Final Report

Ako Aotearoa Regional Hub Project Fund Evaluation

Networkers
EVALUATION ◆ TRAINING ◆ RESEARCH

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Executive Summary

This report outlines the findings of an evaluation of the Ako Aotearoa regional hub project fund. The fund is increasingly popular and well-used by a wide range of individuals, groups and organisations who are undertaking research and implementation projects in tertiary teaching and learning.

The hubs are regionally based and provide accessible support to applicants. The hubs consistently encourage the development of collaborative and cross-sectoral studies, in order to extend the impact of projects and encourage inter-organisational collaboration. The hubs are perceived by fund applicants as highly supportive of local organisations and individuals.

The range of projects, and reasons for applying, is very broad. Projects range from small scale interventions in a single course, to large networking projects. They focus on teaching and teacher skills, learning, assessment, professional development, supervision, IT, distance learning, literacy, and other aspects of tertiary education. A number of projects have received two (six teams) or three (one team) grants.

Applicants rated the process highly, and felt strongly supported by Ako Aotearoa throughout the project and beyond. The funding was seen as relatively simple to apply for and quite accessible to beginning researchers. Publication of project reports on the website was seen as a particular strength. The $10,000 limit was seen as a strength by some and a limitation by others, but did tend to provide focus.

The outcomes analysis was at the heart of this study. Outcomes can relate to the teams, to learners, to departments or whole organisations, to wider collaborations or across whole sectors. With such a range of different projects, it is difficult to quantify at this point the size and nature of both intended and unintended effects and impacts. A series of case studies are provided to illustrate aspects of impact. Many of the projects have led directly to changes in the status and work of individuals and project teams, as well as permanent developments in the process, delivery and/or content of tertiary courses.

As a result of these projects, some teachers are now better prepared and acculturated for the classroom, a range of mentors and supervisors assist students with course or field work, online and IT systems are hugely improved, there is more inter-organisational collaboration and a research culture is being established for the first time in some organisations. Evidence of such impacts is provided, and it is expected that a proposed summative evaluation in about two years time will be able to document any enduring nature of the project outcomes.

This evaluation found it difficult to understand expectations around the fund in relation to Ako Aotearoa's role as a treaty-based organisation. There are a number of projects with a Māori and/or Pacific basis, but little collaboration or partnership between organisations around culture. Ako Aotearoa should consider what kind of collaborations might build capacity in this area and encourage them through the fund.

A large number of project leaders (35) noted that they intended to re-apply for funding for the hub project fund, which may lead to demand beginning to exceed supply. This means that Ako Aotearoa may need to put some formal criteria in place to manage multiple applications.

The view of the evaluation team is that the hub project fund is effective. In funding terms the projects are relatively small, but the commitment of Ako Aotearoa staff, the dedication and enthusiasm of fund recipients and research partners, and the determination of all parties to improve tertiary teaching and learning means that there is a demonstrable short-term impact, that has the potential to grow over time.

With 100 projects currently underway or completed, and more to come, it is likely that a cumulative transformative effect from fund projects will be felt throughout the whole sector, in one way or another.

Ten broad formative recommendations are listed in the next section.

Formative recommendations

These recommendations are presented in chronological order, according to the themes covered in this report.

1. That Ako Aotearoa investigate ways, other than hub co-ordinators, to support new and emerging researchers by mechanisms such as a 'buddy' system (where those who have completed hub projects agree to provide support to others), extend the 'Frequently Asked Questions' (FAQ) page on the website as a developing resource to support projects and other similar methods of support from the application process onwards.

2. That Ako Aotearoa ensure that hub funding is adequate to support each project that is approved, possibly by the development of a good funding 'checklist' to accompany or replace the budget calculator, and detailed advice from hub co-ordinators or project 'buddies' on likely costs.

3. That Ako Aotearoa ensures that the guidelines for funding and reporting are clear and comprehensive. Areas noted in case studies as unclear include what staffing costs are allowable and additional information on the final reporting process (the FAQ section could also be used).

4. That each hub run a one day research colloquium for current (and possibly former) fund recipients each year, to encourage cross-sectoral sharing of information and skills.

5. Ako Aotearoa note the wide range of impacts described by organisations, and consider further ways, as necessary, to support project teams to produce such impacts.

6. In order to assist further evaluations, including self-evaluation of projects, current and future fund recipients should be asked to produce a document which charts potential impacts at the beginning of a project, actual at the end and then subsequent effects over an agreed period of (say) 2 years. The diary would discuss intended and unintended impacts of the project, subsequent project work and any transformative effects, and would attempt to gauge the scope of the impact.

7. The hub project fund policy and guidelines should clearly outline the organisation's intention to support treaty-based projects and partnerships, and the implications of this for individual projects supported by the fund.

8. Ako Aotearoa should examine how to ensure that a focus on Māori and Pacific students, teachers, knowledge systems, organisations and partnerships can be more effectively integrated into all relevant projects.

9. That selection criteria be developed, agreed and published for the hub project fund, that are available to be utilised should demand for funding begin to exceed the number of eligible project applications.

10. A summative evaluation should be undertaken in about two years time, which revisits a sample of projects and considers the quantitative impact and effects at that time via an in-depth survey.

Background and methodology

Ako Aotearoa is the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence, and consists of a National Office and three regional 'Hubs', based respectively in Auckland (Northern), Palmerston North (Central) and Christchurch (Southern).

In seeking to achieve its goal of enhancing tertiary teaching and learning practices, Ako Aotearoa works with educators and tertiary organisations in a range of ways. One way is the provision of project funding, which supports research and practice into innovative methods within (and, where collaborative, between) organisations.

There are two kinds of project funds. The National Project Fund supports larger projects (a 'typical' project will receive around $100,000 for up to 18 months), and the focus is on strategic change. The fund has a formal application process and fixed closing dates and is highly competitive.

The second kind of project funding is the Regional Hub Project Fund (the "fund"). As the title suggests, this is funded and supported through the hubs, and provides grants of up to $10,000. To date Ako Aotearoa has been able to maintain this as an open fund and provide funding support to all applications approved by the independent hub advisory groups. The website notes:

> *Proposals may be for either research or activity projects and should align with our vision to create and support the best possible educational outcomes for learners in the tertiary sector[1].*

This fund is the subject of the current formative evaluation. There were 100 applications to the fund since its inception in September 2007 until March 2010. Table 1 lists the status of all projects applied for at that date.

Current status of projects	No. projects
In progress	51
Completed	43
Not started	1
Not funded or withdrawn	5

Table 1. Status of fund projects, 1 March 2010

The Northern hub received the most applications (39), followed by Central (36) and Southern (25). The main reason given about why there were fewer applications in the Southern region is that the hub was set up later than the other two.

One of the features of the fund is its flexibility, an ability to fund a wide range of projects according to the needs of various types of organisation within the tertiary

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[1] http://akoaotearoa.ac.nz/ako-aotearoa/ako-aotearoa/resources/pages/funding

sector. Also, the hub Co-ordinators are able to promote research and activities to enhance teaching and learning in organisations that have not previously been able to examine their own practices. An effect of this is that the scheme attracts and supports applications from a wide range of organisations, not just from the traditional sources such as universities, as Table 2 demonstrates.

Category	No. organisations*
University	39
Poly/IT	38
PTE	23
Other organisation	12

*Some projects were listed in more than one category

Table 2. Percent of applications to the fund with a particular organisational focus

Other organisations in Table 2 include iwi/runanga learning organisations, ITOs, other industry training groups and community and research sector learning organisations.

