

Whānau Ora: Report of the Taskforce on Whānau-Centred Initiatives

to:

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Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector



Executive Summary

Scope

The Taskforce was charged with constructing 'an evidence-based framework that will lead to:

- strengthened whānau capabilities
- an integrated approach to whānau wellbeing
- collaborative relationships between state agencies in relation to whānau services
- relationships between government and community agencies that are broader than contractual
- improved cost-effectiveness and value for money.'

The Taskforce developed the framework based on a review of relevant literature, the experiences of health and social service agencies, an analysis of oral submissions received at 22 hui throughout the country, and over 100 written submissions from individuals and organisations. Common themes emerged, particularly the need for Whānau Ora to demonstrate a 'Māori heart', ensure local representation in decision-making, minimal bureaucracy, sustainability and adequate resourcing, a research and evaluation component, and quality relationships between whānau, providers and iwi.

Underlying the genesis of the framework is a wider societal context that recognises the position of Māori within New Zealand. Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Treaty of Waitangi, remains a key instrument to guide national development. It affirms the unique status of Māori as tangata whenua, the indigenous population, while simultaneously conferring, through Government, the rights of citizenship upon all New Zealanders. In recent times, Treaty-based settlements between the Crown and various iwi have contributed to positive outcomes for all parties. These outcomes help iwi to focus their attentions on the future rather than the past, and provide Government with opportunities to build positive relationships with tangata whenua that can have national benefits. Achieving these positive Treaty-based outcomes requires a capacity to visualise a future based on goodwill and interdependence.

The Taskforce believes that the Whānau Ora proposals set out in this report provide further opportunities for Government and Māori to work together in interdependent ways to benefit all New Zealanders.

A Five-Part Framework

The whānau-centred framework contains five domains of whānau impact:

- a whānau aspirational aim
- principles
- whānau outcome goals
- whānau-centred services
- a Whānau Ora Trust.

1. A Whānau Aspirational Aim

The framework is built around whānau aspirational aims consistent with the Whānau Ora philosophy. It recognises the many variables that have the potential to bring benefits to whānau and is especially concerned with social, economic, cultural and collective benefits. To live comfortably today, and in the years ahead, whānau will be strengthened by a heritage based around whakapapa, distinctive histories, marae and customary resources, as well as by access to societal institutions and opportunities at home and abroad.

Although much of the focus during the consultation process was on social gains, the aspirational aims are premised on a balance between social gains (such as health, education and societal inclusion), economic gains (such as an expanding asset base), cultural gains (including participation in te ao Māori), and collective gains. These are strengthened by reciprocal commitments between and across generations, and between the ambitions of individuals and the shared hopes of the whānau.

2. Principles

The following principles underline all components of the framework, serve as essential foundations, and will be important markers to guide the selection of indicators, outcome measures, and the allocation of funding for whānau-centred initiatives:

- ngā kaupapa tuku iho (the ways in which Māori values, beliefs, obligations and responsibilities are available to guide whānau in their day-to-day lives)
- whānau opportunity
- best whānau outcomes
- whānau integrity
- coherent service delivery
- effective resourcing
- competent and innovative provision.

3. Whānau Outcome Goals

While the desired results of an intervention will vary according to particular whānau circumstances, the Taskforce has identified a set of goals. The goals will be met when whānau are:

- self-managing
- living healthy lifestyles
- participating fully in society
- confidently participating in te ao Māori
- economically secure and successfully involved in wealth creation
- cohesive, resilient and nurturing.

The six goals, described in detail in section 6 of the report, are outcome goals insofar as they represent the key areas in which results are expected from whānau-centred initiatives. Collectively the goals will make up the agenda for whānau-centred interventions and the results of any intervention will be measured by the impacts on the full range of outcome goals.

4. Whānau-Centred Services

Whānau-centred services are services that focus on the whānau as a whole, build on whānau strengths and increase their capacity. Notwithstanding the contributions to whānau wellbeing by many organisations, the focus in this report is on those services funded by Government. Whoever the provider (government agencies, iwi and Māori providers, non-government organisations (NGOs) or private sector providers) the Taskforce considers that whānau-centred services should be characterised by six key operational elements:

- whānau-centred methodologies shaped by the values, protocols and knowledge contained within te ao Māori
- commitment across government
- the establishment of an independent Trust with a dedicated government appropriation
- a primary focus on best outcomes for whānau, through integrated and comprehensive delivery
- strong regional direction
- building on existing provider capabilities.

