



Education Review Office
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

Strategic Intentions 2020-2024

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Table of contents

Foreword from the Minister of Education 5

From the Chief Review Officer 6

ERO’s mandate 8

ERO’s operating context..... 9

ERO’s strategic framework..... 12

ERO’s strategic intentions 14

ERO’s enabling strategies 16

ERO’s other commitments..... 18

Foreword from the Minister of Education

Every young New Zealander must have the opportunity to develop their full potential if they are to engage fully in society and lead rewarding lives.

The demands we place on our education system are evolving rapidly as our lives are impacted by technology and other societal change. We must respond by creating a system that supports our tamariki to be resilient, creative, and adaptable.

The Government's reform of the Tomorrow's Schools system will put more frontline support closer to schools to give every child the best chance to succeed.

When we announced the Tomorrow's Schools Review we wanted to know whether the system put in place 30 years ago was delivering equitably for our learners and was still suitable as we approach the third decade of the 21st Century.

What we found was that the current system works well in many places, but that it is far from perfect. It is inadequately serving some of our learners, in particular Māori, Pacific, children and young people with disabilities and learning support needs, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The Government's response aims to address these disparities, building a more connected and collaborative system and providing more support and guidance where it is needed.

It strikes a better balance between what should be provided and supported from the centre, what services should be provided locally and what is best delivered by local schools and their communities.

Part of the critical support from the centre is providing independent research, evaluation and oversight of individual providers and the system as a whole. This ensures accountability, and confidence there is a strong focus on improvement and equity.

ERO has an important role in that process as the Government's education evaluation agency. Reviews of individual schools and early learning centres will continue to be an important part of its work, but we also want ERO to strengthen its evaluation of national systems and its support for schools and centres to undertake self-assessment and build continuous improvement into everything they do.

That work will contribute to an education system that supports all young New Zealanders to fulfil their potential and maximise their contribution to a safe, prosperous and inclusive society now and in the future.

Minister's statement of responsibility

I am satisfied that the information on strategies provided by the Education Review Office is consistent with the policies and performance expectations of the Government.



Hon Chris Hipkins

Minister of Education

Pipiri 2020 | June 2020

Nā te Toihau Arotake

From the Chief Review Officer

I te tau 2019, mā te Arotake o Ngā Kura mō Āpōpō, i āta whakatewhatewhangia ngā ratonga aromātai mātauranga o Aotearoa. He tuatahitanga tēnei i roto i ngā tau toru tekau kua pahure ake nei.

I hua ake i te arotakenga, ko te pūrongo a te Kāwanatanga e kīia nei *‘He tautoko i ngā kura katoa kia whai angitu ai: He whakahau i te pūnaha Tomorrow’s Schools’*. Kua whakakoitia ki taua pūrongo te tūnga o Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga hei ratonga arotake mātauranga o Aotearoa, otirā, tērā anō hoki te tono kia whakapakarihia tana aronga ki te aromātai me te arotake i te pūnaha whānui, me tana hāpai anō hoki i te whakapai tonutanga.

Nā aua tūāhuatanga, ka panoni haere ētahi o ā mātou nei hōtaka mahi, ā mātou nei whakaritenga hoki, heoi, kua tīmata kē Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga i taua tukanga.

Hei tēnei wāhanga o Ngā Takune Rautaki, ka kitea te tino whakarerekē haere a Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga i te āhua o te arotake i ngā kura me ngā whare kōhungahunga mā ngā huarahi maha, inarā tonu, mā te whakapakari ake i te āheinga o ngā kura ki te aroturuki i a rātou anō.

Mā roto mai i aua āhuatanga, ka kaha ake tā mātou tahuri atu ki te rangahau, ki te aromātai, ā, ki te tuku hoki i ngā kōrero āwhina mō ngā take e whai pānga ana ki te rāngai mātauranga katoa, ā, ka kōkiri ake hoki i ngā whakapaitanga mā te tāutu i ngā huarahi whakaritenga e whai hua ai, me te whai māramatanga ki ngā take kāhore aua whakaritenga whai hua e whakatinanahia ana i ia te wā.