Ako Aotearoa has a particular focus on supporting projects that lead to an improvement in teaching and learning outcomes for Māori and Pacific students, and collects data on the ethnic focus of projects. Table 3 shows the ethnic focus of all fund projects.

Stated ethnic focus	No. applicants*
Māori	16
Pacific	8
Other ethnicity	82

*Some projects were listed in more than one category

Table 3. Stated ethnic focus of projects.

The approach taken to this formative evaluation is described in the method section below.

Evaluation Methodology

The following questions form the basis of the evaluation:

1. To what extent has the regional hub project funding scheme impacted on learners and teaching and support practices within organisations, regionally and nationally? What are the longer term projections for impact?
2. What are the key factors that help/hinder the impact of projects at an organisational, regional, and national level?
3. What immediate and projected long term impact has receiving regional hub funding had on project teams? Particular focus here could be on the team's

teaching and learning practices, their contribution to the tertiary teaching and learning community, or sourcing additional funding for the expansion of their project (or related projects).

4. What aspects of the regional hub funding process facilitate the maximum potential of the work?
5. Noting that there are some minor variations in the way different hubs manage the processes, are there any aspects of the current Ako Aotearoa processes that could be improved or good practice in any region that could effectively be shared with others?

An online survey (see Appendix 1) was developed in early March 2010 and placed online for a four week period. For each project, the Project Leader was invited to complete the survey. As seven people led more than one project, some were invited to complete two or three surveys.

Of the 100 projects, we received a total of 74 responses, a response rate of 74%. Those involved in more than one project responded only once, and eight of the teams involved in the case studies (see below) did not also fill out the survey. With a notional response rate in excess of 80%, the findings of the survey are likely to be reliable, but with such a small population the margin of error remains at around 5%, using standard measures[2].

Fifteen of the projects were selected to take part in the case study phase. The criteria used to select the surveys were as follows:

Five projects will be selected from each hub;
The selected cases will represent the full range of all completed projects and providers from each hub, some specific projects that focus on improving educational outcomes for Māori and Pacific learners, and a mix of research and implementation projects, overall effects and project implications;
The cases selected will, to the extent possible, have already made a significant impact; and
The project leader of each case must agree to participate and share information, and be available for interview during the evaluation period.

A qualitative interview schedule was developed to guide the case study interviews (attached at Appendix 2). Interviews were carried out with project leaders between late March and early May, 2010. In six cases, either organisation leaders (Heads of Departments, CEOs or others) or research partners from other organisations were interviewed. Reports of completed projects were accessed through the Ako Aotearoa website and read, and used in the impact case studies below.

The projects analysed here are diverse (diversity and multiple focus appears to be characteristics of the fund) and it is difficult to analyse them neatly by category (e.g. a

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[2] The most common measure of confidence level used is the following formula, with the proviso that measurement error is difficult to ascertain in small samples: $\sqrt{p(1-p)/100} = \sqrt{.25/100} = \sqrt{25} = 5\%$.

project on science education for Māori students is both a subject area and a focus on Māori students), but there were approximately:

26 projects with a subject focus
20 projects with a focus on particular groups of students (excluding Māori and Pacific)
19 projects supporting aspects of teachers and teaching, curriculum or pedagogy skills
12 projects with a strong IT focus
11 projects on learning tools or processes
16 projects focused on Māori students
8 projects focused on Pacific students

The format of this report reflects the themes that emerged from the surveys and case studies. Each section outlines the findings and makes recommendations as appropriate.

Formation and application

The matters dealt with in this chapter relate to and underpin the following evaluative question: What aspects of the regional hub funding process facilitate the maximum potential of the work? Sub-questions are:

- *How were the projects formed?*
- *How did the application process work from the applicants' perspectives?*
- *What factors underpinned the decision to apply to the fund?*
- *Did a project pre-exist the development of the fund, or did the fund, the hub or other influence spark the decision to seek funding for the project?*

Survey respondents were asked what factors made them decide to apply for project funding through the hub. Most respondents provided multiple answers, showing that a range of factors impacted on their decision to apply. A total of 273 responses were received to this question from 71 people. Around three quarters of respondents noted that a reason for applying was because of the focus on teaching and learning, and the same number had a specific project for which they wanted funding. Behind these, the third reason was to build research capability within the team. In general, personal and team reasons scored ahead of organisational reasons, as shown in Figure 1:
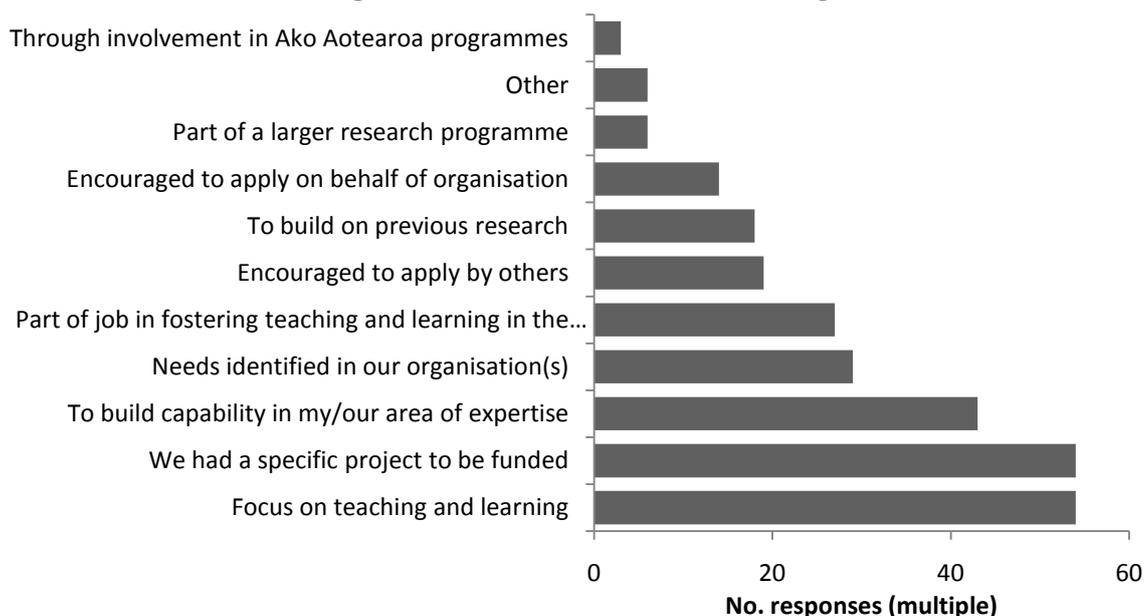
Figure 1. Reasons for applying to the Regional Hub Project Fund n=71.

Responses from case studies flesh out the various reasons for applying to the fund. For those with a pre-existing project, the fund provided a chance to get resources or extend a project:

> *It started off as a much bigger project – we applied for TLRI funding and were declined, so we decided to redo it as a smaller thing and looked elsewhere. The regional hub fund. We saw this as a beginning and a stepping stone (case study 15).*

> *We wanted to extend the focus [of a particular programme] to Māori and Pacific students so we applied for money to develop this (case study 3).*

I had started writing a series of [teaching and learning resources]… I had completed three but was unable to finish the final two. I applied for funding to complete these and received a $10,000 grant for each (case study 8).

Others had prior ideas for projects, and the development of the hub fund crystallised these into an actual proposal:

I had had the idea for some time. I wanted to do an enquiry-based project with students. I had already done a literature review (case study 12).

We realised that we needed information and the project was the best way to flush out that information. We believed that the outcomes would be beneficial for our organisation but that we would need to do it in our own time. We also realised that without funding in place the project would not get done so we applied to Ako Aotearoa Hub for funding (case study 2).

I had been wanting to do research on early career academic success as part of my job (case study 5).

Several case study respondents talked about having an idea that came to fruition as a direct result of contact with the regional hub co-ordinators or other informants, which encouraged them to apply for funding.

The findings of the survey and qualitative interviews show diverse entry points into the fund and that it has met a wide range of needs for research and implementation projects by individuals and groups. While there is strong evidence that the fund was needed, was the funding adequately accessible to all groups? Some applicants knew about the funding through 'insider' routes, for example:

One of the members was on the panel of Ako Aotearoa and knew about the funding, and encouraged us to apply (case study 13).

The survey results show that the most common method by which project teams heard about the fund was directly from the Ako Aotearoa hubs, followed by word of mouth, internal memo and the Ako Aotearoa website, as Figure 2 shows:
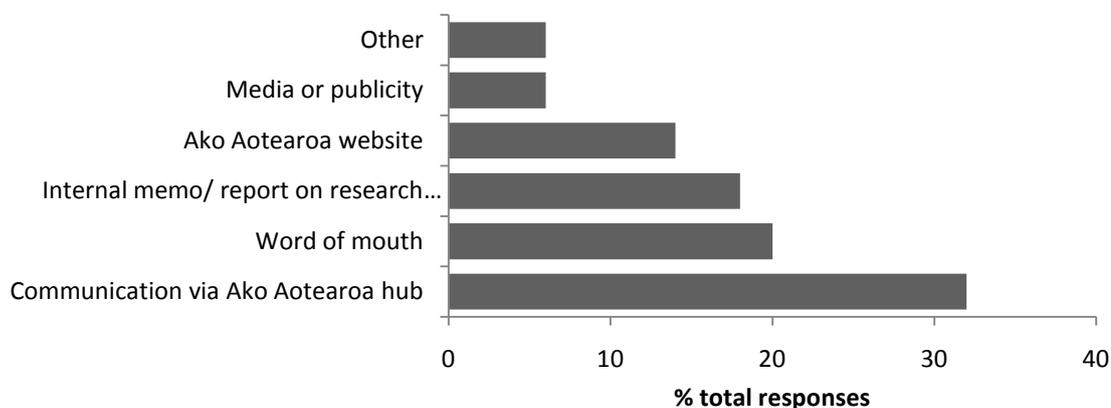

Figure 2. Source of first information about the Fund n=68.

Other survey responses included a visit by hub staff, a workshop, the Tertiary Education Commission and information received due to other involvement in the hub. One element that has been important in disseminating information about the fund has been the activity of the hub co-ordinators throughout their regions. The accessibility of the co-ordinators appears to have been an important aspect in ensuring that information about local Ako Aotearoa activities, including the fund, is disseminated throughout each region. The experiences of the following project team leader show the level of accessibility to the fund:

> *I saw on the Ako Aotearoa website that project funding was available, and I rang [the hub co-ordinator]. I knew her from the university and wondered whether we would qualify for funding, being a private sector organisation. She assured me that we would, and told me that … I should get an application in. She was enthusiastic, which was good. I worked to midnight for a week to get that application in. And I did, and the funding was approved. The whole College was thrilled. There was a sort of synchronicity about the whole thing (case study 12).*

The online survey demonstrates that a number of aspects of the hub fund encouraged teams to apply for funding, as shown in Figure 3:
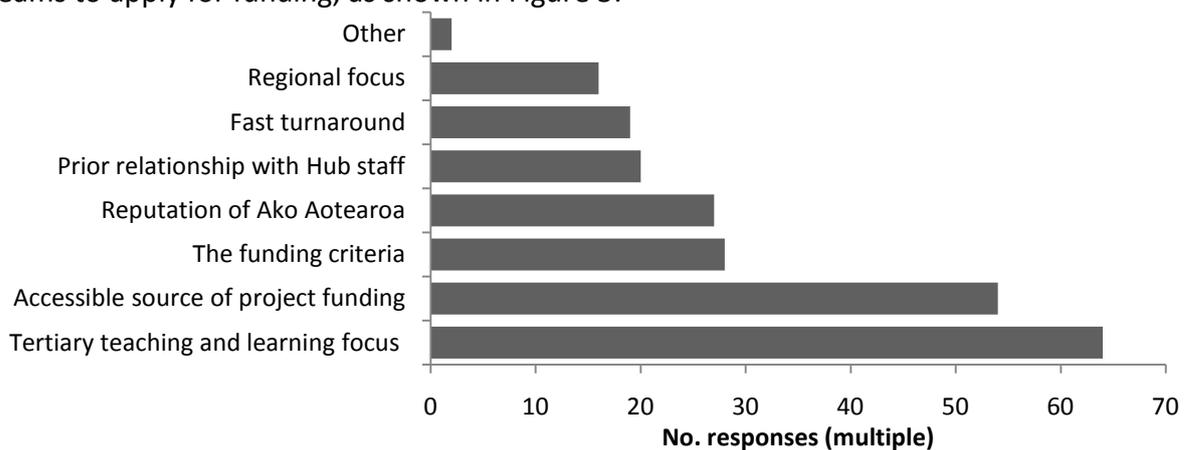
Figure 3. Features of Hub Project Fund that encouraged teams to apply n=71

Most respondents (90%) noted that the focus on teaching and learning was a core reason for applying, followed by the accessibility of the funding. Most respondents noted more than one feature that attracted them to apply to the fund.

A small number of respondents noted 'other' reasons, and these are listed below (as they represent a range of different needs):

Needs identified in our sub-sector; build capability in our sub-sector
Build research experience in [national organisation]
Needs identified by our region
Possibility of online support beyond the event
To grow teaching interest to a research focus
Pilot and test new ways of working with disadvantaged learners

These responses indicate it was the issues of accessibility and relevance that were most important to the teams in applying for funds, which is in line with the overall findings so far.

The survey respondents were asked whether they had any concerns about the Fund application process. A total of 31 concerns were noted, each relating to one of three elements: concern around the eligibility or expertise of the project team, lack of support from the host organisation(s) or problems in working with the hubs, as Figure 4 demonstrates:

Figure 4. Factors of concern in making application to the Fund n=68.

Nearly 15% of responses noted the applicant teams had little research experience and regarded this as a difficulty in terms of making an application. While this is an inevitable effect of a scheme to get a wider range of researchers examining issues around teaching and learning, it does point to the need to ensure there is adequate support for teams in applying for and carrying out their projects.

Three respondents had been declined funding. Two were satisfied with the reasons for this, while one was "confused about the reason given and felt it was not valid". All three respondents intend to re-apply to the fund, one for a substantially similar project and the other two for a different one.

Technical aspects of the application process were rated by respondents on a five point scale of satisfaction, a score of 5 being most satisfactory and 1 least satisfactory. The mean score for each element rated is laid out below in Table 4.

Aspect of application process	Mean score
Undertaking an application (forms, technical advice etc)	4.1
Submission process, including guidance and support from Ako Aotearoa	4.4
Timeliness and efficiency in dealing with the application	4.3
Feedback received on your application from Ako Aotearoa	4.4

Table 4. Mean satisfaction score, elements of application process n=69.

