to policy development and service delivery throughout the public sector. It will also have more success encouraging increased investment in Whānau Ora.
- 3.21 In our view, there also needs to be clearer expectations for public organisations about how they should support the aims of Te Puni Kōkiri for whānau-centred approaches and Whānau Ora. We discuss this in Parts 4 and 5.

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### Recommendation 1

We recommend that Te Puni Kōkiri seek to clarify the mandate for the role that it has for broadening whānau-centred approaches.

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## Te Puni Kōkiri is administering aspects of Whānau Ora well

- 3.22 We found that Te Puni Kōkiri is administering aspects of Whānau Ora well.
- 3.23 Te Puni Kōkiri, the Whānau Ora commissioning agencies, and providers have a common understanding of whānau ora as a concept, whānau-centred approaches, and Whānau Ora. This was evident from our conversations with them and from the various documents we reviewed.
- 3.24 When we carried out our audit of Whānau Ora in 2015, Te Puni Kōkiri did not yet have a clear and agreed outcomes framework for it. There is now a clear outcomes framework – called the Whānau Ora Outcomes Framework – that was developed and agreed by the Iwi Chairs Forum and the Crown. This is a positive development. The Whānau Ora Outcomes Framework provides a common point of reference for Te Puni Kōkiri, commissioning agencies, and providers.
- 3.25 We found examples of the Whānau Ora Outcomes Framework being referenced by, and influencing the work of, other public organisations. It was used in the development of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, the Treasury’s Living Standards Framework, and the Accident Compensation Corporation’s tāngata whenua outcomes framework.
- 3.26 Roles and responsibilities for strategy, oversight, and the planning, commissioning, and delivery of services for Whānau Ora are clearly defined. These relate to the Minister for Whānau Ora, Te Puni Kōkiri, Whānau Ora commissioning agencies, and providers.
- 3.27 There are accountability arrangements for Whānau Ora in place. These include:
- an annual letter from the Minister for Whānau Ora to the commissioning agencies setting out his expectations of them;
  - a four-year outcome agreement between Te Puni Kōkiri and each commissioning agency that requires commissioning agencies to prepare an annual investment plan, quarterly reports, and annual reports; and
  - the annual reporting of Te Puni Kōkiri against appropriations, which provides accountability to Parliament for spending and performance achieved.

- 3.28 Te Puni Kōkiri is using its expertise and available insights to support improvements to the Whānau Ora commissioning model, including:
- actively advising the Minister for Whānau Ora to support him to make improvements – for example, by briefing him on funding matters and the governance review for Whānau Ora;
  - implementing the insights and recommendations of the Whānau Ora ministerial review about how it administers Whānau Ora, for example, trialling localised commissioning and considering governance arrangements; and
  - securing additional funding for the response to, and recovery from, the Covid-19 pandemic based on information from the Whānau Ora commissioning agencies.

### **Te Puni Kōkiri could tell a more compelling story about the performance of Whānau Ora**

- 3.29 There is interest in the impact and value of Whānau Ora. Te Puni Kōkiri told us that it recognises that it is likely to have more success influencing other public organisations if it can tell a compelling story about the immediate and longer-term outcomes of Whānau Ora and whānau-centred approaches.
- 3.30 Currently, Te Puni Kōkiri receives regular reports from Whānau Ora commissioning agencies as part of their accountability requirements. The reports include information on the whānau that the commissioning agencies are assisting, the goals of the whānau, and the progress that whānau are making towards achieving these goals.
- 3.31 In our view, these reports include useful information about the impact Whānau Ora is having for whānau.
- 3.32 Te Puni Kōkiri has also commissioned and published information on the implementation and delivery of whānau-centred initiatives. It has done this to understand good practice and the factors that support and enable whānau-centred approaches. Examples include:
- research on whānau-centred approaches in 2015;
  - an initial evaluation of the commissioning agency model in 2016; and
  - insights into effective whānau-centred primary health care services and support in 2020.

- 3.33 Te Puni Kōkiri has commissioned initial evaluations of Ngā Tini Whetū and Paiheretia Te Muka Tāngata and its ongoing trial of localised commissioning.
- 3.34 Te Puni Kōkiri is committed to improving the available information on what Whānau Ora has achieved. For example, it intends to build its data analytics capability and develop a new measurement framework for the Whānau Ora Outcomes Framework. It is also considering analysing data held in the public sector's Integrated Data Infrastructure database.<sup>16</sup>
- 3.35 Te Puni Kōkiri sees this work as critical to its ability to demonstrate the impact of, and increase investment in, Whānau Ora and other whānau-centred approaches.
- 3.36 Te Puni Kōkiri recognises that there are several challenges to improving performance reporting about Whānau Ora:
- Taking whānau-centred approaches means that each whānau is working towards their own goals and aspirations. This makes it difficult to prepare an aggregate picture of the outcomes that are being achieved.
  - Te Puni Kōkiri receives reporting from the Whānau Ora commissioning agencies, but it does not have access to the underlying information and data from whānau that informs those reports.
  - There is some information about progress on short- and medium-term outcomes, but the long-term, intergenerational, and holistic nature of the outcomes being sought means that change will take time.
  - There are challenges in attributing outcomes to particular initiatives. Not only do whānau benefit from their own efforts to achieve their goals and aspirations, they also receive a wide range of services and support over time.
- 3.37 Some of these challenges are not unique to Te Puni Kōkiri. We have long held concerns about the quality of information available about the impacts of public sector services.<sup>17</sup> However, we still think improvements can be made. In our view, it is important that Te Puni Kōkiri prioritise and complete its work to improve outcomes reporting.
- 3.38 Te Puni Kōkiri should also consider what broader information it can draw on to describe the performance of Whānau Ora.

<sup>16</sup> The Integrated Data Infrastructure is a large database run by the government that holds anonymised data about people and households. The data comes from public organisations, Statistics New Zealand surveys, and non-government organisations. This database allows for cross-sector research and evaluation. See "Integrated Data Infrastructure", at [stats.govt.nz](https://stats.govt.nz).

<sup>17</sup> See Office of the Auditor-General (1999), *Third report for 1999: The accountability of Executive Government to Parliament*; Office of the Auditor-General (2019), *Observations from our 2017/18 central government audits*; Office of the Auditor-General (2021), *The problems, progress, and potential of performance reporting*.

- 3.39 The success of the commissioning approach relies on the strong network of iwi, hapū, providers, and community organisations that make up the Whānau Ora infrastructure, the key relationships and trust established between providers and whānau, and the holistic approach that Whānau Ora navigators take.
- 3.40 Te Puni Kōkiri should work with Whānau Ora commissioning agencies, providers, and whānau to develop performance reporting that better reflects the way that services are provided to whānau and how this supports whānau success. This would enable Te Puni Kōkiri to tell a richer performance story.
- 3.41 Te Puni Kōkiri told us that work to improve measures and use of the Integrated Data Infrastructure is part of its enterprise work plan for 2022/23.
- 3.42 Other public organisations evaluating whānau-centred initiatives and services will likely find the insights from Te Puni Kōkiri about how to improve performance reporting useful, particularly its insights about how the Whānau Ora system is operating.

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### Recommendation 2

We recommend that Te Puni Kōkiri prioritise the completion of work to improve how it measures and reports the impacts and outcomes that whānau-centred approaches are achieving, and consider drawing on broader information about whānau successes.

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### Te Puni Kōkiri should make existing information on Whānau Ora and whānau-centred approaches more accessible

- 3.43 There is a range of monitoring, research, and evaluation information publicly available on Whānau Ora and whānau-centred approaches.
- 3.44 The Whānau Ora commissioning agencies and providers produce a lot of information through their reporting. They also commission research and evaluation to help inform their activities and tell the stories of whānau achievements. This provides a rich source of information on the effectiveness of what Whānau Ora delivers.
- 3.45 There is some research on, and evaluation of, government initiatives that include aspects of whānau-centred approaches, such as the evaluation of Te Pae Oranga, the New Zealand Police-led iwi community panels.<sup>18</sup>
- 3.46 Commissioning agencies told us that they regularly send their reports, research, and evaluations to public organisations. From what we have seen, these reports

<sup>18</sup> Te Pae Oranga is an initiative between the Police and iwi/Māori partners. It uses tikanga and kaupapa Māori and restorative justice processes to prevent reoffending by addressing the underlying issues that may lead to crime, such as addiction and financial stress.

provide good insights into how Whānau Ora is working and what whānau are achieving.

- 3.47 However, it appears that public organisations are either unaware of or not making good use of this information. For this reason, we consider that it could be useful for Te Puni Kōkiri to collate this information and make it more accessible for the public, providers, and public organisations.
- 3.48 Te Puni Kōkiri told us it is scoping the development of a central repository of monitoring, research, and evaluation information about Whānau Ora and whānau-centred approaches.
- 3.49 In our view, this work would help address our concern about how well public organisations are using information about whānau-centred approaches, including Whānau Ora.

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**Recommendation 3**

We recommend that Te Puni Kōkiri continue to identify the various available sources of monitoring, research, and evaluation information about the implementation and effectiveness of whānau-centred approaches and improve the accessibility of this information to public organisations, non-government organisations, and the public.

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# 4

## Public organisations' support for whānau-centred approaches

- 4.1 In this Part, we discuss:
- public organisations' understanding of whānau-centred approaches;
  - what steps public organisations are taking to support and implement whānau-centred approaches;
  - our observations about how well public organisations have supported and implemented whānau-centred approaches;
  - the need to clarify expectations for public organisations about supporting and implementing whānau-centred approaches;
  - public sector processes and practices that can hinder the support and implementation of whānau-centred approaches; and
  - work currently under way that could create a more enabling environment for whānau-centred approaches.
- 4.2 In 2018, the Whānau Ora ministerial review noted that whānau-centred approaches could be applied more widely throughout government. The review also said that public organisations lacked an understanding of them, which affected how well they were supported and implemented. In response, Te Puni Kōkiri changed its strategic focus areas to include broadening whānau-centred approaches throughout the public sector.
- 4.3 We wanted to understand what public organisations have done to better understand, support, and implement whānau-centred approaches. To support the aims of Te Puni Kōkiri, we expected that public organisations would:
- seek to improve their understanding of whānau-centred approaches and how they can support and implement these approaches;
  - adapt their systems, processes, and practices to better enable whānau-centred approaches;
  - work together to integrate and co-ordinate services for whānau;
  - make use of monitoring, evaluation, and research information to improve service delivery and help create positive changes for whānau; and
  - understand and take action to address systemic barriers to supporting and implementing whānau-centred approaches.

## Summary of findings

- 4.4 Some public organisations are starting to take whānau-centred approaches to their work. However, much of this work involves trialling small-scale, time-limited initiatives. Although we saw positive intent from some public organisations, we did not see a significant shift towards supporting or implementing whānau-centred approaches. We also did not see systematic consideration of where and when whānau-centred approaches may be appropriate.
- 4.5 Processes and practices that can hinder implementing or supporting whānau-centred ways of working need to be addressed (such as working in siloes, overly prescriptive contracts, and onerous reporting requirements). A team in the Ministry of Social Development is leading work to embed a relational approach to commissioning throughout the social sector that could help address these barriers.
- 4.6 Ongoing work to improve the public finance system and new expectations in the Public Service Act 2020 could also assist with system-level barriers.

## Understanding of whānau-centred approaches is mixed

- 4.7 Public organisations are aware of Whānau Ora and broadly understand why it was set up and what it seeks to achieve. Some staff at public organisations also understand the distinctions between whānau ora as an outcome, whānau-centred approaches, and Whānau Ora.
- 4.8 However, we also heard that others were not familiar with whānau-centred approaches.
- 4.9 Some public organisations have worked with Te Puni Kōkiri to incorporate whānau-centred approaches into their specific initiatives and services. For example:
- Te Puni Kōkiri worked with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment on the vision and outcomes framework for the Māori Employment Action Plan. This resulted in the plan incorporating a long-term, holistic, and intergenerational view of wealth creation and recognising the importance of matters such as housing and health.
  - The Department of Corrections worked closely with Te Puni Kōkiri on taking a whānau-centred approach to Paiheretia Te Muka Tāngata (which is part of the Department's Māori Pathways programme).

- A Te Puni Kōkiri secondee assisted the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet with documenting evidence on whānau-centred and community-led approaches and the opportunity for these approaches to be better supported through the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.
- 4.10 Te Puni Kōkiri intends to highlight its work with the Department of Corrections and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet as examples of whānau-centred approaches that other public organisations can learn from. This is encouraging.
- 4.11 We heard mixed views about how much information public organisations are seeking about whānau-centred approaches. Te Puni Kōkiri told us that public organisations are increasingly asking for advice and guidance when they develop initiatives.
- 4.12 Some of the staff in public organisations we spoke with were not aware of having received any advice from Te Puni Kōkiri about whānau-centred approaches or Whānau Ora. They acknowledged that they had not sought advice from Te Puni Kōkiri either.
- 4.13 Some staff in public organisations have participated in provider-led whānau ora training throughout the country.
- 4.14 We found that, in some instances, providers are leading the way and urging public organisations to invest in whānau-centred initiatives and services.
- 4.15 For example, Te Tihi o Ruahine Whānau Ora Alliance (Te Tihi) is an alliance of nine iwi/Māori providers who collectively provide leadership and guidance, and service whānau throughout Tararua, Palmerston North, Manawatū, and Horowhenua. Te Tihi has worked closely with public organisations by helping to bring them on board, building strong relationships, and developing their understanding of the value of whānau-centred approaches.
- 4.16 This has enabled Te Tihi to drive shared initiatives such as Kāinga Whānau Ora, a Whānau Ora and collective impact approach that works alongside whānau living in Kāinga Ora homes and transitional and emergency accommodation. The aim of this initiative is to support these whānau to achieve their goals and aspirations.
- 4.17 Some providers we spoke with questioned whether public organisations truly understand whānau-centred approaches. They do not see public organisations working in whānau-centred ways. However, we also heard from public

organisations and providers that public organisations' understanding of whānau-centred approaches has been gradually improving.

- 4.18 Many public organisations we spoke with emphasised the role Whānau Ora commissioning agencies and providers played in supporting whānau during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly their ability to act quickly and draw on their networks to get support to communities.
- 4.19 The visibility of this work appears to have raised public organisations' awareness of Whānau Ora commissioning agencies and providers and the potential of whānau-centred approaches.

## Some public organisations are taking steps towards whānau-centred approaches

### Strategies are starting to signal an intention to support whānau-centred approaches

- 4.20 Despite public organisations' mixed understanding of whānau ora, some are starting to signal an intention to take whānau-centred approaches to their work.
- 4.21 Many public organisations (or sectors) have developed strategies that state their commitment to improving services and outcomes for Māori and tagata Pasifika. Some of these strategies reference whānau ora or a focus on whānau and family in the design of policies and services.
- 4.22 Examples include:
- He Korowai Oranga: the Māori Health Strategy and Whakamaua: Māori Health Action Plan 2020-25.
  - Ola Manuia: Pacific Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2020-25.
  - New Zealand Cancer Action Plan 2019-2029.
  - COVID-19 Māori Health Protection Plan (2021).
  - Pacific Prosperity, the Ministry of Social Development's national strategy and action plan for Pacific peoples.
  - Te Aorerekura: The National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence (2021).
  - MAIHI Ka Ora – The National Māori Housing Strategy.
  - Hōkai Rangi: Ara Poutama Aotearoa Strategy 2019-2024.
  - Te Huringa o Te Tai, the Police's Māori strategy.

### **Public organisations are increasingly partnering with Māori**

- 4.23 Public organisations are increasingly setting up formal partnerships with iwi, hapū, and Māori organisations.
- 4.24 For example, the Police have partnered with Far North iwi Ngāi Takoto, Te Aupōuri, Te Rarawa, and Ngāti Kuri to develop Whiria Te Muka. This is a whānau-centred initiative focused on preventing and reducing family harm.
- 4.25 Oranga Tamariki has strategic partnerships with several iwi and Māori organisations throughout the country to help tamariki and rangatahi Māori “thrive in the care and protection of their whānau, hapū, and iwi”.<sup>19</sup>
- 4.26 Some public organisations have also set up working relationships with Pasifika organisations. For example, Pasifika Futures told us that it has partnered with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment on managed isolation and quarantine support.

### **Some public organisations are adopting whānau-centred approaches**

- 4.27 The public organisations we spoke with identified a range of initiatives that support or reflect whānau-centred approaches. The nature of this work varies, as well as how it reflects the key features of whānau-centred approaches.
- 4.28 As we have already mentioned, some public organisations are working to deliberately take whānau-centred approaches in the way they design and deliver programmes.

### **Paiheretia Te Muka Tāngata**

Paiheretia Te Muka Tāngata is a whānau-centred initiative jointly led by Te Puni Kōkiri, the Department of Corrections, and the Ministry of Social Development, in partnership with local Māori. The initiative intends to support tāne Māori and their whānau in their engagement with the Corrections system.

The initiative assists them to set goals, access services, and maintain relationships and cultural connections with whānau members. It links with the Ministry of Social Development's integrated case management service. It also aims to improve the capability of Department of Corrections' staff to work in kaupapa Māori and whānau-centred ways.

The Memorandum of Understanding for the initiative was signed in September 2019. The initiative is being piloted with iwi in two areas: Ngāti Rangi in Te Tai Tōkerau (Northland) and Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated in Te Matau a Māui (Hawke's Bay). The pilots involve funding provider-based Kaiarataki Navigators to work with tāne Māori and their whānau.<sup>20</sup>

In September 2021, an early evaluation of these pilots found that, although Kaiarataki Navigator contracts had been in place for only six to eight weeks, both tāne and iwi had reported positive engagement and had achieved some outcomes. At the time of writing this report, the Department of Corrections and Te Puni Kōkiri were in the process of finalising this evaluation.

- 4.29 Public organisations recognise the need to consider the wider whānau context and address a broader range of needs when working with individuals.
- 4.30 The Police, for example, told us that a whānau-centred approach underpins Te Pae Oranga, which takes a holistic approach to reduce future offending. The Ministry of Social Development highlighted E Tū Whānau and Whānau Resilience as two examples of whānau-centred initiatives.
- 4.31 Similarly, Kāinga Ora told us that it is introducing a more whānau-centred way of working that involves connecting those living in Kāinga Ora homes to other support and services where necessary.
- 4.32 Public organisations have also established new navigator roles in recent years. In Part 5, we discuss the importance of public organisations that are establishing navigation roles like these co-ordinating with Whānau Ora commissioning agencies and providers.

20 The providers delivering the initiative are: Waitomo Papakāinga, Te Hau Ora o Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Whatua Rūnanga, and Ngāti Hine Health Trust (in Northland); and Te Roopu a Iwi Trust, Te Kupenga Hauora Ahuriri, Te Whare Maire o Tapuwae, Kahungunu Health, Te Ikaora Rangatahi Services Incorporated, and Te Taiwhenua o Heretaunga Trust (in Hawke's Bay).

### **Few public organisations measure whānau outcomes in their monitoring and evaluation**

- 4.33 To improve their information and data on whānau, some public organisations have monitoring and evaluation under way or planned. Some of this work has a specific focus on measuring whānau outcomes.
- 4.34 We identified a few examples of public organisations gathering insights in a way that could be useful for whānau-centred approaches. These include gathering insights for specific initiatives such as Ngā Tini Whetū (where evaluation is being driven by Te Pou Matakana/Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency) and other recent strategies and plans, such as Te Aorerekura: The National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence.
- 4.35 Nonetheless, staff at public organisations told us that there is a lack of information on whānau and whānau outcomes because public services tend to be focused on individuals. This means that the data that is collected also tends to be focused on individuals.

### **There is not yet a significant shift towards whānau-centred approaches**

- 4.36 After 10 years, much of the work that public organisations are doing in relation to whānau-centred approaches is still in early stages (for example, signalling strategic intent and building internal capability) or involves trialling small scale, time-limited initiatives.
- 4.37 In our view, the work to date does not yet represent a significant shift to whānau-centred approaches – either by these organisations or throughout the public sector. The general direction of travel is positive, but most public organisations we talked with are just getting started. A lot more work is needed for public organisations to make change that is in line with the aims of the Minister for Whānau Ora and the strategic focus of Te Puni Kōkiri.
- 4.38 People told us that public organisations have good intentions and a willingness to take whānau-centred approaches. However, we observed some scepticism about the nature and extent of change.

- 4.39 People we spoke with questioned whether public organisations are making changes that are really whānau centred and that make a difference for whānau. For example, we heard that although public organisations often signal the need to devolve decision-making to better meet whānau needs and aspirations, they are reluctant to do so in practice.
- 4.40 As a result, many questioned whether public organisations know how to apply a whānau-centred approach to their work.
- 4.41 The Whānau Ora ministerial review made similar observations and findings.

### **Clearer expectations for public organisations are needed**

- 4.42 There are no clear expectations for public organisations to take whānau-centred approaches to policy and service development or to support whānau-centred initiatives.
- 4.43 The Minister for Whānau Ora has expressed a clear intention to increase whānau-centred approaches throughout the public sector and shared this with his colleagues. The strategic focus area of Te Puni Kōkiri reflects this intention (see paragraphs 2.55 to 2.60). However, there is no corresponding obligation on other public organisations.
- 4.44 Te Puni Kōkiri told us that its work with Te Kawa Mataaho to develop advice to the Minister for Whānau Ora includes consideration of how to set expectations across the public sector.
- 4.45 Clarifying expectations for public organisations, alongside formally mandating the role of Te Puni Kōkiri (see Part 3), would place a stronger onus on public organisations to support the aim of broadening whānau-centred approaches.
- 4.46 Given the partnership approach underpinning the original governance of Whānau Ora, Te Puni Kōkiri will need to consider how to partner with iwi and hapū and seek the views of Whānau Ora commissioning agencies, providers, and whānau in developing this advice.

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#### **Recommendation 4**

We recommend that Te Puni Kōkiri seek to clarify expectations for public organisations to support whānau-centred approaches.

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## Public sector processes and practices can discourage whānau-centred approaches

- 4.47 Although public sector processes and practices were developed for good reasons and are appropriate in many contexts, they can also act as a barrier to whānau-centred approaches.
- 4.48 We recognise that individual public organisations do not always have the authority to remove system-level barriers.
- 4.49 However, even when public organisations have the ability to adopt new ways of working that could improve how services are designed and delivered for whānau, changes still appear difficult to make.
- 4.50 We were told that public organisations tend to design and implement services that cater to the needs of individuals rather than whānau and take an “individualised, deficit focus” to providing services. This approach often results in a narrow focus on fixing a particular problem – which is often a problem experienced by individuals – rather than empowering whānau to be well and self-managing.
- 4.51 An individualised deficit focus may suit some services, such as emergency care for an acute illness or injury. In other situations, such as long-term recovery from illness or injury, a focus on building whānau strengths and resilience might be more appropriate.

## Funding and contracting processes and practices can act as a barrier

- 4.52 In our interviews, Whānau Ora commissioning agencies and providers expressed considerable frustration about public sector funding and contracting processes and practices. Many staff in public organisations we spoke with echoed these frustrations.
- 4.53 A consistent theme was that public organisations often operate in isolation of each other when funding and contracting services. This tends to mean that public organisations focus on their priorities rather than taking a holistic and integrated service response to whānau, who often have multiple, overlapping needs and aspirations.
- 4.54 This tendency also compounds the compliance costs that providers face when taking on contracts. We were told that some providers manage 30 or 40 public sector contracts each, even in a single sector.

- 4.55 Public organisations often have fixed eligibility criteria for funding. These criteria do not always align with what Whānau Ora providers do or the way that they operate. We also heard that public organisations often prescribe the services that they want others to provide.
- 4.56 These features leave little or no flexibility for providers to design and deliver services that respond to the needs of whānau and achieve the best outcomes. Contracts can also impose restrictive eligibility criteria for services. This can mean that some whānau or some whānau members cannot access services that would benefit them.
- 4.57 One provider we spoke with described having to “contort” itself to suit public organisations’ contract requirements and service prescriptions when applying for funding. Another provider said that meeting these requirements risks providers losing sense of “who we are”.
- 4.58 Tendering is a common way for public organisations to award contracts, and it is often an effective way to secure contracts and services with good value for money. However, we heard that it can also foster a competitive rather than collaborative environment among providers.
- 4.59 This competition acts as a barrier to whānau-centred ways of working because providers often rely on their relationships with each other to provide co-ordinated and holistic support to whānau.
- 4.60 Tendering sometimes does not suit the development of collaborative approaches. Nor does it suit situations where there is only one appropriate provider – for example, an iwi provider wanting to design and deliver services to whānau.
- 4.61 In many instances, tendering for services will be the appropriate method for securing services. However, public organisations should explore and seek guidance on alternative methods that might be more appropriate in a given circumstance.
- 4.62 Although the average length of provider contracts in the health and social sectors has increased in recent years, we were told that public organisations often still offer short-term contracts. Because contracts do not often include money for administrative tasks, these contract cycles take up staff time that could be used for supporting whānau.
- 4.63 We were told that providers often experience application fatigue with contracts and funding sources that they must regularly apply or re-apply for.
- 4.64 As well as the immediate effects on whānau support, short-term contracts put providers’ long-term sustainability at risk. Providers cannot easily plan or guarantee support for whānau beyond contract cycles.

