

Report on Ako Aotearoa's Funding Investments

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Contents

Report on Ako Aotearoa's Project Funding Investments	2
Benefits and Returns	2
Ako Aotearoa's strategic alignment of investments through change projects	2
Projects aligned with Strategic themes (2008 to 2018)	2
Summary	2
Highlighted reports	3
a) Student voice	3
b) Vocational Learning	4
c) Employability skills	5
d) Work-based Learning	5
e) NEET and Foundation learners	6
f) Māori and Pacific learner achievement	7
Accountability and Returns on project Investments	10
Impact Evaluation	10
A taste of impact of ongoing projects:	10
National Project Funding- Co-funding investment (2014-2018)	13
References	14

Report on Ako Aotearoa’s Project Funding Investments



Benefits and Returns

Ako Aotearoa’s strategic alignment of investments through change projects During the past 10 years (2008 to 2018) Ako Aotearoa’s national and regional hub projects have been well aligned to strategic areas of importance to the Governments of the day and their priorities and thereby consistently endeavored to “future-proof” tertiary learning and teaching through research.

The change¹ projects addressing themes such as Student Voice, Māori and Pacific learner achievement, work-based learning, the vocational education sector, community-based education and employability are numerous and this strategic fit is demonstrated by the number of projects in which Ako Aotearoa has invested, and their impact.

An overview of a sample of work completed and on-going, is presented below, as a means of introducing Ako Aotearoa’s project funding work. Projects aligned with Strategic themes (2008 to 2018).

Summary

Many projects of Ako Aotearoa are strategically designed to attain impact and therefore cross over several sectors, with strong interrelationships. The following classification is used for practical purposes only.

	Regional Hub Project Funding and Hei Toko²	National Project Funding and GPPG³
Educational Outcomes and Employability	72	57
Work-based learning	52	28
Pacific peoples	17	2
Māori learners and success	31	30
Pacific learners and success	15	12
Quality improvement	34	8
Student Voice and Student engagement (Keyword search)	167	192⁴

¹ Change projects –translational research projects that are directly linked to change in factors that influence teaching practice

² Projects that focus on enhanced outcomes for Māori learners

³ Good Practice Publication Grants

⁴ Includes doctoral scholarships awarded by Ako Aotearoa

Adult Literacy and Numeracy (<i>title search</i>) ⁵	10	7
Adult community Education	1	8

Highlighted reports

On several important topic areas, findings have been synthesised and collated for stakeholder use. New synthesis reports are being prepared while the current documents are being updated, incorporating new research information and findings.

A cross-section of reports and practical tools published over the last **10** years, and some ongoing work, are highlighted as follows:

a) Student voice

- **Student voice in tertiary educational settings- quality systems in practice** (2013) *Ako Aotearoa/Partner contribution \$55,000* – A year-long project conducted to find out how tertiary organisations can effectively use the voice of students to improve quality of provision. A collaboration of Ako Aotearoa, the New Zealand Union of Students’ Associations and Heathrose Research Ltd.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/the-student-voice/>

- **Student perceptions of student evaluations: Enabling student voice and meaningful engagement** (*ongoing*) *Ako Aotearoa/Partner contribution \$10,000/\$24,000* – A two-year project to explore student perceptions of the evaluation process and inform the institution and potentially, other tertiary institutions, on how student evaluation systems can be refined to encourage student engagement. A collaboration of Otago Polytechnic and University of Otago.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/student-perceptions-of-student-evaluations/>

- **The Higher Education Pacific Peer Review Quality Project** (2018) *Ako Aotearoa/Partner contribution \$27,808.50/\$66,500* – A nine-month project to share good practice and areas for improvement in teaching quality, programme quality and student voice across the Pacific region. A collaboration of The University of Tasmania, The National University of Samoa, The University of the South Pacific, The University of Waikato, and Manukau Institute of Technology.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/hepq/>