Overall, a mean score in excess of 4 is a very good to excellent result. Most respondents were highly satisfied with the whole process. Particular areas of satisfaction were the excellent relationships with hub staff and Ako Aotearoa generally, and the "not overly cumbersome" (as one respondent put it) application process. The following comments summarise the positive feelings of the majority of the respondents:

> *Excellent facilitation of the application process and service from hub staff member. Very clear application process with minimal bureaucracy and stress! (survey)*

> *A draft application was developed and this was reviewed by [hub co-ordinator]. Hub co-ordinator also sought advice from people with methodological experience, and gave feedback… the panel also gave good feedback on the project (case study 14)*

There were a small number (less than 5%) of negative comments, referring mainly to confusion arising from different kinds of advice given to individual teams.

> *There was some confusion about the level of reporting required (survey).*

> *The panel and the advisor seemed to be on different pages (survey).*

The respondents were delighted that the fund had been set up.

Recommendations

There is only one recommendation relating to the formation of the project or the application process. Ako Aotearoa seems to have tapped a rich vein of need in developing the regional hub project fund and it is greatly appreciated by all applicants. The wide range of sources of information about the fund gives confidence that those who need it are able to gain access to the fund. The wide range of projects funded also demonstrates a sector-wide commitment. In general, the staff (especially at the hubs) were considered enthusiastic and effective in promoting and assisting with the fund.

The recommendation in this section relates to assistance for inexperienced researchers. Currently, the funding application criteria[3] includes the following clause:

> *4.2 If no member of a project team is an experienced project manager/researcher, the application should also include the name of such a person who is prepared to mentor the team throughout the project. Mentor expenses incurred should be included in the project budget.*

The mentor system reportedly worked well where it was used (it was used in only 2 case studies and an unknown number of other instances), but employing a mentor can be expensive and take resources away from funding the actual project. Yet it is clear that the fund supports quite a few new researchers and their projects.

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[3] http://akoaotearoa.ac.nz/download/ng/file/group-4/n2281-regional-hub-project-funding---application-criteria.pdf

Furthermore, the mentor system is intended to bolster the 'professional' side of the project, such as supporting teachers and learners, assisting with bibliographies or providing professional supervision. For those who have not run a funded project before, assistance may be needed with 'nuts and bolts' issues such as what can be funded, negotiating timelines, reporting and calculating impact. The recommendation below is intended to assist Ako Aotearoa in bolstering its support to project teams at little or no expense:

> That Ako Aotearoa investigate ways, other than hub co-ordinators, to support new and emerging researchers by mechanisms such as a 'buddy' system (where those who have completed hub projects agree to provide support to others), extending the 'Frequently Asked Questions' (FAQ) page on the website as a developing resource to support projects and other similar methods of support from the application process onwards.

Elements of the projects

This section covers aspects of most of the evaluative questions, including factors that help or hinder the impact of the project, impact on project teams, and facilitating the maximum potential of the work. This section also includes a recommendation to extend the practice of one hub (in relation to the research colloquium) to the others. Sub-questions include:
What is the source and nature of projects that are funded?
What roles does Ako Aotearoa play and how are these evaluated by project leaders?
How did the final reporting process work?
What constitutes good practice in projects and funding?
What areas of difficulty emerged?

In the case study interviews, the respondents explained the inception of their projects and why they applied to Ako Aotearoa for funding. In most cases, the need emerged out of the teaching context in which the respondent was working.

> *The internal factors were an acknowledged problem with the quality of teaching on trades courses, and the external factors were drivers for better trades education. One catalyst was reading the literature around staff development for trades tutors, including reluctance to change and a defensive approach based on cultural difference (case study 11).*

> *It came out of the philosophy of the College, a socio-cultural approach where people learn through interaction and through reciprocal learning (case study 12).*

> *We wanted to make the courses more relevant to the learners, as well as to move towards the development of a research culture in polytechnics (case study 15).*

In the case studies, two respondents noted that their project was designed specifically to 'get the funding', as part of the pressure under the PBRF scheme to engage in research:

> *The area is my research platform and as an academic I need to engage in ongoing research. Career academics are my field. I thought that $10,000 was a good amount to get my project started and Ako information implied that the money would be easy to get (case study 5).*

A range of other examples were given of how their projects emerged, including organisational pressures (e.g. "supporting new teachers a priority" (case study 7); "we decided to go with a conference because… there is little time to forge collegial relationships in our region" (case study 13)), and course and individual factors (e.g. "I wanted to compare the different learning software products available" (case study 4)).

In many organisations, teaching and learning services straddle both academic (teaching/research) and administrative (teaching support, student learning, IT) functions. In terms of the projects funded by the hub project fund, a mix of academic and administrative or IT staff was also evident in the research teams (see Figure 5):
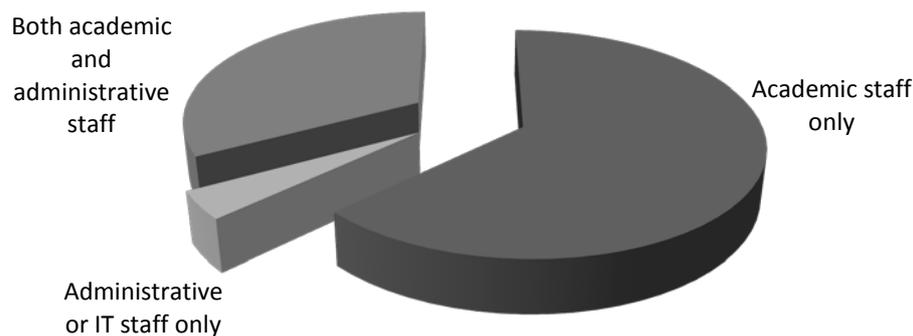
Figure 5.Composition of project teams, Regional Hub Project Fund n=74.

Survey respondents were asked to score the aims and processes that were important in their projects, a score of 5 being a most central component, with a score of 1 not important at all. The results are laid out below in Table 5. The most common aim was to improve learning (followed closely by 'to improve teaching') with reviews of the literature being the least common aim. The capacity building elements tended to score slightly lower than the practice elements. However, the scores are interesting in that so many of the elements were scored as 'important' or better, demonstrating the multi-faceted nature of the projects.

Aims or processes included in projects	Mean score
Aim to improve learning for specified learners	4.4
Aim to improve teaching practice	4.4
'Good practice' focus or findings	4.3
Aim to influence teaching and learning practices across sector	4.3
Sharing of findings in a larger context (within organisation or beyond)	4.1
Building capability across one or more organisations or departments	3.9
Partnerships across departments or organisations	3.4
Review of previous research in area	2.8

Table 5. Assessment of aims and processes included in project by importance.

The application criteria listed by Ako Aotearoa note key indicators are to 'support the best possible educational outcomes for learners in the tertiary sector', by 'supporting projects which provide examples of good practice, identify critical success factors and develop practical action-oriented suggestions for enhancing the effectiveness of tertiary teaching and learning practices'.

The criteria also note:

> *Projects designed to assist organisations and their educators will include research that extends our knowledge about tertiary teaching and learning in New Zealand and develop initiatives that bring together: research findings, examples, case studies and*

other resources for educators. Projects could include: development of new or expansion of existing networks to support teaching and learning practices and strategies[4].

It appears that the aims and processes that are important for the project teams offer a very good match with the aims of the overall fund.