Ka mutu, ka āta mahi ngātahi ake mātou ki ērā atu o ngā ratonga pātuitanga, ā, ko tētahi tauira o taua takune, ko tō mātou hiahia ki te whakahāngai ake i te āhua o ngā rangahau me ngā mahi aromātai e whakatutukihia ana e Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga, e Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga, e Te Rangahau Mātauranga o Aotearoa, e ngā whare wānanga hoki, kia whai hua ake ai te whakamahinga o ngā hōtuku, ā, kia māmā ake ai hoki te nui o ngā mahi aroturuki, mahi aromātai hoki a ngā kura.

I a tātou e ahu whakamua ana i aua whakarerekētanga, ka ū tonu tā mātou tirohanga matua. Ko te rāngai mātauranga, he mea waiwai ki te oranga ā-pāpori, ā-ahurea hoki o ngā tāngata o Aotearoa, ā, ki te tōnuitanga me te tupu ā-ōhanga hoki o te motu – inarā tātou e piki ake anō ana i ngā pānga nui nei o KOWHEORI-19.

I tēnei wā, i te whakaritenga o te tauāki nei, kāore anō kia āta mārama rawatia te kaha pēhea nei o ngā kawekawe o te KOWHEORI-19 ki a tātou o Aotearoa nei, ki tā tātou ōhanga, ā, ki ngā take hoki e whai pānga ana ki a tātou o te rāngai mātauranga. Kāore e kore, ko te wā o tēnei tauāki he wā uaua mō tātou o Aotearoa me te rāngai tūmatanui. Nā runga i taua āhuatanga, e tika ana kia urutau, kia raka hoki Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga, kia aro atu ki te rerekē haere o ngā matea i te rāngai, ā, kia āta whakaritea hoki e mātou te rāngai te whai pānga o ngā mahi ki te hāpai mārika i ngā ratonga mātauranga kōhungahunga me ngā kura, ā, ki te kōkiri tonu i te mana taurite me te hiringa.

Ahakoia pēhea nei ngā kawekawe, ka hāngai tonu te titiro a Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga kia noho tonu ā tātou tamariki, ā tātou rangatahi ki te pūtake o ā mātou mahi, ā, ki te hāpai hoki i ngā kaiako ki te whakatairanga tonu i ngā tino putanga ki ngā ākonga katoa o Aotearoa.

Nā runga i aua tūāhuatanga, ka mahi ngātahi tonu mātou ki ētahi atu o te rāngai mātauranga ki te whakatutuki i te mana taurite me te hiringa i roto i te mātauranga. Ki te kore he mana taurite, kāhore rānei he hiringa, ā, ki te hiahia tātou kia pakari ake, kia whai matatika ake hoki tēnei whenua mō ngā tāngata katoa o Aotearoa, e tika ana kia noho mātua rā te mana taurite ki te mātauranga.

Ko te tamaiti te pūtake o te kaupapa

Nicholas Pole

Te Manahautū me te Toihau Arotake

Pipiri 2020

The 2019 Tomorrow's Schools Review included the first significant examination of New Zealand's education evaluation services in 30 years.

The Government's response to the review – *Supporting all schools to succeed: Reform of the Tomorrow's Schools system* – confirmed ERO in its role as New Zealand's education review organisation, but asked ERO to strengthen both its focus on system-wide evaluation and review, and its support for continuous improvement.

This will mean changes to our work programme and practices, and ERO has already started that process.

The period covered by this Strategic Intentions will see ERO significantly change the way it reviews schools and early learning centres by, among other things, strengthening schools' capacity for self-monitoring.

It will see us putting more resource into research, evaluation and advice on issues that impact the education system as a whole, driving improvement by identifying best practice and understanding the reasons why it is not always applied.

And we will work more closely with partner organisations by, for instance, striving for greater alignment between the research and evaluation undertaken by ERO, the Ministry of Education, NZCER and universities to make better use of data, and to reduce the workload on schools in the context of monitoring and evaluation.

While we work through this change, our main focus remains the same. The education system is vital for New Zealanders' social and cultural wellbeing, as well

as the country's economic prosperity and growth – and never more so than as we recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

At the time of preparing this statement the impacts of COVID-19 on New Zealanders, our economy and on the issues we face as an education system are still to be fully understood. The period covered by this statement will clearly be a challenging one for us as a nation and for the Public Sector. This will require ERO to be highly adaptive and agile, responding to changing needs in the sector, and ensuring that as a system what occurs in early learning services and schools supports recovery and continues to drive equity and excellence.