⁵ Ako Aotearoa’s separate contract with the Tertiary Education Commission covers substantial work in Adult Literacy and Numeracy

- **Data-informed initiatives to enhance Māori and Pacific Student Achievement** (*ongoing*) *Ako Aotearoa/Partner contribution \$150,000/\$150,000* – A two-year project that aims to develop new teaching and learning initiatives for Māori and Pasifika students that are informed by a learner analytics system, combined with student voice data and cases studies of success. The University of Waikato.
<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/data-informed-initiatives-to-enhance-maori-and-pacific-student-achievement/>

b) Vocational Learning

- **Creating digital stories to enhance vocational learning** (*2011*) *Ako Aotearoa contribution⁶ \$9,955* – A project designed to improve the vocational learning and literacy development of learners by engaging them more fully with course content through the creation of their own digital stories. Otago Polytechnic.
<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/creating-digital-stories-to-enhance-vocational-learning/>
- **Set For work, set for life, Te Tai Tokerau** (*2019*)– *Ako Aotearoa/Partner contribution \$50,000/\$337,000* – This project Investigated the need for a demand-led, collaborative and responsive Vocational Education and Training (VET) system through exploration of the SET for Life programme (a skills, employment and training programme run by The Skills Organisation). A collaboration between The Skills Organisation, Primary ITO, NorthTec and Te Matarau Education Trust in Te Tai Tokerau.
<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/set-for-work-set-for-life-te-tai-tokerau/>
- **Contextualising vocational programmes to match institutional and industry Settings – An automotive industry case study** (*2016*) *Ako Aotearoa/Partner contribution \$10,000/\$10,000* – This project identified barriers and solutions associated with delivering an automotive training programme package in different institutional and industry settings, in order to help tutors to tailor programmes to context and ensure consistency and relevant learning for students. A collaboration of Bay of Plenty Polytechnic, Eastern Institute of Technology, Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology and Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology.
<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/contextualising-vocational-automotive-programmes/>

⁶ Project undertaken prior to implementation of co-funding

c) Employability skills

- **Employability and Professional Development: Counselling Students' Perceptions of Counsellor Education and Beyond (2009) Ako Aotearoa contribution⁷ \$9,140.67** - This project examined the extent to which students who had completed a postgraduate distance counsellor education programme were prepared for: continuing development as reflective practitioners; professional employment; and gaining professional membership and appropriate progression in the guidance and counselling field. Massey University.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/employability-and-professional-development/>

- **Embedding employability in the curriculum (ongoing) (Ako Aotearoa/Partner contribution \$147,067/\$152,933)** - A two-year, action research project to discover, trial and share effective and efficient ways of embedding employability in the curriculum. The University of Auckland, University of Otago and the New Zealand Association of Graduate Employers.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/embedding-employability-curriculum/>

- **Identifying authentic teaching strategies that build employability skills (2019) Ako Aotearoa/Partner contribution \$15700/\$18,500** - This collaborative project between seven Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs) produced a toolkit of ideas and strategies to assist teachers in vocational education in embedding employability skills into their teaching practices.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/teaching-strategies-that-build-employability/>

d) Work-based Learning

- **Guidelines for using video to study workshop or work based trades learning (2011) Ako Aotearoa contribution⁸ \$10,000.** This project was designed to help teachers/workplace trainers study the learning of trade skills and knowledge by students or apprentices in classrooms, workshops or in the workplace by using videos and the multimodal discourse analysis method. Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (ARA Institute of Canterbury).

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/guidelines-for-using-video-to-study-workshop-or-workplace-based-trades-learning/>

⁷ Project undertaken prior to implementation of co-funding

⁸ Project undertaken prior to implementation of co-funding

- **Kia Tene – Off the Cuff: Resources for Field Educators and Social Work Students** (2011) *Ako Aotearoa contribution*⁹ \$10,000 – A project to explore, develop, pilot and produce a set of resources to support the learning of social work students in the field. Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology (NMIT).

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/kia-tene-off-the-cuff-resources-for-field-educators-and-social-work-students/>

- **Maximising learning dialogue in professional field-based experiences – (2012)** *Ako Aotearoa contribution*¹⁰ \$131,834 – This project investigated ways to develop genuine learning dialogue between practicum mentors/supervisors and their students. A collaboration of Bethlehem Tertiary Institute, WINTEC and New Zealand Tertiary College, with input from private practitioner, Richard Charmley.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/maximising-learning-dialogue-during-practicums/>

- **Internships- more than enhancing graduate attributes and employability** (2018) *Ako Aotearoa/Partner contribution* \$10,000/\$20,000 – This one-year project, examined and analysed students’ reflections based on their main activities, learning outcomes and overall experiences within a sport management and coaching Work Integrated Learning (WIL) framework. Massey University.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/work-integrated-learning-internships/>

e) NEET and Foundation learners

The findings and learnings up to 2014 from completed projects are captured in our synthesis report [Designing the Bridges: Highlights from Ako Aotearoa supported foundation, bridging and LLN research projects](#) (2017) prepared by Helen Anderson.

Since then, many recent projects have uncovered important findings for the Foundation learners and the NEET sector:

- **Adult refugee learners with limited literacy: Needs and effective responses** (2012) *Ako Aotearoa contribution*¹¹ \$10,000 – A project undertaken to document and analyse the learning needs and issues of adult refugees with low language and literacy skills by looking at how their prior experiences and current contexts affect their educational participation and learning. A collaboration of English language Partners and Critical Insight.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/adult-refugee-learners-with-limited-literacy-needs-and-effective-responses/>

⁹ Project undertaken prior to implementation of co-funding

¹⁰ Project undertaken prior to implementation of co-funding

¹¹ Project undertaken prior to implementation of co-funding

- **Youth guarantee pathways and profiles project (2019) – Ako Aotearoa /Partner contribution \$157,555/\$157.555** – A four-year project that explored the experiences of young people on Youth Guarantee Fees-Free training programmes and their education providers, for the purpose of improving educational provision and learner outcomes, Community Colleges New Zealand.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/youth-guarantee-pathways-and-profiles-project/>

- **Youth cultural heritage empowerment programme (2018) Ako Aotearoa /Partner contribution \$9,600/\$17,250** – A two-year project to empower Pacific students who are struggling with education, using Pacific taonga/treasures to reignite their passion for learning. The Centre for Pacific Studies at the University of Auckland, with support from the New Foundations Trust and Wesley College.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/youth-cultural-heritage-empowerment-programme/>

f) Māori and Pacific learner achievement

Ako Aotearoa's project funding round in 2017 was entirely dedicated to outcomes for Māori and Pacific learning and teaching. Two synthesis reports have been prepared, collating past completed projects as follows:

- **Success for pasifika in tertiary education: highlights from Ako Aotearoa-supported research (2014) – Anne Alkema¹²**
- **Māori learner success in tertiary education: Highlights from Ako Aotearoa supported research (2017) – Dr Acushla Sciascia, Ngāruahine Rangī, Ngāti Ruanui, Te Ati Awa¹³**

A selection of recently completed and ongoing projects is summarised below:

- **Pacific learner success in workplace settings (2017) (Ako Aotearoa/Partner contribution \$50,000/\$104,287)** – A two-and-a-half-year project that explored the critical success factors and effective teaching models for Pasifika learners involved in workplace training. A collaboration of ServiceIQ, The Skills Organisation, Careerforce, Competenz, and Pacific Perspectives Limited, a Pacific-owned and led consultancy.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/pacific-success-workplace-settings/>

- **Motivation and engagement of Māori and Pacific students at PTEs: Lessons for improved teaching and learning strategies (2015) Ako Aotearoa/Partner**

¹² <https://ako.ac.nz/assets/reports/Synthesis-reports/f836897c7e/SYNTHESIS-REPORT-Success-for-Pasifika-in-tertiary-education-Highlights-from-Ako-Aotearoa-supported-research.pdf>

¹³ <https://ako.ac.nz/assets/reports/Synthesis-reports/fa37e45e36/SYNTHESIS-REPORT-Maori-learner-success-in-tertiary-education-Highlights-from-Ako-Aotearoa-supported-research-projects.pdf>

contribution \$10,000/\$10,000 – A project to enhance understanding of motivation and engagement of Māori and Pacific PTE students and explore the relationships between motivation, engagement and learning outcomes. A collaboration of New Zealand Institute of Sport and New Zealand College of Massage.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/motivation-and-engagement-of-maori-and-pacific-students/>

- **Articulating and Implementing a pedagogy of success for Pacific students in tertiary education (2017)** *Ako Aotearoa/Partner contribution \$75,000/\$75,000* – A two-and-a-half year action research project that explored successful teaching pedagogy for Pacific students. A collaboration of Whitireia Community Polytechnic, Unitec Institute of Technology and Massey University.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/success-pedagogy-for-pacific-students/>

- **Pasifika success indicators (PSI) tool (2018)** *Ako Aotearoa/Partner contribution \$50,000/\$52,700* – A two-year project that focused on the implementation and evaluation of the Pasifika Success Toolkit targeting Pasifika student success. A collaboration involving the University of Canterbury, Lincoln University and Ara Institute of Canterbury.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/evaluating-pasifika-success-toolkit/pasifika-success-indicators-tool/>

- **Including Māori and Pacific perspectives in the infrastructure industry (2018)** – A YouTube video providing insight into including cultural perspectives in the infrastructure industry. Presented by Robbie Paul, Civil Industry Manager for Connexis.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/videos-from-he-taunga-waka-wananga/maori-and-pacific-perspectives-in-the-industry/>

- **Developing Māori students' soft skills to support improved achievement outcomes (ongoing)** *Ako Aotearoa/Partner contribution \$13,375/\$13,375* – A one-year project to measure and evaluate progress Māori students make over time in the “soft skills” and evidence the correlation between course achievement and students' soft skills improvement. Matapuna Training Centre.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/developing-maori-students-soft-skills/>

- **Taikākā: Optimising Māori academic achievement in a Māori-medium initial teacher education (2018)** *Ako Aotearoa/Partner contribution \$150,000/\$182,901* – A four-and-a-half-year project, that collaboratively developed, implemented and evaluated a cohesive, evidence-based academic and cognitive skills programme for Māori students within a Māori-medium initial teacher education programme. A collaboration of University of Waikato and University of Auckland.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/optimising-maori-academic-achievement/>

- **Hūtia te punga (in progress)** *Ako Aotearoa/Partner contribution*
\$150,000/\$150/000 –A two-year project to gather data from ITO and polytechnic students to better understand the barriers to Māori student success and identify solutions. A collaboration involving Te Tapuae o Rehua, University of Canterbury, Otago Polytechnic, the Building and Construction ITO and Whenua Kura.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/hutia-te-punga/>

Accountability and Returns on project Investments

Ako Aotearoa's research project related-equivalent Returns on Investment may be estimated through –

- a) Impact Evaluations of completed projects
- b) Income earned through co-funding investment by partner organisations, which indicates stakeholder interests and sector buy-in into Ako Aotearoa's work.

To determine the impact made by Ako Aotearoa's work, the following means are employed:

- An Impact Evaluation Framework is applied to completed projects
- Co- Funding investment is encouraged by partner organisations – Ratio has been consistently >1 and which demonstrates that the sector has invested more in the co-funding than the public investment

Impact Evaluation

Ako Aotearoa is the only research funder in New Zealand that has consistently evaluated project impact since 2012. Project impact is analysed using Ako Aotearoa's Impact Evaluation Framework and therefore focuses on the four key dimensions of reach, and impact on learners, practitioners and project teams.