Role of Ako Aotearoa

The involvement of hub co-ordinators in the projects differed depending on the project. For those teams with little research experience, the co-ordinators were a lifeline, both advising and helping shape projects:

> *Very important. The original conception was for a study in [one organisation] only, but [hub co-ordinator] encouraged us to use a multi-site approach. In the end 5 polytechs were involved. … Ako Aotearoa has created the networks that allow all this to happen. All the southern networks were brought together for a research colloquium, where they presented their studies to each other, which was of value (case study 11).*

> *Throughout the project we found Ako Aotearoa to be extremely supportive and input helped us deal with all the bits of detail that we may have overlooked. During the project they helped us set goals and meet objectives and they kept in close contact following up on these. This also helped us keep on track and motivated (case study 2).*

About half of respondents noted that Ako Aotearoa staff were very helpful, including non-hub staff such as the Knowledge Manager, who supported at least one project. The other half appeared to have little to do with the organisation on a regular basis: "I applied for the grant, received it and reported back to Ako" (case study 9); "just funding and receiving my reports" (case study 5); "not a lot" (case study 13).

The survey asked respondents to rate various elements of working with Ako Aotearoa on a 5 point satisfaction scale; a score of 1 being 'not at all satisfied', to 5 being 'extremely satisfied'. The results are presented below in Table 6, and demonstrate very high levels of satisfaction with the organisation in relation to supporting aspects of the projects:

Item	Overall score
Finalising the contract	4.4
Liaison with Hub staff	4.7
Support from Ako Aotearoa	4.5
Timeliness in producing funds	4.3
Timeliness in response to requests	4.5
Feedback	4.3
Final report process	4.0

Table 6. Overall rating on various elements of working with Ako Aotearoa

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[4] http://akoaotearoa.ac.nz/download/ng/file/group-4/n2281-regional-hub-project-funding---application-criteria.pdf

The terms of reference for this formative evaluation referred to potential areas of good practice in any one hub that might be shared in others. The research colloquium in the Southern hub provided the one example of this. The case study interviews revealed that participants were delighted at the opportunity to share project information and skills and found it very rewarding. As far as we were informed, the other hubs have not run such a session, and we recommend that they do, and that it is repeated in each hub every year.

The lowest score (but still satisfactory) related to the final reporting process. Comments in the online survey are neutral or positive and explain what the respondents value about it:

> *The regional hub advisor was also a key to getting results published on Ako Aotearoa web site (survey response)*
>
> *I used little support re -writing the final report as I am an experienced writer. The process of putting the report on the Ako Aotearoa website was handled extremely efficiently[5] (survey response).*
>
> *We were very satisfied with the feedback process (survey response)*
>
> *We are in the process of addressing Ako Aotearoa's feedback on our final report prior to publication on the website. We have been very satisfied with the support thus far (survey response).*

The final report process was also the subject of a separate question in the online survey (see Table 7). This reveals that all except one of those who have completed their final reports were satisfied with the process, and half of those who have completed were 'very' satisfied.

Rating	No. responses
Very satisfactory	19
Satisfactory	18
Not satisfactory	1
Final report not yet written	25

Table 7. Satisfaction rating for final reporting process

Survey respondents were also asked to rate their satisfaction with Ako Aotearoa's support for the publication of outputs, and most who answered this question reported a rating of 'very satisfactory'. Publication of results is a core goal for many of the projects and website publication provides an excellent start, and often a springboard for further publication.

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[5] The Ako Aotearoa website contains a growing archive of relevant literature, called the Register of Research and Projects, which can be accessed at http://akoaotearoa.ac.nz/project-register/search

Rating	No. responses
Very satisfactory	17
Satisfactory	15
Not satisfactory	1
Not applicable	26

Table 8. Satisfaction rating for support for publication

Overall, there were high levels of satisfaction demonstrated in both surveys and case studies for the work of Ako Aotearoa in running and supporting the fund.

Good practice

Case study respondents noted many elements of good practice in relation to the fund. A number of respondents commented on the speed and efficiency of Ako Aotearoa in processing applications and providing funds, including interim payments:

> *It was a quick process with no hassles (case study 14)*

> *We presented our invoice and they paid it quickly (case study 7)*

> *The progress payments were also really helpful especially when it came to funding the fleet cars we used (case study 2).*

> *The hub was efficient and the money was paid out in a timely manner (case study 10)*

On the other hand, where teams fell behind their research milestones, Ako Aotearoa continued to be supportive and helpful:

> *They were really flexible with timeframes. I had an extra year. They were sympathetic and trusted us to get it done (survey).*

> *We had to negotiate an extension of time, and this was rolled over. The decision was made very quickly and they were very efficient (case study 1).*

As noted above, the level of support for the projects, especially from the hubs, was very important for some respondents, especially those with less research experience.

> *All were very positive. Helped that [co-ordinator] was very excited about the action research component. … enthusiasm gave us confidence we were on the right track (case study 14).*

> *The support given was excellent. It provided us with practical help and feedback. It also helped keep us motivated as there was interest taken in our progress (case study 2).*

A number of comments were made about the quality and clarity of the advice given by Ako Aotearoa, which was strongly appreciated:

Ako were very clear about what was in and what was out with the grant – they were very clear with this and with their justification (case study 1).

No, it was pretty straightforward really. They gave good advice and it was smooth sailing. The website was also very clear (case study 3).

I found that the application process was useful. It was a very clear process (case study 8).

Finally, a number of other aspects of good practice were mentioned in the case studies. In one project, a facilitator was appointed and the hub co-ordinator was also involved, and the project team noted: "We felt they really valued what we were doing" (case study 7). In another case, some of the grant was able to be spent on employing a research mentor for the team leader, which was very valuable. The value of the funding in providing a starting point for larger grant applications was also mentioned, and that same person also thought that the structure encouraged teams to "do a lot more work than resourced for" (case study 15). One person mentioned the level of critique of their report, noting that it was well scoped "thanks to their professional gaze" (case study 7).

Areas of difficulty

Several areas of difficulty were raised by individual case study respondents. The main one was the level of funding available for the projects, and the funding gap. In two cases, the applicants had applied for and received two grants of $10,000 each. They were pleased to have been given the two grants, but pointed out the limitations this caused. One noted:

I think there is a huge gap between the funding pools available through the regional hubs and centrally funded grants which is in the hundreds of thousands of dollars*, There is nothing in-between. Perhaps the hub grants are targeted at emerging researchers (case study 8).
*The actual maximum is $150,000.

Other team leaders discussed the $10,000 limit on funding for each project. Advantages of the funding included the ability for inexperienced researchers to gain knowledge while working in relevant areas, the 'springboard' effect (receiving some funding may make it more likely that further funding would be forthcoming) and the discrete nature of each project.

Disadvantages stated included the potential for the impact of projects to be limited by the relatively small funding, that experienced researchers may bypass the funding and that the relatively small amount may mean that researchers would undertake a lot of unpaid hours. Other comments about the funding included that it had to be spent before it could be claimed, which left a gap, and some difficulties in dealing with Ako Aotearoa when working through a large bureaucracy.

There were a variety of comments about guidelines and processes. There are excellent and transparent policies and procedures outlined on the Ako Aotearoa website[6], and hub co-ordinators are specifically charged with supporting projects, but some difficulties were raised in practice about aspects of the projects, including the final report process.

Discussion and recommendations

From the point of view of respondents, the fund met their project needs very well. One area that seems particularly important is that project leaders have a number of factors that they consider important, often operating at the same time. The complexity of these effects are revealed in Table 5, where the multi-faceted nature of the project is revealed. For example, the project may benefit them as teachers, benefit them as researchers, benefit the organisation in terms of research profile and open doors to collaborative work with other networks. The qualitative findings backed up the perception of multiple benefits.

