

More Effective Social Services Inquiry
New Zealand Productivity Commission
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Tēnā koutou katoa

We were pleased to meet with you in Christchurch on Thursday 11 June 2015, to receive our preliminary thoughts on the Productivity Commission's draft report, More Effective Social Services. This paper provides some detail to the comments we raised during that hui.

Background

Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu was formed in March 2014 and launched in July 2014 as the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency for the South Island. Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu is a limited partnership supported by the nine iwi of Te Waipounamu through a Shareholders' Council known as Te Taumata. Te Taumata has appointed an independent governance board which is responsible for the investment strategy.

The name, Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu, represents the convergence of the rivers of Te Waipounamu, bringing sustenance to the people, and reflecting the partnership's founding principle of Whānaungatanga.

Outcomes Focus

The Commission has observed a great deal of potential in the Whānau Ora approach: Whānau Ora is a good vehicle for whānau to use to pursue their development aspirations.

Because Whānau Ora is a community development approach, it is in its very nature that some of the capability needed for success is currently under-developed. Whānau Ora is meant to build that capability. Whānau Ora has at its heart the empowerment of whānau, which in practice requires devolution of funding and decision-making rights and responsibilities.

We endorse the Commission's recognition of the potential that is evident in the commissioning approach. We appreciate also and acknowledge that whānau are at the heart of Whānau Ora. It is our firm belief that Whānau Ora must be distinguished by the adherence to outcomes, namely:

- Whānau self-management;
- Healthy whānau lifestyles;
- Full whānau participation in society;
- Confident whānau participation in tē ao Māori;
- Economic security and successful involvement in wealth creation; and
- Whānau cohesion.

Te Pūtahitanga supports an **incentive approach driven by Whānau Ora outcomes** – funders should be focused on the end results; not just the activity of outputs. Commissioning Agencies should have far greater freedom and flexibility to respond to outcomes determined by the whānau they serve. We need to see devolution expressed by the means of an outcomes based contract.

There is a risk of playing to the specifications of the Investment Plan – the organisation being driven by particular outputs in a contract; rather than enabling the flexibility and autonomy of commissioning agencies to be truly responsive to the aspirations of whānau.

How has Te Pūtahitanga applied Whānau Ora?

Te Pūtahitanga has chosen to invest in transformative change to build sustainable whānau capability. Te Pūtahitanga supports flax roots innovation and whānau writing their own futures. The commissioning model is primarily directed at growing approaches in Te Waipounamu to support the achievement of whānau self-determination.

Commissioning, in the context of Whānau Ora, is the process of identifying the aspirations of whānau and investing in them whether they are new or existing initiatives. These whānau-centred initiatives are expected to best reflect progress towards Whānau Ora outcomes. Commissioning also involves the monitoring, evaluation and review of these investments.

The commissioning approach reflects ngā pou whā:

- Kotahitanga: collaborative approach to integrated solutions;
- Kāinga focused: by the people for the people;
- Panoni hou: innovative approach to distinctive pathways;
- Kokiritanga : collaboration with partners.

Te Pūtahitanga has developed our approach further with the Opportunity Realisation and Aspiration (ORA) Index which consists of eight indicators that contribute to the realisation of whānau opportunities. The index categorizes a spectrum of needs ranging from 'high needs' to aspirational goals. We intend to use this in our contracting arrangements with investees, and also integrate into the broader reporting arrangements to Te Puni Kōkiri.

The accountability framework between Te Pūtahitanga and Te Puni Kōkiri will have three components:

1. Tracking the progression of whānau along the Opportunity Realisation Index;
2. Achieving relevant impact measures; and
3. Collecting evidence and reporting on KPIs that capture whānau achievement in priority aspects of each of Te Pūtahitanga's four investment pillars.

Importance of Reporting and Promotion of Whānau Ora

We also appreciated the Commission's recognition of **a range of reporting mechanisms** to report on achievement against these goals, including whānau stories, action research with collectives, whānau surveys, reporting by provider collectives.