For continuous improvement, new changes are being brought in to evaluate the impact on a broader spectrum of learner benefits (economic, educational, social, cultural and environmental) and on the external environment. An impact tracking software system has been commissioned to enable formative evaluation, better tracking and quantification.

Impact evaluations are analyzed and published as full reports from time to time:

Contributing to better tertiary teaching and learning outcomes – the summary. A summary of two reports on the impact of Ako Aotearoa's co-funded projects – Linda Keesing Styles (2017).

<https://ako.ac.nz/assets/synthesis-reports/c723961a70/Contributing-to-better-tertiary-teaching-summary-report.pdf>

A taste of impact of ongoing projects:

- a) **Ako Whakaruruhau – Implementing and evaluating good practice for Māori trade training** (2016) *Ako Aotearoa /Partner contribution-\$150,000/\$150,000 – Te Tapuae o Rehua.*

Impact Evaluation –

In this project the model *Te Ako Tiketike – Māori as successful workplace learners* was implemented by the He Toki ki te Mahi Apprenticeship Training Trust (the Trust) and Hawkins Construction Limited. Ako Whakaruruhau is both

the practical and theoretical model informing the practice of the Māori apprentice mentors of the Trust and thereby a key component of the Trust.

The Agriculture and Economic Research Unit of the Lincoln University estimated at 30 June 2017 that the total net value of the potential economic benefits to learners and the community gained through the Trust via its Whānau-Ora centred apprenticeship to be above \$5,500,000 (Dalziel et al, 2017).

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/supporting-maori-apprenticeship-success/>

- b) **Set for life – best practice guidelines for vocational education and training for NZ Ako Aotearoa/Partner contribution \$50,000/\$337,000** A one-year project, commissioned by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and co-funded with Ako Aotearoa that studied transition in Northland / Auckland.

Impact Evaluation –

“Hands on action research with focus on support of young people into work in the electrical and plumbing and the primary industries. Summarised progress to date detailing the complexity of transitions and disconnect between needs of employers / industry and schools. The project brought together the range of networks, industry and providers to improve the transition of school leavers into work. Learners appreciated ‘someone who cares’ and assistance in ‘finding my way’. Families were powerful influencers. Needs for engagement in learning were context specific.

Transport to work was a defining factor with regards to continuance. Employers’ viewpoints were collated and included the importance of matching the learner to the right workplace. Schools’ needed to make sense of the transition space, which was congested and complex, with some schools focusing more on NCEA credits rather than the learning required to achieve employment success. Funding was an issue for providers and ITO as to how completions could be recognised. ITOs are not funded to work in the transition space but may be effective if this occurred.

Developed ‘tools’ including Set4 life navigators and the development of a co-designed programme between iwi, PTE, Northtec, BCITO, Kaitia College and the Far North Community (Selena Chan, 2018)”.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/set-for-work-set-for-life-te-tai-tokerau/set-for-life-best-practice-guidelines/>

- c) **Evaluating the effectiveness of immersive learning in nurse education: Go over it, see it, get it”- (2018) Ako Aotearoa/partner contribution \$10,000/\$80,383.** This project undertaken by Otago Polytechnic evaluated the effectiveness of using a technology-enhanced, integrated, immersive, teaching approach to clinical practice, in order to improve learner outcomes within nursing education. Otago Polytechnic.

Impact Evaluation –

“It was very exciting to hear 12 months after the project completion, that it has been a major contribution to a changing School culture. Barriers to using

simulation have been broken down and it is considered as a worthwhile and valuable teaching tool that has become the norm school-wide. This change from a 'champion' to full-staff involvement has largely been as a result of buy-in and relationships from top down”

“Quantitative data from the online survey verified these themes. A significant difference was found in exam marks (these were higher) for students who had had the immersive learning experience and been on a medical placement before the exam”.