A small number of potential difficulties arose around funding levels, and, to a lesser extent, ensuring that teams are clear about funding and accountability processes. Some felt that the work done was not sufficiently compensated for by the project funding. One participant noted working extremely hard all year, egged on by her employer's enthusiasm, working huge hours and then finding herself passed over for promotion because her assessment did not take into account all the unpaid work she had done.

The recommendations are as follows:

That Ako Aotearoa ensure that hub funding is adequate to support each project that is approved, possibly by the development of a good funding 'checklist' to accompany or replace the budget calculator, and detailed advice from hub co-ordinators or project 'buddies' on likely costs.

That Ako Aotearoa ensures that the guidelines for funding and reporting are clear and comprehensive. Areas noted in case studies as unclear include what staffing costs are allowable and additional information on the final reporting process (the FAQ section could also be used).

That each hub run a one day research colloquium for current (and possibly former) fund recipients each year, to encourage cross-sectoral sharing of information and skills.

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[6] http://akoaotearoa.ac.nz/regional-hub-project-funding

Impact

The material in this section links directly to the first 3 evaluative questions relating to impact. In summary: What is the impact of the projects on research teams, teachers and learners, the organisational context and regional and national sites?

The projects achieved multiple outcomes in terms of building capacity in teaching and learning at the individual level, the organisational level, nationally and for some projects, internationally. In the following section the impact is examined on individuals who were involved in the projects in terms of their increased levels of confidence and skill. Second, the section analyses the outcomes of improved teaching practices across organisations focussing on changes to teaching practices, assessment, and new learning opportunities for students. Finally, research outcomes are explored, and the impact of the project funding in leading to further work.

Teaching and learning are not the same thing. Looking to the effects of projects on student learning can be difficult and complex, and often require a long period to assess effectiveness. Some projects were able to demonstrate improved student outcomes, and these are discussed. Other projects identified the outcomes they hoped to achieve, but commented that it was too soon for them to provide evidence of change.

The following section of this report is based on information from the surveys and the 15 case studies. To illustrate the outcomes achieved we discuss both, but also provide vignettes of case studies to illustrate particular outcomes.

Building capacity in individuals

Building confidence and skills

As noted above, the projects tend to be multi-faceted in focus, posing significant challenges and learning curves for the research teams. For example, a single project might require a team leader to design an intervention, lead it, take part in it, evaluate it and report on it. A number of the project teams report both resource and professional pressures as a result of these multiple tasks.

The online survey asked respondents to identify how the project had enhanced their confidence to do this kind of work. A total of 45 responses were received; they were diverse and, for the most part, very positive. Confidence came from the ability to successfully apply for funds, to plan and develop a project, implement it and report on it successfully. Success breeds success, and a number of respondents reported that:

> *It has inspired me to apply again in 2010 for another project! (survey response)*

Around three quarters of the responses related to the confidence gained as a researcher, research leader or manager. However, a number of other areas of new confidence were also mentioned, including: managing budgets and funds; how to undertake projects (technical skills); teaching and course skills; collaboration skills,

cultural skills, the dissemination of findings and, finally, a new status within their organisations. The following case study demonstrates a project that deals with a central issue facing many polytechnics and ITOs: how to effectively transform trades people into trades teachers. One result has been a change of career for the researcher – from trades tutor to staff developer.

Case Study: Tradespeople as teachers

In the main, research into the development of tertiary teachers has focused on university lecturers. This project explores the perspectives that beginning tertiary teachers bring with them via their vocational identity as trades people. When tradespeople came into the organisation to teach, what values and skills did they come with, and how did these affect the quality of teaching they offered?

The findings of this research which was carried out across five organisations, has resulted in an increased understanding of how tradespeople can be better teachers. It also highlighted insights that social learning theories reveal about how and why there are 'cultural' issues to be considered in providing teacher education skills to tradespeople. This learning will be incorporated into the Diploma of Learning and Teaching which is being re-developed within the organisation.

> As a trades tutor I had been interested in evidence based research on this issue. As a result of the research I am now working full time in staff development and am considered an 'expert' in this area. I hope to publish an article in an academic journal on teacher education in vocational settings. (Project Manager ITP)

In another project, people involved in the project were identified as potential leaders in their organisations. As one interviewee stated:

> *During the group meetings some participants stood out for their leadership abilities. This has directly resulted in them being offered roles as support staff for lecturers and existing staff.*

In the case studies in particular, team leaders articulated a process of increasing skill and confidence through the research process. There were many comments about the excellent assistance provided by hub co-ordinators and others, and a strong sense of self-efficacy comes from completing the projects. In a sense, the project fund is building researchers for the futures, as well as actively improving teaching and learning processes.

Teaching practice

Respondents in the online survey were asked to describe how the project had enhanced their own teaching and learning practices. A selection of comments is highlighted below. In nearly every case, the project leaders report that the project has impacted in some way on their teaching practice or, at the least, on their thinking about teaching and learning:

I am a great deal more reflective about my teaching practice - and achieve much better evaluations from students.

Apart from the findings of the research in relation to teaching processes, it has really made me question what we are expecting of our year one students, and how realistic those expectations are...

Increased awareness, added significant quality content and process to curriculum, increased collaboration and therefore access to ongoing best practice ideas from around the country - good eh!

I am much more aware of the educational needs of learners in my topic area. Thus my teaching has been enhanced by making the content more relevant to the learners needs. I am also much more aware of the relationship between learning needs, knowledge and skill and interest in learning more. I am also more aware of the things that impact on practice based learning and how learners learn in practice situations. This has helped me model my teaching to reflect workplace learning.

The overall results from the online survey (see Table 9) bear out these positive views, with all areas relating to teaching scoring in excess of 4 on a 1-5 scale of the likely effects of their projects. The three areas that scored lower – online teaching, assessment and evaluation processes – did so because fewer projects included these elements, thus leading to a number of 'no effect' scores. However, those projects that did include those elements scored the effect as high, and the case studies supported this perception.

Likely effects of project on sector	Mean score
Improvements in attitudes or approach to teaching	4.3
Improved teaching preparation	4
Better content of courses	4
Improved teaching practice	4.3
Improved online course/teaching	3.5
Improved assessment	3.3
Improved course evaluation processes	3.4

Table 9. Likely effects of projects on teaching and learning

Building capacity in organisations

Most of the project teams aspire to generalise their work across much wider areas than the original project suggests. In the online survey, there was an attempt to quantify the amount of change by asking respondents to provide an estimate of the expected impact of their project on various groups and sectors, on a scale of 1 to 5. The results are listed in Table 10. The results are of interest. Like a ripple effect, the influence diminishes the further it rolls out from the core project, but an important finding is that it does not fall by much. In summary, the table can be interpreted to

mean that project leaders have a high expectation that their project will have an impact far wider than the original work.

Impact on various groups	Mean
Tertiary teachers in your organisation	4.2
Tertiary teachers across more than one organisation	3.9
Learners in a particular course, programme or department	4.2
Learners across a whole organisation	4.0
Learners in more than one organisation	3.9
Regional or sectoral change in teaching and learning	4.0
Specific e-learning or e-teaching practices within one area	4.2

Table 10 Estimate of expected impact of projects on various groups

The case studies documented numerous instances of how projects cast influence across the organisation. Respondents in small organisations noted the excitement of becoming research active, and of developing solutions that impact on the whole organisation, for example, "the mentoring project has now become part of the induction process we use with all new staff".