Whatever the impact, ERO remains committed to keeping our tamariki and rangatahi at the heart of what we do and to supporting teachers to achieve better outcomes for all learners in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This means we will continue to work collaboratively with others in the education system to achieve equity and excellence in education. There can be no excellence without equity, and equity in education is essential if we are to build a stronger and fairer country for all New Zealanders.

Ko te tamaiti te pūtake o te kaupapa

The child – the heart of the matter

Chief Executive Officer's statement of responsibility

In signing this document, I acknowledge that I am responsible for the information on strategies for the Education Review Office. This information has been prepared in accordance with Section 38 and Section 40 of the Public Finance Act 1989.



Nicholas Pole

Te Manahautū me te Toihau Arotake | Chief Executive and Chief Review Officer

Pipiri 2020 | June 2020

ERO's mandate

The Education Review Office (ERO) is the New Zealand government's education evaluation agency.

It was established as a government department on 1 October 1989 under the State Sector Act 1988, and is an independent public service department. The Chief Executive of ERO is the Chief Review Officer.

Under legislation, ERO is required to review the performance and assess the quality of pre-tertiary education providers in relation to the educational services they provide.

In its response to the Tomorrow's Schools Review, the Government confirmed ERO's role in the review of schools. It also confirmed that ERO's focus should be on continuous improvement through strengthening

the capability of schools to undertake self-evaluation, including ensuring effective engagement with whānau and communities.

ERO's legislative mandate extends into Early Childhood Education, where its reviews are focused on the quality of education in a safe and supportive environment.

The report on the Tomorrow's Schools Review further confirmed ERO's role in ensuring that research and evaluation provides a strong basis for generating effective system-level information and evaluation that informs prioritisation, action, and improvement.



ERO's operating context

At no previous time in our history has education been so critical to our social, cultural and economic prosperity and New Zealand's future. Technological change and globalisation are rapidly reshaping the way we work and live.

For New Zealand to be successful it must have a highly educated and skilled workforce that is innovative, creative, and flexible and can adapt to the rapid transformation in the nature of work. Equally, our education system needs to support social and cultural participation and expression, the development of our values as a nation and an understanding of who we are as New Zealanders.

Government expectations

The Government's long-term plan, as described in *Our Plan*¹, sets out three key priorities and associated steps to building a modern and fairer New Zealand. A big part of that is changing how we work so that we do things with, rather than to, people.

Education, in different ways, supports each of these priority areas:

1. In contributing to an economy that is *growing and working for all*, we work as a system to foster in all learners 21st century skills and competencies, support lifelong learning, ensure that our system is connected to industry needs and directions and that our investment in research and development fosters innovation that contributes to the transformation in New Zealand's economic base. Education is itself a significant contributor to New Zealand's economy and the economy of our regions and communities.
2. The education system works towards *Improving the wellbeing of New Zealanders and their families* through ensuring that learner wellbeing, connectedness and resilience are supported and fostered, that cycles of generational under-achievement are actively addressed and that financial barriers to participation in education are removed. Equally, there is an expectation that health, welfare and community organisations work alongside education providers to ensure that children's interests and wellbeing are central.

3. In *Making New Zealand proud* education has a critical role in ensuring that we have an education system that is connected, credible and acknowledged internationally. It is important that we grow understanding of our history as a nation and learn more about New Zealand's unique identity and values. In this, our system has a major role in supporting the revitalisation of te reo Māori, delivering on our commitments as Treaty partners and contributing towards a cohesive and inclusive society.

Government's vision for education

The Government wants a system that strives to bring out the very best in everyone and that means our educational offerings need to be as diverse as the learners we cater for, to deliver equity and be constantly focused on excellence.

The Government has set a significant agenda for reform across the education system and is working towards a 30-year strategic approach with the aim of building the best education system in the world.

At the time of preparing this Strategic Intentions statement, the Government had released for consultation *Shaping a Stronger Education System with New Zealanders*, a discussion document that paints the long-term vision, objectives and actions for education in New Zealand.

