



Te Mahi Tiaki Taiao

Supporting taiao groups to care
for their people and environment

A report on the trial of Te Kete Hononga for Reconnecting Northland

National
Science
Challenges

NEW ZEALAND'S
BIOLOGICAL
HERITAGE

Ngā Koiora
Tuku Iho

Acknowledgements

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To the Reconnecting Northland Management team, thank you for your guidance and tautoko, your passion and drive towards a better future.

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Maria Barnes (He uri nō Hokianga) led the research and writing of this report, with support from Kiely McFarlane (Cawthron Institute) and Merata Kawharu (Nukuroa Consulting)

Ko Āraiteuru rāua ko Niniwa ngā kaitiaki taniwha o Hokianga. Designed by Dennis Barnes, he uri nō Ngāti Pou, Ngāti Korokoro, Ngāti Pakau, Te Roroa

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Foreword

In 2014 the New Zealand Government established 11 'National Science Challenges' to address major science-based issues and opportunities facing New Zealand. This study is part of New Zealand's Biological Heritage National Science Challenge/Ngā Koiora Tuku Iho, which aims to protect and manage New Zealand's biodiversity, improve biosecurity and enhance resilience to harmful organisms.

This study is one of three exemplar studies of restoration collectives within BioHeritage Strategic Outcome 6 'Pathways to Ecosystem Regeneration'. SO6 focusses on supporting co-development of exemplar restoration projects that showcase successful regeneration of mātauranga and bioheritage.

We have written this report primarily for Reconnecting Northland and its support organisations, to inform the ongoing trial and development of Te Kete Hononga. The report collates important insights from taiao leaders and members of the Waimamaku, Otaua and Hokianga communities. As such we hope that it will be a resource for both those communities and Reconnecting Northland to reflect on what has been achieved and ongoing opportunities to work together to protect and enhance the taiao. We also believe this report shares relevant insights for government and funding organisations on the benefits of investing in capability and capacity building for taiao groups and the need for integrative support systems that are responsive to the needs of taiao groups in different contexts and at different stages in their development.

The research has been developed and carried out through a collaborative process between the research partners – lead researcher Maria Barnes, Cawthron Institute, Reconnecting Northland, Te Ohu Taiao o Waimamaku, Otaua ki Hokianga Roopu, and Hokianga Harbour Care.

Our research partners have been involved in the design and delivery of this research, but the analysis of findings and any errors or omissions in this report remain the responsibility of the researchers.

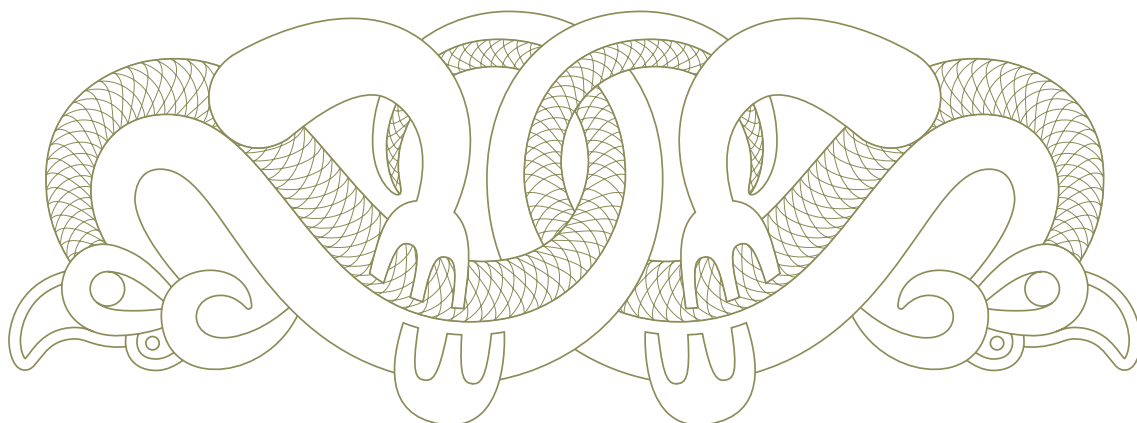




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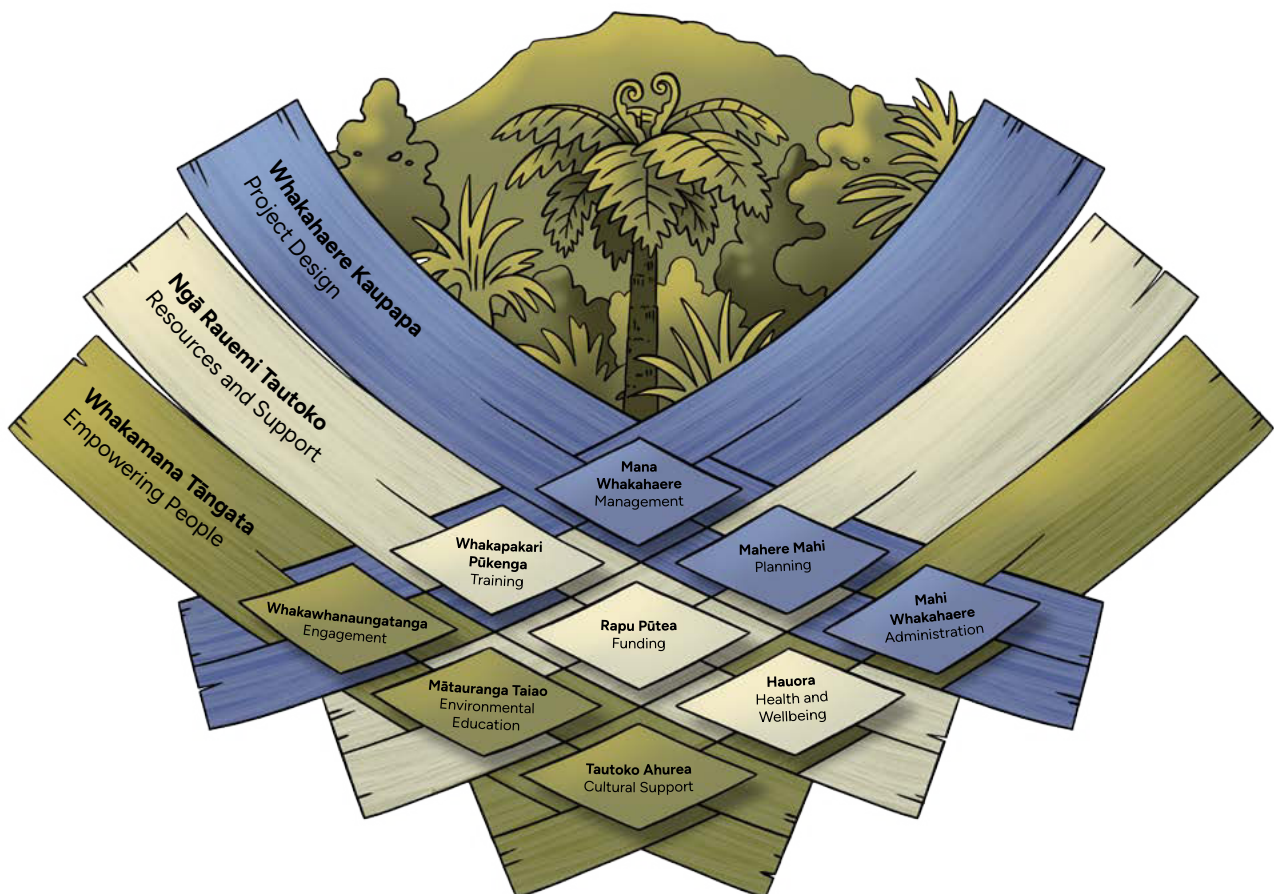
Executive summary

Te Kete Hononga is a service designed by Reconnecting Northland to assist taiao groups to gain better access to the support, guidance, training and resources needed to achieve their goals. It is currently being trialled over a 12-month period with community groups in Te Tai Tokerau.

In this study, the researchers partnered with Reconnecting Northland and three taiao groups in Hokianga to observe the trial and examine how effective Te Kete Hononga is in meeting the needs and aspirations of tangata whenua who are engaged in action to restore their taiao and improve socio-ecological outcomes.

The research used a collaborative kaupapa Māori approach to gain an understanding of (1) the support needed by tangata whenua and community-led taiao groups in Waimamaku, Otatau and Hokianga, and (2) how Te Kete Hononga is supporting taiao groups to develop their capability and capacity to make progress on their restoration goals. Data were drawn from many sources, including interviews, observations, databases and reports. This research contributed valuable insights into the trial of Te Kete Hononga, including the benefits, challenges, and areas for improvement.

We identified nine themes in the support services and resources needed by taiao groups to pursue their restoration goals and uphold the dreams and aspirations of their communities. These are illustrated in the community support framework and briefly described below.



Community support framework

Groups reported the need for management, planning and administration support to enable them to successfully develop and deliver restoration projects. (1) Project and people **management** are core capabilities for large-scale restoration initiatives, which involve volunteers, contractors and employees. (2) Long-term restoration also benefits from strategic and action **planning** processes, and monitoring frameworks to track progress. (3) All these activities have high **administration** requirements, from communication and human resources processes to reporting and finances.

Groups identified that for taiao initiatives to fulfil their communities' aspirations, they need to upskill local people and create local employment opportunities and valuable career pathways. (4) **Training** was consequently identified as a high priority to ensure groups have the local capability, capacity and qualifications to deliver their taiao projects. (5) Sustainable **funding** is also needed to enable groups to employ and retain skilled kaimahi and progress long-term restoration plans. (6) Groups also need to ensure their people are supported in all areas of **health and wellbeing** if they are to retain people in these roles.

Groups highlighted that restoration initiatives need to be a good fit for the community if they are to improve outcomes for local people and the environment. (7) They therefore desire support in developing **engagement** strategies appropriate for their local context. (8) Groups also saw a need for greater access to **environmental education** and support to incorporate education in community restoration activities. This includes recognition of mātauranga Māori and opportunities for local experts to share their knowledge. (9) **Cultural support** is essential for taiao work, including an understanding of local history, places, and cultural protocols and relationships with haukāinga.

This report uses the nine themes to assess the support provided through Te Kete Hononga and the difference it is making for taiao groups in Hokianga. It identifies areas for further development and opportunities for integrated support services like Te Kete Hononga to build community capability and capacity to lead ecosystem restoration.

Overall, the report demonstrates that Te Kete Hononga and RN's leadership are growing the foundations in taiao groups to scale up restoration, which will not only benefit the taiao but also the wellbeing of the people. Having access to integrated support across the nine key areas identified by communities is strengthening what these groups are able to plan and achieve.

Ko te whenua te waiu mō ngā uri whakatupu
The land provides the sustenance for our future descendants



Glossary

of selected key Māori words and phrases

<i>Haukāinga</i>	Home people
<i>Hauora</i>	Health
<i>Hui</i>	Meeting
<i>Kaimahi</i>	Worker
<i>Kāinga</i>	Home
<i>Kairaranga</i>	Leader and connector
<i>Kaitiaki</i>	Guardian
<i>Mahi</i>	Work
<i>Mana</i>	Authority
<i>Maramataka</i>	Māori lunar calendar
<i>Mātauranga Māori</i>	Māori knowledge
<i>Mauri</i>	Lifeforce
<i>Ngahere</i>	Forest
<i>Roopu</i>	Group
<i>Taiao</i>	Environment
<i>Tangata whenua</i>	People of the land
<i>Taonga</i>	Gift
<i>Tautoko</i>	Support, advocate
<i>Te ao Māori</i>	The Māori world
<i>Te Kete Hononga</i>	Basket of connections
<i>Te Tai Tokerau</i>	Northland area
<i>Tikanga</i>	Protocol
<i>Tūpuna</i>	Ancestors
<i>Wānanga</i>	Place of learning
<i>Whenua</i>	Land

Section 1 | Introduction

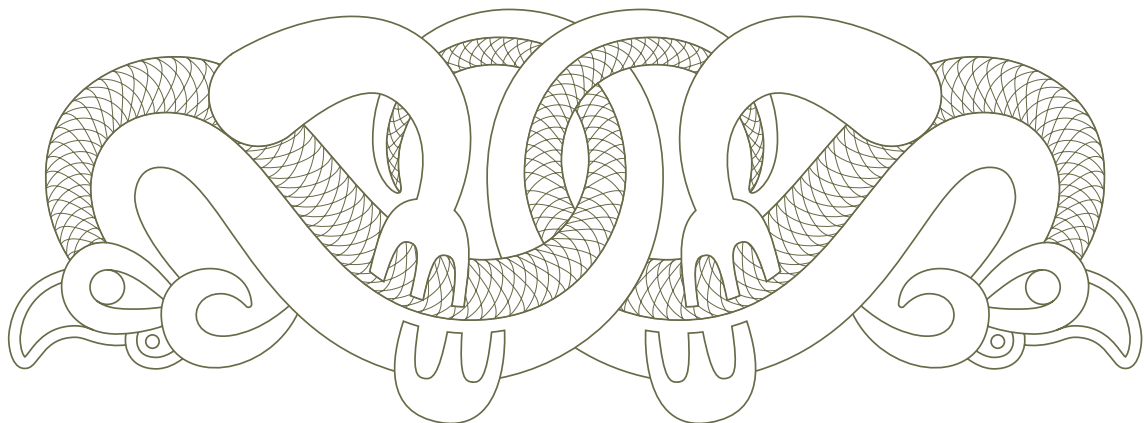


Tuia ki te rangi
Tuia ki te whenua
Tuia ki te ngākau ō ngā tāngata
E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā uri maha o Aotearoa
Ki ngā tāngata e tiaki ana i te taiao
E tiaki ana i ngā taonga
E rere haere ana ngā mihi

Ko te taiao he taonga, our environment is a treasure to be nurtured by all those who live here. From the high reaches of our maunga (mountains), through the veins that run through our awa (rivers) to our whenua (lands) to the moana (ocean), everything is connected, and all hold a sacred mauri (lifeforce).

Over the years, many factors such as overpopulation, pollution, burning of fossil fuels and deforestation have made significant impacts and led to soil erosion, poor air quality, reduced biodiversity and polluted waterways (Ministry for the Environment & Stats NZ, 2022).

Community taiao groups in Aotearoa New Zealand are responding to this degradation by taking action to protect biodiversity and improve ecosystem health (Towns et al., 2019; Department of Conservation, 2021). This includes removing pest and weed species, planting natives, fencing, wetland restoration and monitoring, as well as social activities like advocacy and education (Peters et al., 2015; Sinner et al., 2022). These groups include diverse community members, including landowners, local residents, hapū members and businesses (Sinner et al., 2022). They often collaborate with iwi/hapū and local and central government agencies (Peters et al., 2015).



Community restoration initiatives are typically volunteer-based and face significant challenges in acquiring the funding, expert advice, skills, administrative support and other resources necessary to undertake complex restoration projects (Peters et al., 2015; Sinner et al., 2022). In response to these challenges, regional charitable organisations have formed in many areas to support community groups in undertaking their restoration activities (Peters, 2019; Doole, 2020). These regional 'collectives' connect community groups, iwi/hapū and agencies to enable them to work together toward shared taiao goals (McFarlane et al., 2021).

Tangata whenua-led taiao groups are also growing in numbers and are reshaping the way restoration is undertaken in Aotearoa (Lyver et al., 2019; Towns et al., 2019; Bargh et al., 2023). This report will amplify their voices and highlight some of their needs and the support these groups are seeking. Our people, who have generational connections to the whenua (land) are passionate about their roles as kaitiaki, the obligations they have to uphold the tikanga (protocols) of our tūpuna (ancestors). They work to build their own knowledge and the knowledge of the haukāinga (home people) to be able to contribute to restoration projects which will enhance the health and wellbeing of their areas. Understanding the aspirations, needs and support desired by tangata whenua groups will better help regional organisations to know how they can support and collaborate with these groups to make a real difference (Bargh et al., 2023).

Previous research reveals that the support of regional collectives enables tangata whenua and community groups to have greater impact by growing their capacity and resources and increasing groups' connectivity to each other, funders and government agencies (Peters, 2019; McFarlane et al., 2021). By providing a centralised support structure for accessing services, training, and information, regional collectives can improve the efficiency and efficacy of community-led restoration (Doole, 2020). However, in many cases collectives themselves lack the resources and infrastructure to provide the support that taiao groups need (Peters, 2019). Despite the growing number of collectives nationwide, there are few examples with well-established systems and processes to coordinate support and connect taiao groups with agencies and service providers. As a result, it is unclear what approaches best enable regional collectives to meet groups' support needs and help them to achieve their restoration goals.

Furthermore, research to date on community-led restoration has focused on community groups and collectives in general (Peters, 2015, 2019; McFarlane et al., 2021; Sinner et al., 2022). There is a need for greater recognition of how collectives reshape the local funding and resourcing landscape for tangata whenua (Brown, 2018; Towns et al., 2019). This requires an understanding of how the support offered by collectives aligns with the goals and needs of tangata whenua groups and aspirations of haukāinga. Previous research on kaitiakitanga and biocultural restoration (Kawharu, 2000; Lyver et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2019) has provided important insights on tangata whenua taiao relationships and responsibilities in te ao Māori, and Te Tiriti-based approaches to ecosystem regeneration (see Bargh et al., 2023). However, given the focus on

Reconnecting Northland is

a non-profit connectivity catalyst programme established in 2012.

We support remote communities in Northland to regenerate some of the world's most biodiverse forests and wetlands, creating dynamic, landscape-scale, globally-significant change.

RN's vision is that 'in three generations Northland is a flourishing tapestry of abundant and resilient ecosystems'. RN is a catalyst for action, fostering collaboration between communities, agencies, business and investors, activating pathways to nature-based enterprise for more sustainable futures.

The organisation is based in Whangārei and relies on combined support from philanthropic and agency funding to achieve its vision. It is governed by a Board of Trustees and operationalised by a small team of core employees, as well as a range of contractors who work in project-specific roles.



Māori–Crown relations during this period, less attention has been paid to what non-government organisations can or should do to tautoko tangata whenua initiatives and aspirations. This research responds to this gap by exploring tangata whenua perspectives on the support offered by a well-established collective in Te Tai Tokerau (Northland).

Te Tai Tokerau is the northern-most region in Aotearoa and hosts some of the highest biodiversity in the country, alongside a rich cultural heritage that is of great importance to its people (Orange, 2015). However, the region faces unique challenges including socio-economic disparities, with many areas experiencing high unemployment rates and poverty (Orange, 2015). The region is home to many small communities in remote locations with limited access to government resources and support systems. Environmental concerns such as deforestation, soil erosion and threats to native flora and fauna are also prevalent (Centre for Social Impact, 2018). Climate change is exacerbating these issues, contributing to extreme weather events, flooding and rising sea levels that pose significant risks to both the environment and local communities (Department of Internal Affairs, 2022). These social and environmental trends make it difficult for local government or communities alone to protect the region's biodiversity.

This research examines Reconnecting Northland (henceforth RN) as an 'exemplar' collective that is partnering with government agencies (for example, the Department of Conservation) and community entities across Te Tai Tokerau to facilitate large-scale ecological restoration. In recognition of the administrative burden, lack of resources and other support needs that community groups face, RN has developed 'Te Kete Hononga', an integrated service that facilitates access to products, services and resources.¹ It is intended to build lasting capability for Tai Tokerau communities who are ready to take action to address nature's decline and increase biodiversity.

1 <https://www.reconnectingnorthland.org.nz/the-mahi/te-kete>

Te Kete Hononga is a new service being trialled by RN that aims to streamline access to the knowledge and resources needed to scale-up conservation in Te Tai Tokerau. With many groups across the region seeking to restore their taiao it is often difficult for groups to access resources and support, while service providers struggle to keep up with demand. Te Kete Hononga is designed to connect community groups with businesses and agencies that provide the resources, knowledge and people needed to advance their projects. Local businesses are expected to benefit from more consistent work, and it will enable agencies to improve their service delivery efficiency and capacity.

A key component of Te Kete Hononga is the creation of 'kairaranga' (weaver) roles across the region. These are skilled individuals with 'on the ground' connections to groups who are responsible for listening to and understanding groups' needs and weaving together a package of support. Some kairaranga are local leaders, while others sit within agencies. The service also involves creating a centralised support hub that incorporates everything from visioning, training and development, communications, project management, environmental planning to impact investment to support local communities to advance their taiao planning, projects and delivery.

Te Kete Hononga is a collaborative service led by RN and is initially being trialled for one year (June 2023-June 2024) with a subset of community initiatives. During the trial, RN staff have been working hard to grow relationships with agencies, expand the range of services available, coordinate training and learning opportunities for groups, and develop the back-end systems that enable Te Kete Hononga to function.

Reconnecting Northland trialled Te Kete Hononga over a 12-month period as a proof of concept to demonstrate how the service can provide quantifiable benefits for communities, service providers and agencies alike. Te Kete Hononga aims to increase efficiencies and grow the capacity and capability of community and tangata whenua groups to deliver outcomes for the environment by:

- providing greater access to the services and supports that community and tangata whenua groups need
- improving efficiency of agencies and service providers through better connected services.

In the trial, Te Kete Hononga worked with existing initiatives across Te Tai Tokerau (including Hokianga taiao groups) to learn and demonstrate how Te Kete Hononga can support tangata whenua-led efforts through better enabled and streamlined regional services supported by central and regional government.

Our research examined how the trial was implemented in Te Tai Tokerau and sought to assess the benefits and challenges of Te Kete Hononga for community groups in Waimamaku, Otaua and the wider Hokianga area. Through analysis of the trial of Te Kete Hononga, the research explored how collective organisations can support community groups and help them to achieve their goals and aspirations. In particular, this research focused on how regional collectives can support local capability and capacity building to undertake restoration, while creating opportunities for nature-based employment and economic development.

Research overview

The RN/Te Kete Hononga research is an exemplar study within the Biological Heritage National Science Challenge programme's Strategic Outcome 6, 'Pathways to Ecosystem Regeneration'. This strategic outcome has a particular focus on supporting co-development of exemplar restoration projects that showcase successful regeneration of mātauranga and bioheritage.

The research builds on an earlier analysis that characterised collective structures and operations around Aotearoa New Zealand (McFarlane et al., 2021), which acknowledged that increasing numbers of groups are aiming to increase the impact of their environmental restoration efforts. That study forms part of a broader body of work that aims to understand what strategies work best for amplifying community-led restoration – such as joining up with other groups, increasing the size of their efforts or deepening the scope of their project (Norton et al., 2016; Peltzer et al., 2019; Peters, 2019; Doole, 2020; Lam et al., 2020; McFarlane et al., 2021).

This project, alongside the other two exemplar studies (Zealandia in Te Whanganui-a-tara/Wellington and the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River Network in Ōtautahi/Christchurch) aim to provide in-depth insight into how collectives function

and what they contribute to ecosystem regeneration in New Zealand. The RN case study will in particular contribute insights on how collectives can support and promote tangata whenua-led environmental initiatives and empower local kaitiaki.

RESEARCH AIM

To understand what support services and resources are needed by tangata whenua-led groups to pursue their restoration goals, and how Te Kete Hononga can improve support for those groups.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How effective is Te Kete Hononga in meeting the needs and aspirations of tangata whenua by developing local capacity and capability to undertake restoration and realise improved socio-ecological (tāngata me te taiao) outcomes?

RESEARCH SUB-QUESTIONS

1. How does Te Kete Hononga resource and support local environmental custodians/kaiatawhai in their areas?
2. How does Te Kete Hononga enable improved planning by tangata whenua-led groups and targeting of support to deliver their plans?
3. What challenges do community leaders and staff experience when using Te Kete Hononga? Do they have specific needs that are not covered?
4. What cultural considerations are important in the design of Te Kete Hononga to enable environmental work in community group areas?

Research approach

This research was conducted by Maria Barnes, a researcher with whakapapa to Hokianga, with support from Kiely McFarlane (social scientist, Cawthron Institute) and Merata Kawharu (Ngāti Whātua, Ngāpuhi, Nukuroa Consulting), a kaupapa Māori researcher.

The study was conducted in partnership with RN and three Hokianga taiao groups (Te Ohu Taiao o Waimamaku, Otaua ki Hokianga roopu and Hokianga Harbour Care) that are at different stages of development. Two of the groups are tangata whenua-led, while the third is a community-wide group that employs a number of local kaimahi. The different age, composition, work, and priorities of the three groups provides an opportunity to explore commonalities and differences in taiao groups' support needs and experiences of the Te Kete Hononga trial.

The research was co-designed by the research partners through regular Zoom and in-person meetings over the course of the study, and a co-design hui that resulted in a research agreement (signed February 2023). The research covers the first nine months of the trial of Te Kete Hononga, from June 2023 to March 2024. The partners agreed that the research would use a combination of pre-trial interviews, and data collection and follow-up interviews halfway through the trial. The pre-trial interviews were used to develop a community support framework that identifies the key types of support and resourcing needed by taiao groups led by or working closely with tangata whenua. This framework was then used to assess how Te Kete Hononga is addressing those needs and promoting local capacity and capability building, based on data collected.

The research thus highlights what is working well and potential areas for improvement based on the first nine months of the trial, which could be used to inform the ongoing implementation of Te Kete Hononga. It also provides a framework with which to evaluate and communicate the outcomes of Te Kete Hononga for tangata whenua and other community groups.

The community support framework presented in this report was developed for a specific community context and therefore may not be directly translatable to other contexts and regional collectives. However, strong commonalities in support needs identified by the three taiao groups in this study, as well as similar observations in other studies of community-led restoration, suggest that these themes may have broader relevance. We suggest that this framework could provide a starting point or model for taiao groups and collectives elsewhere that wish to reflect on the types of support they need, receive, or provide.

Outline of report

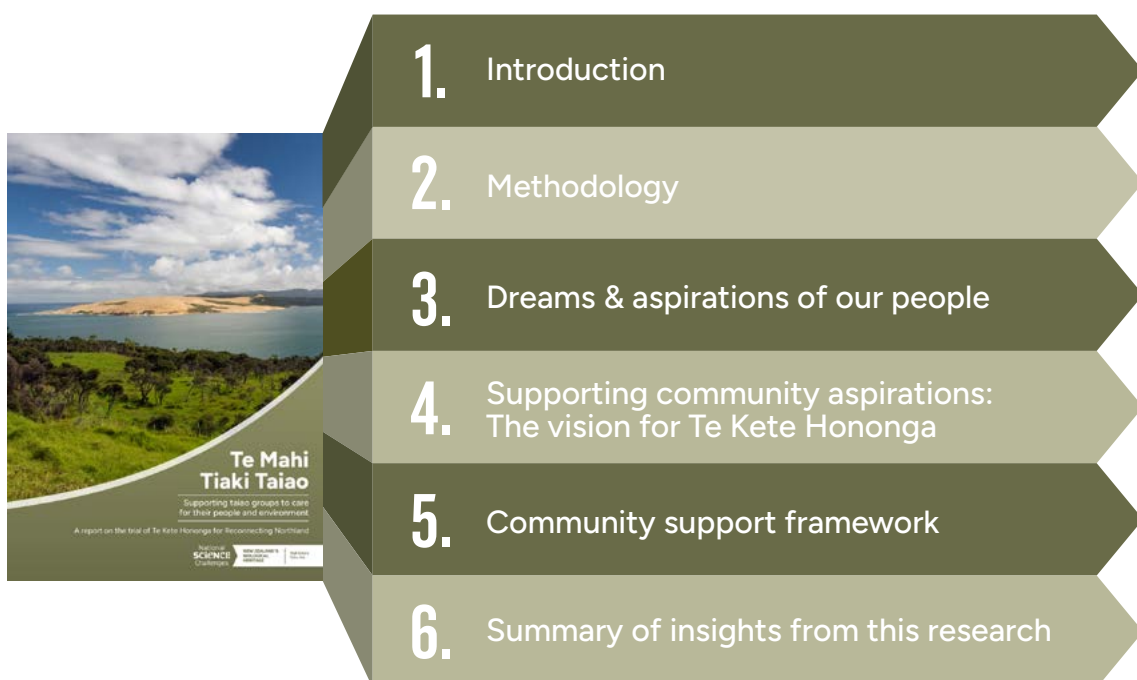
Section 2 outlines the kaupapa Māori approach and key methods used in this research.

Section 3 provides some context on the Hokianga area and the three taiao groups at the centre of this study, before summarising the dreams and aspirations of the people of Hokianga. These dreams and aspirations provide insight into how improving support for taiao groups can contribute toward meeting the larger goals and needs of the communities.

Section 4 summarises the vision for Te Kete Hononga, based on interviews with Reconnecting Northland leaders and staff. It describes the origins of and objectives for Te Kete Hononga, how it is expected to benefit groups and communities, and where Reconnecting Northland aims to take it in the future.

Section 5 describes and applies the community support framework developed through this research to identify the key support needs of taiao groups and assess how Te Kete Hononga is meeting those needs. It identifies nine themes in the support services and resources needed by taiao groups to pursue their restoration goals and uphold the dreams and aspirations of their communities. For each support theme, the key support needs of taiao groups are summarised, from which indicators of support are identified and then applied to review the support offered through Te Kete Hononga during the first nine months of the trial.

Section 6 then summarises insights from our research on the trial of Te Kete Hononga, beginning with the dreams and aspirations of our people and how Reconnecting Northland is responding to those aspirations by creating systems and opportunities to support capability and capacity building. Key successes and strengths from the trial of Te Kete Hononga to date are highlighted, alongside areas for further work. The report ends with some final reflections on the direction of Te Kete Hononga and our taiao groups.





Section 2 | Methodology

This section provides an overview of the research methodology and approach. The research aimed to empower the voices of our people through a collaborative qualitative approach embedded within a Kaupapa Māori research framework.

While the trial of Te Kete Hononga reaches across Northland, this research specifically focuses on Waimamaku, Otaua and the rural areas of Hokianga and the three taiao groups working in these areas: Te Ohu Taiao o Waimamaku, Otaua ki Hokianga roopu and Hokianga Harbour Care.

Kaupapa Māori research

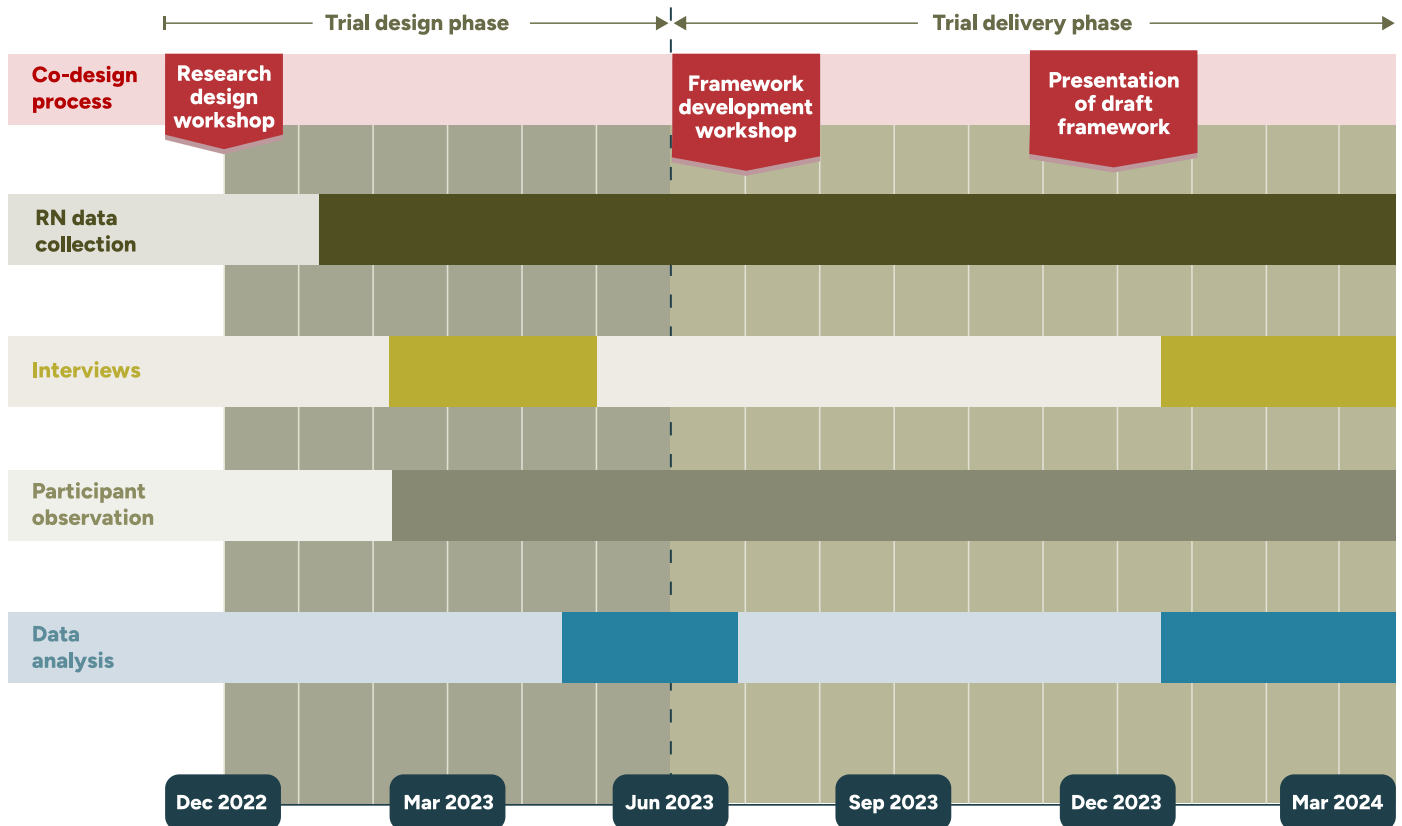
Given the unequal power relations that have traditionally characterised research with Indigenous people, we strove to be as participatory and collaborative as possible. Indigenous people and communities are an integral part of determining research agendas, and their participation should be assured with research methodologies that align with their world views. There is a need to 'reinterpret what is meant by an original contribution to research', as the focus is on improving practice within the context of this research through gaining an 'insider's view of action in context rather than contributing intellectually to a discipline' (Haseman, 2006, p. 3). Kaupapa Māori is about "*challenging unequal power relations and making space for the validity of Māori ways of knowing and being*" (Smith, 2012, p. 19) and reinforces the fact that communities and those involved with the research should ultimately benefit from it.

The research aimed to understand what support services and resources are needed by tangata whenua groups to pursue their restoration goals and how regional collective organisations can improve taiao groups' access to support. Our desire was that this research would contribute to better outcomes for the Hokianga taiao and people. This involved a range of methods to capture the journey of our groups up to and through the first nine months of the trial, as set out in this section.

Data collection

Ethics approval for this research was granted by the Cawthron Institute Human Research Ethics Committee in March 2023. Key methods of data collection included co-design, semi-structured interviews, researcher observation of hui and data collection by RN.

Timeline of research project



Co-design process

A co-design research workshop was held with community kairaranga and RN staff in late November 2022. During the workshop, participants shared updates on their groups and the planned trial of Te Kete Hononga, and brainstormed potential research foci, questions and approaches to data collection. Following this workshop, a draft research proposal was developed collaboratively using online meetings and shared documents. The proposal included the overall aims, priority research questions, a list of key people to interview and a timeline of key milestones. This co-design process continued to be used throughout the research, including:

- Regular (2 weekly) online progress check-ins with RN staff
- In-person hui with RN staff in July 2023 to share and invite feedback on key themes emerging from the first series of interviews
- Online presentation of draft framework to RN staff in December 2023
- Reconnecting Northland sharing monthly reports completed by kairaranga and RN staff
- Co-development of indicators for measuring progress in the trial through an iterative process of discussion and refinement
- E-mail updates from the research team to kairaranga
- Kanohi ki te kanohi check-in meetings between the lead researcher and kairaranga
- The lead researcher attending community and RN events.

The co-design process helped to map out the direction of the research, developments during the trial, and continuous updates on the advancement of the hub and other tools and information platforms designed to help groups. Working closely with RN and kairaranga helped to ensure that our partnerships were solid and that there was easy access to information. Having regular check-ins ensured that the trial and research worked well together.

Semi-structured interviews

Prior to the start of Te Kete Hononga's trial run, key informant interviews were held with 15 interviewees, including four RN staff, four kairaranga, four haukāinga (including kaumātua, kuia and youth from Otaua and Waimamaku) and three community taiao volunteers. Interviews lasted 15–90 minutes and were conducted by the lead researcher in person, on Zoom or over the phone, depending on the interviewee's preference. The researcher used a semi-structured questionnaire that included questions on the history of the community, group, or initiative; the interviewee's aspirations for Te Kete Hononga or their community; and the goals and support needs of taiao groups in the Hokianga.

A second set of interviews were conducted midway through the trial of Te Kete Hononga to understand participants' experiences and perspectives on the developments, training, and support provided during the trial. Interviewees were selected to focus on those most closely involved in the Te Kete Hononga trial, including two RN staff, three kairaranga and two kaimahi from the taiao groups who had received training through Te Kete Hononga. Interviews lasted 25–90 minutes and were conducted in person by the lead researcher (one interviewee provided written responses) and on Zoom call. The interviews used a semi-structured questionnaire that had been developed to gather information on progress made for each theme in community support needs.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by a professional transcriber who had signed a confidentiality agreement. The transcripts were qualitatively analysed by the lead researcher using thematic coding.

Participant observation of hui

The lead researcher attended and observed workshops, training sessions, events and taiao training education days at the invitation of RN and the Otaua/Waimamaku kairaranga. Observations included taking handwritten notes and in some cases photographs during hui with the permission of participants. These observations provided opportunities to understand how the groups worked to upskill, plan, train and navigate key issues and challenges towards achieving their own visions and goals outlined in their catchment plans. These observations provided valuable insights into collaborative approaches used to support groups in advancing their goals and aspirations and catchment plans. Observations also provided insights into how the information hub was designed and used by groups. The hub is an essential part of the trial, used to store and share information.

Data collection by Reconnecting Northland

Reconnecting Northland is collecting information about taiao groups' needs and the uptake of the support and resources it provides over the trial of Te Kete Hononga. It collated and shared some of this information with us, to enable analysis of how the trial is progressing over time and outcomes for taiao groups. Data RN shared with the researchers includes:

- needs analysis data collected by RN from kairaranga and volunteers at the beginning of the trial to gather information on groups' training and support needs
- training and support evaluations collected by RN from kaimahi and volunteers to assess the outcomes for participants attending the training sessions provided. Participants were asked for their permission to share these evaluations with the researchers
- a database of service providers developed by RN, showcasing the range and availability of service providers in the region that can support groups
- a calendar of training and hui held/coordinated by RN for taiao groups
- monthly reports summarising training provided (and attendance information), events held, and updates on activities completed by taiao groups.



Analysis of data

The pre-trial interview transcripts were analysed using thematic coding to identify themes in the:

- goals and aspirations of haukāinga and taiao groups
- key support and resourcing needs identified by taiao groups
- challenges and barriers that taiao groups may be facing.

The interviews with RN staff were analysed to understand the origins, purpose, and development of Te Kete Hononga. The resulting nine key themes were shared with RN at a hui held in Whangārei in July 2023 to inform their ongoing work and invite their feedback. The themes were refined based on this feedback and then developed into a 'community support framework'. The researchers then worked with RN staff to develop a series of indicators for each theme, based on a combination of specific needs identified by interviewees, implementation plans for Te Kete Hononga, and an assessment of what data could be collected.

The mid-point interviews were designed to gather data on the trial of Te Kete Hononga, according to the indicators developed earlier. Participant responses to each indicator question were analysed to assess the progress the trial was making and the support that had been provided to groups. Quotes and examples shared by interviewees were used as evidence of progress (or challenges) for each indicator. Due to the small number of participants in this study, all interviews are quoted anonymously.

The observations made at hui were recorded and analysed according to the nine key themes in the community support framework. Observations used to assess progress made during the trial included attendance at each hui, the types of information shared and activities, and reflections on the researcher's and others' experience of the hui. Photographic evidence was also collected from these hui to be able to share back as a pictorial report at the end. Visual presentations are what sit comfortably with our people, more so than written works.

The data provided by RN was analysed to track the support provided to groups and other developments over the course of the trial. This information was valuable to see how the trial was progressing, what adjustments or changes had been made, and the reflections and challenges that were arising. The feedback forms shared were also analysed to understand how participants found the training and hui they attended, and outcomes for individuals. Overall, these data helped to analyse the value of what was offered and what aspects of Te Kete Hononga are connected to the nine key support needs.

Section 3 | Dreams & aspirations of our people



Nau mai ki te puna i te ao mārama. Welcome to Hokianga-nui-a Kupe, the spring of the world of light, the place where Kupe landed and settled his people. Hokianga is on the west coast of Northland, where the kaitiaki taniwha Ārai-te-uru on the South and Niniwa on the North guard the harbour entrance.

Before Europeans arrived, Māori lived in their whānau and hapū groups, sustaining themselves via the resources of the moana (ocean), ngahere (forest) and awa (rivers) (Hohepa, 2011). They also cultivated crops such as kūmara, taro, uwhi and hue (Leach, 1984). From the 1820s onwards the arrival of Europeans marked a period of significant cultural exchange and conflict. Hokianga became a vital hub for the timber and flax industry, with kauri forests being exploited for shipbuilding and construction. Local Māori continued to grow and trade foods. Hokianga remains an important cultural and historical site, and a focus of local whānau and hapū initiatives to preserve and protect the taiao.

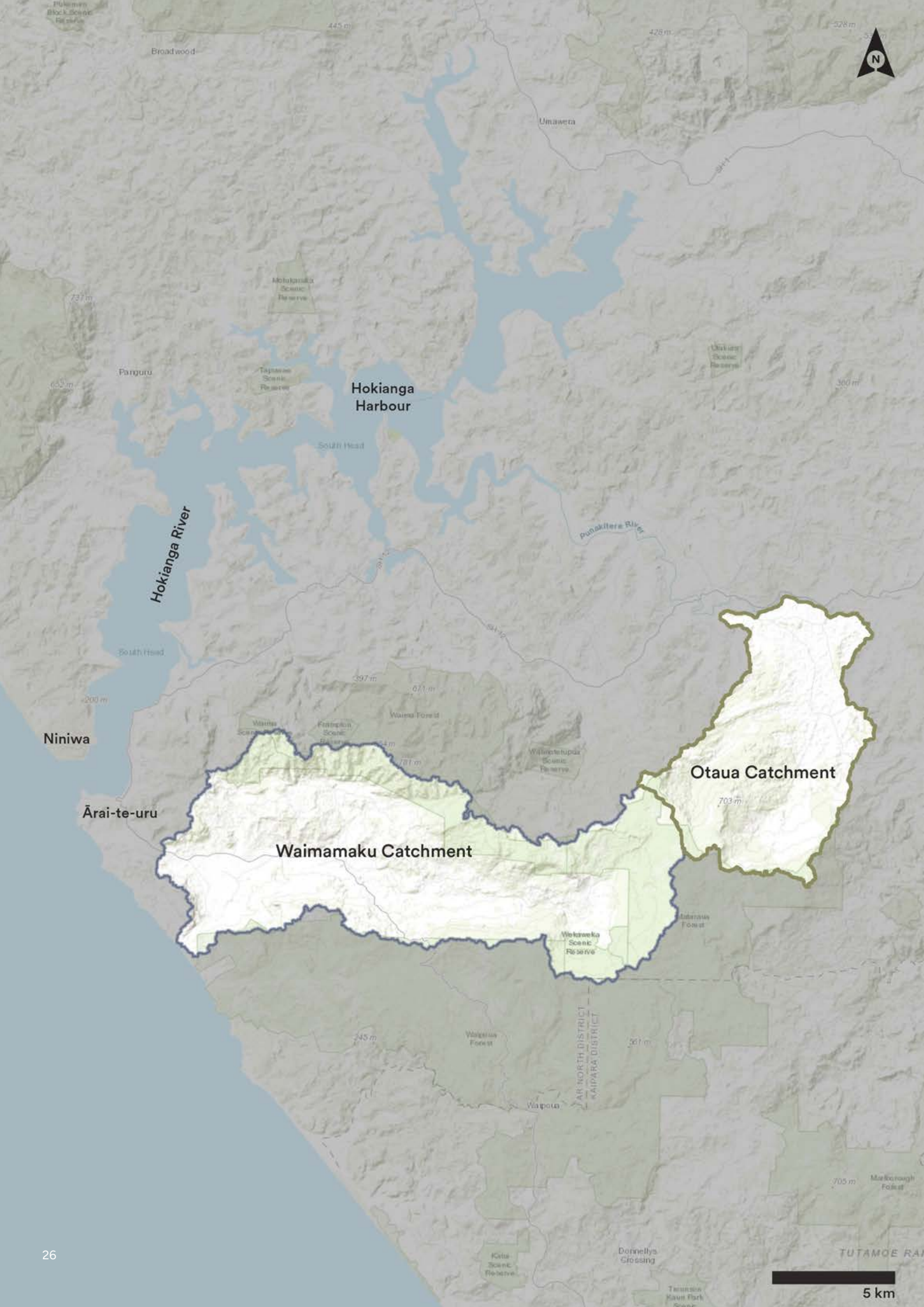
The three taiao groups at the centre of this research are the Te Ohu Taiao o Waimamaku, the Otaua ki Hokianga roopu and Hokianga Harbour Care. Two are volunteer groups led by tangata whenua kairaranga (Māori leaders of their community taiao group), who are passionate about their taiao and communities and are contracted by RN. The third is a Hokianga-wide community group led by a local non-Māori coordinator who has worked closely with tangata whenua, including the Otaua and Waimamaku roopu, to protect and restore the Hokianga taiao. Hokianga Harbour Care employs a team of mostly Māori kaimahi to conduct taiao mahi.

Dreams and aspirations of different parts of the community

The groups are motivated and passionate about looking after, caring for and learning about the taiao in their areas. All have strong relationships within their communities. Based on the interviews conducted at the beginning of this study, we identified the following dreams and aspirations of kairaranga, kuia and kaumātua, youth and volunteers for their taiao and communities. These aspirations provide insight into how improving support for taiao groups can contribute toward meeting the larger goals and needs of the communities.

Basic information on community taiao groups in the Hokianga case study

	Otaua ki Hokianga roopu	Te Ohu Taiao o Waimamaku	Hokianga Harbour Care
Year started	2021	2021	2017
Leaders	RN kairaranga	RN kairaranga	Tiaki ngā wai Project Manager
Land ownership	Mostly Māori landowners	Māori and European landowners	Māori and European landowners



Basic information on community taiao groups in the Hokianga case study cont.

	Otaua ki Hokianga roopu	Te Ohu Taiao o Waimamaku	Hokianga Harbour Care
Key issues/ goals	Roading Waterways Rubbish and Recycling Weed & pest management Engagement with government agencies	Habitat regeneration Para Kore – Zero Waste Regenerative land use Food production Rongoa (Waimamaku Taiao Plan 2021–2026)	Ecosourcing seeds Riparian planting Wetland restoration Stabilise erosion-prone land Fencing Pest plant control Build capability & employment
Funding	Kairaranga role funded by RN Volunteer-based Expected to receive funding in 2024	Kairaranga role funded by RN Volunteer-based Expected to receive funding in 2024	Funded by MPI One Billion Trees (2020) for 3-year catchment restoration project 4th year funded by Pub Charities, Foundation North and Ministry for the Environment

Kairaranga

Kairaranga lead taiao groups, and therefore have hands-on experience of both the work these groups do and the challenges they face in accessing funding, resources, expertise and skilled workers. The aspirations voiced by kairaranga focus on building community capacity and capability so that groups can carry out their taiao work for the benefit of local people and the environment.

Aspirations	Illustrative quotes
To build a community of knowledge holders regarding the taiao and to share with others the environmental expertise that sits in the community	<i>“There is only a certain group in our community that understand the taiao and it would be beautiful to be able to pass that on to the rest of our community and more importantly our youth”</i>
To grow the capability and capacity of whānau, hapū and community to be able to gain employment in their home areas	<i>“To see our people gaining the jobs in our area. For our people to have the discipline to hold a job. For us to have the patience to support them in their journey”</i>
To improve the health and wellbeing of the Hokianga taiao by restoring the health of the waterways and catchments in the area	<i>“We want to employ and upskill tangata whenua to help restore and protect the taiao through our project, including planting the waterways and by educating the community”</i>

Kaumātua and kuia

Kaumātua and kuia have witnessed significant changes in their landscapes and communities over their lifetimes and are holders of mātauranga and tikanga for their communities. The dreams and aspirations of kaumātua and kuia focus on passing down this knowledge so that changes in the taiao can be accurately observed and interpreted, and tikanga used to ensure sustainable management of local resources.

Aspirations	Illustrative quotes
To provide guidance and wisdom about the taiao in their areas	<i>"Whakarongo ki ngā kaumātua and kuia, those with lived experiences in the taiao"</i>
To observe and take notice of what is happening in the taiao	<i>"In today's time we are often too busy inside and not enough time in nature"</i> <i>"We need to know and understand our taiao – the smells, seasons, spawning times, lifecycles of different plants and species, and to have wānanga about our taiao"</i>
To follow the tikanga of our Tūpuna	<i>"Put rāhui on certain areas to preserve our kaimoana before it's all gone"</i>

Youth

Local youth are involved in taiao work through participation in the activities of taiao groups and groups' collaborations with local schools. The local curriculum provides limited opportunities to study science, so mahi taiao is an important way for rangatahi to learn about their environment. Youth aspirations focus on a better future for their taiao and communities, including opportunities for local people to work in environmental restoration.

Aspirations	Illustrative quotes
To see an environment that is thriving for future generations	<i>"To see our taiao alive and thriving, kai flourishing for generations to come"</i>
To create pathways to have our own people working on our whenua	<i>"We need more funding to start up taiao kaupapa and to run wānanga, training or courses, even for maramataka,... and to support youth into career pathways to fill the roles in this area of mahi"</i>

Community volunteers

Volunteers are a critical part of local taiao groups, and include haukāinga and non-Māori community members. Volunteers contribute their expertise, time and labour to undertake planting, weeding, trapping and environmental monitoring to restore the taiao. The dreams and aspirations of volunteers highlight the need to create sustainable pathways for restoration work, so that restoration activities can continue and be expanded out.

Aspirations	Illustrative quotes
Better funding support and ways of working together	<i>"Stop the piecemeal funding approach and join agencies, organisations and communities together to get work done"</i>
To ensure that taiao projects offer a range of work so that it is rewarding work for kaimahi	<i>"Have environmental projects that mix up the work to keep it interesting"</i>
To educate younger generations	<i>"To foster a love and understanding of the taiao in the younger people"</i>

Overall goals and aspirations

Analysis of interviewee responses revealed the following common themes in local people's dreams and aspirations for mahi tiaki taiao:

- to have a thriving, healthy taiao to pass on to future generations
- to grow the knowledge of taiao groups and young people, including by learning from kaumātua and kuia and local and external experts
- to ensure Mātauranga Māori is nurtured and supported in the mahi, and to keep noticing and observing what is happening in nature
- to have systems and structures set up to employ, train and support local people to do taiao work
- to have better funding systems that advance the work needed to restore the taiao.

Section 4 | Supporting community aspirations



Te Kete Hononga began to be conceptualised in 2019 as part of an initiative to create a landscape scale approach to restoration. This involved working with multiple communities to define a vision for their landscape, and supporting them to hold hui and develop a plan.

This initiative highlighted the importance of community connectivity for achieving landscape scale restoration:

The goal for RN was for the connectivity that we aspire to achieve across the landscapes and within communities to be informed by our relationship to te taiao and the stories of the land that we can sort of find and give new expression to through our mahi.

In bringing multiple groups and initiatives together to work towards a common vision, RN also recognised the importance of groups *"maintaining their own autonomy to deliver on what it is that they want to deliver."* Reconnecting Northland saw an opportunity to support groups by attracting co-investment or co-resourcing to these areas so that they are not competing with one another, as well as helping to *"bring in larger pots of money that can result in greater impact and address the capacity and capability challenges that exist within our communities."*

Building on these insights, RN sought to pull a *"pool of resources, of people, of income, of investment, of technology, of technical expertise together"* so that when groups come to them seeking support, they can act as a conduit to a *"suite of resources"*. As one manager stated, *"it's really hard; if you don't know what's out there, resource-wise, how can you access it?"*

Staff noted that many of the barriers Te Kete Hononga sought to overcome are long-recognised issues in community conservation:

Te Kete Hononga - it's not a new concept either, how many times have we heard our people say oh gosh you know, we always get funded piecemeal by all the different agencies and then we've got to try and piece it all together so that we can create enough capacity in the funding, the resources and so on, to actually complete the mahi.

Reconnecting Northland is currently leading the 12-month trial of Te Kete Hononga with 16 kairaranga across Northland. To understand the support and resources groups need to achieve their goals, each group completed a 'needs analysis' and had discussions with RN's Training Coordinator, who works with training providers to develop bespoke programmes for taiao groups.

As stated by RN,

if we can get the trial right and we have the connectors and connection catalysts that we are claiming to have under the guise of RN, then what that actually means is that all the different agencies... and ... experts, we will be able to link our collectives to in order to grow and evolve well.

Reconnecting Northland's key focus is making practical gains for groups. It was noted that in the past

people can kind of get together and hui and hui and it's all good for a while but then you want to get stuff done. So you combine the two – progression and development with coming together and sharing, that happens naturally when you get them all in the same room. That's what we hope that there will be better access to the services that directly address the needs that they have so it grows their competencies and that there's economies and efficiency achieved in coordinating that and speeding up the process by having things ready to go.

Reconnecting Northland's objectives for Te Kete Hononga

Interviews with RN staff revealed seven common themes in what they hope Te Kete Hononga will deliver for local taiao groups. Each theme is briefly summarised below with explanatory quotes.

1. To understand the needs of groups and be able to connect groups to the support and resources they need

I think the main thing is supporting groups to identify what they need and to give them streamlined access to those things without them having to go through the churn of trying to figure that out for themselves and most probably missing things.

2. To support groups by providing targeted and accessible training for kaimahi

There's some quite practical things like [enabling] one or two people in their teams to access training. It's really hard to get people on to training courses unless they are willing to travel to Whangārei. So just having some training coordination available with Te Kete will be valuable and our Training Coordinator can arrange trainers to come to those communities, which they are willing to do if there's enough people wanting to be trained.

Our Training Coordinator will also go out and sit with the groups... and identify those things [they need] and then she will start putting together the training. Therefore, training will be done using a targeted approach to what is needed for that group.

As noted by the Training Coordinator there is satisfaction in seeing people advancing themselves and their situations: *"I just get a good sense of achievement and pleasure and enjoyment of seeing people gain qualifications, that's a biggie."*

3. To provide broad administration support for taiao groups.

Administration is a challenge for community groups that are used to operating in a more informal way, and for leaders who do not necessarily have any training or experience in administration. As one manager reported, *"some have said like I'm*

really good at planting out and I'm really good at working in the taiao but I'm not very good at administration and actually it's the administration that takes up a lot of time." Administration includes emailing, coordination of activities, writing funding applications, engaging with stakeholders on projects, report writing and financial accountability. Reconnecting Northland hopes to enable groups "to focus on actually doing the mahi on the ground" by providing services and support for these administrative tasks.

- 4. Working with kairaranga to prepare for contracting services and employing staff.**
Many community groups have operated on a volunteer basis for a long time but are considering bringing on contractors and hiring staff to scale up their restoration work. According to RN,

the immediate most urgent need is probably those groups who are recruiting staff and employees. [We can provide] support with getting HR and administration underway, interviewing, policies, health and safety. Being able to get all those aspects organised.

- 5. To grow the knowledge of kairaranga and taiao groups**

With Te Kete Hononga... there is a lot of expertise within those agencies such as DOC. So, we hope the technical knowledge, is not only shared but that knowledge is transferred to our communities. Whether that's secondments down the track or just you know closely working alongside our collective, our groups.

- 6. To support groups to access funding and employ local people**

Reconnecting Northland staff note that while they do not have discretionary funding to directly fund taiao groups, they "are able to be the conduits to find funding and support this area. It may not necessarily just be funding grants from agencies either, it could be something co-created like income streams to sustain our collectives."

Reconnecting Northland see this funding as critical for groups' success:

the biggest barrier that I see for people and volunteer groups is that they can only give so much time to these projects because you know, let's face it, they need to generate income to feed their families. ...This is where I see a huge gap when we're working on ecological restoration of any nature, is it doesn't actually come with building the capacity in the individuals financially in order for them to give full commitment to these projects. It's very piecemeal timewise and it's very piecemeal in terms of the funding and the resources that they are provided with. So, it's a huge barrier because [if] you can only give like one weekend a month to the project, then there's only going to be so much that can be done during that time. So, projects sort of pan out for years.

7. To support the creation of local nature-based enterprises
Reconnecting Northland see a need to

somehow move away from reliance on government grant funds and use it to seed you know, enterprise opportunities that groups can sort of generate revenue from and build that up. It might only be 10% in the first instance and grow to 20% of what the overall costs are, but at least if all the funding dries up, there's a percentage there that can sort of... keep the lights on and keep things moving.

Consequently,

part of our strategy ... is to actually create these nature-based enterprises so our whānau, our collectives, our hapori are actually creating income streams for themselves; it will allow them to implement these passion projects alongside those income streams. So that's an area that we want to grow and evolve within the collectives that we're working with.

Anticipated benefits and value of Te Kete Hononga

Reconnecting Northland anticipate many benefits arising from the trial:

with all of these different projects, it not only benefits te taiao, it not only benefits our waterways, it not only benefits our forestry and our environments. It actually benefits us and our future generations as well. You know, we don't want to leave Papatūānuku worse off for our tamariki mokopuna. That's really where it's at for us, especially as Māori.

They share that engaging in taiao mahi is also about feeling proud as a people and knowing that you are making a difference:

the immediate benefits are we're feeling good about the mahi that we're doing as a community and as a collective and as an individual. It's something that we are absolutely passionate about and you know when you're actually in that kind of line of work and you're actually living and breathing that type of lifestyle where you're making te taiao a lot better than what it was previously, that actually does something to your heart and soul.

They also see it as part of the responsibility that one holds to look after Papatūānuku:

I think the biggest benefit is that we are seeing that our restoration projects are actually connected to that old saying 'when you live somewhere and when you leave this earth, you are hoping to leave it in a better way than what you received it'.

Future directions for Reconnecting Northland

The overall goal for RN is to facilitate the creation of sustainable systems and practices that make taiao mahi for groups and communities less burdensome, less isolated and better managed.

Ultimately in terms of groups interacting with service providers, organisations and experts, success would be:

both sides of the system reporting increased benefits. So from a service provider just as an example, success for Te Kete would look like a reported increase in clientele as a result of being involved. ... For community groups, they'd be reporting that their efficiencies to deliver on projects has improved and the skills of their team or their crew have increased and then agencies might be talking about increased uptake of their services. ... and then overall, I suppose from an RN perspective, that we're seen as a valued partner in the field of conservation.

It was also noted that by building capability and capacity, groups will be better able to participate, lead and look at ways to begin self-funding the mahi in their areas.

There's often a strong desire to want to do stuff but it's often borne by the few and there are opportunities to grow the competency of that few to improve the quality of the work that is being done. And then in time, support the emergence of new initiatives or opportunities that can help self-fund or generate revenue for the work... because coordination really is the kind of fulcrum around which most things evolve in those communities, having a coordinator, someone that's the mover and shaker and can make things keep moving.

There is also a desire to engage the whole community in learning and training, because growing the knowledge in the people is growing a better future: *"I want to see a range of people accessing a wide spectrum of courses. So not just being limited to people who are employed but also including communities and family involvement".*

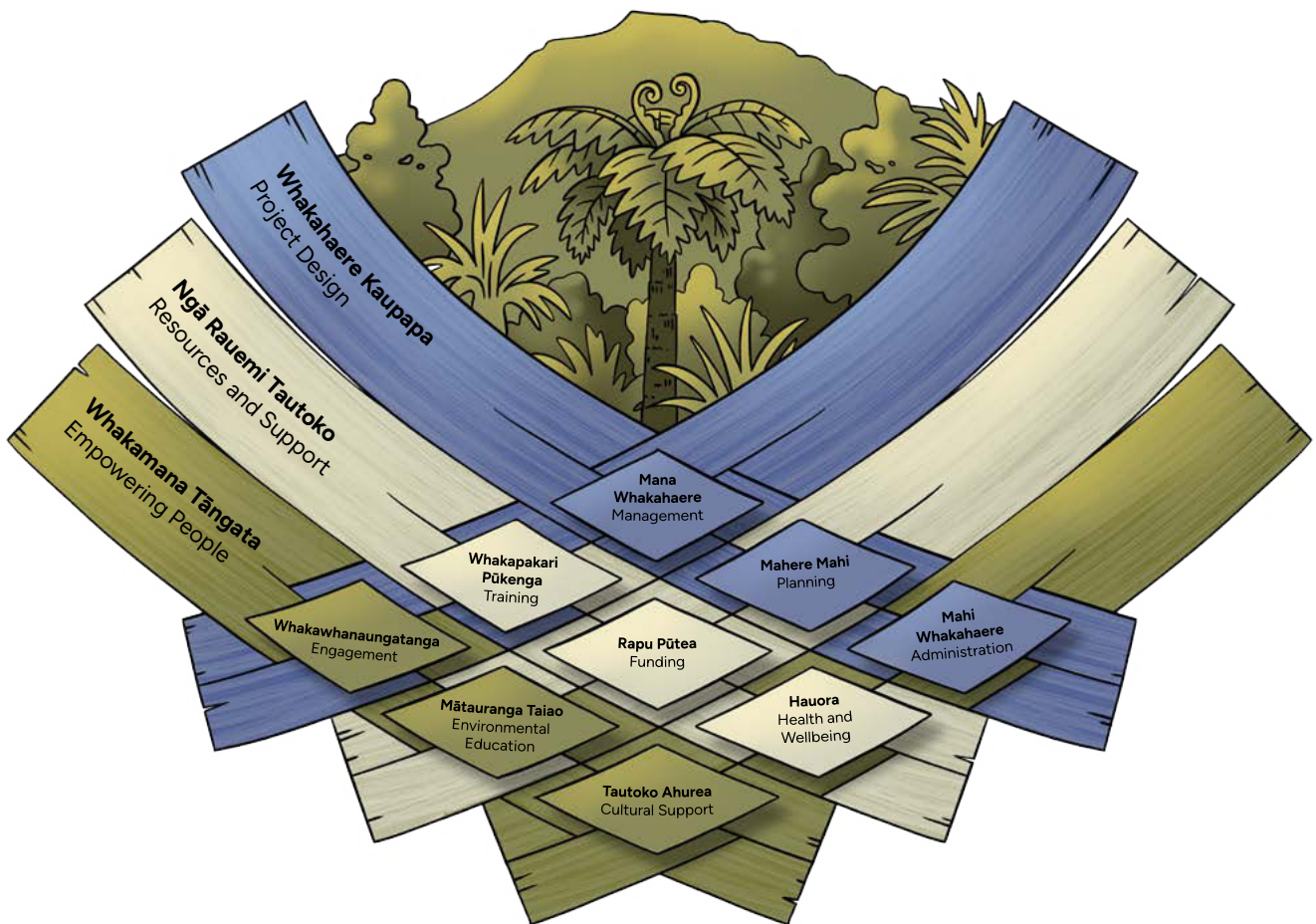
The way in which RN aims to achieve the aspirations is:

to nurture a culture of awahi and tautoko and manaaki, these things are deeply embedded in the strategies of RN, but deeply embedded in the people too. This is how they talk, this little team and it's quite refreshing. It's like they're actually living, breathing, talking, working like this and so only benefits can come from that kind of perspective. This will then lead to our collectives becoming sustainable and they will be able to undertake the mahi and projects that they absolutely want to, to get into the bigger, wider scale of things.



Section 5 | Community support framework

This section presents the key support and resourcing needs of taiao groups and their communities and describes the support systems created through Te Kete Hononga. The nine community support needs described in this section were identified through thematic analysis of pre-trial interviews and refined through workshops with RN. Together, these nine themes comprise a 'community support framework'.



Community support framework

The design represents Te Kete Hononga—the 'basket of connections'—which is the weaving together of the dreams and aspirations of the people and projects for restoring the taiao. Key elements of the Hokianga taiao are represented in the background of the image. The role of Te Kete Hononga in providing integrative support for the taiao and people is illustrated through the weaving together of nine support themes identified through interviews with groups and communities. Through ongoing development of support in these areas the aim is that the whole project will come alive and continue to grow and evolve. Toitu te whenua! Toitū te mauri!

Kaupapa matua | Key support areas

We identified nine types of support services and resources needed by taiao groups to pursue their restoration goals and uphold the dreams and aspirations of their communities. These nine support needs are organised according to three overarching areas, as described below.

Whakahaere Kaupapa | Project Design

Groups identified the need for management, planning and administration support to enable them to successfully develop and deliver restoration projects. Project and people **management** are core capabilities for large-scale restoration initiatives, which often involve a combination of volunteers, contractors, and employees. Large-scale and long-term restoration also benefits from strategic and action **planning** processes, and monitoring frameworks to track progress. All these activities have high **administration** requirements, from communication and HR processes to reporting, finances and data management. Kairaranga have variable skills and experience in these areas, so collectives can increase capability by putting systems in place that decrease the load for community groups and help them grow their skills.

Ngā Rauemi Tautoko | Resources and Support

Groups reported that large-scale restoration initiatives require skilled people who undertake hard work in often challenging conditions, as well as significant and sustained resourcing. They also want to see restoration projects creating local employment opportunities and valuable career pathways, rather than relying on outside labour. **Training** of kaimahi and volunteers was consequently identified as a high priority to ensure groups have the local capability, capacity and qualifications to deliver their taiao projects. Sustainable **funding** is also needed to enable groups to employ and retain skilled kaimahi and progress long-term restoration plans. Groups also need to ensure that kaimahi and volunteers are supported in all areas of **health and wellbeing** if they are to attract and retain people in these roles.

Whakamana Tāngata | Empowering People

Groups highlighted that restoration initiatives need to be a good fit for the community if they are to improve outcomes for local people and the environment. Kairaranga recognised the need for good relationships with communities, organisations, and funders, but do not always have existing connections to all the right people. They therefore desire support in developing **engagement** strategies appropriate for their local context. Groups also saw a need for greater access to **environmental education** and support to incorporate education in community restoration activities. This includes recognising the extensive mātauranga that tūpuna held and opportunities for kaumātua

and local experts to share their knowledge. **Cultural support** is essential for taiao work, including an understanding of local history, places, and cultural protocols and relationships with haukāinga.

Explanation of the nine support themes

In the following sections we apply the community support framework to assess how Te Kete Hononga is supporting taiao groups in Hokianga to develop their capability and capacity and make progress on their restoration goals. Each section describes and applies one of the nine themes and includes:

- an explanation of the groups' support and resourcing needs, based on analysis of the pre-trial interviews
- a series of indicators that can be used to assess whether and how these needs are met
- an analysis of the support offered to taiao groups through Te Kete Hononga during the first part of the trial, and areas for further work.

Whakahaere Kaupapa | Project design





Mana Whakahaere | Management

Te amorangi ki mua te hapai ō ki muri

The leader at the front and the workers behind the scenes

Management support was highlighted as a key need in interviews, as all projects require good management to be successful. It was important to the kairaranga that everyone involved in taiao projects understood their roles and responsibilities and that, as managers, “we need to have good systems in place to be able to lead well.” For kairaranga, having the right management support and systems in place includes:

- good people skills
- effective communication systems
- writing support
- being able to execute plans
- being able to access the right support for different situations
- knowledge of conflict resolution strategies
- ensuring that legal requirements are met for employing people.

While some kairaranga have a wealth of skills and experience in managing groups and projects, others had none.

A key need identified by kairaranga is having human resources (HR) guidance, support, and policies in place to employ people in the future, upon gaining funding. When entering the realm of employment, managers need to know their responsibilities around contracts, support, and health and safety requirements. Even those with experience of management said this was “an area that was forever changing, and it was important to be up to speed with current requirements.”

Interviewees also noted that undertaking funded taiao projects requires skills in project design and management. When designing projects, it is important to “ensure the milestones are achievable and priced at the right amounts” because this can become a problem later down the track. Each part of the project needs to be thought through

carefully, and kairaranga would appreciate more support in this area. One idea suggested was being able to access an expert to look over project plans and agreements prior to signing. It is also important for kairaranga *"to understand what to do if you are not able to meet certain criteria."*

Other areas of management interviewees described needing support in focus on funding and contracting, including:

- how to engage with funders
- understanding the wording used in contracts
- knowing what resources were needed for projects and where to get them
- being able to write terms of reference and MoU
- knowing how to negotiate across multiple funders.

People skills were also highlighted as an area where kairaranga would benefit from support, for example through training, coaching or mentoring. Kairaranga need to know how to have difficult conversations, be able to give critical feedback in a supportive manner, support kaimahi when they are going through tough times. These are real situations, and kairaranga would welcome strategies and skills for dealing with them.

Support offered through Te Kete Hononga

Management has been an area of focus during the trial, with two project management workshops being held to support kairaranga in their work. Information and tools to advance in this area were welcomed by kairaranga, who have different backgrounds and experiences in this area. The following is a summary of the two project management training opportunities and the support they provided.

Project Management Training 1 (Nov 2023)

An in-depth session began with whakawhanaungatanga to get to know other kairaranga and participants from across Northland. The session covered a wide range of content,

Support needs

The main management needs arising from the interviews were:

- having access to management training, including for project management and people management/leadership
- having management support tools
- having policies and HR support in place
- being able to set up contracts, manage funds and deliver services.

Indicators of support

1. Kairaranga have received project management training.
2. Training is supporting kairaranga to manage their taiao initiatives.
3. Project management support tools (apps, templates, processes) are accessible and appropriate for group's needs.
4. Kairaranga feel confident in their people skills and ability to navigate personnel issues.
5. Evidence of new skills and systems being used in delivery of mahi.
6. Kairaranga can set up contracts to commission or deliver services.
7. HR legal requirements, policies and contracts to employ people have been set up.
8. HR processes are in place.
9. The foundations are in place to employ kaimahi to deliver strategic and planned work.

including:

- an overview of project management
- stages of project development
- leadership styles and self-reflection about the type of leader you are
- working styles
- fostering a culture of honesty and critical thinking within your groups
- storytelling and sharing your project
- funding strategies
- a tool kit of planning templates and supports
- digital tools and systems for project management (e.g. Google Drive)
- setting timelines and measurable goals
- budgeting
- strategies for building taiao plans.

The session also provided time for the kairaranga to share their experiences in each of the topics, which was beneficial to the group as a whole. Feedback from this session included that the information was *"informative and useful,"* while others stated that *"it would have been good to have more time to go through and trial the tools and templates shared."*

Environmental Project Management Training (Feb 2024)

This training workshop began with a pōwhiri and whakawhanaungatanga, followed by a visualisation and storytelling session focused on the taiao in participants' areas. Training sessions then focused on high-level frameworks and strategies for project management. Subsequent sessions focused on the 'nitty gritty' aspects of project management, including timelines, budgets, and data exploration and management. The use of GIS mapping tools was briefly touched on, but due to time constraints the practical application of mapping was not covered.

Feedback from kairaranga and trainees regarding the management courses varied. While *"a lot of valuable information was shared"*, it was noted that *"hearing and seeing the information is really useful however it is the practical application that needs to have more time to go over during the courses"*. Kairaranga would also like more practical application of information, particularly of the GIS mapping systems.

Wider support

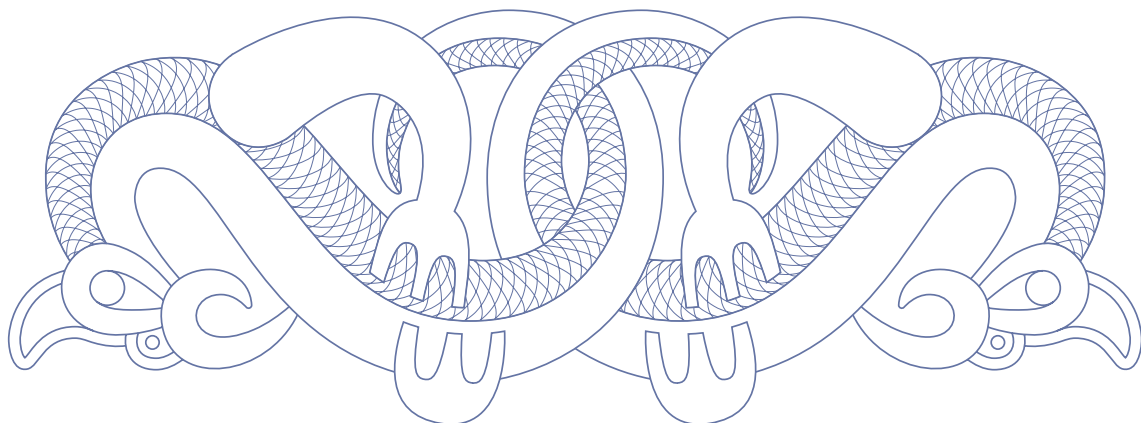
Management support is also offered by RN outside of formal training, by providing information and advice and being responsive to kairaranga requests. One of the kairaranga noted that *"the RN management team are great leaders, they have inspired me with the way they have carried and presented themselves across the trial. I feel proud and privileged to have been able to take part"*.

Kairaranga are experiencing challenges in applying some of the project management support tools and skills provided through the trial in their mahi. Key challenges for kairaranga at this stage are time management and embracing the systems and tools to manage all of the different kinds of information associated with their projects. While the range of tools and software being made available through the trial may be useful in the long term, it is also a lot to learn and become familiar with in a short space of time. Most are familiar with Google Drive but are now navigating multiple project management and information sharing systems. Furthermore, as some tools are still being tested with groups and are sourced from different providers, it is not all well integrated as a system at present. As one kairaranga shared *"it would be great to have like an environmental app or programme that had all areas set up that you could add into, [where] everything is in one place; you have your planning, timelines, budgets, photo evidence, etc all in one space."*

In response to challenges experienced, RN management have discussed introducing the ASANA app that may be useful to kairaranga in the future. Finding a suitable and user-friendly project management platform would be welcomed. One kairaranga suggested the possibility of *"looking across other taiao groups in the country"* to find out what was working well for groups elsewhere.

Areas for further work identified through this research include:

- having a user-friendly app or platform that is set up for Taiao projects, planning, reporting, budgets, photos, data, etc.
- more training regarding the practical application of information shared, especially during the 'grant writing' workshop
- more detailed information about contract design and milestone writing
- having a mentor to work through management processes and challenges as they arise.





Mahere Mahi | Planning

He rangi tā matawhāiti, He rangi tā matawhānui

*The person with a narrow vision sees a narrow horizon,
the person with a wide vision sees a wide horizon*

Planning was highlighted by our groups as an important tool for guiding the taiao work that was to take place. Some of our kairaranga had experience of planning processes; others had very little experience and felt they needed a lot of support. Reflecting on previous experiences, it was noted that *“getting the foundations right at the beginning was important to the outcomes and achievements of the project or activities, and this required good planning.”*

Kairaranga identified the need to gain knowledge in the areas of *“catchment planning, strategic planning, and operational planning.”* They also expressed a desire to have access to templates and systems to help guide these processes.

However, it was noted that *“you can have loads of planning; it is also important to know how to execute the plan so that they are living documents, not just kept in a folder on the shelf.”* As one kairaranga said,

it’s not too hard to build the big visions, but when you drill down to actually what needs to happen to achieve the visions, into the nitty-gritty, it can be quite hard. And particularly if there aren’t the resources within the roopu to actually deliver it, it can be a bit delusional because you have all the great ideas but don’t have the capacity to deliver them.

To support kairaranga to deliver on community visions, it was suggested that plans need *“timeframes and systems to track whether they were achieving what they set out to do.”*

Interviewees also highlighted that planning *“needed to be developed incorporating the views of various people and groups, which needed nurturing and support at times.”* Therefore, facilitation strategies would be welcomed to help groups manage hui with diverse community members, respond to questions, and manage time and different personalities.