As the Commission's report suggests the social services system fails to create and share information about which services and interventions work well and those that do not.

Story-gathering is a vital means of celebrating and promoting whānau success. In this light, one of our 2014/15 commissioning activities has been to invest in the 'storyteller' function with Maui Studios Aotearoa, who will bring to life the stories of commissioning. The project will take on story-telling methods and upload digital footage of high quality imagery and video to communicate the growth of Te Pūtahitanga. The stories will allow Te Pūtahitanga to connect with more whānau, and to showcase their successes as a result of the investments put into them.

Building on Best Practice

We want to see a national focus on **models of whānau change that link observable behaviours to identifiable progress on a pathway towards whānau well-being**. There was considerable resource put into action research in Phase One on the basis that reflective practice would inspire and energise others to follow their lead. It would seem sensible that Phase Two (Commissioning) builds on the successes and learnings from Phase One, and yet to date, we have not seen that direct follow-through.

We believe that the foundation laid for us by the Governance Group; the Whānau Ora Provider Collectives; the Regional Leadership Groups; and the navigator workforce should have been able to be shared through the action research network.

We agree with the conclusions of the Commission we need much more emphasis on turning tacit knowledge of what works into performance data. Perhaps this could be an area of emphasis for the Māori Centre of Research Excellence (Nga Pae o tē Māramatanga) or Aotahi: Māori and Indigenous Studies? In general, we think there is a need in the devolved environment to create and share information about which services and interventions work well and those that do not.

Effective social services require Integration and Collaboration

We are also committed towards seeing a tighter collegial relationship between the commissioning agencies – connectedness must be role-modelled within the Whānau Ora sector. To this end, we are inviting the other two Commissioning Agencies for an informal meeting in the next month to build on our collective knowledge of best practice in commissioning.

We would however like to move to a position where the state is able to demonstrate greater faith in organisations such as Te Pūtahitanga to benefit from direct resourcing of solutions based at the community level. We believe that onerous government processes in drawing resources away from providing services can 'clog up the pipeline' in adding a barrier between state resources and social service delivery.

The Taskforce on Whānau-Centred Initiatives noted that success for Whānau Ora would require strong commitment across government agencies (2010, p. 57). Currently, the level of commitment has appeared to be lukewarm in some quarters. The evidence suggests there is still quite some way to go to devolve sufficient funding and decision making to achieve the aspirations of those whānau and communities.

In Te Pūtahitanga the nine iwi of the South Island have elected to become involved in commissioning social services within the apparatus of a government initiative. Te Puni Kōkiri's commissioning function has been contracted out to a joint venture with the iwi as the drivers of the transformation.

Contracting out the commissioning role of Te Puni Kōkiri to three NGOs was a decision in the right direction to move control and decision making (mana whakahaere) over Whānau Ora further from government and closer to Māori organisations. Such a decision needs to be demonstrated in practice and policy through a contracting model similar to a high trust model.

The organisational culture within the commissioning agencies is significantly different to the culture within government purchasers. For Te Pūtahitanga we are driven by a strengths-based attitude, particularly regarding what can be done, how soon it can be done, how it can be done and how measurable the outcomes would be. We are also disappointed that across government agencies, other than Te Puni Kōkiri, it would not yet appear that the transformational potential of Whānau Ora is being supported in cross-sectoral investment.

We note that Whānau Ora is not a programme or a service : it is an approach. Whānau Ora is also not a shortcut for Provider Ora. Having said that we are firmly focused on being responsive to the needs and aspirations of whānau living within Te Waipounamu, and being an effective vehicle by which they can achieve their aspirations; address their needs; and work towards fulfilling their whānau plans.

Te Pūtahitanga hopes that these comments are useful in redrafting the report. We are also happy to provide any further detail that the Productivity Commission may need if you see as necessary.

Heoi ano



Norm Dewes

Board Chair, Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu