



Whiria Te Oranga

Kaumātua Workforce Development and Wellbeing Strategy

Strengthening Cultural Leadership in Mental Health and Addiction Services

Te Rau Ora | 2025–2035 Refresh



TE RAU ORA

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- Ngā Tai a Kupe – Te Toi Ora
- Tākiri Mai te Ata – Kōkiri
- Taumata Tū, Taumata Ora – Te Taumata Tapu o Ngāi Tūāhuriri
- Kaumātua Lounge – Ngāti Hine Pātea
- Te Hiku Hauora – Whaea Warden Initiative

Their experiences demonstrate the strength of kaupapa Māori, community-led approaches and the many ways kaumātua leadership is expressed across Aotearoa. Their insights have directly informed the evidence base and strategic direction of this refreshed strategy.

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Most importantly, we acknowledge the generations of kaumātua who have gone before us. Their teachings, values and sacrifices continue to guide this work. Their legacy lives on through today's kaumātua and through the rangatahi and future leaders who will carry this kaupapa forward.

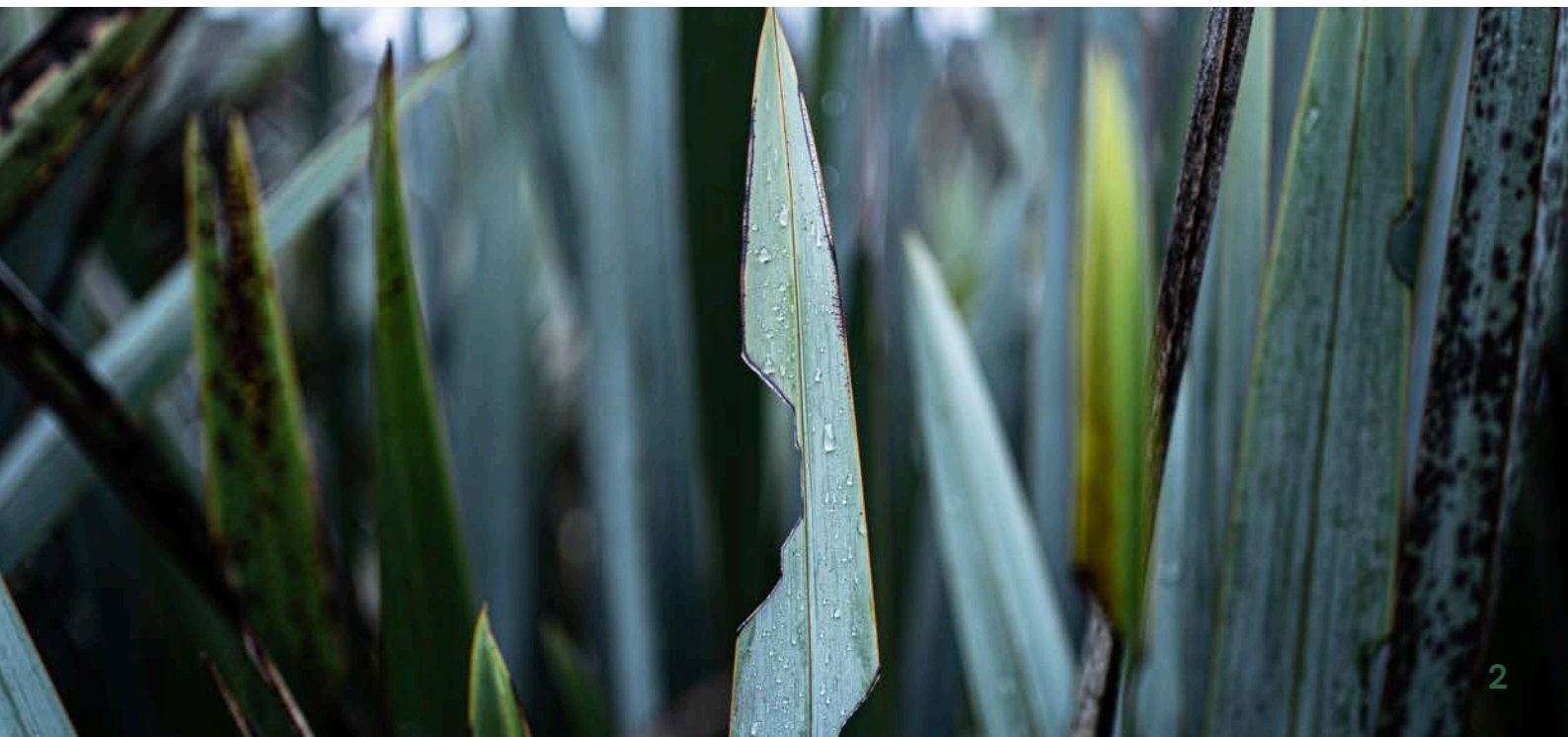
Executive Summary

This refresh represents a significant shift toward system transformation, building on the original 2008 framework to embed cultural leadership, well-being, and community-led approaches as core components of system design and delivery. Within this context, kaumātua leadership is critical to recovery, strengthening whānau connection and enabling culturally responsive care, yet remains inconsistently recognised within formal workforce and system structures. Whiria Te Oranga embeds kaumātua leadership as a core component of workforce capability and system design, underpinned by four strategic pou: access, prevention, workforce and partnership.

Implementation will be delivered through national coordination, regional Puna and locally led delivery, supported by enabling infrastructure across governance, workforce investment, data and regional coordination. Over time, the strategy will deliver increased participation of kaumātua in leadership and workforce roles, stronger cultural capability across services, expanded Kaupapa Māori wellbeing initiatives, and improved mental health and wellbeing outcomes for Māori.

This shift is informed by Kaupapa Māori evidence, funded initiatives, and the voices of kaumātua and whānau. These insights demonstrate that while culturally grounded approaches are effective locally, their impact remains fragmented without coordinated system-level support. This strategy establishes a deliberate shift toward embedding cultural leadership at the centre of workforce development, service design and system transformation, supported by a nationally aligned framework across Aotearoa.

This system transformation integrates wellbeing and workforce as interdependent components, positioning cultural leadership at the centre of workforce capability, service design and wellbeing outcomes.



Strategic Context

The refresh of Whiria Te Oranga is being implemented within a period of significant health system transformation across Aotearoa. Reforms, including the establishment of Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora and the implementation of the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022, have reshaped the health system landscape. Within this context, recognising the leadership of kaumātua and strengthening workforce pathway advances the wider transformation of the health system.

Within this evolving context, strengthening a culturally capable workforce has become an important priority. National workforce planning has identified ongoing shortages within the mental health and addiction sector, alongside the need to grow a workforce that reflects the cultural diversity and lived experiences of the hāpori it serves (Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora, 2024; Te Pou, 2025).

The Whiria Te Oranga strategy advances this national direction by recognising the cultural leadership and knowledge of kaumātua as central to workforce capability and system design. By building workforce capability, culturally responsive practice and community-led well-being, the strategy aligns with the broader objectives of the Pae Ora health system reforms and strengthens wellbeing outcomes for Māori hāpori across Aotearoa.

These system shifts reinforce the need for coordinated action across the four strategic pou, access, prevention, workforce and partnership, which together provide the foundation for the system transformation advanced through this strategy.

Kaumātua Voice

Across the case study engagement, kaumātua consistently described their roles not as formal workforce positions, but as expressions of responsibility grounded in whakapapa, manaakitanga and collective wellbeing.