Support offered through Te Kete Hononga

Prior to the trial taking place, two groups had undertaken high-level planning to identify the issues of importance to each communities, and develop a vision, goals and key focus areas. These plans contained the bigger picture details but needed more action-based, time-focused and resourcing aspects added to them. Further development of these plans relied on obtaining specialist support. The third group had full operational plans for their work.

Planning has been a focus of support during the trial and steps have been taken to make planning support available for the two groups that require it. During the trial, RN have been successful in gaining \$40,000 of funding for the two groups to support them to employ an ecologist, who will assist with writing *“specific management plans including a catchment plan, and to support the taiao work that the groups are doing.”*

Kairaranga welcome this support and although the funding will be managed by RN it presents an opportunity to show the groups how to manage and deliver what is required by funders. RN intends to guide the kairaranga through the requirements and reporting systems for this funding so that in the future the funding can be managed directly by the groups. One group has now established its own legal entity, enabling it to hold funds, and another is exploring the option of operating under the umbrella of a local trust.

This planning support is expected to be hugely beneficial to the groups, enabling them to access expert ecological advice specific to their areas, organise their priorities, record what resources and support are available in their areas, and map out what funding is required and available to progress their plans. Kairaranga hope that this support will mean further work and progress can be made towards restoration work and taiao improvements in each area.

Support needs

The main planning support needs arising from the interviews were:

- access to support for building strategic plans, operational plans and whole catchment plans
- support with implementing plans, including being able to:
 - » facilitate planning meetings
 - » drive ideas to reality
 - » set priorities
 - » use planning to support funding applications
- systems to track progress, record evidence, monitor plans and reflect on plan outcomes and next steps.

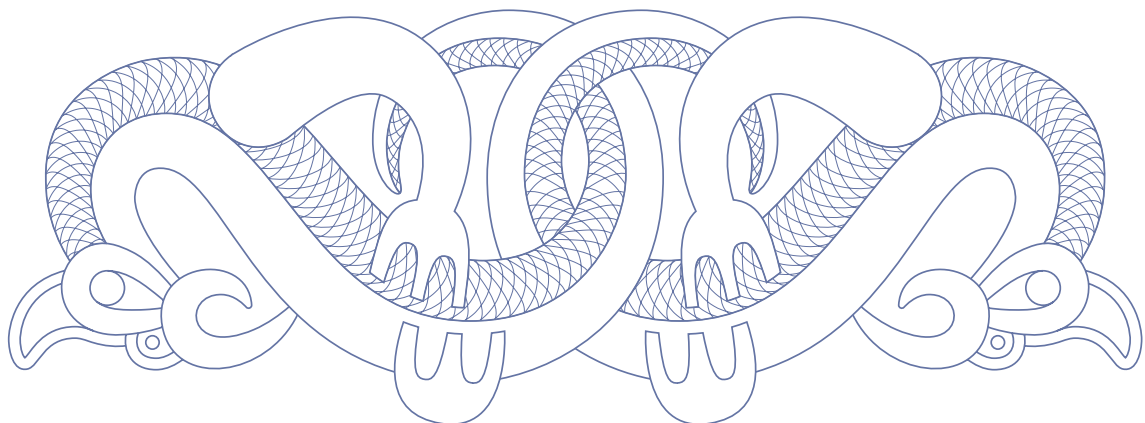
Indicators of support

1. Kairaranga know how to develop a strategic plan, catchment plan, and action plan.
2. Group has templates to guide the planning process.
3. Group regularly updates their plan(s) – it is a living document.
4. Group plans include the timeframes, resources and support needed to meet the goals and objectives.
5. Action towards plan objectives has commenced.
6. Planning includes a monitoring system to record actions and assess outcomes.

A challenge with making progress on planning noted by one of the kairaranga was *"having the time to dedicate to planning. We are limited in time, the majority of our time has been spent on hui which has had many benefits, but this has hindered spending more time on the nitty gritty mahi in planning and on the ground mahi."* Another reported *"I still need help with planning and getting the ecologist will be such a great support."*

Areas for further work identified through this research include:

- consolidating knowledge of planning processes and understanding the plans produced
- actioning the plans and having timeframes to work by
- securing the resources to action the plans
- developing monitoring systems to collect evidence and assess progress on plans.





Mahi Whakahaere | Administration

Kia mau ki te aka matua

Hold tight to the binding thread

There are many types of administration tasks that groups reported needing support with. These included developing communication systems, computer skills, writing plans, letter and e-mail writing, report writing, systems for collecting and analysing data on projects, and using software programmes to make administration tasks less burdensome. They also reported needing support with understanding financial systems and best practice guidelines for managing large amounts of funds.

Administration tasks can take up a lot of time and are frequently identified as an area for which taiao groups need support. These tasks are also an essential part of binding a project together and ensuring that the *"nuts and bolts of the project stay in place."* For example, it is important when working in communities and with large groups of people to have *"good, clear communications issued in a timely and organised manner."* It is also important when dealing with funding to be accountable and to have robust financial practices and records in place. Funded projects also require groups to collect evidence of developments to be able to report on progress and milestones achieved. It was noted that *"when you are busy doing your day-to-day work, it is sometimes hard to keep up with all that admin stuff and keep track of the developments."*

Different forms of administration support were discussed. *"Having a person take care of these tasks would be really helpful, but they have to be the right person who has the skillset to do these tasks, or the person has to be willing to attend training to develop the skills."* Further to this, it was mentioned that *"not having the right person can end up doubling your workload because, as the kairaranga, you have to go back and fix up the errors, and that can take a lot of time. The person also needs to be closely involved so they are aware of what is happening and what needs to be done."*

Some groups thought it may help to have a centralised administration hub that would support the smaller groups that are just starting out, including our volunteer groups. Kairaranga with projects that were fully funded and had many tasks underway felt they needed a person dedicated to their project. Ideally, funding would be allocated to cover

Support needs

The main administration support needs arising from the interviews were:

- access to administration training, including on:
 - » effective communication systems
 - » finance management systems and programmes
 - » learning to write funding applications
- having administration equipment (phones, printer, etc.)
- access to a skilled administration worker or hub that could support multiple groups
- a training and events calendar.

Indicators of support

1. Tools (laptop, Wi-Fi, printer, cell phone) and service providers (cell phone, Wi-Fi) are available to support kairaranga with administration tasks.
2. Administration systems (for example, e-mail, record keeping, reporting) that meet groups' needs are in place.
3. A calendar of events, training and cross group opportunities is activated and being used.
4. Groups have access to an administration support person.
5. Administration staff have good connections to groups and their area.

administrative support when the projects are designed.

The groups supported the idea of upskilling those in the kāinga (home people) to be able to take on these administrator roles. Alternatively, if a central administration hub was designed that served many groups, it would be important to ensure this person developed good relationships with groups and made good connections with their rural areas.

Groups also noted that a calendar of events, training and activities would be useful so that groups could plan, join with others, or organise dates for taiao activities that do not clash with other activities taking place. As a kairaranga commented, *"sometimes we are not sure what is happening or we want to organise training but may not have enough people, so sharing a calendar would be helpful; we wouldn't miss out on things either that way."*

Finally, administration requires groups to have appropriate technology, tools and systems in place. For groups that are just starting out this can include basic equipment like laptops, printers and cell phones, while access to Wi-Fi can be an issue for many groups operating in rural areas. More advanced administration tasks also require appropriate software and people with the training and experience to use them. The cost of software such as Microsoft products can be prohibitive for small groups to access on their own.

Support offered through Te Kete Hononga

Administration support has been a focus during the trial, with several key training and system needs being provided for. However, as recognised by RN these aspects need *"further tweaking to streamline the processes and to ensure systems are more user-friendly."* Before the trial, two groups were managing their own administration and one group was aiming to employ a person to provide administration support for their funded project. This has now happened, with the support of RN: *"RN provided support for the recruitment process, sat on interview panel, looked over advertisements, role descriptions and helped*

with the backend preparation work." This personal professional support was greatly appreciated by the group.

In terms of having the tools to do administration work, the groups are currently using their own equipment but are reimbursed for costs they incur during their work. In the future they would like to obtain funding to have a range of tools (laptops, cameras, printers, etc.) available to enable them to operate more effectively. Some groups continue to have issues with Wi-Fi due to their location.

A range of information platforms have been activated during the trial to provide administration support, including Hubspot, Teams and OneDrive at this stage. The following is a brief overview of the platforms and the administration support they provide for kairaranga.

Hubspot was set up with the idea of having a centralised system to share and hold information across the multiple groups supported by RN. Training was provided to all groups in the trial on how to access and use the platform. Hubspot is currently used to hold the needs analysis information that all groups completed along with a work development plan developed from the needs analysis. Alongside this information, each group's monthly statistics are logged relating to services accessed, training attended and tools used. Reconnecting Northland have found it useful to be able to withdraw information and statistics for their reporting from this database, though the groups are not using it directly. Feedback from groups regarding the needs analysis included that *"it was useful to think about the focus areas for their groups,"* but *"quite time-consuming to go over so many questions."*

Microsoft Teams has also been activated as a platform to hold meetings, keep diary notes and store the kairaranga monthly reports, to do lists and tasks, along with emails.

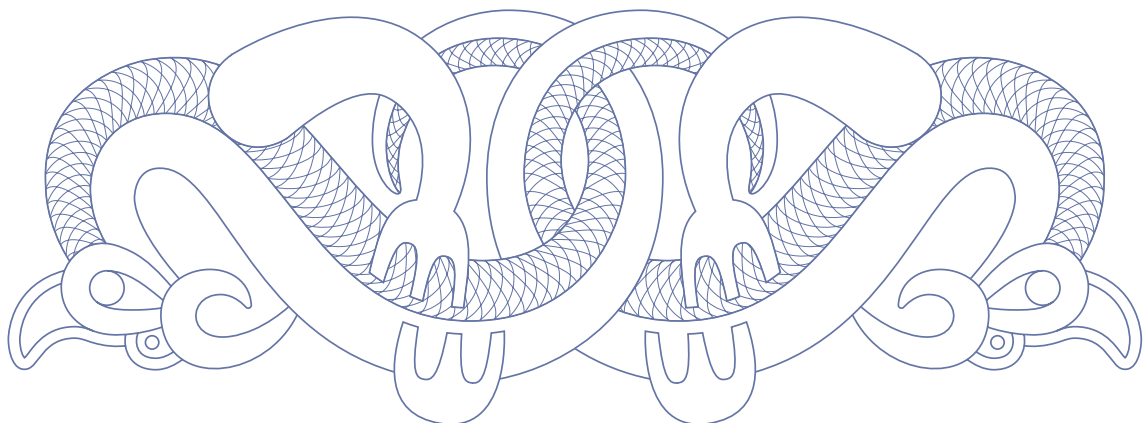
OneDrive is used to share a calendar of training and events developed by RN, along with emails from the RN Training Coordinator to groups. The calendar has been highlighted by groups as a useful tool for organising their programmes and training for themselves and their groups.

Groups have noted that it has been challenging at times to access Hubspot, Teams and OneDrive. *"I couldn't access the training calendar or any of those sort of OneDrive documents, but then I had this little moment of like, oh, maybe I could check my personal e-mail and actually I did have a OneDrive personal login, and that still works, so I've now got access to it."* Another kairaranga noted that *"it would be really useful if we had an RN e-mail and then access to their Teams platform, or their folders and files would work easier."*

While the login processes to the different platforms will need to be worked through to overcome these barriers, when access has been successful the information stored in these systems has been useful. The Training Coordinator has ensured that emails and calendar updates go out to all groups.

Areas for further work identified through this research include:

- to have a system that can hold all of the different functions that groups use in one place or one platform, that is easy to login to and is accessible to kairaranga
- to have protected folders for groups to store confidential or sensitive information, as well as folders to enable information sharing
- to have funding to gain tools and equipment that are effective for doing administration tasks including photo and video footage and storage for keeping evidence of progress and reporting requirements
- to have an administration person or hub that can provide support for multiple taiao groups.



Ngā Rauemi
Tautoko

Resources
and support





Whakapakari Pūkenga | Training

*Ko te manu e kai ana i te miro, nōna te ngahere;
ko te manu e kai ana i te mātauranga, nōna te ao*

*The bird who partakes of the miro berry owns the forest; the bird who
partakes of education owns the world*

Training is a high priority for groups to ensure they have the capability and capacity to be able to deliver projects and achieve their taiao goals. Groups desire training and certification in taiao mahi skills (such as pest control and monitoring) as well as core capabilities like first aid and heavy vehicle use. Such training is typically provided by polytechnics, government agencies and private trainers. Often, when funding or projects are announced, there is only a short period within which to apply and begin the work. This puts pressure on groups to ensure that their training and skills are up to standard to be able to do the work. In the past this has meant that our own people missed out on employment opportunities as they didn't have the skills required to perform necessary tasks.

Hence, accessing training across many areas benefits groups by enabling them to gain funding and support a range of taiao projects, such as pest management, waterway protection, waste management and freshwater monitoring. It was mentioned that *"having people trained across various areas would support catchment planning initiatives to be achieved."* The groups also felt that employing local knowledge and workers was preferred over bringing in outsiders when working in the taiao. However, they did see value in learning from others to support their work, and this may mean having those already trained joining the team and mentoring and coaching others.

Health and safety are also very important when working in the taiao, and being able to understand and mitigate the risks associated with different types of work requires thorough analysis and care. Therefore, training in health and safety and first aid was highlighted as a need for groups. Groups also need to understand their legal obligations for employing staff and providing safety for volunteers when they are supporting taiao work. Project management training was identified as a need for some kairaranga who had not led projects before.

Coordination of training so that groups can access the right courses at the right time was recognised as a key need for taiao groups, especially in remote communities. Groups saw the value in joining with other groups to access training and share expertise and developments. They felt it was financially better for them to be able to join with others in order to share costs and secure local training. Kairaranga also saw value in completing a needs analysis relating to training and felt that it was important to create a database of those who had accessed training and the skills that were developing in the kāinga, even if these people moved on to other paid employment or left the area. This information was seen as valuable to groups to enable them to assess their capability and capacity to take on new taiao work.

As part of this research, a survey was completed by community members, kaimahi and volunteers regarding what training they felt they needed. The training courses requested through this survey are listed below.

Training courses requested:

- Computer literacy
- Compliance for contracting
- Chainsaw/arborist training
- Tractor use
- Heavy vehicle
- Pest/plant identification
- Pest control
- Poison certification and safety
- Growsafe
- Driver's licence
- Quad bike training
- Vehicle and equipment maintenance
- Job interviews
- Soil testing
- Health and safety
- Seed collection
- Fencing
- Fresh water monitoring
- Horticulture
- Ropes and knots training
- First aid
- Strategic planning
- Firearms
- Recycling
- Sustainable practices
- How to learn
- Taiao Wānanga – Kaupapa Māori
- Planting plans

The training requested is connected to personally upskilling to be able to: gain employment, conduct work on their own properties, drive to work, fill in applications, understand how to learn in order to participate in training, prepare for interviews for taiao mahi and operate tools safely. Some respondents desired to run their own businesses as well. A few stated that while they had been successful in getting jobs, they did not know much about what they had to do. For example, *“planting trees is easy, but I had to learn what to plant, how to plant it, what to feed it, how close to*

Support needs

The main training support needs arising from the interviews were:

- to have a database of training providers available to support groups
- completing a needs analysis of training with community members that are involved as workers or volunteers
- linking the training to the catchment plan and strategic plan
- training in administration, accessing funding and health and safety are key priorities at this time, however training in technical taiao skills is also of importance
- to develop a database of local people holding skills in taiao mahi that could be contacted to support current or future projects.

Indicators of support

1. A database of training providers can be accessed.
2. Training has been provided or is scheduled that meets the needs of the group.
3. Groups find the training valuable and connected to the goals and objectives identified in their strategic plans and needs assessment.
4. Training is preparing local kaitiaki for employment in taiao work.
5. Training is helping to build a group of highly skilled individuals (volunteers and employees).

plant it, etc., and sometimes you would go back and the plants had died; you felt bad.” They continued to explain that “learning about soil types and what plants needed to grow was helpful, and they got a better success rate.”

Support offered through Te Kete Hononga

Training has been of the highest priority throughout the Te Kete Hononga trial, based on feedback from kairaranga and the needs analysis information collected at the beginning of the trial. Information from initial interviews highlighting the importance of training was also fed back to RN. Reconnecting Northland recognised that it was important to “*build capacity and capability within groups.*” The training support needs vary across different groups. Some groups are funded and have funds allocated in their budget for training, while others are volunteer-based and require more support. RN management shared that “*our groups are at different stages in their development and therefore the training programme and offerings needed to cater to the different needs.*”

Reconnecting Northland has a dedicated training coordinator who has done extensive work with groups. In response to discussions and career planning with kairaranga and individuals, as well as the needs analysis information, she has accessed and helped to design training support for groups. This has involved building relationships with a range of providers, individuals and organisations who are able to offer a range of courses and training days. The coordinator has developed a database of more than 200 training providers to share with groups. Providers were selected based on previous engagement, reputation, and ability to meet the needs identified by groups.

Trainees and kairaranga have all noted that the Training Coordinator has been highly valuable to all aspects of training and that this has assisted with the progression of work in their areas. They have valued the career planning the coordinator has done with them; as noted by one of the trainees “*it helped you to think about*









what you needed and where you were going, also when reviewing the career plans you can see how much you have achieved since the last time you met."

Through the development of Te Kete Hononga groups have been able to join with other groups to come up with the number of trainees needed to actually hold a course. Filling placements from across the multiple groups has not been a problem. By joining together, groups can also sometimes share costs and travel expenses, improving their ability to attend.

Enrolments in courses or workshops sometimes went well and other times there were challenges. Some kairaranga were able to activate enrolments independently while others needed more support. Course requirements also differed: "any courses offered through Te Pūkenga required substantial paperwork, whereas the bespoke courses were as easy as adding names to a list to attend". It is hoped that kairaranga get to a stage where they can lead and activate the training required and are able to make use of the database of training providers.

Generally, courses have connected to management skills and a range of field training skills, such as Growsafe, pest management, weed management, water monitoring, and health and safety training. Some kaimahi have also gained drivers' licences.

Training provided and accessed during trial of Te Kete Hononga (Sept 2023–Mar 2024).



