- 4.65 One commissioning agency told us that, although it had worked hard to build relationships with its providers, its inability to guarantee them funding from one year to the next puts these relationships at risk.
- 4.66 Staff at public organisations and providers said that reporting requirements in contracts are often overly onerous.
- 4.67 People also considered that the value of some reporting requirements is questionable. Some requirements fail to reflect the richness of providers' work with whānau and the results they are achieving. People told us that public organisations are largely interested in what was variously referred to as "tick box", "widget", or "outputs-based" reporting instead.
- 4.68 We were told that public organisations are often less interested in the perspectives of whānau or other information about outcomes. As a result, provider reports tend not to give public organisations useful information about whānau outcomes and goals.
- 4.69 As discussed in Part 3, we consider that Te Puni Kōkiri should prioritise completing its work on insights and performance reporting for whānau-centred approaches. This work could be useful for other public organisations.
- 4.70 It is important that public organisations gather information about shorter-term impacts that is useful and appropriate. However, we encourage public organisations to consider how they can improve reporting requirements to ensure that they record useful information about results being achieved without overburdening providers.

### **There are challenges in consistently integrating and co-ordinating services for whānau**

- 4.71 Public organisations, particularly in the health, social, and justice sectors, are intending to work together and with non-government organisations to provide joined-up (sometimes called "integrated") services for whānau. They recognise that a co-ordinated approach to supporting whānau is integral to providing services and support, and to achieving and sustaining whānau ora.
- 4.72 This intention is reflected in a range of strategic documents, including:
- Te Aorerekura: The National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence;
  - the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy;
  - He Korowai Oranga: the Māori Health Strategy;

- Whakamaua: Māori Health Action Plan 2020-25;
- MAIHI Ka Ora; and
- the Homelessness Action Plan.

- 4.73 We heard that collaborative work on responding to the Covid-19 pandemic – including on the whānau-centred approach developed for the Māori vaccination drive in 2021 – has helped to strengthen relationships between public organisations. This was because they needed to meet regularly and work closely together. Public organisations we talked to in Canterbury said that the Canterbury earthquakes had a similar effect in bringing agencies together.
- 4.74 However, we also heard mixed views about whether inter-agency forums and working groups result in action and whether the co-ordinating role played by Regional Public Service Leads in the regions is making a difference.
- 4.75 Regional public organisation leaders often work alongside iwi and providers in regional forums or governance groups. We identified particularly strong relationships in Manawatū where Te Tihi o Ruahine Whānau Ora Alliance championed a Whānau Ora and collective impact approach in the region.
- 4.76 However, in most instances, we heard that the relationships between public organisations and providers are driven by contractual arrangements for specific services. As we have discussed, some public sector processes, practices, and system-level settings make it difficult for providers to develop and deliver whānau-centred services. These barriers also affect the quality of the relationships between providers and public organisations.
- 4.77 There are some examples of public organisations and Māori organisations collaborating on specific whānau-centred initiatives. These include Ngā Tini Whetū, Paiheretia Te Muka Tāngata, and the Kāinga Whānau Ora initiative in Manawatū.
- 4.78 However, we did not see many examples of public organisations implementing integrated services in practice. We heard that it is not easy and that there are many reasons why it is not happening. These include:
- a lack of clear and consistent leadership at all levels for providing integrated services;
  - public organisations having different priorities or being too busy for what they perceive as additional or optional work;
  - public organisations having concerns about not being able to share information about whānau because of the Privacy Act 2020; and

- at the regional level, limited sources of discretionary funding to enable public organisations to pool resources for shared initiatives, as well as different organisational criteria and processes for approving funding.

### **Public organisations' capability to work in whānau-centred ways is still developing**

- 4.79 Public organisations are building the cultural competence and capability of their staff to engage with Māori and Pasifika communities and design policies and services in a way that meets these communities' aspirations and needs. Some public organisations have recently employed staff specifically to assist with these organisational changes.
- 4.80 Although many staff in public organisations acknowledged that public organisations are working on improving capability, they were clear that there is a long way to go. Many people told us that they did not think public organisations understand how to support whānau-centred approaches in practice.
- 4.81 Staff in public organisations also told us that some are reluctant or resistant to embrace whānau-centred ways of working – or that they lack the capability to work in different ways that better support whānau-centred approaches.
- 4.82 Public organisations and providers emphasised the importance of leadership and building the right mindset to bring about cultural change and changes to organisational systems and processes.
- 4.83 Many people emphasised a need for more Māori staff in public organisations, particularly in senior positions, to help bring about change. Some pointed to the value of secondments in improving understanding and capability in public organisations.

## Work under way could better enable whānau-centred approaches

- 4.84 The effect of the barriers posed by these public sector processes and practices is that the public sector's operating environment incentivises individualised, service-focused approaches while disincentivising whānau-centred approaches. This makes it difficult to support or implement whānau-centred approaches.
- 4.85 When we asked people what would enable public organisations to provide integrated support for whānau and better support whānau-centred approaches, they consistently identified the same factors. They include:
- strong leadership;
  - having the right people at the table;
  - having productive, high-trust relationships;
  - a long-term commitment to working together;
  - a focus on shared goals and a common agenda;
  - partnering with the community sector; and
  - being prepared to take risks and to test and address perceived barriers.<sup>21</sup>
- 4.86 In our view, the barriers to supporting and implementing whānau-centred approaches are not insurmountable. Many of them do not need changes to system-level settings and policies to overcome.
- 4.87 Public organisations and providers told us that the Covid-19 pandemic provided an opportunity for providers and public organisations to work together more closely. It also led to public organisations working differently and “dropping the red tape” that can discourage whānau-centred ways of working. We heard a mix of optimism and scepticism from public organisations and providers that this approach will continue.
- 4.88 The public sector has started work that is intended to address the barriers that some public sector processes and practices create. The Ministry of Social Development has a team leading work for the Social Wellbeing Board that aims to improve how the government commissions social services.
- 4.89 The intention is that, during the next six years, 22 social sector government departments and Crown entities will implement a more relational approach to commissioning social services. This is consistent with the Social Wellbeing Board's role to work with sectors to consider outcomes as a whole instead of agencies considering outcomes for their individual responsibilities only.

