



Making sense of the numbers



TOKONA TE RAKI
Māori Futures Collective

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Jo Smith
Inquiry Director
Productivity Commission
By email

Tenā koe Jo,

A fair start for all – breaking the disadvantage cycle

We are writing to discuss the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the inquiry. We would be keen to ensure that the voices of rangatahi, especially Māori but also Pacifica, are part of the ToR.

The world as we know it is rapidly changing. Our shifting population demographics, climate change and the impacts of technology are reshaping what the future will look like for our tamariki and mokopuna. Rangatahi Māori represent the fastest growing sector of New Zealand's population and as such will be the drivers of the future. We need to equip them with the tools to be inspired by their future, succeeding as Māori, confident in their culture and prosperous in their careers.

As the statistics tell us, the journey through education into employment is not equitable, and Māori are still disadvantaged within the current system. For the benefit of all, it's time we identify and address the failings of the current system to ensure that it meets rangatahi where they are and inspires, connects, and prepares them for where they want to go.

We need to understand the opportunities on offer and make the investment that will transform our system and empower our rangatahi to achieve their dreams – their new Hawaiki. We also need to acknowledge what hasn't worked in the past. Previous research has either lacked the ability to understand the myriad forces holding a problem in place or has failed to attempt to understand the lived realities of those affected. Despite the wealth of previous research, we have to acknowledge that the gains needed have not been achieved. We need new, bold and blended approaches leveraging the depths of the lived experiences of those affected, the power of data in raising the gaze to systemic levers and focusing insights on actionable changes that can be implemented in the real-world. Our partnership proposes an end-to-end blended approach including both insights and innovation spanning qualitative and quantitative methods and leveraging both systemic insights and lived experience to enable a deeper and actionable case for change.

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This is why it will be important that rangatahi and whānau voices drive a new approach. We would like to discuss how you can utilise and access rangatahi by using data to give it credence and integrate the human voice to give it mana and to extend analysis to go where the data can't. BERL and Tokana Te Raki have worked on various projects together and are strong advocates for blending data and human voices, insights, and innovation. We would like to propose the following methodology:

Phase	Round 1 – Qualitative	Round 2 - Quantitative	Round 3 - Qualitative	Round 4 - Qualitative	Round 5 - Qualitative
Activity	Building relationships with whānau and understanding lived experience	Whānau voice focused data analysis	Informed whānau voice makes sense of the data and goes where the data can't	Whānau-centred design to make and test prototype solutions	Developmental evaluation to understand what changed because of the actions taken
Outcome	Understand lived experience and current boosters and barriers	Mapping system levers, what's working, what's not and what needs to change	Deeper understanding of lived experience and clarity on levers of change	Clear plan of critical shifts needed and actionable prototypes	Clear understandings of the strategic learnings from the process with recommendation for embedding change

This will enable a framed rangatahi voice as part of the research outputs. Furthermore, we propose a process that includes collaboratively designing, building, and testing solutions to extend analysis into the realities of implementation and build deeper understanding of the systemic barriers and levers of change. This creates a deeper and broader scope of inquiry that better focuses the findings on actionable and achievable levers of change.

We would like to see this methodology being used across Aotearoa. We have worked with Waikato Tainui as well as the Southern Initiative and propose a partnership of Ngai Tahu, Waikato Tainui, and the Southern Initiative that could be used to run three rangatahi focussed co-design, co-develop and co-deliver projects to inform the inquiry.

We would also like to see that the ToR extends to the system. Practitioners, in especially the education system as well as the Government Departments, need to be part of the solution. Interviewing the practitioners will ensure that we are going to where the data cannot go.

The aim will be to empowering those affected to be part of the process, by ensuring that they participate, engage and design through this research journey.

We look forward to working with you, nāku noa, nā,



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