Kaumātua spoke to the importance of connection to whānau, whenua and culture as central to wellbeing. Many reflected that their contributions are often not visible within formal system structures, despite being critical to supporting recovery, strengthening identity and guiding culturally safe practice.

Their voices reinforce that cultural leadership is not supplementary to the system, but foundational to effective wellbeing support. These insights highlight the importance of recognising and sustaining kaumātua leadership within workforce and system design. Achieving this will require enabling infrastructure across governance, workforce investment, data and regional coordination to support consistent implementation at scale.

Case for Change

Kaumātua are central to systems of wellbeing across Aotearoa, providing cultural guidance, mentorship and leadership that supports recovery and strengthens whānau connection. Despite this, their contributions are not consistently recognised within workforce frameworks.

At the same time, demand for services continues to increase alongside workforce shortages and persistent inequities for Māori. Addressing these challenges requires a fundamental shift toward approaches that recognise cultural leadership, community connection and kaupapa Māori models as core components of wellbeing, rather than supplementary elements.

Strategic Narrative

The Whiria Te Oranga Kaumātua Workforce Development and Wellbeing Strategy is grounded in the principle that Māori wellbeing is strengthened when cultural leadership, workforce capability and community wellbeing operate as an integrated system. Across Aotearoa, kaumātua provide cultural leadership within whānau, hapū and iwi. Their role supports the transmission of mātauranga Māori, strengthens cultural identity and guides services to reflect the values and aspirations of Māori hapori.

It also strengthens workforce practice by supporting the integration of tikanga Māori and mentoring emerging practitioners. These insights reinforce that sustained system-level coordination is required to embed cultural leadership across the system.

Integration of Wellbeing and Workforce

This strategy intentionally integrates wellbeing and workforce as interdependent components of a single system. Wellbeing initiatives, led by whānau, hapori and community-based approaches, create the conditions for connection, prevention and sustained engagement. Together, this integrated approach anchors workforce development in lived experience and community need, ensuring wellbeing initiatives are supported by a capable, culturally responsive workforce. Kaumātua leadership acts as the connecting mechanism between these domains, bridging community wellbeing and workforce practice through cultural authority, mentorship and system influence.

Scope of the Strategy

Whiria Te Oranga is a national workforce and wellbeing strategy focused on strengthening the role of kaumātua leadership within mental health and addiction services across Aotearoa.

The strategy applies across:

- Kaupapa Māori providers
- Mainstream health and addiction services
- Iwi and community-led wellbeing initiatives
- Workforce development and training pathways

It is designed as a framework that strengthens alignment across national, regional and local systems, rather than operating as a standalone programme.

INTEGRATION OF WELLBEING AND WORKFORCE

WELLBEING

WORKFORCE



Indigenous and Kaupapa Māori Evidence Informing the Strategy

The refreshed Whiria Te Oranga strategy is informed by a growing body of Indigenous and Māori health research that highlights the importance of culturally grounded approaches to wellbeing, leadership and workforce development. Across Indigenous health systems internationally, elders play critical roles as cultural leaders, knowledge holders and community mentors whose leadership contributes not only to individual wellbeing but also to the collective resilience of hapori.

Within Māori health scholarship, models such as Te Whare Tapa Whā emphasise the interconnected nature of wellbeing across spiritual, mental, physical and whānau dimensions (Durie, 1998). These perspectives recognise that wellbeing is sustained through relationships with whānau, hapū and iwi, connection to whakapapa and the maintenance of cultural knowledge systems. Similarly, Durie's Te Pae Mahutonga framework highlights the importance of cultural identity, community participation and leadership as key determinants of Māori health development (Durie, 1999).

Kaupapa Māori approaches to workforce development further emphasise the importance of Māori leadership and cultural knowledge within health systems. Rather than focusing solely on formal professional qualifications, Kaupapa Māori workforce frameworks recognise lived experience, kaumātua leadership, and community engagement as valuable forms of expertise that contribute to workforce capability (Nuku & Came, 2022).

These perspectives reinforce the importance of strengthening kaumātua leadership within mental health and addiction services. Kaumātua bring cultural knowledge, mentorship and guidance that support practitioners to deliver care in ways that are culturally safe and responsive to the needs and aspirations of Māori hapori.

Evidence Informing the Kaumātua Wellbeing and Leadership Continuum

The continuum of connection, prevention, support, leadership and legacy presented within this strategy reflects the progression of wellbeing and leadership observed through the case study findings and supported by Māori health research. Research examining Māori ageing initiatives highlights that wellbeing for kaumātua is strengthened when programmes prioritise social connection, cultural identity and community participation.

Initiatives that create opportunities for whakawhanaungatanga, cultural engagement and knowledge sharing support kaumātua to remain connected to whānau, hapū and iwi while contributing their leadership and experience within hapori. These findings align with Kaupapa Māori approaches to wellbeing which emphasise the importance of collective relationships and cultural identity as key determinants of health outcomes. Within this context, kaumātua wellbeing is not only about individual health but also about the ability to maintain meaningful roles within whānau and hapori.

The continuum therefore reflects the different ways in which kaumātua engage with wellbeing and leadership across the life course. From strengthening connection and prevention through community-based initiatives, to providing cultural guidance and leadership within services, kaumātua contribute to systems of wellbeing that support both workforce capability and community resilience.

KAUMĀTUA LEADERSHIP CONTINUUM



CONNECTION

Reconnecting kaumātua to whānau, hapū and community.



PREVENTION

Leading early intervention, knowledge sharing and wellbeing promotion.



SUPPORT

Providing peer support, guidance and cultural navigation.



LEADERSHIP

Leading services, mentoring others and shaping systems.



LEGACY

Leaving a legacy of knowledge, strength and transformation.

IMPLEMENTATION MODEL

FROM NATIONAL VISION TO WHĀNAU OUTCOMES



NATIONAL COORDINATION

Leadership, strategy, investment and national workforce development.



REGIONAL COORDINATION

Regional coordination, training hubs and provider support.



COMMUNITY DELIVERY

Kaumātua-led services, outreach, prevention and support.



WHĀNAU OUTCOMES

Stronger whānau, healthier communities and thriving Māori.

Case Study Findings Informing the Wellbeing and Leadership Components of the Strategy

Acknowledgement of Case Study Contributors

The development of the Whiria Te Oranga Kaumātua Workforce Development and Wellbeing Strategy has been informed by the generosity, leadership, and lived experience of kaumātua, providers, and hapori who contributed to the case study programme led by Te Rau Ora.

We acknowledge the following iwi, organisations, and kaumātua whose insights, practice, and leadership have shaped the evidence base of this strategy:

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- Ngā Tai a Kupe – Te Toi Ora (Whaingaroa / Kāwhia)
A community-led kaumātua collective whose contributions reflect the strength of voluntary, kaupapa-driven wellbeing and cultural leadership.
- Tākiri Mai te Ata – Kōkiri (Lower Hutt)
Including the leadership of Donna McCullough and Jane Hopkirk, and the kaumātua who shared their lived experiences across diverse roles within hapori.
- Taumata Tū, Taumata Ora – Te Taumata Tapu o Ngāi Tūāhuriri (Tuahiwi, Canterbury)
Including the leadership of Te Ruapounamu and Danna Robson, and the kaumātua advancing intergenerational knowledge transmission and cultural revitalisation.
- Kaumātua Lounge – Ngāti Hine (Pātea, South Taranaki)
Led by Auntie Lovey, whose mahi exemplifies manaakitanga, community care, and support for kaumātua wellbeing.
- Te Hiku Hauora – Whaea Warden Initiative (Te Hiku o Te Ika)
Including the leadership of Whaea Betty Brown and the kaumātua contributing to culturally grounded pastoral care and collective leadership.

These contributors have provided invaluable insights into how kaumātua leadership, wellbeing, and workforce capability are expressed in practice across Aotearoa. Their experiences demonstrate the strength of kaupapa Māori, community-led approaches and have directly informed the development of this strategy. We honour their mātauranga, their leadership, and their commitment to whānau and hapori, which continues to guide this strategy and its intent toward system transformation across Aotearoa.

The case studies informing this strategy were undertaken by Te Rau Ora as part of its national workforce development and sector leadership programme, drawing on Kaupapa Māori research approaches, sector leadership insights, and engagement with Māori providers, iwi organisations and community-led initiatives across Aotearoa. These case studies were designed to capture lived experience, practice-based evidence and provider insights to better understand how kaumātua wellbeing and leadership are expressed within real-world service and community contexts. These findings reflect the four strategic pou of access, prevention, workforce and partnership, demonstrating how these elements operate together in practice.

Provider summaries drawn from these case studies highlight the diversity of approaches currently supporting kaumātua across the sector. These include Kaupapa Māori health providers, iwi-led initiatives and community-based programmes that deliver a range of activities such as wānanga, rongoā Māori, mirimiri, social connection spaces and intergenerational learning environments. While differing in delivery models, these providers consistently demonstrate a shared commitment to strengthening cultural identity, whanaungatanga and holistic wellbeing outcomes for kaumātua and their whānau.

Across provider settings, several common themes emerge. Firstly, kaumātua are positioned not only as recipients of care, but as active contributors to wellbeing through cultural leadership, mentorship and community engagement. Secondly, effective initiatives are grounded in culturally safe, relational environments that prioritise connection and participation as key determinants of wellbeing. Thirdly, providers emphasise the importance of locally led, iwi and hapori-driven approaches that reflect the unique aspirations and contexts of their hapori.

These provider insights confirm that wellbeing and leadership are not discrete components but interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Community-led initiatives create the conditions for connection and prevention, while provider-supported environments enable ongoing support and pathways into leadership. In turn, kaumātua leadership strengthens workforce capability and contributes to the sustainability of these initiatives through intergenerational knowledge transmission.

Together, the case study findings and provider summaries establish a strong and credible evidence base for the wellbeing and leadership continuum presented within this strategy. They demonstrate that culturally grounded, community-led approaches are critical to strengthening both workforce capability and wellbeing outcomes and affirm the role of kaumātua as central to system transformation across Aotearoa. These findings provide the foundation for the key insights and continuum presented below.

Evidence from case studies highlights three consistent insights:

- Kaumātua leadership strengthens culturally responsive practice
- Community-based initiatives support connection and prevention
- Intergenerational engagement strengthens leadership continuity

These insights demonstrate that cultural leadership, workforce capability and community wellbeing operate as interdependent components of an effective system. Through these roles, kaumātua support practitioners to develop culturally informed practice while strengthening relationships between services and the hapori they serve. Māori health literature has long emphasised the importance of cultural leadership in strengthening health outcomes for Māori and ensuring that services reflect the values, practices and aspirations of Māori hapori (Durie, 1998).

The case studies also highlight the effectiveness of tuakana–teina leadership models, where experienced kaumātua work alongside practitioners and emerging leaders to support knowledge transmission and workforce capability development. Partnerships between kaumātua and clinical practitioners strengthen both cultural understanding and service delivery by ensuring that cultural knowledge and tikanga are embedded within care practices. These models demonstrate the value of intergenerational leadership in strengthening workforce capability and culturally responsive service delivery.

In addition to leadership within services, the case studies demonstrate the significant role that community-led wellbeing programmes play in supporting the wellbeing of kaumātua. Activities such as wānanga, mirimiri, storytelling, cultural learning, rongoā Māori and shared community spaces create opportunities for connection, cultural revitalisation and collective wellbeing. These initiatives reflect Māori models of health that recognise wellbeing as holistic and relational, encompassing spiritual, cultural, emotional and physical dimensions of health (Durie, 1998; Pere, 1982).

Community-based initiatives also highlight the importance of social connection and culturally safe spaces for kaumātua. Programmes such as the Kaumātua Lounge in Pātea demonstrate how locally led initiatives can provide opportunities for social engagement, health support and cultural connection. These initiatives strengthen relationships between kaumātua, whānau and hāpori while helping to address issues such as social isolation and barriers to accessing culturally responsive services.

Another key finding across the case studies is the importance of intergenerational engagement in supporting both wellbeing and leadership development. Initiatives that bring together kaumātua, rangatahi and tamariki support the transmission of cultural knowledge and strengthen cultural identity across generations. Through these programmes, kaumātua contribute to the development of future leaders while reinforcing their role as knowledge holders and cultural guides within their hāpori.

The case studies also reveal that many initiatives supporting kaumātua wellbeing and leadership are sustained through voluntary or community-led contributions. In several examples, kaumātua described their involvement as a form of service grounded in values of manaakitanga, whakapapa and collective responsibility rather than as a formal workforce role. While these contributions are critical to community wellbeing, they are often not formally recognised within workforce structures. Recognising these roles and strengthening system recognition of cultural leadership and lived experience as valuable forms of workforce capability represents an important opportunity for workforce development.

These findings align with the broader direction established through the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022, which reinforces the need to improve health outcomes for Māori by strengthening whānau wellbeing, community leadership and Māori participation in the health system. The Act recognises the importance of Māori-led approaches to service design and governance that reflect the needs and aspirations of Māori hāpori (Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act, 2022). Similarly, the Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora Māori Health Plan highlights the need to strengthen culturally responsive approaches and to develop a workforce capable of supporting Māori wellbeing across the health system (Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora, 2024).

National health data also continues to highlight significant inequities in mental health and wellbeing outcomes for Māori. Māori experience higher levels of psychological distress and barriers to accessing culturally responsive services compared with the general population (Manatū Hauora, 2024). Addressing these inequities requires approaches that go beyond traditional clinical models and recognise the importance of cultural identity, community leadership and social connection as determinants of wellbeing.

Taken together, the case study findings demonstrate that strengthening the wellbeing component of the Whiria Te Oranga strategy requires a balanced focus on both kaumātua leadership and community-led wellbeing initiatives. Leadership from kaumātua strengthens the cultural capability of the workforce and supports culturally responsive service delivery, while wellbeing programmes provide culturally meaningful opportunities for connection, prevention and healing.

Drawing on these insights, the strategy proposes a continuum of kaumātua wellbeing and leadership that reflects the different forms of support and engagement required across the wellbeing journey. At the foundation of this continuum is connection, which focuses on strengthening relationships between kaumātua, whānau and community networks. Opportunities for social participation, cultural activities and community gatherings support whanaungatanga and help maintain strong relationships that contribute to wellbeing.

The second stage of the continuum focuses on prevention, where culturally grounded wellbeing initiatives such as wānanga, rongoā Māori, mirimiri and community activities strengthen wellbeing and reduce the risk of isolation or declining health.

The third stage involves support, where culturally safe services and community programmes provide support for kaumātua who require additional wellbeing or health assistance. Workforce capability is critical at this stage to ensure practitioners can engage respectfully with kaumātua and their whānau.

The fourth stage recognises the role of leadership, where kaumātua contribute as mentors, cultural advisors and leaders within hapori and services. Through these roles, kaumātua strengthen workforce capability and support the integration of tikanga Māori within service delivery.

Finally, the continuum recognises the importance of intergenerational legacy, where kaumātua contribute to the transmission of cultural knowledge, values and leadership across generations.

Programmes that bring together kaumātua, rangatahi and tamariki strengthen cultural identity and ensure the continuation of mātauranga Māori within hapori.

Through this continuum, the Whiria Te Oranga strategy seeks to strengthen the connection between community-led wellbeing initiatives, workforce capability development and culturally responsive service delivery. By recognising and supporting the leadership and wellbeing contributions of kaumātua, the strategy aims to enable programmes and workforce pathways that uplift the wellbeing of kaumātua, whānau and hapori across Aotearoa.

These insights collectively demonstrate the critical role of kaumātua leadership in strengthening both workforce capability and community wellbeing. The Whiria Te Oranga strategy therefore positions kaumātua leadership as a central mechanism for enabling culturally grounded mental health and addiction services across Aotearoa.

Together, these examples reinforce the importance of culturally grounded models of care that support connection, leadership and community participation. These environments enable kaumātua to continue contributing their knowledge, experience and cultural guidance within their hapori. These insights reinforce the importance of sustained, system-level coordination.

Models of Care Supporting Kaumātua Wellbeing

In addition to the initiatives identified through the case studies, several Kaupapa Māori programmes across Aotearoa provide important insights into models of care that support the wellbeing of kaumātua. One such initiative is the Kaumātua Mana Motuhake programme, developed through the Ageing Well National Science Challenge. This programme uses a peer-led mentoring model in which kaumātua support other kaumātua to access services, strengthen social networks and maintain independence within their hapori. Evaluations of the programme have demonstrated improvements in wellbeing, increased service engagement and stronger community connections among participating kaumātua (Oetzel et al., 2020).

Another example is the Whānau Ora commissioning model, which focuses on integrated service delivery centred on whānau aspirations. Through the support of Whānau Ora navigators, whānau can access services across health, housing, education and social sectors in ways that reflect their goals and priorities. Evidence from Whānau Ora initiatives demonstrates improved wellbeing outcomes when services are delivered through Māori-led organisations and grounded in whānau-centred approaches (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2020).

Marae-based initiatives also provide culturally grounded environments where programmes supporting kaumātua wellbeing can take place. Across many hāpori, marae host activities that support cultural connection, social participation and community engagement. These initiatives strengthen identity, reduce social isolation and reinforce the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge.

Papakāinga developments further illustrate how culturally grounded environments support ageing in place for kaumātua. By enabling older Māori to remain connected to their hāpori, whenua and whānau networks, papakāinga models contribute to wellbeing outcomes that extend beyond traditional health services.

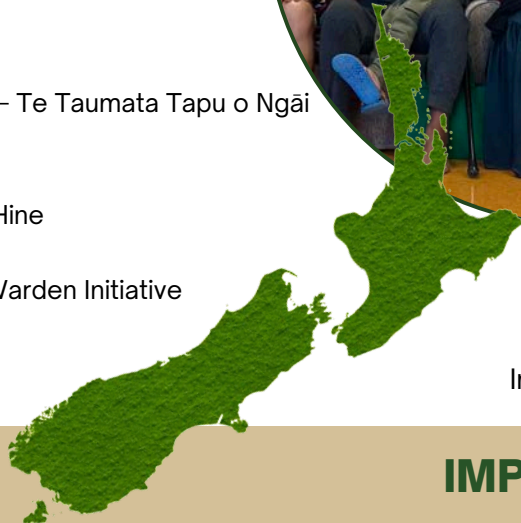
Together, these examples reinforce the importance of culturally grounded models of care that recognise the leadership and contributions of kaumātua within hāpori. The continuum reflects a Kaupapa Māori understanding that wellbeing and leadership are relational processes that develop through connection, participation and intergenerational knowledge sharing. By recognising the different stages of engagement across the wellbeing journey, the continuum provides a framework for supporting both community-led initiatives and workforce capability development that strengthen the wellbeing of kaumātua, whānau and hāpori.



CASE STUDY CONTRIBUTORS

CONTRIBUTORS

- Ora Toa Mauriora – Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira
Porirua
- Ngā Tai a Kupe – Te Toi Ora
Whaingaroa / Kāwhia
- Tākiri Mai te Ata – Kōkiri
Lower Hutt
- Taumata Tū, Taumata Ora – Te Taumata Tapu o Ngāi
Tūāhuriri
Tuahiwi, Canterbury
- Kaumātua Lounge – Ngāti Hine
Pātea, South Taranaki
- Te Hiku Hauora – Whaea Warden Initiative
Te Hiku o Te Ika



OVERVIEW

Whiria Te Oranga has been informed by the generosity, leadership and lived experience of kaumātua, providers and hapori across Aotearoa. These case studies highlight the diversity of community-led, iwi-led and provider-based approaches that strengthen kaumātua wellbeing, cultural leadership and workforce capability.

SHARED INSIGHTS

Kaumātua are active contributors to wellbeing, not just recipients of care
 Community-led initiatives support connection, prevention and healing
 Culturally safe environments strengthen participation and belonging
 Intergenerational leadership helps sustain knowledge and workforce development

IMPACT SNAPSHOT



Kaumātua leadership



Whānau wellbeing



Cultural connection



Community participation



Workforce capability



Local partnership

BELONGING

We feel stronger
when we belong.

CONNECTION

It's about being seen,
heard and valued.

LEADERSHIP

Kaumātua want to
lead and contribute.

**WHAT
WE
HEARD**

IDENTITY

Our culture is
our strength.

WHĀNAU

Everything we do is
for whānau.

MANAAKITANGA

Caring for each other
creates wellbeing.

RESPECT

Treat us with respect,
and we will thrive.

Implications for Workforce Development

Access

Strengthening culturally safe pathways requires a workforce that is able to engage effectively with Māori hapori, supported by kaumātua leadership and culturally grounded practice.

Prevention

Community-led wellbeing initiatives play a critical role in prevention by strengthening social connection, cultural identity and collective wellbeing. Supporting these initiatives contributes to environments where whānau can thrive.

Workforce

Workforce development must recognise cultural knowledge, lived experience and kaumātua leadership as critical forms of expertise, alongside clinical capability.

Partnership

Strengthening collaboration between iwi entities, Māori providers and health services is essential. These partnerships are central to system design, delivery and accountability, enabling locally led approaches that reflect the aspirations of hapori.



System Transformation

The Whiria Te Oranga strategy sets a clear direction for system transformation in how mental health and addiction services are designed, delivered and experienced across Aotearoa. This transformation moves beyond workforce expansion to embed cultural leadership, strengthen community connection and position kaupapa Māori approaches as core components of the system.

Current State

Mental health and addiction services remain largely structured around clinical models of care. While essential, these models often lack integration with cultural leadership, whānau-centred approaches and community connection.

Future State

Whiria Te Oranga envisions a system where cultural leadership is embedded across workforce development and service delivery.