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/evaluating-the-effectiveness-of-immersive-learning-in-nurse-education/>

- d) Enabling students to become life-ready, study-ready, work-ready in Tai Tokerau - (2017) Ako Aotearoa /Partner contribution \$10,000/\$15,000** – This project designed regional solutions to address barriers to a taura (learner) completing their study and moving into mahi (work). A collaboration between Te Matarau Trust and NorthTec.

Impact Evaluation -

“Started a Regional Investment plan for Northland through TEC and MoE. Co-leading series of workshops with MoE, high schools, industry and other providers to increase numbers of high school students from Tai Tokerau going to tertiary education.

Last workshop had 60 attendees. Taskforce has been formed that will increase numbers and achieve L4 in Tai Tokerau.

NorthTec students are “satisfied to very satisfied” with the support provided to develop Literacy and Numeracy Skills. Lifting literacy and numeracy skills of students and staff continues to be a priority for NorthTec. In 2017 a further 16 were awarded the National Certificate in Adult literacy and Numeracy (NCALNE) qualification within an online environment, supported by seven face-to-face learning opportunities across all campuses. Staff have a clear understanding of how to administer the literacy and numeracy diagnostic tool, how to read the results of this tool, how to embed appropriate levels of literacy and numeracy skills into their schemes of work and how to align their teaching to the relevant levels of the Adult Learning Progressions.

NorthTec learners have engaged well with the literacy and numeracy diagnostic tool, with 97 per cent of learners completing initial assessments (versus 95 per cent, 2019 TEC target), 13 per cent of learners making significant gains in reading (an increase of 2 per cent on 2016) and 15 per cent making significant gains in numeracy (an increase of 3 per cent on 2016).

Literacy and numeracy is embedded into all Level 2 programmes, and further curriculum development work will ensure that embedded practice of literacy and numeracy is “business as usual” at Level 3. Individual learning plans are prepared with learners that test at Steps 1 and 2 of the Adult Learning Progressions, with individual literacy and numeracy goals being set by the learners.

The learning tool, Pathways Awarua, is used as a resource by learners in their self-directed learning time and often used by tutors during timetabled

teaching hours. From 2018, our Adult literacy and Numeracy Education and Adult Tertiary qualifications will be offered through e-Campus.

These programmes continue to be a priority for professional development for all tutors teaching at Levels 2 and 3 at NorthTec, to assist with the achievement of a fully embedded approach to improving literacy and numeracy for our students. *Supported student rep sits on Council. Support F.T. student voice to meet with CE regularly In-class student surveys*".

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/enabling-students-in-northland/>

- e) The language in the trades education - (2017) Ako Aotearoa/Partner contribution \$150,000/\$169,169** - This three-and-a-half-year project explored the vocabulary, genres and linguistic features of trades language. A collaboration between Victoria University of Wellington and WelTec.

Impact Evaluation

"There are now 27 members of the community of practice formed after the trial Ako Aotearoa workshop. While it is not possible at this point to identify actual changes in practice, it can be assumed that as this is an active community staff at the various organisations are utilising the resources in their teaching. It could take up to 24-months to know the full use and impact of the resources.

One of the outstanding features of this project is its ease of use for any organisation. All that is required is the willingness of staff to introduce the resources into their teaching. These are available free of charge online and can be used without professional support."

<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/the-language-in-the-trades/>

National Project Funding- Co-funding investment (2014-2018)

Year	Ako Aotearoa's investment (National projects (\$))	Co-Funding from partner organizations (\$)	Ratio
2014	675,000	702,092	1.04
2015	630,000	708,000	1.12
2016	559,847	881,652	1.57
2017	450,321	698,051	1.501
2018	897,080	1,083,415	1.20

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References

Dalziel, P., Saunders, C & Guenther, M (2017). Measuring the Economic Impact of Whāanau Ora Programmes: He Toki ki te Mahi Case Study: Prepared for Ihi Research and Development by The Agribusiness and Economics Research Unit (AERU), Lincoln University (Research Report No. 343, August 2017).

Ako Aotearoa website- www.ako.ac.nz



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