21 We recently commissioned a report from Haemata Limited about Māori perspectives of accountability that emphasises the importance to Māori of meaningful, transparent, and accountable relationships between them and the public sector. See Haemata Limited (2022), *Māori perspectives on public accountability*.

- 4.90 If successful, this work could encourage a more enabling environment for whānau-centred approaches. It could also encourage more positive and productive relationships between the public sector and social service providers more generally.
- 4.91 The implementation plan for this work describes six overlapping features of relational approaches to commissioning. They are:
- grounding work in the needs and aspirations of the people being served;
  - entering relationships with a common set of outcomes;
  - recognising and giving practical effect to te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi;
  - agreeing how to work together to deliver these common outcomes;
  - committing to shared accountability; and
  - agreeing clear roles throughout the commissioning process.
- 4.92 The implementation plan includes action to address system-wide barriers that make moving to relational ways of commissioning difficult. The plan identifies several system-wide barriers including procurement rules, budget processes, the allocation of responsibilities between agencies, legislation, government policy, and how these are operationalised.
- 4.93 It is important that Te Puni Kōkiri continues to be involved in this work so that it is well informed by an understanding of what is needed to better enable whānau-centred approaches. Te Puni Kōkiri told us it wants to work more closely with the Ministry of Social Development to ensure that the new relational commissioning model aligns well with Whānau Ora and whānau-centred ways of working.

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#### **Recommendation 5**

We recommend that the Social Wellbeing Board consider how to better enable whānau-centred approaches in developing and implementing the Government's new relational approach to commissioning social services.

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- 4.94 The Productivity Commission is also carrying out an inquiry on economic inclusion and social mobility. The inquiry is focusing on the causes and underlying dynamics of persistent disadvantage. Part of its brief is to develop recommendations for system changes.
- 4.95 The Productivity Commission released its interim report in September 2022. It includes interim recommendations about “system shifts” it considers necessary to better support well-being outcomes, including outcomes for whānau.
- 4.96 The Productivity Commission intends to release its final report in May 2023.
- 4.97 We reiterate that many of the barriers to whānau-centred approaches can be addressed without major organisational or system changes. Public organisations should not wait for the Productivity Commission’s final report or the Social Wellbeing Board’s work on relational commissioning to be finished.
- 4.98 It is crucial that public organisations consider what they can do now to better support whānau-centred approaches. For example, they may be able to make greater use of outcomes-based contracts and work with iwi, hapū, Māori, Pasifika, and community organisations to co-design services where appropriate.

### **The Treasury and Te Kawa Mataaho could provide more proactive advice**

- 4.99 Many public organisations see the Vote structure and the Public Finance Act 1989 as a barrier to public organisations working together. They told us that this does not create an enabling environment for whānau-centred approaches.
- 4.100 However, the Treasury told us that the public finance system enables flexibility and that public organisations have many different mechanisms and pieces of guidance to enable joint working arrangements. We agree with the Treasury.
- 4.101 Paiheretia te Muka Tāngata and Ngā Tini Whetū (which we describe in more detail in Part 5) are examples of public organisations jointly funding initiatives.
- 4.102 Nonetheless, there appears to be significant uncertainty about the joint funding models available. We consider that the Treasury could take a more proactive approach to providing guidance to public organisations about how to jointly fund initiatives.

- 4.103 Ongoing improvements to the public finance system and implementation of the Public Service Act could also help address systemic barriers to supporting Whānau Ora and whānau-centred approaches. In Budget 2022, the Treasury began piloting a “cluster” approach for the justice and natural resource sectors to improve collaboration and reporting within existing legislative provisions.
- 4.104 The Public Service Act introduced a range of formal mechanisms to support more joined-up working throughout the public sector. The Act also includes expectations for public organisations to develop and maintain their capability to engage with and understand Māori perspectives.
- 4.105 Te Kawa Mataaho has an important role in embedding these changes and supporting public organisations to make use of these mechanisms.
- 4.106 Te Kawa Mataaho told us it often provides direct support to agencies working through matters of system design, including proposals for joint working arrangements. It has also developed general guidance for structural, governance, and collaborative arrangements in the public sector.<sup>22</sup>

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#### **Recommendation 6**

We recommend that the Treasury and Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission provide more proactive guidance to public organisations about joint working and funding arrangements available that would support the use of whānau-centred approaches.

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22 Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission, “Tā pūnaha hanganga: System design”, at [publicservice.govt.nz](https://publicservice.govt.nz) and Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission, “Kete Rauemi Hoahoa mō ngā raru – Guidance: System Design Toolkit for shared problems”, at [publicservice.govt.nz](https://publicservice.govt.nz).

# Public organisations' support for Whānau Ora

- 5.1 In this Part, we discuss:
- how well public organisations are supporting Whānau Ora; and
  - the need to clarify expectations for public organisations about their support of Whānau Ora.
- 5.2 We wanted to understand what progress Te Puni Kōkiri had made on its strategic focus area for increasing investment in Whānau Ora.
- 5.3 We also wanted to understand what public organisations have done to provide “complementary effort” for Whānau Ora, which is what the 2013 Cabinet paper setting up the commissioning approach envisioned.
- 5.4 To achieve the aims of Te Puni Kōkiri, we expected that public organisations would:
- work with Whānau Ora commissioning agencies and providers to address the needs and aspirations of whānau;
  - adapt their systems, processes, and practices to better support Whānau Ora; and
  - understand and take action to address systemic barriers to supporting Whānau Ora.

## Summary of findings

- 5.5 The compounding effect of the lack of clear expectations for public organisations and the barriers posed by public sector processes and practices means that limited progress has been made in increasing investment in Whānau Ora, the Government's flagship whānau-centred approach.
- 5.6 There has not been much change since the Whānau Ora ministerial review in 2018. Providers still struggle to access services and support for the whānau they work with. This has been detrimental to providers' ability to support whānau and the effectiveness of the Government's overall investment in Whānau Ora.
- 5.7 The Cabinet paper setting up the Whānau Ora commissioning approach said that public organisations should carry out a “complementary effort” to support Whānau Ora. However, what is meant by complementary effort has never been clearly defined.

## Public organisations' support for Whānau Ora has been limited

- 5.8 Although public organisations are investing in Whānau Ora commissioning agencies, this funding typically does not directly support the design and delivery of whānau-centred approaches.
- 5.9 As discussed in Part 4, we consider that there are several reasons for this. They include:
- a lack of clear expectations for public organisations;
  - real and perceived barriers posed by public sector processes, practices, and system-level settings; and
  - the still-developing capability and willingness of staff at public organisations to engage with Māori and with whānau-centred ways of working.

## Te Puni Kōkiri remains the main funder of the Whānau Ora commissioning approach

- 5.10 Aside from the contracts Te Puni Kōkiri had with commissioning agencies, we identified few examples of public organisations funding commissioning agencies and providers to design and implement whānau-centred services. This affects the ability of providers to support whānau to meet their needs and aspirations, and the effectiveness of the Government's overall investment in Whānau Ora.
- 5.11 For example, the Ministry of Education has a school attendance contract with one commissioning agency that is intended as a whānau-centred approach. The Ministry of Education told us this contract allows providers to decide what actions should be taken to address attendance. However, we were also told that the contract does not adequately cover work to address wider student experiences or challenges, nor the experiences or challenges of their whānau.
- 5.12 The main examples we saw of public organisations funding whānau-centred initiatives by Whānau Ora commissioning agencies and providers are Paiheretia te Muka Tāngata (see Part 4) and Ngā Tini Whetū.
- 5.13 Some of the iwi providers involved in piloting Paiheretia te Muka Tāngata in Northland and Hawke's Bay are Whānau Ora providers.
- 5.14 Ngā Tini Whetū is the first and only use of a commissioning agency contract to jointly fund a whānau-centred initiative that we are aware of.

### Ngā Tini Whetū

Ngā Tini Whetū is an initiative for whānau in the North Island. It was co-designed and is being implemented through a partnership between Te Pou Matakana/Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency and Te Puni Kōkiri, Oranga Tamariki, and the Accident Compensation Corporation. The initiative is co-funded by the three public organisations through the commissioning contract that Te Puni Kōkiri had with Te Pou Matakana.

The initiative began in December 2020 as a two-year prototype. It intends to support whānau to achieve their aspirations and work with them where early signs of need have been identified.

In December 2021, Whānau Ora collectives and participating providers reported that there were signs of positive results for whānau throughout the North Island.

The initiative met its target reach of 800 whānau, and it met or exceeded all other performance indicators. These relate to completing needs assessments and whānau planning, whānau satisfaction with their engagement, and whānau achievement of one or more outcomes.

In Budget 2022, the initiative was allocated funding for another four years, from 2022/23 to 2025/26.

### Few public organisations and providers partner to plan and design services

- 5.15 Providers emphasised the importance of setting up and sustaining partnerships to design and plan services in a way that holistically addresses the aspirations and needs of whānau. This is also important for providers that are not part of Whānau Ora.
- 5.16 However, as with the commissioning agencies, most examples of public organisations working with Whānau Ora providers involve them funding and contracting specific services (such as the Police's implementation of Te Pae Oranga).
- 5.17 As discussed in Part 4, the barriers created by some public sector processes, practices, and system-level settings can significantly limit providers' relationships with public organisations and their ability to design and deliver whānau-centred services.
- 5.18 Providers value and rely on the connections they have with individual staff at public organisations who understand the work that they do. However, providers do not have these relationships with every public organisation, and staff turnover in public organisations makes these relationships vulnerable.

- 5.19 One provider told us about a significant improvement in its relationship with a public organisation after it appointed a new regional manager who was experienced in working with iwi. Another provider described being “scared” about its future relationship with a public organisation after a key contact moved to another role.

### **Providers struggle to access some service support for whānau**

- 5.20 There appears to have been little change in the accessibility of services since the Whānau Ora ministerial review. Providers continue to face high demand for support from whānau, who are referred to them by their own networks in communities and by public organisations.
- 5.21 Some of these whānau need crisis responses or specialist services that are either the responsibility of public organisations or not adequately covered by any existing services. In particular, we heard that some whānau have serious mental health needs that are not met.
- 5.22 We were told that this is because existing mental health services are inadequate and because there are service gaps. As the Whānau Ora ministerial review noted, many Whānau Ora providers are not funded or fully qualified to provide crisis response services.
- 5.23 We saw indications that the work providers are doing to respond to crises or provide specialist support can take up much of their time. This can mean they are not able to do their work on longer-term Whānau Ora outcomes and supporting whānau to achieve their aspirations.
- 5.24 For example, referrals from public organisations can mean that Whānau Ora navigators spend a lot of their time doing crisis-response work rather than planning the preventative or aspiration-focused programmes and services that whānau want them to work on.
- 5.25 The Covid-19 pandemic has put pressure on all public organisations and community providers that remained operating during the pandemic. We heard that the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the tension between the intended role of Whānau Ora as a strengths-based approach and public organisations' over-reliance on Whānau Ora providers to deliver acute, emergency support for whānau.
- 5.26 We did not sense that providers or Whānau Ora commissioning agencies were reluctant to help those whānau needing significant short-term support during the pandemic. This kind of work is consistent with the Whānau Ora Outcomes Framework, and the response to the pandemic has increased the profile of

Whānau Ora. However, some are concerned that this could create a perception that the purpose of Whānau Ora is to respond to crisis instead of supporting the strengths-based, aspiration-focused work it was primarily set up to do. We share this concern.

### **Adverse perceptions risk undermining relationships**

- 5.27 We heard mixed views from public organisations, providers, and Whānau Ora commissioning agencies about the extent and strength of their relationships. We also heard perceptions about the behaviours and motivations of parties that risk undermining these relationships.
- 5.28 We heard that public organisations' approach to developing new services sometimes fails to acknowledge the expertise and work of Whānau Ora commissioning agencies and providers.
- 5.29 For example, we were told that one public organisation spent considerable time drawing on a commissioning agency's knowledge and experience of supporting whānau without telling the agency that it intended to set up a similar service. We also heard about a public organisation engaging providers in a lengthy co-design process and then contracting others to deliver the service.
- 5.30 In both instances, the commissioning agencies perceived the public organisations' actions as competitive behaviour that undermined their relationships.
- 5.31 We also heard concerns about the development and implementation of the Ministry of Social Development's (the Ministry) Community Connection Service, which was established in June 2020 to support people impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The service established navigator-type roles called Community Connectors.
- 5.32 The service was developed and implemented at pace during the Covid-19 pandemic. Currently, 500 Community Connectors are based in providers throughout the country. The Ministry told us that its contracts are outcomes-based, which gives providers the flexibility to tailor their services to the needs of communities.
- 5.33 The Ministry told us it engaged with iwi and community partners throughout the country on its design and how it might best work in practice. However, in our interviews, we heard concerns from providers, Whānau Ora commissioning agencies, and an iwi representative that the early development phase of the Community Connector service did not involve them enough.
- 5.34 These differing views on the quality of the Ministry's engagement could explain why we heard mixed views in our interviews about the service itself. For example,

we were told by some that the roles are an unnecessary duplication of Whānau Ora navigators, especially when they are deployed in the same areas. On the other hand, we were also told that, although there was duplication at first, the service now better complements existing Whānau Ora services.