This statement is a consequence of extended conversation with parents, whānau and the sector, and work from a range of Ministerial advisory groups, including extensive consultation through the Ministerial Advisory Group on Early Learning and the independent taskforce on Tomorrow's Schools.

¹ <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/feature/our-plan-modern-new-zealand-we-can-all-be-proud>

The Government's vision is underpinned by the following strategic objectives:

- ➔ Learners at the centre – learners with their whānau are at the centre of education.
- ➔ Barrier free access – great education opportunities and outcomes are within reach for every learner.
- ➔ Quality teaching and leadership – quality teaching and leadership make the difference for learners and their whānau.
- ➔ Future of learning and work – learning that is relevant to the lives of New Zealanders today and throughout their lives.

ERO's contribution in the education system

Independent and objective monitoring and evaluation by ERO is critical to the integrity of the New Zealand education system. Through our institutional reviews, and our system-wide evaluation programme, we aim to ensure that New Zealanders can have confidence in our early learning services, *kōhanga reo*, *puna kōhungahunga*, *kura* and schools, and to lift performance in those areas and of those providers that need it most.

The changing face of New Zealand's early learning sector and its implications for ERO

The case for high-quality early childhood education is well proven. Children learn at a faster rate during the first five years of life than at any other time. It is at this stage that critical cognitive, social and emotional competencies are developed, which contribute to future learning and lifetime outcomes.

Quality learning environments are those that provide for intentional, experiential opportunities to learn. They challenge, facilitate and guide learning. They focus on the quality of children's interaction, allow children opportunities to explore and make sense of their worlds, support engagement with peers, and with adults, and actively engage with parents in the child's learning journey. They also place a strong emphasis on children's wellbeing and affirm their culture and identity.

As a system, New Zealand's early learning sector has many positive features. These include high levels of participation in early childhood education, a common direction for quality early learning through the ECE curriculum, *Te Whāriki (2017)*, and a system which supports diversity of provision in response to different needs and contexts.

Over the past decade, participation in early learning services has grown rapidly, as has the number of services operating, the levels of private ownership and greater diversification in the type of service available to parents and operating in communities.

There are currently around 4,600 early learning services operating in New Zealand, catering for 200,000 children annually. With this growth, there have been significant increases in the numbers of younger children (those under three years of age) in early childhood education and care. We are also seeing increasing turnover in the ownership of services.

Despite significant participation increases and associated increases in investment, ERO continues to identify only one in 10 early learning services as "Very well placed".

The performance of about 5 percent of services is of concern. We also see lower participation for those from poorer communities and a higher proportion of poor performing providers serving children in these communities.

The period to which this Strategic Intentions document relates will see substantial reform in this sector as a consequence of the Government's Early Learning Action Plan 2019-2029. This plan places a greater emphasis on inclusion, equity, quality, provision planning, and strengthening the Ministry of Education's and ERO's oversight of the sector.

During the last two years, ERO has developed a new framework for evaluation of early learning services. Within this we have established a set of indicators to provide clarity around those things that matter most in terms of quality early childhood education. These indicators focus on the valued learning outcomes for all children and the conditions that evidence tells us are important.

Over the next four years, it is our intention to embed these within the sector and in the way we will work with the sector to lift quality.

Shifting the balance from self-management and accountability to continuous improvement, equity and excellence in schooling

Over 2,500 schools in New Zealand provide education for approximately 800,000 students. The majority are self-managing state or state-integrated schools, including 112 full Māori medium kura and 83 mixed Māori language kura.

ERO finds that approximately 20 percent of New Zealand schools are judged as strong and the majority are considered as “Well placed”. Combined, these schools provide for around 95 percent of all enrolments.

About eight percent of New Zealand schools are of concern to ERO. These schools are generally small, serve poorer communities, and disproportionately work with Māori learners. Within this group of schools there is a small number that have struggled over many years to provide a quality education to their communities.

It is not just these poor performing schools that are contributing to poor outcomes for Māori learners. As a system, outcomes are poorer for Māori and Pacific learners, and New Zealand has intolerably high levels of “within-school variations” in learner outcomes.

It is for this reason that ERO has the same central inquiry in every school evaluation: the extent to which the school delivers equitable outcomes for its Māori learners and those learners at risk of poor outcomes.

There are schools that are doing very well. This includes schools that provide a Māori medium environment and deliver learning that enables learners to enjoy an education that strongly affirms language, culture and identity.

Through the past five years schools have increasingly used collaborative approaches, typically through Kāhui Ako, to support improvement in teaching and learning. The use of networked arrangements is being further enhanced in areas such as Learning Support. We have also seen a strengthened pursuit of locally-based curriculum where individual schools and their teachers determine what is taught.

Both shifts require ERO to adapt its methodologies and undertake evaluations that are better able to capture and understand the impacts of these networks and shifts in teaching on outcomes.

ERO's goal is to ensure every school and learning opportunity is a great one. Over the past 18 months ERO has been working to shift its approach to individual school reviews. We seek to be a valued partner in driving continuous improvement in the sector, as opposed to merely operating as a point of external accountability.

A key weakness in the system, identified through our reviews, is that schools are particularly poor at processes of internal evaluation or self review. Going forward our focus will be looking to both strengthen the capability and develop the tools which support schools in their own improvement journeys.

The past 18 months have seen some significant changes in the way ERO works with the sector. This has included the removal of return times and a shift to a risk-based approach to determining which schools we might work with at any one time. We are also looking to establish a more differentiated review approach, working more intensely with schools we see as having the greatest needs.

This work involves ERO using evaluation to more strongly identify the support needs of the individual school. For all schools our methodology is being enhanced to more strongly focus on the conditions that deliver equity and excellence for every learner.

ERO's strategic framework

Our Ambition

Equity and excellence in outcomes for all learners.

Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa
The Child – the Heart of the Matter

Our Strategic Intentions 2020-2024



High quality education for all learners

We work to ensure that every early learning service, school and kura is a great place to learn, has excellent teaching and contributes to the success and wellbeing of every learner.



An improvement-oriented system

We are committed to finding solutions to the most difficult challenges in education. We promote and contribute to continuous improvement, where evidence and evaluation are fundamental to decision making at all levels.



Māori success as Māori

We work for the revitalisation of te reo Māori, place a spotlight on outcomes for Māori learners and ensure that our system recognises the aspirations of parents and whānau for their tamariki.



A strong and effective system

We assess the effectiveness of existing programmes and policy settings. We contribute to the knowledge base about what works and create insights which support innovation and improvement in teaching and learning.

Our Values

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| → We focus on the learner and learning outcomes. | → We have strong partnerships with agencies and with the sector. | → We deliver excellence in evaluation services, built on ethical foundations. |
| → We embody a spirit of service. We are accountable and work with integrity . | → We collaborate with national and international research and evaluation agencies. | → We pursue innovation and aim to add value in every context. |
| → We are inclusive, committed to bi-culturalism and seek enrichment through diversity. | → We are transparent and impartial when working with others. | → We are committed to environmental sustainability in the way we work. |

Our Commitment

We work to ensure that as an organisation and a system we honour our obligations of partnership, participation and protection under the Treaty of Waitangi.

**How we
deliver on
our strategic
intentions**

Enhancing our multi-year, multi-method evaluation and research programme

1. establish system-wide priorities for research and evaluation
2. monitor the delivery of the government's system reform and inform policy and practice by eliciting new insights
3. build a knowledge and evidence base in support of effective policy and practice in priority areas
4. help to grow capabilities in te ao Māori research and evaluation
5. embed evaluative thinking and promote evidence informed decision making

Strengthening the quality and performance of early learning services

6. evaluate all licensed services in New Zealand at least once every three years
7. strengthen monitoring and assurance of new early learning services
8. embed a new quality framework for early learning services to drive improvement
9. provide parents and stakeholders with better access to information on quality
10. undertake regular assessments of the quality assurance and service development activities of umbrella organisations and corporate entities with multiple services in support of their own improvement focus
11. identify and ensure action for those services that are not providing high-quality learning

Encouraging and supporting improvement in school performance

12. develop and implement a new approach to school reviews that ensures that ERO is a valued evaluation partner in the improvement journey of providers and places a priority on working with those providers with the greatest needs
13. work in partnership with schools and their communities in support of their continued improvement
14. provide parents with better access to information on school quality and performance
15. share insights and expertise with providers and their communities to ensure that their practices deliver equity in outcomes for all learners
16. increase alignment between external and internal evaluation and the linkages of both within schools' planning and improvement cycle