	Waimamaku	Otaua	Hokianga
Sept – 4 courses offered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider Induction Literacy • Kairaranga induction • Drivers license • Staff Development/ Career Planning • Project Management 	 	 	
Oct – 4 courses offered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Safety Growsafe • Kairaranga Induction • Volunteer Northland Fund Writing • Staff Development Career Planning Study Support 	 	 	



Number of courses accessed



Number of people trained from each group

	Waimamaku	Otaua	Hokianga
Nov - 4 courses offered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kairaranga induction • Digital skills • Study Support • Project Management 	 	 	 
Dec - 4 courses offered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental planning • Kairaranga Induction • Digital skills • Study support 		 	
Jan - 4 courses offered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TKH KR Training Processes • Training Goals • TKH Training Goals Processes • Hui Karere 	 	 	 
Feb - 3 courses offered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicles & machinery • Predator/pest control • Project management 	 	 	 
Mar – 2 courses offered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predator/Pest control • Future Whenua Summit Business Development 	 	 	 

Along with these external offerings, RN also designed and organised two specific training courses on project management. These courses were intended to assist kairaranga with the multiple requirements of the role of Project Manager and with the set up of their own legal entities. RN also worked collaboratively with Future Whenua to hold the Future Whenua Summit (15–17 March 2024). As well as giving trial groups space to showcase the mahi being done, this summit highlighted innovative ideas of sustainable practices to honour and replenish our taiao. Discussions ranged from regenerative agriculture to innovative community-driven solutions, all aimed at nurturing our planet for future generations. Having access to such a range of expert knowledge and being able to share knowledge among groups is something that kairaranga had been asking for.

The comment was made that RN hold a lot of knowledge themselves about project management, administration, planning and other skills that groups are seeking. There are therefore potentially opportunities for training to be provided by RN, rather than an external provider. In some cases, RN may even be able to provide better support than an external provider: *"I really believe RN would have been able to provide better [project management] systems, tools, and technical support. The team at RN listen to us and try their best to meet the needs of all the group participants."*

Trainees have found a lot of value in the range of courses, skills and information they have gained with the support of Te Kete Hononga. They enjoyed the training courses and being able to upskill themselves. They talked about this transferring to the workplace, sharing this new learning with their community and holding hope in the future that it may lead to the opportunity to gain contracts themselves. A success story was shared that *"a small number of youth who attended courses in the first part of the programme now have jobs in this space and other whānau who live here have gained higher skills with the training that was on offer."*

It was noted that

all of the training has been super helpful because I now have more knowledge about the work that I am doing, how to plant the trees, what they need, what happens in flood zones, what the trees need for maintenance. Before the training we just planted where we could and sometimes you went back and the trees had died.

A trainee stated that *"I want to get all the qualifications so that I can look at management and contracts in the future."* Another trainee noted after attending the project management training that *"there was some good basic knowledge; I felt a bit under experienced compared to some other people there, but I definitely took some good stuff out of it."*

Areas for further work identified through this research include:

- further training based around leadership, governance, health and safety and digital literacy
- more training and information related to mātauranga Māori in regard to the taiao
- to ensure time for practical application of information and for the groups to share their experiences is factored into training programmes
- to consider providing in-house training where RN staff hold the skills and knowledge sought after by groups.



Rapu Pūtea | Funding

Mā te huruhuru ka rere te manu

Adorn the bird with feathers so it may fly

Funding is of high priority to our groups because having funds supports having people employed and available to undertake projects along with resources to do the work. It is also an area that our groups feel frustrated about. Often, funding is short term, meaning that while significant gains are achieved initially, once the funding runs out, employment ends, people move away and it sometimes feels like all of the progress made slips away. For example, while past investments into training were highly useful, when the funding ended groups lost those skilled people and had to re-train others.

There was also frustration expressed that funders do not understand the realities of working in the taiao and what are realistic milestones that groups can achieve. What funds can be spent on is often very narrowly defined, which creates barriers to undertaking taiao projects for groups with no or limited other funds. For example, it was noted that it is very important that funding for any projects includes a training budget.

Groups also want to “see an end to piecemeal approaches to funding restoration projects,” noting that “there needs to be better systems and better collaboration between organisations to get the best outcome for taiao-based work.” Some also felt that their areas “needed to be more noticed and supported by the council and that taiao mahi is always going to need support in some way.” One interviewee suggested that “rather than contesting for funding all the time, it would make more sense to map out the needs and design projects long-term collaboratively.” At this time, applying for funds feels more like a “hit and miss, hope and pray” approach to support.

One example of the challenges posed by piecemeal funding is the cost of acquiring equipment and other supplies on a project-by-project basis. An example was provided of one group that had purchased specialist equipment that was now sitting in a shed unused as the contract had ended and there was no funding to continue the work. If each group must purchase its own resources on a short-term project basis this creates significant inefficiencies in resource use and misses opportunities to reduce costs of supplies by buying in bulk and sharing equipment.

In discussing support needs, some groups focused on the very first steps they need to take to get set up and be able to receive funding: *"We need to be setting up some kind of structure as the existing structures (marae and other groups) don't fit the mahi we want to do."* Similarly, *"we want a trust connected to the taiao mahi and not to have restrictions about what could be applied for."* Others had structures already established and were employing people.

After setting up structures, some groups need support with writing funding applications, entering into contracts, and reporting on funded projects. Some kairaranga felt this was quite an overwhelming process, but wanted to learn how to do this so that their groups could apply for funding. They also wanted to learn where you can access information about funding and how to develop better relationships with funders. Groups were also interested in learning more about reporting systems for projects, including what information must be provided to funders and systems or programmes that support this process.

Another potential source of funding is the development of nature-based enterprises. This idea has been raised by RN's management as a pathway towards ending the need to constantly apply for external funding. Researching and investigating the opportunities for nature-based enterprises is seen as a positive way of moving towards income generation that will continuously fund taiao mahi in local areas. They explain,

... so that's part of our strategy as well is to actually create these nature-based enterprises. So our whānau, our collectives, our hapori are actually creating income streams for themselves, but they're also able to implement these passion projects alongside those income streams. So that's an area that we want to grow and evolve within the collectives that we're working with as well.

Support needs

The main funding needs arising from the interviews were:

- how to set up an entity to be able to apply for funding
- how to write funding applications
- how to report back on funding
- how to develop effective relationships with funders.

Indicators of support

1. Training to write applications has been accessed.
2. Funding is applied for based on the priorities from the group's strategic plan/needs analysis.
3. A legal entity has been set up or connected with to hold funds.
4. Support is available to help develop funding applications.
5. New funding sources and mechanisms are being explored.

Support offered through Te Kete Hononga

Increasing access to funding for taiao groups has been a focus of the trial. One significant development has been a successful application for funding to enable the groups to advance their catchment planning work with the support of an ecologist, and to continue to fund the kairaranga in their positions. Although RN will umbrella this funding in this instance, the aim is that the process and systems followed will be shared with groups. Thus, all aspects of receiving the funding, meeting milestones, budgeting and reporting will be demonstrated to groups as a guide for future funding applications. The second significant part of the trial has been to support groups to have their own entities and apply for their own funding.

Support with writing funding applications has been shared through project management training sessions and advice. Reconnecting Northland is also able to provide guidance as their team includes skilled people with experience in writing successful funding applications. It is an area that at least one of our groups would like further support with, as it is quite a process to be able to write, define a project and design a budget for projects. There is a certain style of writing involved in funding applications and the more practice groups have, along with guidance, the better they will become at them and better able they will be to secure funds for their areas. As reported by one kairaranga, *"I understand a little bit. After that funding workshop, I have a little idea. I haven't implemented what I was taught yet; it would have been good if we did some live writing and stuff, it would've stuck better."*

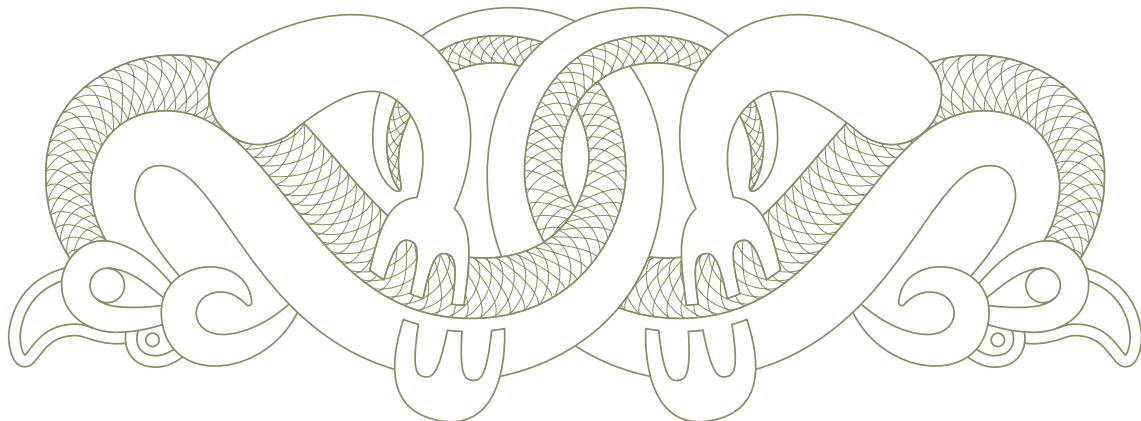
Designing contracts sits alongside funding applications. As noted in the previous interviews, getting all the project elements aligned and priced out needs careful working through. Key insights from those who have already managed contracts are to ensure that there is *"time allocated for just engagement and getting to know the people of the area,"* and *"to ensure the pricing of the contract allows some flexibility and back-up funds, if cost of items are to go up."* They state that it is important to keep milestones manageable, to include a training budget and allow enough time to get through everything that needs doing.

Prior to the trial a key challenge for two of our groups was having an entity to be able to apply for funds through. This has now been achieved for both groups. The third group is already employing and managing staff, and has received support and training via Te Kete Hononga. The next challenge for these groups is having the time to apply for funding. Kairaranga shared that *"it would be great to have an organisation or person who could do funding applications fulltime for all the Hokianga roopu."*

Finally, where funding and contracting leads to employing people, this creates new legal and practical requirements for groups. kairaranga need support with HR, policy development, job descriptions, interviewing, and in some cases, health and safety depending on the role description. Two groups have not reached this stage yet, but if they are successful at gaining their own funding in the future then this is an area they will need to develop.

Areas for further work identified through this research include:

- consolidate knowledge of writing funding applications, managing funds and reporting
- to support HHC with post project funding applications
- consolidate knowledge of requirements of being a legal entity
- to upskill in the area of employment contracts, legal obligations and responsibilities
- to explore opportunities to coordinate purchasing of equipment and supplies across groups
- to explore the development of nature-based enterprises.





Hauora | Health and Wellbeing

Kia tau te wairua – Kia pakari te hihiri

When the wairua is settled – the energy is increased

Health and wellbeing are important to groups because they recognise the need to ensure that they themselves, kaimahi and volunteers are working well together and are supported in all areas of wellbeing to be able to participate in projects that are taking place. Many felt that *“if we nurture ourselves and our relationships, more will be achieved, and you can avoid the burnout that can come with this type of work.”*

Some interviewees noted that many taiao projects and tasks required *“fit, motivated people to do the work, and kaimahi have to be able to walk or hike for long distances and lift equipment; they also have to be okay being out in the weather.”* Therefore, it was recognised that having fitness support would be beneficial. Being physically active is good for not only your physical wellbeing but also your spiritual, mental and whānau wellbeing. One of the kairaranga took his group to Ngawha Springs as a way of providing wellbeing support for kaimahi, who did a lot of long physical days.

Working in the taiao can involve hard labour and requires a high level of skill and commitment. Due to these factors, groups may struggle with a high level of volunteer and employee turnover. Groups need to be able to care for the whole person to make these jobs attractive and help keep people in these roles. Diversity in the work that is undertaken has also been suggested so that *“people don’t get tired of doing the same thing day after day.”* Having a range of activities within taiao work and also working with the weather conditions, some felt, would be more valuable than single-focused projects. The work can also be dangerous, so attention needs to be focused on volunteer and employment safety as part of wellbeing.

Some also sought support for *“bringing more togetherness to the people of the valley and supporting people to understand different viewpoints.”* This included *“having support to help navigate challenging situations,”* such as being able to hold difficult conversations with regards to projects that are taking place, being able to answer questions in hui, managing different personalities and being able to give constructive

feedback without offending people. Kairaranga felt that mentoring or coaching support was or would be useful to help them advance work that was developing in paid projects and volunteer projects.

There was also a desire *“to see our people working together, to be in paid employment, coming back to the taiao and marae to learn, to help restore and understand our taiao.”* For our people to be able to be at home means not just having people working, but having people back to tautoko life and developments of the kāinga and strengthening relationships with each other.

A key mechanism to promote hauora is to create opportunities for groups to think about how well each of these aspects is supported in the mahi that they do. It does not always require a course or programme to make progress in these areas. A lot can be achieved through discussion and commitment to taking steps towards practices that support each area of health and wellbeing.

Te Whare Tapa Whā model of health

- » Taha Wairua – (Spiritual) - Atua Māori, karakia, tikanga Māori
- » Taha Hinengaro – (Mental) - aro, aroha, tika, pono
- » Taha Whānau (Family)- mahi tahi, mahi ā roopu, whanaungatanga
- » Taha Tinana (Physical) - whakapakari tinana, kai oranga, kori tinana

For more information on Te Whare Tapa Whā see: mentalhealth.org.nz/te-whare-tapa-wha

Support needs

The main health and wellbeing support needs arising from the interviews were:

- strategies to support the Te Whare Tapa Whā model of health
- access to mentoring and coaching support
 - » support to identify and connect with suitable mentors/coaches
 - » being able to gain advice when needed
 - » gaining support to help navigate the developments and challenges of projects
- strategies to be able to respond to the pressures of leading and working in this environment
 - » self-care support
 - » leadership support
 - » stress management
 - » time management
 - » balancing family time versus work time.

Indicators of support

1. Health and wellbeing is supported in all areas of mahi.
2. Coaching and mentoring – support is available and can be accessed.
3. Groups are accessing the hauora/wellbeing support or services facilitated by RN.
4. Groups are developing hauora/wellbeing practices and/or policies.
5. Hauora/wellbeing elements are included in all community events.

Support offered through Te Kete Hononga

Reconnecting Northland values the importance that health and wellbeing holds for groups. Interviews and discussions with RN management highlighted their support for this area of work, including past workshops that were organised around the holistic health and wellbeing of people and groups participating in taiao projects. Those that attended these workshops found a lot of value in taking time out to reflect on areas of their wellbeing, and enjoyed connecting with others doing taiao work and learning remedies and strategies for managing areas of their health and wellbeing. RN management noted it was an area *“they wish to strengthen further.”* They see overall health and wellbeing as fundamental, as they directly impact one’s quality of life. A holistic approach to health sits in line with Te Ao Māori me ōna tikanga.

During the trial, it was observed that at each and every hui, tikanga Māori were upheld and considered a natural part of delivery. This included:

- karakia (prayer)– connection to te taha wairua (spiritual wellbeing) and atua Māori (Māori cosmology)
- mihi mihi (greetings)– connection to te taha hinengaro (mental wellbeing) and te taha whānau (family links).

These protocols for opening a meeting and acknowledging the haukāinga (home people) of the area are important. Following this was the sharing of kōrero and kai together which connects to te taha tinana (physical wellbeing). Both Māori and non-Māori attending were respectful of these tikanga. Whakawhanaungatanga was also part of each hui and gave time for kairaranga to share about themselves and their work with others who are doing similar mahi in other areas. As noted by one kairaranga

all my experiences to date within the trial have nurtured my hauora in respect to building my confidence to use and speak Te Reo Māori for someone who has little confidence in speaking my language. This has been a journey for me towards embracing my language and applying it in my mahi, rather than just on the marae.

Coaching and mentoring is an area that is still in development. RN has key individuals that are available to groups and who can offer coaching and mentoring across a range of areas. An example of this was given by one kairaranga regarding support for recruiting and employing an administration person for the group. Being *“able to gain advice from RN and support with looking over employment contracts, job advertisements, role descriptions and all the backend prep work”* was extremely valuable. Another example involved having to hold difficult conversations with landowners, where *“advice and support from RN was offered to help navigate these situations.”* It meant the kairaranga didn’t feel so alone in this issue and could work through ideas to find a solution to the problem. These moments often occur during projects and when working in the taiao, so having mentoring support available to talk things over is useful.

A health and wellbeing strategy shared by one of the kairaranga during the second round of interviews was that they gave their group a

wellbeing survey every couple of months. We've got a number of different questions and a rating, how they feel with the job and their role, the clarity of instructions, use of chemicals etc... I also do a stress test and make time to chat on a regular basis.

Another kairaranga shared that *"I just try to lead by example when I engage with others, treat people the way I expect to be treated."* These examples highlight that group level health and wellbeing practices are emerging, and that groups and kairaranga are aware and want to keep developing in this area.

Te Kete Hononga also shares contacts with health and wellbeing providers who are available to deliver holistic programmes for groups. These have been well received in the past, and as commented by one who attended, *"the session was uplifting and just gave me a chance to breathe and think about all the things going on."* Groups are able to make contact with these providers via information in the Elements Spreadsheet, and can join together with other groups if they need enough numbers for the programme to go ahead. This highlights a valuable aspect of Te Kete Hononga: being able to connect people and find the numbers across many groups to allow for delivery to go ahead. The Training Coordinator has been of great support in this area for groups.

Groups found value in coming together, training together, and sharing their journey with each other. They also shared skills and resources with each other during the induction and training sessions.

There is a powerful aspect to this where collaboration leads to upskilling and being able to access more information from each other, as well as from the session being held. These are examples of mahi-tahi, working together; mahi-ā-roopu, working in groups; and whānaungatanga, sharing knowledge with each other. As one kairaranga noted,

Meeting whānau and kairaranga from other hapū has helped my wellbeing, connecting me to other Hokianga hapū has been the highlight across this mahi as this has nurtured my connection to my whakapapa, and people who work in the same space and who face the same problems."

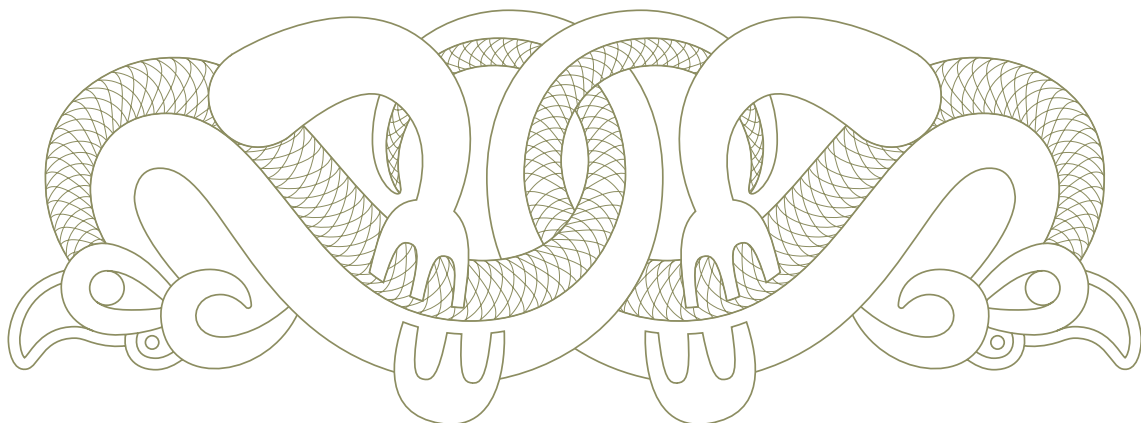
Another noted *"that making time for sharing from within our own groups is important, knowing what others are doing or what systems they are using is always helpful."*

As one example, at the recent Future Whenua Summit there was an uplifting and inspiring spirit evident that gave those attending further motivation to continue the much-needed mahi in the taiao space. The Summit promoted further collaboration across the multiple groups, organisations, agencies and politicians present. This included strategising of developments and future-focused conversations that were rich and meaningful. One kairaranga noted that she returned for another day because she

was so inspired by all the people she had met and the workshops that shared so much information.