- 5.35 The Ministry told us that, since mid-2022, it has been working closely with Te Puni Kōkiri to develop options to make it easier for community providers to facilitate collaboration between Community Connectors and Whānau Ora navigators. The Ministry said this includes considering how the new relational commissioning principles might apply to its contracting guidelines, standards and safety, regional engagement, monitoring, and reporting.
- 5.36 Further, the Ministry told us it has been working closely with Te Puni Kōkiri and other social sector public organisations to ensure that any new services or functions are complementary and do not duplicate existing initiatives. The Ministry said that this work includes a stocktake of publicly funded navigator-type roles.
- 5.37 Strong relationships are essential for developing high-quality, integrated, and co-ordinated services for whānau. In our view, regardless of whether public organisations partner with providers and community organisations or whether they develop a new whānau-centred service on their own, services need to complement one another.
- 5.38 In some instances, designing a new whānau-centred service will be the right approach. In other instances, public organisations could make greater use of the Whānau Ora commissioning infrastructure before developing alternatives.

### **A clearer definition of “complementary effort” is needed**

- 5.39 Te Puni Kōkiri has a strategic focus area to increase investment in the Whānau Ora commissioning approach. The Cabinet paper that set up the commissioning approach expected public organisations to provide “complementary effort” to Whānau Ora. However, there are no corresponding expectations for other public organisations to support Te Puni Kōkiri to achieve its aim, and what the “complementary effort” entails has not been defined in detail.
- 5.40 The Whānau Ora Partnership Group was set up in 2014 to provide oversight of Whānau Ora. One of its tasks was to co-ordinate public organisations’ “complementary effort”. However, the Partnership Group stopped operating in 2017 and has not yet been permanently replaced.

- 5.41 As discussed in Parts 3 and 4, Te Puni Kōkiri told us that its work with Te Kawa Mataaho on advice to the Minister for Whānau Ora includes considering how to secure cross-government investment opportunities for Whānau Ora.
- 5.42 We consider that Te Puni Kōkiri should also seek to clarify what is meant by the “complementary effort” that public organisations are expected to provide for Whānau Ora. This will assist with clarifying how public organisations should support the aim of Te Puni Kōkiri to increase public sector investment in Whānau Ora.
- 5.43 It will be important for Te Puni Kōkiri to seek the views of other public organisations in developing its advice.

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**Recommendation 7**

We recommend that Te Puni Kōkiri seek to clarify the nature of the “complementary effort” that public organisations are expected to provide for Whānau Ora.

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# Appendix

## Advisor biographies

Throughout this audit, the audit team benefitted from the advice and guidance of Kura Moeahu and Sir John Clarke.

### **Kura Moeahu**

Kura Moeahu is of Te Kāhui Maunga, Te Āti Awa, Ngā Ruahine, Ngāti Ruanui, Ngāti Mutunga, Ngāti Tama, Taranaki Tuturu, and Ngāti Toa descent, and was raised in Wainuiomata and Waiwhetu.

Kura is an experienced and highly sought-after cultural advisor and consultant, and has supported and advised the Office of the Auditor-General many times. Kura is committed to the advancement of whānau well-being through a te ao Māori perspective and is passionate about the revitalisation, promotion, and inclusiveness of traditional Māori arts and culture.

Kura is the Chairperson of Te Rūnanganui o Te Āti Awa ki te Upoko o te Ika a Maui,<sup>23</sup> Waiwhetu Marae, and Āti Awa Toa FM Limited, and sits on the boards of Creative New Zealand, WelTec, and Whitireia.

In 2023, Kura was named a Companion of the Queen's Service Order in recognition of his knowledge of tikanga and mātauranga Māori and his contributions to the arts, culture, and heritage sector.

### **Sir John Clarke**

Sir John Clarke is of Ngāti Porou and Ngā Puhi descent. He has worked in a wide range of environments in the public sector, including education, justice, health, human rights, Crown law, social welfare, environment, and heritage.

Sir John has played a major part in Māori-Crown relations and been the principal cultural adviser to all Ministers of Treaty Settlements for more than 25 years. He has held numerous senior management positions in the public sector, including Chief Executive of the then Ministry of Māori Affairs, Director Māori Ministry of Justice, and Group Manager Department of Justice. He has also served as Race Relations Conciliator and Human Rights Commissioner.

Sir John is the former principal of Ngata Memorial College and Wellington High and Community Institute. He was involved in implementing te reo Māori in secondary schools from 1971 to 1977. He was also involved in establishing the first national intensive course in Māori language at Wellington Polytechnic in 1977. In 1984, Sir John was awarded the Sir Woolf Fisher Fellowship for outstanding service to education.

Sir John has conducted eight major inquiries as a member of the Waitangi Tribunal. He has also been extensively involved in facilitating and mediating successful outcomes for iwi and the Crown. He is currently a long-serving chairperson of the Māori Heritage Council Aotearoa New Zealand, deputy chairperson of the Board of Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, and principal adviser to the Asthma and Respiratory Foundation and Pharmacy Council. He is a Trustee of Te Rimu Ahuwhenua Trust and Tokararangi Forest Trust. He is also a former Trustee of the Sir Winston Churchill Memorial Trust.

Sir John was awarded the New Zealand 1990 Commemoration Medal and was appointed a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2011. In 2018, he was elevated to Knight Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for outstanding service.



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Office of the Auditor-General  
PO Box 3928, Wellington 6140

Telephone: (04) 917 1500  
Email: [reports@oag.parliament.nz](mailto:reports@oag.parliament.nz)  
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