- Kaumātua leadership is integrated within workforce structures
- Workforce pathways reflect cultural knowledge and clinical expertise
- Community-based initiatives are recognised as core components of prevention
- Services operate in partnership with iwi and hāpori

Mechanism for Change

This transformation will be delivered through coordinated system action across national, regional and community levels:

- Embedding kaumātua leadership within workforce structures, governance and service delivery
- Strengthening iwi and Māori partnerships as a core implementation pillar, enabling shared leadership, decision-making and accountability
- Advancing workforce pathways that recognise cultural knowledge and lived experience as critical forms of expertise
- Investing in community-led wellbeing initiatives that support prevention, connection and intergenerational engagement
- Enabling regional implementation through Puna, ensuring locally grounded approaches that reflect iwi and community priorities
- Aligning national, regional and local system partners, including iwi, Māori providers and health agencies, to support coordinated delivery

Together, these shifts reposition the role of cultural leadership within the health system and strengthen the connection between workforce development, service delivery and community wellbeing.

System Impact

Whiria Te Oranga strengthens the development of a more responsive, culturally grounded and equitable mental health and addiction system. Over time, the strategy will contribute to:

- Increased participation of kaumātua within the mental health and addiction workforce
- Improved cultural capability across services and organisations
- Expanded Kaupapa Māori wellbeing initiatives that support prevention and community connection
- Stronger collaboration between iwi entities, Māori providers and national health agencies
- Improved wellbeing outcomes for Māori hapori and future generations.

Implementation Pillars

Implementation of Whiria Te Oranga is supported by four key pillars, which align with and enable delivery across the four strategic pou:

- Kaumātua Leadership – cultural authority, mentorship and system guidance
- Iwi and Māori Partnerships – shared leadership, commissioning and accountability
- Community Collaboration – locally led wellbeing initiatives and hapori engagement
- Workforce Development – pathways, training and capability building

National Impact and System Contribution

The Whiria Te Oranga Kaumātua Workforce Development and Wellbeing Strategy positions the system to improve wellbeing outcomes for Māori hapori and strengthen culturally responsive health systems across Aotearoa. By recognising the leadership of kaumātua and strengthening workforce pathways, the strategy advances the objectives of the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022 and the wider transformation of the health system. Over time, the strategy will contribute to:

- Increased participation of kaumātua within the mental health and addiction workforce
- Improved cultural capability across services and organisations
- Expanded Kaupapa Māori wellbeing initiatives that support prevention and community connection
- Stronger collaboration between iwi entities, Māori providers and national health agencies
- Improved wellbeing outcomes for Māori hapori and future generations

The Whiria Te Oranga strategy is designed to align with and strengthen existing system priorities, including national workforce development strategies, Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora commissioning frameworks and the priorities of Iwi Māori Partnership Boards. By acting as an enabling framework rather than a standalone initiative, the strategy strengthens coordination of existing investments and resources across the health and wellbeing system. This alignment ensures that the implementation of Whiria Te Oranga contributes to sustainable system change while maximising the impact of current and future workforce and wellbeing initiatives.

Implementation will be supported through alignment with existing commissioning pathways, workforce investment streams and iwi-led development priorities. The strategy strengthens coordination of existing resources rather than creating additional system burden.

WHIRIA TE ORANGA SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION



KAUMĀTUA LEADERSHIP

Kaumātua are recognised as cultural leaders and knowledge holders.



WORKFORCE CAPABILITY

Building a strong kaumātua-led workforce with cultural and clinical capability.



CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SERVICES

Services are accessible, safe, culturally grounded, and whānau centred.



WHĀNAU WELLBEING

Whānau experience improved wellbeing, connection, resilience and belonging.



SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

A system that honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi and reflects Māori aspirations.

Kaumātua Workforce Model

The following roles reflect the cultural mana of kaumātua within te ao Māori and extend into system influence across governance, service design and workforce development. The Whiria Te Oranga strategy recognises that kaumātua contribute to the mental health and addiction workforce through diverse and interconnected roles that extend beyond traditional definitions of workforce participation. This model defines the core domains of kaumātua contribution to strengthen clarity, recognition and workforce development pathways.

1. Cultural Leadership and Governance

Kaumātua provide strategic and cultural leadership across iwi, services and system-level initiatives. This includes guiding tikanga, advising governance structures and contributing to decision-making processes that shape culturally responsive systems of care.

2. Cultural Supervision and Workforce Capability

Kaumātua strengthen workforce capability by providing cultural supervision, mentorship and guidance to practitioners. Through these roles, they support the integration of tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori and culturally safe practice within service delivery.

3. Whānau Support and Recovery Roles

Kaumātua contribute directly to the wellbeing of tangata whaiora and whānau by providing cultural guidance, strengthening connections to whakapapa and supporting recovery journeys through culturally grounded approaches.

4. Intergenerational Leadership and Knowledge Transmission

Kaumātua play a critical role in the transmission of cultural knowledge, leadership and values across generations. Through engagement with rangatahi and emerging leaders, they support succession planning and the sustainability of Māori leadership within the workforce.

Through these contributions, Whiria Te Oranga seeks to support the development of a health and wellbeing system that recognises the importance of cultural leadership, community participation and mātauranga Māori in shaping more responsive and equitable approaches to care.



Implementation and System Leadership

The successful implementation of the Whiria Te Oranga strategy will be delivered through coordinated leadership across national, regional and community levels of the health and wellbeing system. The strategy sets a structured approach to implementation that enables alignment across system partners while supporting locally grounded delivery.

National Leadership

At a national level, Te Rau Ora will act as steward of the Whiria Te Oranga framework. This includes:

- Establishing and supporting a National Kaumātua Advisory Group
- Providing strategic oversight and alignment with national workforce priorities
- Supporting system-level integration with Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora, Iwi Māori Partnership Boards and national workforce strategies

The National Advisory Group will provide cultural leadership, strategic direction and guidance to ensure the ongoing integrity of the Kaupapa Māori foundation of the strategy.

Regional Implementation - Puna Model

At a regional level, the strategy proposes the establishment of Regional Puna to support locally led implementation.

These Puna will:

- Bring together iwi entities, Māori providers, community organisations and Iwi Māori Partnership Boards
- Coordinate workforce development initiatives and community-led wellbeing programmes
- Support regional planning that reflects the aspirations and priorities of local Māori hapori

Regional Puna will operate as key connectors between national strategy and local delivery, enabling a coordinated and responsive approach across the system.

Local Delivery and Workforce Activation

At a local level, implementation will be led by iwi, Māori providers and community organisations. Kaumātua will play a central role in strengthening and supporting culturally grounded service delivery:

- Mentoring practitioners and strengthening workforce capability
- Leading and contributing to community-led wellbeing initiatives

Phased Implementation Approach

Implementation will be delivered through a staged approach:

Phase 1 (Year 1): Establishment

- Establish National Kaumātua Advisory Group
- Initiate Regional Puna across priority regions
- Confirm governance, reporting and implementation structures

Phase 1 Outputs

- National Advisory Group operational
- Initial Puna established
- Implementation framework confirmed

Phase 2 (Years 2–3): Expansion

- Scale workforce development pathways
- Strengthen regional coordination and partnerships
- Embed cultural supervision and leadership roles

Phase 2 Outputs:

- Workforce pathways expanded
- Cultural supervision embedded
- Regional partnerships strengthened

Phase 3 (Years 4–5): Embedding and Sustainability

- Integrate the model across national and regional systems
- Strengthen long-term workforce sustainability
- Embed monitoring and evaluation frameworks

Phase 3 Outputs:

- Model integrated nationally
- Sustained workforce participation
- Monitoring and evaluation embedded



Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation will be underpinned by a clear accountability framework aligned to national workforce and equity priorities. The successful implementation of the Whiria Te Oranga strategy will be supported by ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure accountability, measure progress and inform continuous system improvement.