Adding value in Māori medium settings through partnerships and innovation

17. work collaboratively with individual Māori medium providers to share insights and contribute to their ongoing improvement
18. continue to deliver evaluations where whānau and learner agency is acknowledged and respected from the onset
19. maintain a shared ERO and Māori medium governing body wrap around service to those needing focused development for improvement
20. support and influence Māori success as Māori in English medium

Our approach is supported by plans to:

- | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| ▲
enhance our
frameworks,
methodologies
and tools | ▲
develop new
skills and make
the best use of
our capabilities | ▲
build enduring
partnerships and
networks | ▲
modernise our
technology
systems | ▲
use our
information for
better insights | ▲
boost our
confidence in te
reo Māori | ▲
grow leadership
in our people |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|---------------------------------------|

ERO's strategic intentions

ERO's strategic framework identifies four key strategic intentions:



High quality education for all learners

We challenge and support early learning services, kōhanga reo, puna kōhungahunga, schools and kura to ensure they provide high quality education for all learners, that learners are safe in their place of learning and that learning is underpinned by excellent teaching and the creation of conditions which underpin quality learning and wellbeing.



An improvement-oriented system

We aim to influence the sustainability of provider performance and ensure a continuous improvement culture throughout the education system. We identify what works, establish indicators for success, and identify and develop evidence to influence improvement in practice, for individual practitioners, providers, and programmes, as well as for the system as a whole. Alongside this, we work to ensure that our system is one that is driven by evidence, and evaluation is seen as a fundamental contributor in decision making at all levels of the system.



Māori success as Māori

We aim to ensure that our system works to deliver equitable outcomes for Māori learners and that as a system these outcomes support the language, culture and identity of Māori learners and recognise the aspirations of parents and whānau for their tamariki. We maintain a strong focus on the delivery of quality Māori medium education and work to support the revitalisation of te reo Māori.



A strong and effective system

We are committed to finding solutions to the most difficult challenges in education. In this we aim to support innovation and informed decision making at all levels of the system. Our evaluative insights contribute to the knowledge base about what works and places a spotlight on those areas in the system that are failing to support improved outcomes for learners.

During the 2020-2024 period we aim to deliver on these intentions by pursuing 20 organisational goals.

Enhancing our multi-year, multi-method evaluation and research programme

ERO will continue to deliver a programme of national evaluations and research on system-level issues, including sector performance, policy, implementation, and the quality of teaching and learning in the pre-tertiary sectors. This will include an ongoing focus on understanding the lessons and challenges resulting from the impact of COVID-19.

Over the next four years the programme will focus on the following priority areas:

- *System performance and reform*: where we contribute to an understanding of system performance, policy development and the effectiveness of implementation of key education initiatives and system wide reform.
- *Leadership and workforce capability*
- *Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment*: where we work to identify effective teaching, learning and assessment practices.
- *Learner (ākonga) wellbeing*: where we grow understanding of the health and wellbeing needs of learners and the effectiveness of programmes, supports and practices in promoting learner outcomes.
- *Māori learner success as Māori*: through the development of kaupapa methodology, and the evaluation of those programmes, services and interventions which aim to lift Māori achievement.
- *Te reo Māori revitalisation*: through an evaluation and research programme supporting deep insights into the strategies which ensure quality of language teaching and learning in New Zealand schools and kura.
- *Effectiveness of targeted interventions for at risk and priority learners*: through increasing our understanding of the needs of these learners and of what works to ensure positive outcomes.
- *Factors contributing to quality outcomes in priority communities*: through case studies grow our understanding of the learning and wellbeing needs of those in priority communities and the factors which are successful in addressing these.
- *Support services, networks and collaboration*: build understanding of the quality and contribution of support services, networks and collaboration on learner outcomes.

The system-level evaluations and investigations are undertaken at the request of the Minister of Education or instigated by the Chief Review Officer. The reforms that are emerging from the Government's strategy statement and work programme will require strong and robust monitoring and evaluation.