Areas for further work identified through this research include:

- making time during hui to check-in with each other regarding health and wellbeing and learning some activities or interactive tools to better address this area in our workplaces or hui
- helping kairaranga to recognise and respond to health and wellbeing issues that may arise
- having access to more regular coaching and mentoring support and guidance for leading taiao mahi and overcoming challenges that are specific to their own areas.



Whakamana Tāngata | Empowering People





Whakawhanaungatanga | Engagement

Ehara taku toa, i te toa takitahi, he toa takitini

My success is not mine alone, but it is the strength of many

The need for engagement strategies and importance of engaging across many parts of the community and connecting with organisations and funders was frequently discussed during interviews. When undertaking engagement, groups recognised the need to ensure that the engagement strategy or pathway was a good fit for the community. Aspects such as where engagement takes place, how engagement is activated, what messages are shared, how perceptions are managed, and what outputs are important and appropriate all need to be considered. When bringing new kaupapa or information to communities, it is important that there is respect for the people and a plan made specifically for engagement and sharing of information. Some shared that *"if people share information in the wrong way or miss parts, then this could lead to people not understanding the kaupapa or sharing information that may not be correct."* Before a project has even started, people may try to shut it down. Hence, strategies and ideas for engagement are welcomed by groups.

It was recognised that different communities have different needs and may have their own ways of doing things. Therefore, *"taking time to engage, listen, and get to know people is a good first step before any work begins."* The need for careful engagement does not only apply to newcomers to a community; those from the kāinga also felt that engagement needed to be worked through, and *"just because you come from the place doesn't mean you won't have barriers or challenges to overcome."* It was noted that this important aspect *"should not be rushed and should be incorporated into contracts or initiatives."* It was noted by one of the kairaranga that *"having time for engagement is absolutely critical to the success of any project and would have saved a lot of time working on issues and misunderstandings had more time been put into this crucial area."* This is an area that funders should be aware of in terms of dates, timings, and the ways projects are set up.

Relationship building and growing your profile were also identified as areas where taiao groups would benefit from support. Groups noted that when working with other organisations and funders, it is important to share your vision, story, purpose, and objectives. This helps groups to strengthen their relationships with funding and support organisations and means that if opportunities arise, they think of you. Groups also want their developments to be understood by those in the community, and the community to feel part of the work being done. When holding engagement hui, it is important that people *“feel welcomed, supported, heard, and can participate in the design and development of the work.”* It is argued that by empowering our people, we empower ourselves and our futures.

Engaging with other taiao groups was identified as an opportunity to upskill, share expertise and knowledge, and possibly share resourcing costs among groups. This could involve collectively buying equipment together or coordinating travel across groups to reduce the cost of attending training or hui. As recognised by one of our kairaranga, *“by solidifying the engagement strategy, you are able to bring people and groups together and build on existing relationships.”* It was also noted that *“building your reputation positively goes a long way in being able to achieve your community’s dreams and aspirations.”*

Support offered through Te Kete Hononga

Engagement is always a focus for taiao groups and bringing communities on board to learn about and support the work underway is important to each group. As highlighted in the interviews there is a desire to *“strengthen the knowledge base of our people, to learn from those who hold the knowledge within the group, and from experts outside.”* All groups include people from a range of backgrounds, experiences and qualifications.

Currently, online communication is largely conducted via e-mail for the two volunteer-based groups in this

Support needs

The main engagement strategy needs arising from the interviews were:

- having clear communication systems in place
- having a toolbox of ideas for building relationships across multiple groups
- building engagement into project and funding timelines
- being able to manage information sharing and profile building
- understanding engagement strategies that help to empower the people of the kāinga.

Indicators of support

1. Systems are in place for communicating with communities, whānau and hapū.
2. Relationships with locals, RN, knowledge holders, funders, taiao groups, government agencies are growing and being nurtured.
3. People are being empowered by being part of the planning and delivery of the mahi.

study. The third group, Hokianga Harbour Care, has a website and Facebook page that share a lot of information about their project and developments. Challenges in this area for kairaranga are having sufficient funds to establish and maintain a website to share information, and having time to manage online forums. One option for supporting groups to have an online presence would be for local groups to share a website rather than all paying to create one each.

Relationships within the communities are strengthening and a range of organisations now attend community hui and workshops. Te Ohu Taiao o Waimamaku usually have between 16–20 people attending their events, including representatives from the iwi of Te Roroa, the Department of Conservation, Northland Regional Council, the Wekaweka Landcare Trust, local contracted environmental workers, Whitebait Connection and enthusiastic locals. Having the expertise, guidance and support of so many groups contribute to knowledge sharing, upskilling and sharing of information regarding funding and support systems available. Engaging these groups and individuals in the next phase of catchment planning will be important for preparing enduring plans and strategies that make a difference for the taiao of Waimamaku.

Te Ohu Taiao o Waimamaku roopu has also been engaging in community education days focused on different species and water monitoring, and supporting Hokianga Harbour Care with plantings along the Waimamaku River. There is a desire to continue this engagement through the trial and to further build the knowledge around local species.

The Otaua ki Hokianga roopu engages through regular meetings and has been focusing on building a 'master plan' for the valley to support funding for a range of subgroups in Otaua. There are about 14 people in their group, representing the marae committee, kōhanga reo, Otaua Sports Club and Ninihi Charitable Trust, which is the new entity for te taiao and hauora mahi. Reflecting on their engagement, the group noted that *"the connections made during the trial have been critical, we have built over 50 relationships in the course of the trial across all of the above and this has moved all our plans and aspirations to another level."*

Hokianga Harbour Care hold many community education wānanga and hui to share and promote the work that they are doing in South Hokianga. Examples include wānanga on freshwater monitoring, tree planting and investigation of inanga spawning sites. These sessions have attracted a lot of interest from the community and help to contribute volunteer hours towards various projects. Hokianga Harbour Care is also engaging in programmes with local schools and students.

Feedback from people attending the community hui highlight the level of interest and care for the taiao across the Hokianga:

"it's so awesome to be out learning about what's in our backyard."

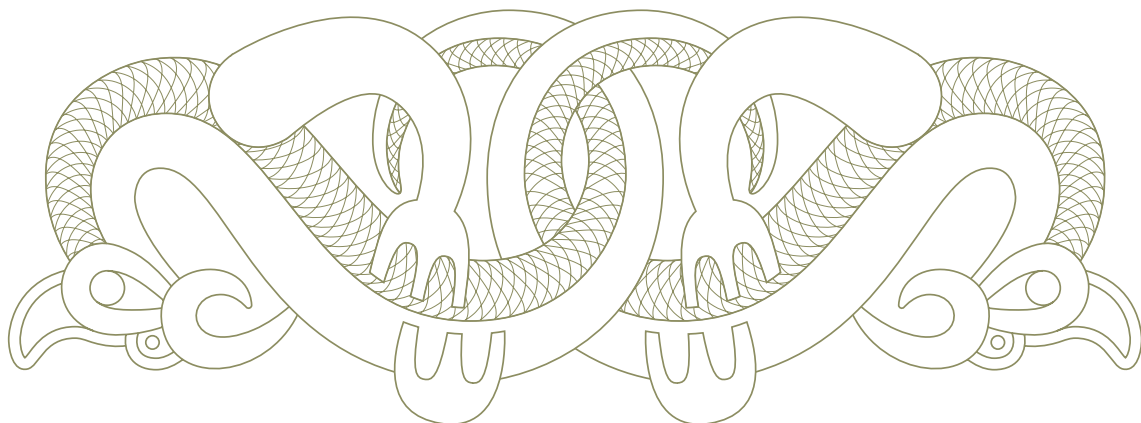
"what can we do to help protect the manu oi [grey-faced petrel]?"

"we need to be careful about what sprays are used to protect our spawning sites."

All the practical taiao sessions have been well attended with a lot of teachings and lessons being shared. These sessions also help to raise awareness about taonga species and problems we are facing in the taiao, for example the cat and dog problems that are damaging the habitats of the manu oi. Many people did not previously know that manu oi were in the local area, as they spend their days out at sea and return after dark. Now people are more aware not to let their dogs wander free in these areas. Signs would be another helpful engagement tool for taiao groups working on these issues.

Areas for further work identified through this research include:

- to continue to strengthen relationships across agencies, organisations, funders and communities
- to complete catchment planning to organise projects and future engagements with communities
- to explore the possibility of a shared website or individual group websites.





Mātauranga Taiao | Environmental Education

*Mā te kimi ka kite, mā te kite ka mōhio,
mā te mōhio ka mārāma!*

Seek and discover, discover and know, know and become enlightened!

Education was identified by our groups as very important for the future of our taiao and communities. Many felt that we have an obligation to ensure that future generations are well-versed in mātauranga taiao, and acknowledged the extensive mātauranga that our tūpuna held and the tikanga that they lived by to protect our taiao. They also acknowledged the mana that our tūpuna held in being able to make decisions for their own areas. There was disappointment raised at the barriers that still remain in terms of Māori being able to exercise tino rangatiratanga over their taiao and resources.

Education was viewed by our groups as very important for the wider community to engage and learn about the taiao. As one of our kairaranga mentioned “*I really want to see information sharing from those in the community with the knowledge to the rest of the community who want to learn.*” Our groups talked about inviting our schools and youth to be part of workshops, hui and projects so that the knowledge coming into our areas reaches further into the community. A desire was also expressed that our youth could design and lead some of the work.

There was discussion around ensuring that career pathways focused around taiao mahi are fostered and shared at career information days and that schools include taiao-based programmes in their curriculum. While this has occurred over the years, it has largely relied on passionate teachers taking action. Our groups felt that forming closer relationships with schools would assist in bringing more awareness of the taiao and related mātauranga to youth and our people. Some groups would benefit from support to build these relationships and promote taiao career pathways. One idea for fostering career pathways that was identified is to develop trade academies around taiao mahi.

Our groups felt that even if there are not currently taiao jobs or funded projects, continuing to upskill people through taiao-focused education and training is still valuable for future progress. As noted, “*it is important to keep our volunteer base*

activated and growing their knowledge from within and externally.” Others also had hopes of moving from volunteer-based to paid employment. It was stated that “one of our clear aspirations that’s come out of everything is that we want to move to the next phase of being able to pay ourselves to do this mahi so that we don’t have to go to other jobs or be looking for other incomes.”

Overall, there was a feeling among participants that *“we need to foster a love for our taiao in our people, along with growing knowledge and skills.”* This would assist in gaining more support for projects and hopefully, bring in more hands to help with the mahi.

Support offered through Te Kete Hononga

Environmental Education links closely with Engagement. Providing a range of opportunities to grow the knowledge and skills within groups was important to the kairaranga. A strength of our groups is their connections to local people with environmental knowledge that they can share during hui and field work. Too often, local expertise and mātauranga is overlooked as a resource, so the recognition of this knowledge by kairaranga increases learning opportunities. Our own people hold kōrero tuku iho (intergenerational stories) that are useful in our educational spaces and when preparing to work on the whenua.

Through Te Kete Hononga, relationships have been built with external experts who are supporting environmental education within communities. Our groups have learnt a lot about particular aspects of the taiao through organisations such as Whitebait Connection, Department of Conservation, and the regional council’s water monitoring training. The Future Whenua Summit also opened up groups’ access to numerous experts.

Another well supported educational opportunity has been the wānanga regarding freshwater monitoring and planting delivered by Hokianga Harbour Care, which our Waimamaku and Otua groups have been

Support needs

The main environmental education needs arising from the interviews were:

- education and upskilling our people in relation to taiao-based activities, tiro tiro observations, and noticing changes in the seasons, maramataka and weather patterns
- using expertise from within groups and externally, including recognition of mātauranga Māori
- strengthening relationships with schools to better integrate taiao programmes into curricula and career information days
- investigating taiao-focused ‘trade academies’ for Tai Tokerau.

Indicators of support

1. Opportunities are provided to further engage the community (school groups, locals, marae, hapū) to grow their knowledge of protecting and restoring the taiao.
2. Experts (including in mātauranga Māori) are sharing their knowledge through initiatives/ education programmes.
3. Tiro tiro Māori – observations in the local environment are being documented and recorded for future referencing of taiao monitoring.
4. There is information available to students about taiao career pathways.

able to attend. Seeing our groups working together and sharing knowledge is valuable for both education and relationship building. The wānanga have also included aspects of mātauranga sharing and tiro tiro observations of particular species and environmental indicators. As a result, groups are becoming more observant and taking note of the changing seasons, links to maramataka and climate influences.

However, it was noted by all groups that they would like more mātauranga Māori hui and wānanga, along with *“more gathering of hapū knowledge in local areas of interest with like-minded individuals who are working in the same spaces to share experiences, learnings, challenges and to connect the wider spaces that connect us all in Hokianga.”* Indeed, one of the kairaranga mentioned that they would like to see *“more gathering of just kaitiaki who live in areas without outside influences or government organisations.”* There is a sense that knowledge still needs to be protected and that we have obligations to ensure our kōrero tuku iho are used in the right ways.

In terms of youth educational pathways, it is hoped that more youth will be invited to future workshops and field day sessions to grow and foster a love for our taiao within younger generations. One idea that was shared was *“organising a youth wānanga to teach more concepts about the taiao, tiro tiro Māori and mātauranga Māori.”* The need to bring in our youth and develop more opportunities for them to lead and take ownership over projects and future directions in the taiao space was also raised at the Future Whenua Summit.

Areas for further work identified through this research include:

- to continue to create opportunities to share knowledge within the community and learn from experts in different areas of taiao work
- to gain funding to provide more educational workshops
- to design a youth wānanga for taiao learning in our areas
- to invite our youth to workshops, hui and future summit events so that they are familiar with the journey, challenges and conversations involved in taiao mahi, and can be active participants in designing future pathways.



Tautoko Ahurea | Cultural Support

Manaaki taiao, manaaki tangata, haere whakamua

Care for the land, care for the people, go forward

Cultural support is essential when working in the taiao, as it is important to understand the history, significance of places, and long-standing relationship that Māori hold with the whenua. Before any mahi starts, it is important to ensure that all those participating are versed in cultural protocols and that relationships with haukāinga have been made. This helps to ensure that people are aware of what is appropriate, where to go and how to work with Māori and others. Such knowledge also helps to form relationships with locals, landowners and community groups. Some kairaranga come from the areas they are leading; some are non-Māori. Therefore, there are a range of backgrounds and starting points for kairaranga in different groups. All of the kairaranga shared their experiences in this area, which we can look to for guidance and to develop cultural support.

Many talked about *“how important it is to build relationships with haukāinga because haukāinga have local knowledge of the area and can help in designing plans and helping others understand on-the-ground information, accessways, challenges, and weather patterns.”* One of the kairaranga talked about the need to spend more time around cultural protocols to ensure that projects could advance without too many barriers being put up. Therefore, *“when designing contracts, being aware and making sure to allocate time and support in this area is important.”* Guidance from kaumātua and kuia was also of importance, as they have *“lived experiences on the whenua and in the taiao that they could share.”* It was also noted, however, that not every person was open and inviting of taiao initiatives, so sometimes there needed to be careful approaches and discussions held around dealing with cultural and important issues for Māori.

Understanding Te Reo Māori and tikanga Māori was seen as beneficial when working and leading taiao mahi in Māori communities, and also helped to foster close relationships with locals. Kairaranga felt it was important at hui and during the mahi that concepts such as karakia, mihimihi and waiata are normalised as part of taiao mahi to *“acknowledge and honour our tūpuna and their tangata whenua status.”* It was also noted that gaining support from kaumātua and kuia is important and that they should

Support needs

The main environmental education needs arising from the interviews were:

- having access to cultural support and advice
- being confident in leading hui following tikanga Māori
- developing relationships with haukāinga.

Indicators of support

1. Cultural supports (advice, guidance, courses) are available locally.
2. Tikanga Māori and mātauranga Māori are observed during hui and mahi taking place in the taiao.
3. Haukāinga support people are known and relationships are strengthening.

be invited to be part of designing and delivering projects in the kāinga, *"being mindful, of course, to not overuse them, but ensuring that they are updated, invited, and have knowledge of what is taking place."*

The point was also raised that iwi that had completed their settlement processes had better, more sustainable projects because they could allocate funds as needed, whereas many areas in Te Tai Tokerau still had to beg and apply for funds in a piecemeal way. This was not seen as culturally appropriate because *"we too want to develop long-term self-sustaining projects to protect the taiao."*

Support offered through Te Kete Hononga

Cultural support has been provided within the trial via various methods and strategies. Cultural support is important to RN and groups have appreciated being able to access advice and guidance from within the management team of RN.

At the opening launch ceremony for Te Kete Hononga, many beautiful aspects of te ao Māori were interwoven into the programme. One particular aspect was the gifting of mauri stones to each of the kairaranga. This was a very beautiful touching part of the day as karakia was held over each mauri stone in preparation for the gifting. These moments will not be forgotten and demonstrate the cultural leadership within the RN management.

Groups have also talked about connecting locally with whānau, hapū and iwi to gain advice and support. This has been straightforward in some respects and challenging in other areas. As noted at one of our hui, sometimes *"you have to work hard to build respectful relationships."* Another stated, *"do the mahi with good intentions and back yourself."*

A challenge raised was finding who are the cultural decisionmakers and people to talk to within the local area. Do you talk to the taumata of the marae, the marae trustees, the hapū representatives, the kaumātua, kuia or uncle down the road? It can be

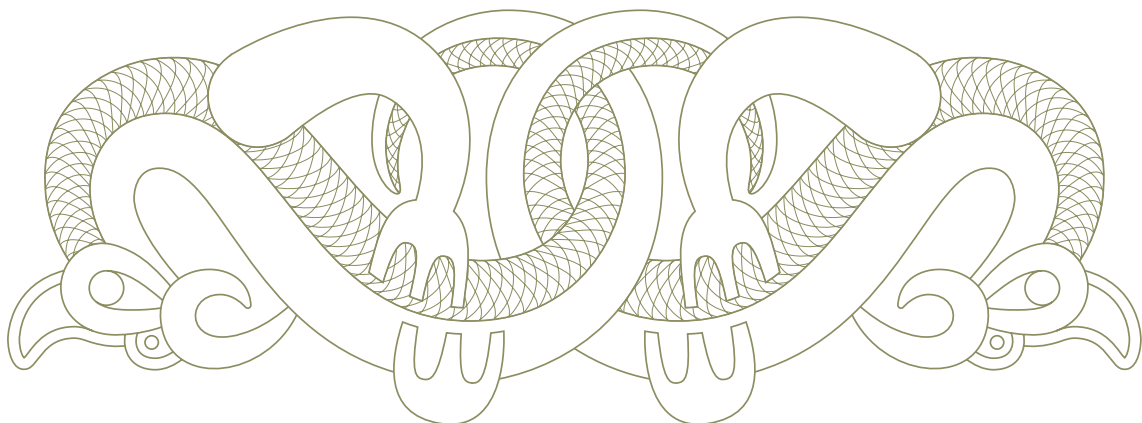
quite a lot to work through, especially for non-locals; however, all our groups have been able to navigate taiao work in their areas well.