Monitoring mechanisms will support the identification of emerging workforce needs, strengthen accountability across the sector and enable continuous learning as the strategy evolves.

Evaluation approaches will draw on both quantitative workforce data and qualitative insights from iwi, providers, kaumātua advisory groups and hapori. These insights will support the ongoing refinement of workforce initiatives and ensure that the strategy remains responsive to the needs and aspirations of Māori hapori.

Over time, monitoring of workforce participation, service capability and community wellbeing initiatives will provide important evidence for strengthening culturally grounded models of care and informing future workforce development priorities across Aotearoa.

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

To ensure accountability and measurable progress, the following indicators will guide implementation:

Domain	Measure	Indicator of Success
Workforce	Kaumātua participation	Measurable increase in number of kaumātua in formal workforce roles
Workforce Capability	Cultural supervision	% of services implementing cultural supervision models
Services	Access to care	Increased access to Kaupapa Māori services across regions
Community	Wellbeing initiatives	Sustained growth in programmes
System	Partnerships	Number of active iwi provider and IMPB partnerships
Outcomes	Equity	Reduction in inequities in mental health and addiction outcomes for Māori

MONITORING & EVALUATION DASHBOARD

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS



KAUMĀTUA WORKFORCE

Number of
kaumātua in paid
roles and training.



WHĀNAU WELLBEING

Improved wellbeing
and quality of life.



SERVICE ACCESS & EXPERIENCE

Improved access
and positive
experience.



PREVENTION OUTCOMES

Increased prevention
activity and early
engagement.



PARTNERSHIP STRENGTH

Stronger partnerships
and community
leadership.

TIKANGA MĀORI EVALUATION PRINCIPLES

WĀNANGA

WHAKATAUKĪ

WHAKAPAPA

WHANAUNGATANGA

KŌRERO

Our evaluation uplifts Māori voices, mātauranga and aspirations.

Kaumātua Workforce Development and Wellbeing Framework

The workforce framework recognises three key domains of kaumātua contribution:

1. Supporting recovery and wellbeing for tangata whaiora and whānau

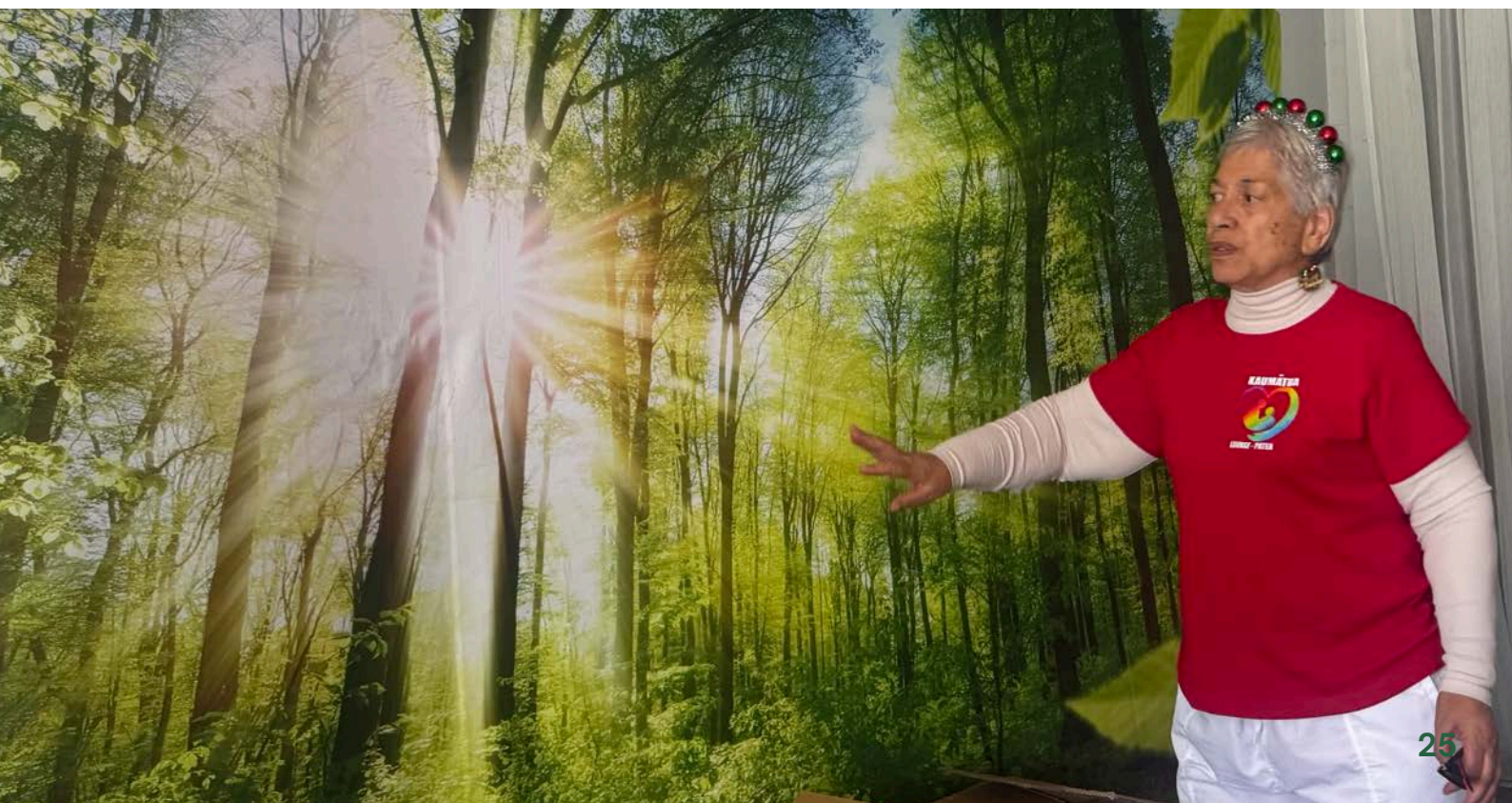
Kaumātua provide cultural guidance and support that enables recovery journeys, reconnects tangata whaiora with whānau, whakapapa and community, and promotes holistic wellbeing.

2. Strengthening service leadership, cultural supervision and tikanga practice

Kaumātua contribute cultural leadership within services by guiding tikanga, providing cultural supervision and supporting practitioners to deliver culturally responsive care.

3. Advancing workforce pathways to support kaumātua wellbeing

This domain focuses on developing workforce pathways that build the capability of practitioners to effectively support the wellbeing of kaumātua. Guided by kaumātua leadership, these pathways strengthen cultural knowledge, practice capability and workforce development initiatives that ensure services are equipped to respond to the needs and aspirations of kaumātua and their whānau.



Strategic Vision

The evidence base and case study findings informing this strategy demonstrate that strengthening the kaumātua workforce requires a coordinated, system-level approach integrating cultural leadership, workforce capability and community-led wellbeing.

Strategic Outcomes Framework (2025–2035)

The Whiria Te Oranga Kaumātua Workforce Development and Wellbeing Strategy is designed to deliver measurable improvements across workforce capability, service responsiveness and whānau wellbeing. The following outcomes provide a clear framework for monitoring progress and guiding implementation over time.