ERO will be a key partner in this work. Our evaluation programme is guided by a set of standards that assess the strength of the evidence we uncover, including the level of attribution and impact of a programme or activity, and the potential value that this may have in improving learner outcomes. We want to "get under the bonnet", and understand what works, for whom and in which contexts. Our goals are to:

1. establish system-wide priorities for research and evaluation
2. monitor the delivery of the government's system reform and inform policy and practice by eliciting new insights
3. build a knowledge and evidence base to support effective policy and practices and better system performance
4. help to grow capabilities in te ao Māori research and evaluation
5. embed evaluative thinking and promote evidence informed decision making.

Strengthening the quality and performance of early learning services

Our evaluations of early learning services and kōhanga reo will continue to assure service quality and inform improved performance. By pursuing our goals we intend to help strengthen the quality of many early learning services and kōhanga reo. We will implement new frameworks, indicators and reporting practices as necessary to be successful. Our goals are to:

6. evaluate all licensed services in New Zealand at least once every three years
7. strengthen monitoring and assurance of new early learning services
8. embed a new quality framework for early learning services to drive improvement
9. provide parents and stakeholders with better access to information on quality
10. undertake regular assessments of the quality assurance and service development activities of umbrella organisations and corporate entities with multiple services in support of their own improvement focus
11. identify and ensure action for those services that are not providing high-quality learning.

Encouraging and supporting improvement in school performance

Our evaluations of schools, support services and networks provide surety in relation to quality and performance. We encourage and support schools to lift performance and enhance learner outcomes. Our goals are to:

12. develop and implement a new approach to school reviews that ensures that ERO is a valued evaluation partner in the improvement journey of providers and places a priority on working with those providers with the greatest needs
13. work in partnership with schools and their communities in support of their continued improvement
14. provide parents with better access to information on school quality and performance
15. share insights and expertise with providers and their communities to ensure that their practices deliver equity in outcomes for all learners
16. increase alignment between external and internal evaluation and the linkages of both within schools' planning and improvement cycle.

Adding value in Māori medium settings through partnerships and innovation

Our evaluations of Māori medium, kōhanga reo and kura also provide surety in relation to quality. ERO's specialist team adds value in Māori medium settings through partnerships and innovation. In pursuing our goals in Māori medium education our approach is forging new ground delivering on both our Treaty commitments and a truly indigenous model embodying Te ao Māori principles and practices. Our goals are to:

17. work collaboratively with individual Māori medium providers to share insights and contribute to their ongoing improvement
18. continue to deliver evaluations where whānau and learner agency is acknowledged and respected from the onset
19. maintain a shared ERO and Māori medium governing body wrap-around service to those needing focused development for improvement
20. support and influence Māori success as Māori in English medium.

All ERO's work is supported by our recently released *Pacific Education Strategy (2019-2022)* and by a commitment to growing and supporting enhanced outcomes in the system for Māori through a revision of our strategy *He Toa Takitini* by the end of 2020.

ERO's enabling strategies

To deliver on the above commitments we have identified seven enabling priorities, which will support us in our work.

▲ Enhance our frameworks, methodologies and tools

This includes the development of tools, methodologies and techniques to support ERO in its work and equally support the sector in its own evaluation, monitoring and assessment activities. We will also implement tools that will enable parents and whānau to develop greater insights into the quality of education and of individual providers.

▲ Develop new skills and make the best use of our capabilities

ERO has a strong commitment to building the skills of its workforce through a regular programme of professional learning and development. Over the past year ERO has established a dedicated unit with a focus on supporting professional development and enhanced practice.

We employ highly trained specialists and educators, and a shift to a more differentiated review approach will allow staff to increasingly specialise in particular areas of our work. This *Strategic Intentions* will see us roll out an enhanced approach to professional learning including opportunities for coaching. We will also offer intensive training in specialist evaluation techniques, and opportunities for staff to study internationally.

▲ Build enduring partnerships and networks

The establishment of partnerships within the sector is critical to ERO's future direction. We will strengthen our partnerships with the national and international research, policy and evaluation communities and with government entities including the Ministry of Education, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, Oranga Tamariki, Statistics New Zealand, the Social Investment Agency, Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association, NZCER and leadership advisors to improve learner outcomes. From the beginning of this year, we have commenced a leadership partner programme where current principals will participate in school review teams.