5. A Whānau Ora Trust

Pivotal to the implementation of this framework is the establishment of an independent Trust. The Trust will provide an independent, stable and transparent foundation for the implementation of Whānau Ora. One of the primary functions of the Trust will be to facilitate the delivery of whānau services that are comprehensive, integrated and focused on positive development.

The Trust will be responsible for the administration of a fund, derived from relevant appropriations – including, but not limited to, Votes Health, Education, Justice and Social Development. The Trust will report directly to a dedicated Whānau Ora Minister and will be accountable to this Minister and to Parliament.

A key function of the Trust's chief executive will be to chair a group of social sector chief executives, with the objective of ensuring Whānau Ora is implemented across the full range of government activity. The success of Whānau Ora will be dependent on changes in the way policies, programmes and services are designed and delivered across the wider public sector.

Recommendations

Arising from the framework, the Taskforce has six key recommendations that will contribute to best outcomes for whānau.

1. The Taskforce recommends that an independent Trust be constituted to govern, coordinate and implement Whānau Ora, and report to a dedicated Minister of Whānau Ora.

The Taskforce has concluded that a new entity will be necessary to oversee whānau-centred programmes and promote best outcomes for whānau across government agencies, iwi and Māori providers, NGOs and private sector providers. The Taskforce proposes that this new entity should be established as an independent Trust accountable to a dedicated Whānau Ora Minister and to Parliament.

2. The Taskforce recommends the establishment of a specific Whānau Ora appropriation(s) to be managed by the Trust.

Funding derived from relevant appropriations will enable the Trust to facilitate the delivery of whānau services that link social, cultural and economic development and build whānau capability. The Whānau Ora Minister will control and be accountable for the fund. The Taskforce has recommended a timely process for deriving the level of contributions from appropriate sectors.

3. The Taskforce recommends that Whānau Ora services are integrated and comprehensive, and focused on measurable outcomes that will contribute to whānau empowerment.

When whānau access coherent and integrated services, and experience enabling interventions, positive development will follow. The Taskforce strongly advises a relational contracting approach that minimises fragmentation, reduces transactional costs, targets positive whānau development, encourages provider collaboration and enables whānau needs to be addressed in a consistent, unified and proper manner. The Taskforce further recommends that specific outcome indicators reflect whānau ora philosophies and aspirations.

4. The Taskforce recommends that Whānau Ora services are shaped by te ao Māori.

It is critical that the cultural distinctiveness of whānau is recognised in the delivery of services. Despite varying levels of participation in te ao Māori, this is a central component of contemporary whānau experience. Services should be attuned to whānau cultural norms, whānau traditions and whānau heritage, while at the same time recognising the realities and opportunities in te ao Māori and in wider society.

5. The Taskforce recommends that all government agencies with responsibilities for any aspect of whānau wellbeing commit to the Whānau Ora principles and support the Whānau Ora approach.

A number of government agencies have responsibility for legislation, policies, programmes and services that impact on whānau, even though they may not focus directly on whānau. The Taskforce considers that agency efforts can accelerate whānau wellbeing and complement Whānau Ora services if they incorporate the Whānau Ora principles and commit to a new way of working with whānau that includes adopting an outcomes focus and working with other agencies. While many sectors, including health, social development, justice and housing are germane to whānau wellbeing, the Taskforce notes in particular the significance that educational achievement holds for whānau.

6. The Taskforce recommends that the Trust establish regional panels to ensure Whānau Ora contributes in positive and realistic ways in local communities.

Local Māori leadership and knowledge are essential to ensuring that Whānau Ora services contribute in positive and realistic ways to local communities. The Taskforce proposes eight to ten regional panels, based on Māori Land Court Districts. Panel responsibilities would include strengthening networks between providers, identifying gaps in services, highlighting local priorities and profiling regional distinctiveness for the Trust.