A range of cross-organisation, national and international impacts were also noted, for example one study had a major impact in the six organisations involved, plus strong national and international interest.

Teacher resources

A number of projects funded by Ako Aotearoa produced new resources aimed at assisting teachers to improve their teaching practice. The following two case studies are examples of such projects.

> **Case study: The development of an E-primer on distance learning**
>
> Ako Aotearoa funded this writer to produce the final two of a series of e-primers on distance learning that is available on the Ako Aotearoa website. Educators have rapidly adopted recent developments in ICT to improve the reach and effectiveness of their teaching. Successes with online bulletin boards first emerged from studies in the late 1980s and innovation with desktop videoconferencing soon followed.
>
> Teachers who want to engage distance learners or interact with their on-campus learners in new ways can choose from a variety of proven online applications. In this e-primer, the author encourages teachers to apply online discourse (conversation mediated through internet tools) in ways that are conducive to teaching and learning. He explores interactive journals (blogs), wiki tools, working with ePortfolios, and the potential of social networking tools such as MySpace and Facebook for education.

There is nothing like this resource - it is very innovative. There are many self-paced resources for students learning another language, but nothing for the teachers. The resource focuses on pedagogy, and provides opportunities for teachers to practice specific skills, or develop particular areas of their teaching e.g. questioning. In our organisation they all undergo ongoing professional development. The resource is designed to complement this not to replace it.

It is available on our own website, the Ako website and we circulated it to all the language school networks, but we do not know the level of uptake. It does come up on Google, and we have been contacted by a UK teacher.

The resource could be used at other levels of the education system e.g. secondary and primary school to support teachers, with only minor adaptations. (Project Manager PTO)

And:

Case Study: Professional learning resources for ESOL teachers

Ako Aotearoa funded this PTO to develop an electronic resource to provide ESOL teachers in NZ with an opportunity to develop their teaching skills. The *ETS TaskBook* is suitable for English language teachers in a variety of contexts.

For pre-service or less experienced teachers, it may be a way of gaining a deeper understanding of ESOL teaching methodology. For more experienced teachers, it may act as a useful refresher and springboard for further study.

The ETS *TaskBook* can be used in a number of different ways:
- a teacher working alone;
- a group of teachers working as a professional development discussion group;
- a senior teacher or academic manager wanting to lead a professional development seminar ;
- an academic manager wanting to provide an individual teacher with some kind of targeted professional development support;
- a tutor working with pre-service teachers on a training or development course.

This project has had a huge impact on me personally. It was a good opportunity for me to develop my reading and writing in this area. It has led to lots of opportunities for me that I would not otherwise have had. It has enhanced my position in e-learning and I have been invited to present at a conference and two on-line seminars.

In my school we are committing to a major e-learning programme and this work has helped to drive the change for greater effectiveness. (Project Manager – PTO)

Professional learning outcomes

While some projects described above concentrated on developing resources for teachers, others focussed directly on creating professional learning opportunities for tertiary teachers. The majority of the projects have the potential to provide additional support to the work of teachers in the tertiary sector, in many different ways. They are focussed on many areas of professional practice, including literacy leadership for adults, assessment processes, IT and online learning skills, cultural support for teachers of Pacific students, examining the role of emotion in teaching, as examples.

The following case study is an example of how Ako Aotearoa grants were used directly to improve professional learning of teachers.

Case study: Professional supervision for creating communities of practice

This project focussed on using professional group supervision to facilitate tertiary educators to critically examine their teaching practices in a supportive and non-threatening environment. The two core objectives of the action research project were to assist participants to critically examine patterns of student engagement that may limit or hinder teaching effectiveness, and to assist participants to examine more flexible and student-centred teaching pedagogies. The project was action orientated and focussed on finding solutions to barriers to good pedagogy.

At the completion of the project, teachers' self-reports on changes in their understandings, beliefs and practices were significant. Eighty three percent reported that the 'group supervision' had helped in increasing their focus on learning outcomes.

Half reported increased confidence in engaging in discussions about teaching practice with peers, and the benefits achieved from discussions with other tertiary educators.

Fifty eight percent said that they had made positive shifts in their level of awareness about key drivers for improving teaching. In particular, they had become more aware of student issues and organisational issues (such the value of challenging the examination focus paradigms they work under). Other insights included the importance of lesson/teaching plans, diversity of teaching methods and self-critique.

This project illustrated a lack of support mechanisms for teachers and our organisation came to the realisation that offering good support to staff will impact positively on many different levels. The group meetings were so valuable in the sharing of ideas. Key to this was the good cross-section of disciplines and their different viewpoints and techniques in teaching practice . As a direct result of the project my organisation has set up the 'Communities of Practice' which will give better support to teaching staff and hopefully increase the quality of their teaching and increase the retention of students. As side issues we have seen an increase in communication and team bonding within our organisation. (Project Leader ITP)

One of the strengths of some projects funded by Ako Aotearoa was that teachers were able to transfer what they had learned to other contexts. For example, a project to improve teaching practice with Māori students, based on a theoretical model of identifying student strengths and building on them, has also had spin-off effects as staff "transfer these learnings to their work with non-Māori students".

The implication of this is that a process of learning transfer may extend the impact of projects in ways unforeseen by project leaders, as individual teachers extend the knowledge they have gained to other areas of their work. This kind of innovation is difficult to chart but may, over time, have a transformative effect on teaching skills.

In some organisations, there is significant interest from others in using or duplicating resources developed for the projects:

> *This is very important to the Wānanga as we deliver across multiple sites and quality, available resources are crucial to maintaining high standards of delivery no matter where a course is delivered to students (survey response).*

> *Early feedback is very positive..it's a resource for fieldwork educators to increase the quality of their teaching with social work students while on placement. Traditionally this group has had little or no resourcing from organisations, however they are responsible for about half the teaching and learning time on SW courses (survey response).*

Information technology to support teaching and learning

A number of the projects had as either a central or an incidental focus aspects of information technology, including online learning, e-learning tools, Moodle, CD ROMs and other technological applications. Implementing IT projects is complex because the support of organisations is needed in so many ways: hardware, software and ensuring that teachers and learners have the skills to optimise positive outputs from the various models.

In the online survey, 19 project leaders stated their project would have significant effects on online learning. Because of the particular characteristics of the IT projects, this evaluation did not get a clear picture of their impact on teaching and learning at this stage. Two main themes emerge from the qualitative data. The first is the use of IT for collaborations between teachers and institutions, in particular by sharing resources and even courses (a case study example is given below). The second is assisting learners to access learning using a range of IT tools, for example a project aiming to work with workplace learners using the Google applications suite.

Student learning outcomes

The ultimate goal for providing support for teachers in the tertiary sector is to improve the outcomes of students. It is important to recognise that teaching and learning are not the same thing, and assessing the effects of projects on student learning can be

difficult and complex. Most of the respondents to both the case studies and online survey noted that it was too early to tell the impact on learners.

> *Long term it is difficult to answer. It is difficult to prove that an initiative in professional development has an impact on student results (collaborative project).*

However, based on the implementation of research-led teaching approaches, including teaching styles, mentoring and support, integrated IT solutions, course content and other factors, project leaders were able to say that they expected an improvement in student learning.