Relationships are hugely important in this area of work. Each of the groups involved here have good working relationships with those attending hui, workshops and with those who are employed. These relationships have strengthened throughout the trial.

In terms of tikanga Māori and mātauranga Māori this is an area that all groups uphold to the best of their abilities. Some lead this area well and others let people who have the skills lead from within the group. All groups expressed the desire to learn more regarding mātauranga Māori in relation to the taiao. Becoming more in tune with the taiao will help as projects develop in the future.

Areas for further work identified through this research include:

- to offer more mātauranga Māori learning opportunities for groups and communities
- for RN to continue to provide cultural advice and support for kairaranga when needed
- for groups to continue connecting and learning from their own people in regard to the history and stories of their whenua.



Section 6 | Summary of insights from this research



Summary of insights from this research

This study sought to understand what support services and resources are needed by tangata whenua-led groups to pursue their taiao goals, and how regional collectives can improve support for those groups. Using the trial of Te Kete Hononga with three taiao groups in Hokianga as a case study, we examined the benefits of an integrated support service for groups and their communities. Our research encompassed the goals and aspirations of taiao groups, their communities and RN, as well as the connections, support and resources they see as necessary to make progress on those goals. Using information gathered during the first nine months of the trial, we analysed how Te Kete Hononga helped to meet the support needs of tangata whenua and community-led taiao groups.

As the research only encompassed nine months of the trial and focused on the experiences and outcomes of taiao groups in Hokianga, we cannot make claims about the trial as a whole. The outcomes of Te Kete Hononga will necessarily vary over time and from community to community. However, as a remote, rural area that receives limited government investment and is subject to significant social and environmental pressures, we believe that the perspectives shared by Hokianga groups in this research are important and provide meaningful insight into the ways Te Kete Hononga has supported and can support taiao groups.

This section summarises the insights generated through our research and concludes by identifying areas for further development and opportunities for integrated support services like Te Kete Hononga to build community capability and capacity to lead ecosystem restoration.

Summary of insights on taiao aspirations and support

This study sought to answer the question:

The first part of our research sought to understand the tāngata and taiao outcomes our groups and communities aspire to achieve through their taiao mahi. We found that the goals and aspirations of taiao groups, community members and RN staff all focus on improving employment and educational outcomes and the sharing of knowledge and tikanga, alongside visions of a flourishing taiao.

How effective is Te Kete Hononga in meeting the needs and aspirations of tangata whenua by developing local capacity and capability to undertake restoration and realise improved socio-ecological (tāngata me te taiao) outcomes?

Community dreams and aspirations:

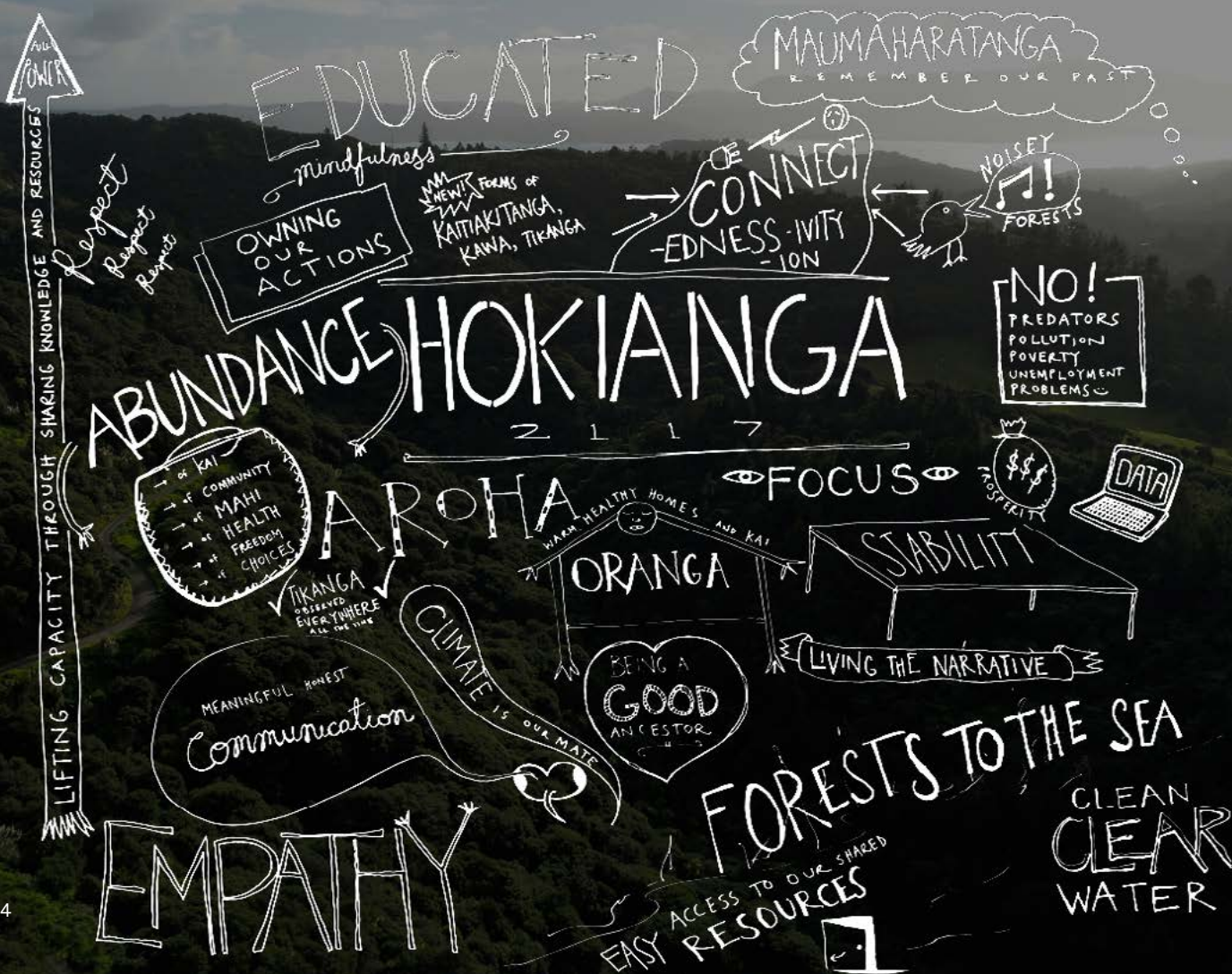
- to have a thriving, healthy taiao to pass on to future generations
- to grow the knowledge of taiao groups and young people, including by learning from kaumātua and kuia and local and external experts
- to ensure Mātauranga Māori is nurtured and supported in the mahi, and to keep noticing and observing what is happening in nature
- to have systems and structures set up to employ, train and support local people to do taiao work
- to have better funding systems that advance the work needed to restore the taiao.

Our interviews with group leaders, members and RN staff demonstrated their passion and commitment to achieving improved outcomes for the taiao and communities in Hokianga, but also that they cannot achieve these outcomes alone. Our research highlighted that tangata whenua and community-led taiao groups, and especially groups operating in remote areas with few resources, have a wide range of support needs. All groups need support with management, planning and administration, but this is particularly true for groups that are making the transition from being volunteer-based to engaging contractors and employing staff. This transition also creates greater demand for support to obtain funding, access training in key skills and safeguards the health and wellbeing of group members. Finally, for taiao groups that are led by, include and work closely with tangata whenua, cultural support and guidance with community engagement are key to ensuring that taiao mahi delivers on the goals and aspirations of our people. For many communities, this means investing in environmental education, including mātauranga Māori, so that taiao work can be carried on by future generations.

For RN, a key aspiration is to bring about better collaboration and support between agencies, organisations, funders, iwi and community groups through Te Kete Hononga. There is clear evidence at local and regional levels that this is now taking place and that relationships across the various groups are strengthening. This is resulting in increased activity, taiao developments and knowledge sharing, while access to funding and support is beginning to improve. RN also had a clear desire to build capability and capacity in community groups. This is being supported through relationships forming as mentioned above, as well as through the training coordination, training programmes, guidance and other opportunities that RN are making available to groups. The groups are gaining valuable skills and qualifications by being a part of the trial of Te Kete Hononga. This contributes to having more of our local people upskilled, involved in taiao projects, and in a position to take on employment should contracts become available.

For government agencies and funding organisations, this research provides clear insights into the aspirations and support needs of community groups who are the people on the whenua, connected to the taiao and facing the many challenges of these times. Our taiao needs support and protection especially with the very real effects of climate change facing us all. Support needs to be available at all levels. This also requires adoption of a more collaborative approach to working and designing pathways forward, and ensuring that tangata whenua are active participants in decisions, design and on the ground work for taiao mahi. The holistic work that is developing within this trial demonstrates the power and usefulness of collaboration.

Reconnecting Northland have demonstrated that they are in a strong position to be able to support and guide multiple groups across Tai Tokerau, and to network the many initiatives taking place across agencies and organisations. This demonstrates smarter ways of working, better weaving together of people and resources and ultimately means that our groups are better prepared to take on future challenges and opportunities. Te Kete Hononga also has the potential to be scalable to the whole region: as the groups receiving support currently become more self-sustaining, they can become mentors for other groups, creating an expanding network of connections and support.



Highlights from the trial of Te Kete Hononga

There are many highlights and successes to date to celebrate as groups have engaged and developed within the trial of Te Kete Hononga. To begin, a key strength is the wealth of knowledge, experience and leadership skills within the management team of RN and their support for all the groups engaging in this trial. As noted by one kairaranga,

we have great leaders; they have inspired me with the way they have carried and presented themselves across this trial. I feel proud and privileged to have been able to take part in this trial and very grateful for all the support and guidance from the entire team of RN. I hope Te Kete can continue to grow and strengthen so RN can deliver to more communities like mine.

Another highlight has been the level of collaboration occurring within the groups themselves and among the trial groups as they have come together for training and development. Groups are building their knowledge and skills through this increased access to local knowledge and outside experts. Seeing the range of organisations, agencies and iwi groups sitting around the table sharing information and contributing to future restoration planning is a success for our groups. For the Waimamaku and Otatau roopu, this access will be further strengthened through the funding that RN has secured to employ an ecologist to help the groups develop catchment plans for their areas.

The Future Whenua Summit in March 2024 took the collaboration, networking and the sharing by experts across many areas of taiao work to another level. Having ministerial support at this and other hui was also really important, as it ensures that the voices, ideas and discussions contributed by groups are highlighted and shared outside of the forum.

Having a training coordinator that holds close relationships with kairaranga and across the community groups is another key strength of the trial. Coordinating the training calendar, training requirements and enrolments and organising training sessions with providers is a huge undertaking that has significantly increased groups' access to training. The groups and trainees greatly appreciate what a support this has been to them. The range of training that has been offered has also contributed to growing capability and capacity within groups and communities. Groups and trainees are gaining a sense of empowerment as their knowledge grows across many areas of restoration work. Kairaranga reported that the training is upskilling local people who are working in paid taiao projects, enabling people to gain further qualifications to undertake taiao mahi, and in some cases has led people into employment. Some trainees have moved away once they have gained certifications to work; the hope is that soon the groups will have adequate funding to have their own skilled people in paid employment at home looking after their taiao.

Another strength is the diversity of groups involved in the trial. Hokianga Harbour Care involvement in this research has highlighted how much groups that are setting up can

learn from established groups that have been working in their areas for years. These groups have highly relevant experience to offer on project managing and leading the planting and fencing of waterways, engaging and educating the communities, building relationships and the challenges that taiao roopu can face. Further, as one trainee noted, being able to see the impacts and progress that groups can make is hugely beneficial:

when we first started, we'd only done a few sites. We couldn't really see the impact we were having until now nearly three years down the track and we're seeing sites that we started two years ago and they're booming now. Seeing wildlife, seeing birds go back to those places where when we started, there was nothing. So being able to see the difference is a pretty big morale booster for you to keep wanting to do the mahi.

Areas for development

We have suggested areas for further work and development for each of the nine support themes in the body of this report. We hope that moving forward, these suggestions may help to guide the ongoing implementation and refinement of Te Kete Hononga as the trial continues. Here we summarise some of the key areas for development identified through the final interviews.

A key area for further work is developing groups' knowledge on applying for funding, setting up to be able to employ staff and the legal requirements for doing this work. Strengthening support in funding and people management would mean more local people gaining employment in their home areas, including potentially attracting skilled people back home. More long-term funding and collaborative approaches among agencies and organisations would also support this outcome.

As funding is a key priority, one way to provide support could be to organise a 'meet the funders' event where groups could showcase their work and learn from the funders about what they offer and how to apply to their organisations. This would improve groups' access to information, save the time involved in going through this repeatedly with different groups, and could allow for better collaboration in funding applications and strategies.

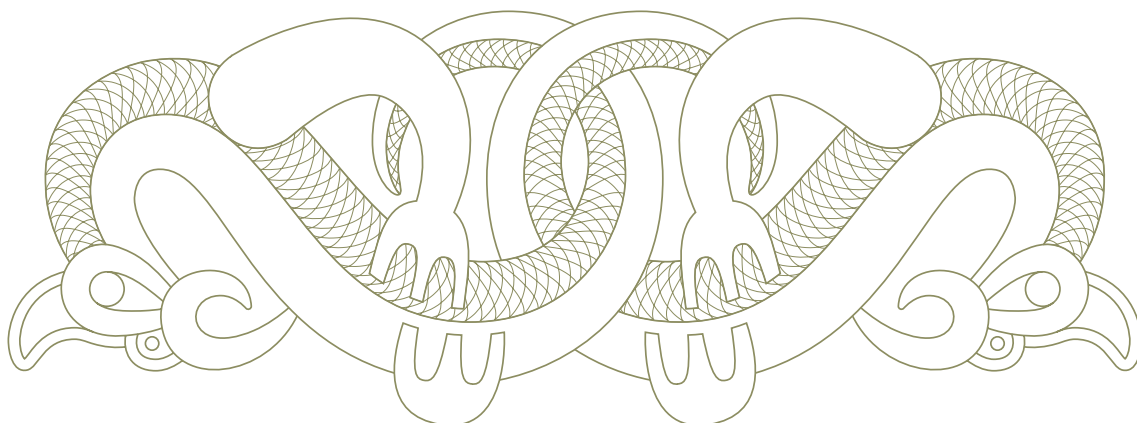
There are also opportunities to support collaboration among groups to reduce costs and increase access to resources for taiao mahi. A good example is the Training Coordinator's work with multiple groups to improve access to training for small and remote communities and reduce the costs of attending training. A similar approach could be used to help groups acquire and share resources for taiao mahi. For example, are there businesses that could support multiple groups to purchase equipment or supplies, using their collective power to obtain better pricing? And what happens to equipment when a contract ends, and it is no longer needed for that purpose – could a system be set up to enable that equipment to be used by other groups?

Groups have also identified the importance of growing the knowledge of their own people and a love for the taiao within their communities. This could be fostered through more hui, wānanga or opportunities to join the experts when they come out to visit areas. The community groups have enjoyed being able to attend on the ground workshops and wānanga offered to date.

A related area for further work is the strengthening of mātauranga Māori in the taiao space. All groups highlighted this as a need and an area they wish to learn more about and be supported in, along with te reo o te taiao and connection to the histories and stories of their whenua. They acknowledge that this mātauranga usually sits within their own people and look forward to pursuing and growing relationships in their own kāinga to gain support in this area. One opportunity for external support could be learning how to research and access the information held in archives about their areas; a workshop or session could help to grow groups' knowledge in this area.

Another key area for development is refining the administration tools and systems to ensure they are straightforward for groups to access and use. Having all the information stored in one place with an easy login would be preferable, especially for groups with limited administration experience or capacity. The calendar has been very useful in guiding groups' work plans so far. Its utility could be further enhanced by adding more information to it to help with the planning of hui, training and events, for example the maramataka, seasonal changes and lifecycles of key local species.

Finally, health and wellbeing is an important area for groups, but guidance and resources are often limited to health and safety. This area could be further supported by co-developing ideas and strategies for team building and caring for all aspects of our wellbeing, as well as regular check-ins and wellbeing hui.



Final reflections

When analysing the many aspects of this trial and its outcomes we have reflected on the dreams and aspirations of the groups and people and then worked through the observations and evidence that has been collected. From this process, we share some final overall reflections on Te Kete Hononga.

Training has been a key priority during the trial, and a lot of training has been offered in a short space of time. Our reflection here would be to allow time for consolidation of the knowledge that has been shared, and to allow for follow-up sessions to ensure that groups understand how to apply and use their new skills. This is particularly true for project management, which is a steep learning curve.

Adding a more specific coaching and mentoring element to the trial to address on the spot needs or challenges for groups may also be useful. Advice is currently available from RN Management on request, however more regular check-in or mentoring sessions would be welcomed by kairaranga.

A key strength of Te Kete Hononga is RN's work with organisations and agencies to help them align their services with one another and with groups' needs and ways of working. We recommend RN continue building conversations and relationships with organisations and agencies, and work with them to examine how things are funded and different ways of organising funding. There is a need to both build better funding strategies and systems and get these in front of decision makers.

As groups grow and develop it will be useful to begin looking at nature-based enterprise and supporting groups to investigate opportunities for their areas. However, at this stage most groups are still getting the basics in place to acquire and manage funds and employ staff, so work on nature-based enterprises may take a little longer.

Education and engagement continue to be important to our groups, including listening to kaumātua and kuia, our knowledge holders and the voices of our youth, and taking every opportunity to learn and grow together. Kairaranga, RN and organisations can support this by continuing to design and hold workshops to grow knowledge and inviting local people. Using multiple methods (for example, daytime and evening hui, coffee catch-ups, youth wānanga, short online sessions, walks, retreats) will enable organisers to reach and engage more people.

This research has highlighted the hard work and achievements occurring across many areas. These developments are inspiring local people to get and stay involved in taiao mahi. Keeping an archive of these developments, including photos and video footage, may be useful for groups to track progress and help our future generations to see what was accomplished in our time.

Overall, the foundations that are growing in our groups through Te Kete Hononga and the leadership of RN will not only benefit our taiao, but the wellbeing of the people also. Having access to support across the nine key areas identified as important to communities is strengthening what these groups are able to plan and achieve.

It has been a privilege to conduct this research and witness the passion in the people, hear their stories and see the developments taking place. To the groups and the organisations that support them, keep going, keep focused, keep inspiring, keep working together for the taiao and our wellbeing. We cannot afford to sit back and not take action:

Despite all that we are doing to try to protect and restore habitats and assist species, Papaptūānuku and Aotearoa New Zealand's indigenous biodiversity is in crisis. Around 4000 species are threatened or at risk of extinction. Many plants and wildlife continue to decline or are just hanging on. Biodiversity in Aotearoa New Zealand, the strategy's companion report presents the sobering evidence. It's not just a crisis for our country, but for global biodiversity – any indigenous species that we lose from these islands is gone forever (Hon Eugenie Sage, Te Mana o Te Taiao - Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020).

Nō reira,

E mihi ana ki a koutou,
Koutou e manaaki, e tiaki ana te taiao
Kia maia, kia manawanui



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