▲ Modernise our technology systems

Commencing with the adoption of Microsoft Office 365, from 2020 onwards ERO will have a core focus over the next four years on modernisation. Office 365 gives us access to a range of collaborative tools which will better support innovation in a highly distributed workforce. We will also explore other applications to support ERO in its work and in the sharing of our insights and findings more broadly.

▲ Use our information for better insights

During 2019, we have shifted to information-based scheduling of reviews for schools and services which builds on the large information repositories available in the sector. Over time we aim to strengthen this use and work to gain stronger feedback from the frontline in terms of what we are finding through our review programme. Equally we are looking to adopt other sources of information (such as Statistics New Zealand's Integrated Data Infrastructure) and link administration and participation information in order to better assess programme impacts and monitor long-term outcomes.

▲ Boost our confidence in te reo Māori

ERO's Te Uepū ā-Motu group provides its services to Māori medium early learning services (kōhanga reo and puna reo) and kura and is key to understanding the quality of teaching and learning through te reo Māori. This group is also at the centre of growing ERO's contribution to our understanding of te reo Māori use in English medium settings.

As part of ERO's commitment to the revitalisation of te reo Māori, all staff in ERO will be provided with opportunities to strengthen their confidence in the language. We will also support ERO staff to be released to participate in intensive immersion language programmes where they wish to do so. Increasingly we will look to publishing our findings, where it is appropriate, in Māori, and to use of the language in our workplace.



▲ **Grow leadership in our people**

During the course of the 2019/20 year we continued with the development of our leadership strategy.

Key concepts that underpin our leadership strategy are:

- » leaders as champions of change and improvement
- » leadership is collective and collaborative
- » leadership is distributed with leaders working both independently and interdependently
- » leadership builds capacity and capability, and fosters wellbeing
- » leadership supports the Treaty principles of partnership, participation and protection.

We are providing opportunities for leadership growth and learning for everyone in ERO, and in particular for those coming into leadership roles. We want our people to lead ERO's ongoing transformation and more broadly contribute to the transformation of our system.

We have established a leadership forum for all managers in ERO to align our work, and restructured our remuneration systems through recent Collective Employment Agreement negotiations to better acknowledge those who are taking on leadership roles.

We are also looking to more strongly partner with other leaders in the sector and to facilitate and contribute to sector leadership.

ERO's other commitments

Enhancing our diversity and wellbeing

ERO is committed to enhancing the diversity and wellbeing of its workforce.

We are working actively to address gender inequities and to ensure that all staff are treated fairly and provided with the opportunity to contribute and grow while working with ERO.

Through our workplace policies, flexible working arrangements, recruitment and retention strategies, we aim to extend the range and background of the people who work in ERO.

We also seek through our partnership strategies with the sector (described previously) to have people from diverse cultural and language backgrounds working alongside us whilst remaining in their communities, schools and early learning services.

Involving young people more actively in our work as partners is also important to us. This will enable us to better reflect their views, values and priorities. ERO's work is intensive – it also requires our staff to work away from home for extended periods, often outside regular working hours, when we are engaging with the communities we work in.

ERO is working to build on its suite of policies and practices to mitigate the toll that these demands may place on individual staff and their families. This work will form the basis of ERO's Health, Safety and Wellbeing action plan. This plan will include strengthened monitoring of staff fatigue and wellbeing and a suite of initiatives and practices to further address these issues.

Reducing our environmental footprint

ERO is committed to reducing its environmental impact wherever possible.

The highly distributed nature of our schools and early childhood services requires ERO staff to travel large distances.

For example, our small Māori medium review team (Te Uepū ā-Motu) is required to travel the length of the country in their work with Māori medium providers.

Given the isolation of many of the places we work, there is often quite limited infrastructure to support alternative vehicle options such as electric vehicles.

In working to reduce our environmental impacts through this plan, we will see ERO shift its entire vehicle fleet to hybrid and (where this is appropriate) electric vehicles.

Our approach to scheduling our work will also look to minimising repeat travel and the adoption of our modernisation strategy (described above) will support greater levels of online collaboration between staff working across multiple sites.

The progressive refit of our offices, over the period of this plan, will also seek to reduce energy consumption. We are furthering this effort through establishing a baseline in relation to our current footprint.

Making our efforts transparent to both staff and to stakeholders through our regular annual reporting cycle will ensure our efforts continue to be sustained and enhanced.



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