Short–Medium Term Outcomes (1–5 years)

Increased recognition and formalisation of kaumātua roles within the mental health and addiction workforce

- Growth in culturally grounded workforce capability across services and organisations
- Increased access to Kaupapa Māori mental health and addiction services for Māori hapori
- Increased participation of iwi, Māori providers and hapori in workforce development initiatives
- Improved integration of tikanga Māori and mātauranga Māori within service delivery

Long-Term Outcomes (5–10 years)

- Increased representation of Māori within the mental health and addiction workforce across all levels
- Sustained participation of kaumātua in leadership, advisory and workforce roles
- Reduction in inequities in mental health and addiction outcomes for Māori
- Strengthened whānau wellbeing outcomes, including increased connection, cultural identity and community participation
- A more culturally responsive and equitable health system that reflects the aspirations of Māori hapori

System-Level Impact

Over time, the implementation of Whiria Te Oranga will contribute to a system shift where:

- Cultural leadership is embedded within workforce development and service delivery
- Community-led wellbeing approaches are recognised as core components of the health system
- Kaumātua leadership is sustained as a critical enabler of workforce capability and intergenerational wellbeing



Strategic Framework: Four Pou for System Transformation

A Kaupapa Māori-led mental health and addiction workforce where cultural leadership strengthens practice across the sector, supports recovery journeys for tangata whaiora, and advances culturally grounded models of wellbeing for whānau, hapū and iwi across Aotearoa.

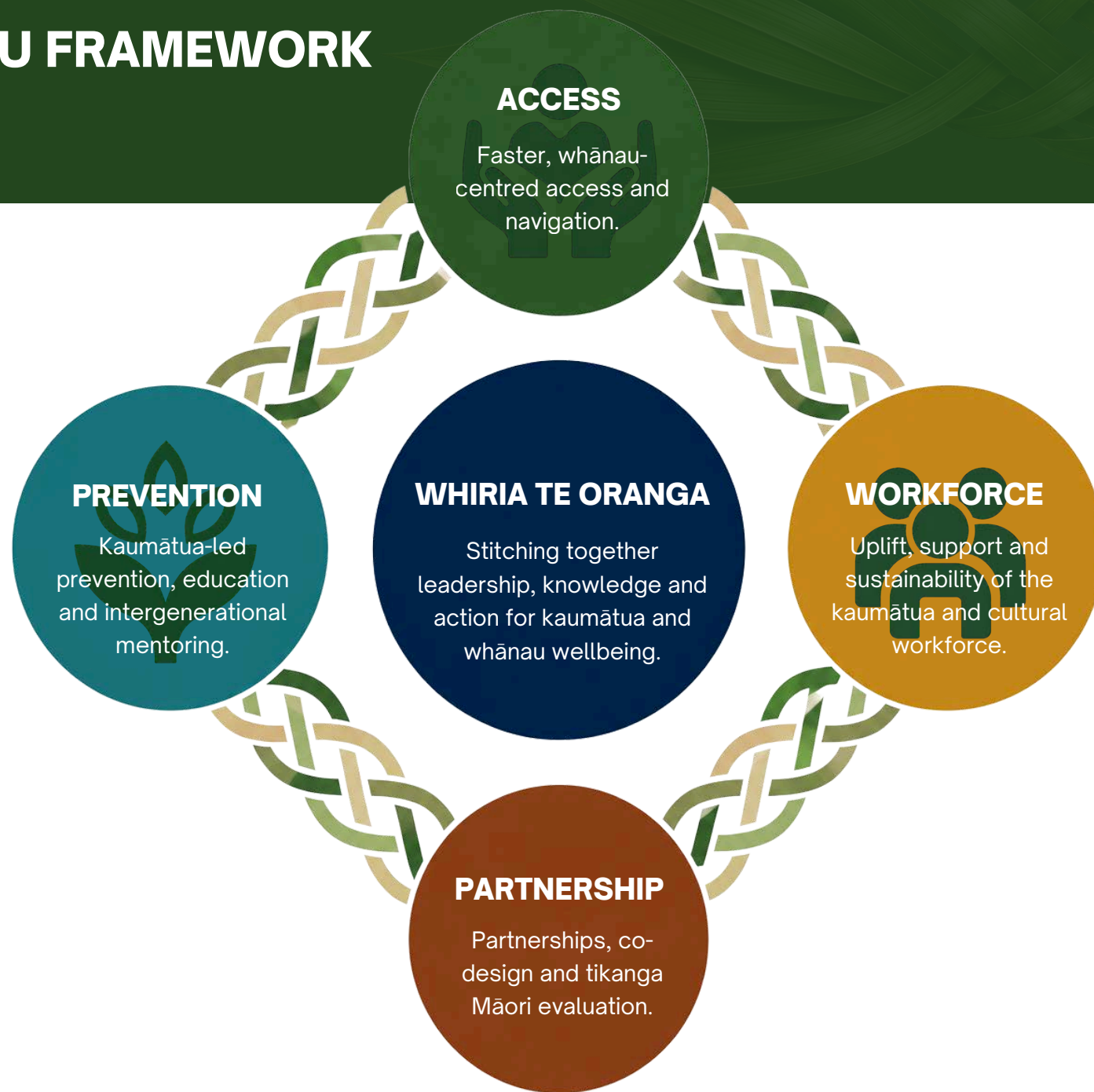
<p>Access</p>	<p>Embedding culturally safe pathways Strengthening culturally safe pathways that enable Māori hapori to engage with mental health and addiction services in ways that are responsive, accessible and grounded in tikanga Māori. Through the guidance of kaumātua leadership, access pathways are strengthened by ensuring that services are grounded in tikanga Māori and reflect the realities of whānau, hapū and iwi. This includes improving culturally safe entry points into services, strengthening relationships between providers and hapori, and supporting approaches that recognise the importance of whānau engagement in the recovery journey of tangata whaiora.</p>
<p>Prevention</p>	<p>Enabling community-based initiatives Strengthening community-led initiatives that support early intervention, wellbeing promotion and the prevention of mental distress and addiction-related harm. Kaumātua leadership plays an important role in guiding initiatives that promote wellbeing through cultural connection, intergenerational knowledge sharing and community support. By supporting initiatives that strengthen whānau capability and cultural identity, the strategy contributes to environments that enable individuals and hapori to thrive.</p>
<p>Workforce</p>	<p>Advancing workforce pathways Supporting the growth of a culturally capable workforce within the mental health and addiction sector by recognising cultural leadership, lived experience and mātauranga Māori as critical forms of knowledge. Kaumātua play a critical role in supporting workforce capability by mentoring practitioners, guiding tikanga practice and strengthening cultural understanding within services. Through the development of workforce pathways and learning opportunities, the strategy aims to support practitioners to develop the knowledge, skills and cultural competence required to respond effectively to the wellbeing needs of Māori hapori.</p>
<p>Partnership</p>	<p>Strengthening collaboration Strengthening collaboration between iwi entities, Māori providers, hapori and health services to support culturally responsive and locally informed approaches to care. Effective partnerships recognise the leadership of iwi and Māori hapori in shaping services that reflect their aspirations and priorities. Through the development of regional Puna and the establishment of kaumātua advisory groups, the strategy supports stronger relationships between hapori and services. These partnerships enable shared leadership, strengthen accountability to Māori hapori and support coordinated approaches to workforce development and wellbeing initiatives across Aotearoa.</p>

Together, these four pou establish a system framework that embeds cultural leadership as a defining feature of mental health and addiction services across Aotearoa. By supporting access, prevention, workforce capability and partnership, the strategy seeks to create an environment where kaumātua leadership contributes to both workforce development and community wellbeing.

Evaluation findings will support ongoing system learning across the health and wellbeing sector. Insights generated through the implementation of Whiria Te Oranga will contribute to national workforce planning, inform culturally responsive service development and support collaboration between iwi, Māori providers and national health agencies. Over time, these insights will strengthen the evidence base for Kaupapa Māori approaches to workforce development and culturally responsive approaches.



FOUR POU FRAMEWORK



Whiria Te Oranga Kaumātua Workforce Strategic Framework

The workforce framework translates the strategic priorities of Whiria Te Oranga into practical domains of contribution for kaumātua within the mental health and addiction sector. These domains recognise the diverse roles that kaumātua play in supporting recovery journeys, strengthening cultural leadership within services and guiding workforce development initiatives that enhance the wellbeing of kaumātua and their whānau.

Workforce Strand 1:

Kaumātua Assisting Tangata Whaiora in their Journey to Recovery

Kaumātua Role	Whānau Ora Contributions	Key Practice Indicators
Kaumātua assisting tangata whaiora in their recovery	Tangata whaiora and whānau engagement	1.1 Demonstrate culturally safe engagement that supports tangata whaiora and whānau through tikanga-based practice and manaakitanga. 1.2 Advocate for the voice, aspirations and cultural identity of tangata whaiora within recovery and wellbeing planning.
Kaumātua assisting tangata whaiora in their recovery	Service approaches to tangata whaiora and whānau	1.3 Support and advocate for meaningful whānau participation within mental health and addiction services. 1.4. Facilitate culturally responsive communication between whānau and service providers. 1.5 Promote service delivery that reflects tikanga Māori and Māori models of wellbeing. 1.6. Support the integration of cultural assessment findings into recovery and wellbeing planning.
Kaumātua assisting tangata whaiora in their recovery	Tikanga Māori interventions	1.7. Facilitate culturally safe environments through practices such as pōwhiri, karakia, manaaki, whakawhanaungatanga and recognition of whakapapa. 1.8 Enable access to culturally grounded healing approaches including rongoā Māori and community-based support.
Kaumātua assisting tangata whaiora in their recovery	Social inclusion	1.9 Facilitate access to hapū, iwi and Māori hapori. 1.10 Assist tangata whaiora and whānau to connect with whakapapa
Kaumātua assisting tangata whaiora in their recovery	Balance in recovery journey	1.11 Distinguish between cultural norms and symptoms of disorder. 1.12 Recommend interventions to alleviate culturally based distress

Workforce Strand 2:

Kaumātua Contributions to Mental Health and Addiction Services

Kaumātua Role	Whānau Ora Contributions	Key Practice Indicators
Service leadership	Conduit to whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori hapori	2.1 Establish relationships and link services with Māori hapori. 2.2 Mediate between services and Māori hapori to support programmes
Service leadership	Integration of teams	2.3 Support senior management to bring teams together. 2.4 Advocate for collaborative interagency service delivery
Service leadership	Multidisciplinary teams	2.5 Provide cultural advice in relation to mental disorders and addiction. 2.6 Identify and assess cultural factors relevant to clinical conditions
Service leadership	Tikanga Māori leadership and oversight	2.7 Teach and oversee tikanga practices including pōwhiri, karakia and whakawhanaungatanga. 2.8 Lead cultural protocols for services and organisations
Service leadership	Cultural supervision and mentorship	Assess cultural competency of team members. 2.9 Provide cultural supervision and mentoring for practitioners and managers

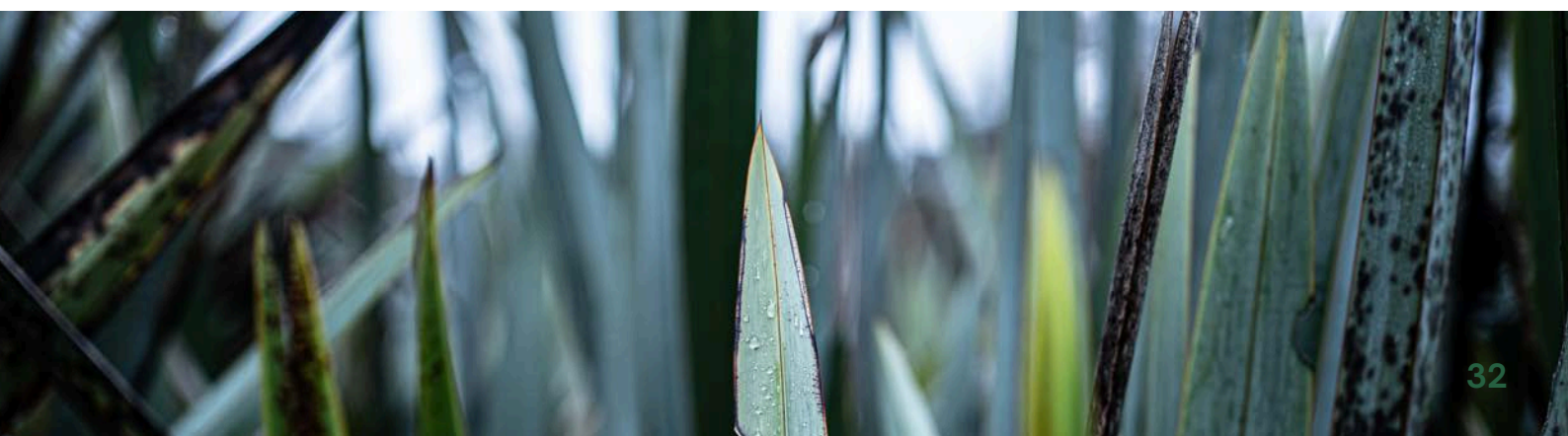


Workforce Strand 3:

Kaumātua Workforce Qualities and Skill Sets

Kaumātua Role	Whānau Ora Contributions	Key Practice Indicators
Workforce capability	Cultural fluency	3.1 Knowledgeable in te reo Māori, tikanga, ethics and Māori hapori. 3.2 Confident use of te reo Māori and English to strengthen identity. 3.3 Demonstrate understanding of Māori models of health and wellbeing including Te Whare Tapa Whā and Te Wheke.
Workforce capability	Clinical knowledge	3.4 Understand tangata whaiora policy and apply appropriately to practice. 3.5 Inform whānau and Māori hapori about mental health and addiction issues
Workforce capability	Understanding the mental health sector	3.6 Understand Māori development and implications of mental health issues. 3.7 Provide cultural input into care and treatment decisions
Workforce capability	Engagement with iwi and Māori hapori	3.8 Maintain support of local iwi and Māori hapori
Workforce capability	Māori workforce development	3.9 Contribute to Māori recruitment and retention strategies. 3.10 Advise on Māori language, whakataukī, symbols and imagery. 3.11 Strengthen whanaungatanga within Māori workforce development initiatives. 3.12 Endorse promotional materials and career pathway information

Whiria Te Oranga establishes a long-term commitment to embedding kaumātua leadership at the centre of workforce development, service transformation and intergenerational wellbeing across Aotearoa, not as an adjunct to the system, but as a defining feature of it.



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