> *We are now on the fourth cohort with the new course and feedback via student surveys is much more positive. There is a lot less dissatisfaction about the assessment process, as the course is now competency-based (cross-organisation project).*

In a small number of projects, effects on students are quite easy to demonstrate. For example:

> *Students showcased their stories at a departmental event and received positive feedback from their peers and lecturers. They also improved their vocational literacy skills throughout the project and significantly enhanced their feelings of self-worth. Lecturer participants and researchers enhanced their ability to use creative learning and teaching strategies. Their stories were shown at an in-house staff development day, attracting excellent feedback and interest from other staff (survey response).*

Ways of measuring long term outcomes of improved student learning resulting from improved of teaching practice were described by one participant in the following way:

> *In the long term we could probably capture the impact of Ako Aotearoa funding by noting the impact of quality teaching by using a range of 'blunt instruments' such as retention and success data, student satisfaction surveys, and the like that all organisations use to report to TEC.*

The following case studies illustrate projects with a direct focus on supporting students. The difference in the length of time since the projects were completed has influenced the evidence of improved student outcomes.

The first case study has evidence of the impact of their project on retention rates, whereas the second case study has put new structures in place, but has as yet no direct evidence of improved student outcomes.

Case Study: Support for Maori and Pacific distance learners
A programme of culturally relevant peer support was trialed with first-year Māori and Pacific students studying in degree and diploma programmes. Students were contacted via telephone during semester one 2008 and offered support. The programme was informed by Kaupapa Māori theory and principles of inclusive teaching practice and aimed to enhance student engagement and success.

The results of the programme reveal that first year Māori and Pacific students studying at a distance value the opportunity to have regular contact with knowledgeable peers in addition to their tutors. They find the contact encouraging and motivational; it enables them to deal more effectively with the demands of study and to feel part of a learning community. This contact, which occurs at key decision-making points in students' progress through their courses, assists in the identification of issues that might be a barrier to successful completion and provides opportunities to resolve these in a timely manner. Students, particularly Māori students, placed great importance on belonging – the notion of tātau tātau. They considered that contact with the peer supporters had contributed positively to their sense of belonging.

The project identified the provision of six key learning support practices: academic counselling and pre-enrolment advice; academic preparation and study skills assistance; opportunities for meaningful and regular contact with students; peer mentoring and support services; advise and assist students considering withdrawing from their studies; and teacher professional development.

This has been a very successful project with many positive outcomes.
- Learners are giving us feedback that they really appreciate the peer support from the project in addition to the support they get from their tutors. They talk about a sense of community.
- Retention rates are measured at the end of each year, and over two years we have had an average annual increase in retention of 6%. Literature argues that online learning can increase retention rates 3-5% from a single contact with the student.
- More academic staff are coming to us and asking how they can support Maori and Pasifika students.
- The success we have had with this project has motivated us to include online mentoring in selected level 4 courses.
- It has helped staff work with Maori in a positive way, and also to transfer these learnings to their work with non-Maori students. It provided a sound theoretical basis for strengths based new ways of working.
- It has provided opportunities for national and international conference presentations and publications. (Project Manager ITP)

And:

Case Study: Industry Mentoring project

The achievement and retention rates of apprentices in some industries is a concern for Industry Training Organisations (ITOs). Ako Aotearoa provided funding for a pilot project to create and trial a professional development model that aimed at strengthening industry-based workplace mentoring, thus improving apprentice/ trainee learning and achievement.

ITOs in Auckland and Wellington were selected to host half-day workshops to industry employers who had apprentices. Follow up visits were arranged in workplaces to support establishing mentoring processes.

ITOs wanted industries to take on mentoring with apprentices, but didn't know how to go about it - what, why and how. There was a high drop-out rate for apprentices who were not mentored. The workshops opened the door for ITOs to introduce mentoring as a practice they encouraged with their industries who had apprentices.

As a result. two of the ITOs have employed staff for the mentoring roles (ITO project manager).

Collaborating nationally and internationally

Ako Aotearoa has a strong mandate for cross-sectoral collaboration and change. Improving teaching and learning at the tertiary level clearly requires significant whole-of-sector work, alongside projects within organisations. This desire for plural impacts is evident in many aspects of the organisation's work. It is also evident in the hubs, where the co-ordinators have worked quite hard to encourage collaborative work on projects, as well as to encourage cross-sectoral dissemination of findings. The projects have very clearly taken on a collaborative ethos:

> *…created new networking opportunities and brought us into contact with tertiary education providers that we had previously not interacted with (survey).*

From individual to organisational effects, nearly all the case study participants had stories to tell about the positive impact of their projects on teaching and learning. In this section we focus on cross-organisational outcomes nationally and internationally.

Case study: Collaborative online delivery of courses across six organisations

This project focused on piloting the delivery of six New Zealand Diploma of Business programmes across six organisations (ITPs and Universities), using Moodle as a platform. The goals of the project were to share the programme content, course information and materials, and student management data across the six organisations. Key motivators for the project were to broaden learner access to education and training options, and to deliver programmes to areas where student numbers are low. This collaboration accessed expertise across all the six organisations.

The pilot tested Moodle as a technology framework that enables learners at one organisation to access taught courses, resources and learning materials from partner organisations through a "single sign on" login process, while retaining the home organisation's logo and other brand identification. The action research project also sought to understand the experience of tutors and learners as well as those of support, administrative and technical staff and the impact on organisational systems. It

challenged not only the technical skills of those involved but forced the participants to focus on pedagogical issues involved in the delivery of the project.

This case study project demonstrated that the technology exists that makes it possible for organisations to collaborate in the delivery of courses across the country, or even internationally. However there needs to be a great deal of goodwill across the organisations, as in this project each organisation ran one paper towards the qualification. The project has continued to be funded and is currently working through issues related to collaboration and developing protocols, such as sharing EFT funding.

Ako Aotearoa funded the pilot study research where we looked at the experienced of 8 successful academics at a university and Polytech. As a result of the pilot I have created a whole new ongoing international research project. I have received funding from the University and two successful Ako applications. Since the pilot I have worked with 64 more academics in NZ, Canada and Sweden. I now have a much wider data set which has wider applicability. I will be publishing the results of this project internationally. (Project manager, University)

And:

Case study: A springboard to international collaboration

The purpose of this research project funded by Ako Aotearoa was to uncover the experiences of early career academics at two New Zealand tertiary organisations; to identify key recruitment, appointment, induction, training and development processes that result in well prepared academics, capable of enhancing their students' educational outcomes and their own careers.

The information from the research has been used to design a new course for beginning academics, and a pamphlet that has been used with individual academics at the University. Key factors identified by the research include that successful career academics have common traits: they collaborate and have broad networks; they are resourceful in the ways they seek support; they are resilient in the face of setbacks; they are organisationally aware; and they are self disciplined.

The project had a big impact on teaching and learning practices of those involved. This project forced tutors to address issues of pedagogy and also learn about delivering on-line courses. We now have a pool of experienced people across the six organisations, and an unintended consequence was in some cases the collaboration was better than it was within organisations. Technically it has had an impact; probably we are world leaders in this. The pilot proved that technology worked. We have been approached by a Canadian university who are interested in what we are doing. (Project manager ITP)

Publication and dissemination

The final element of building capacity across organisations is the role of the written report, conference paper or journal article. To begin, it is important to note that the fund, in the words of one respondent, has "put us on the tertiary radar as an organisation that undertakes research".

This is an important effect for organisations in terms of both sectoral esteem and access to research funding through the PBRF. It also has important implications for the teams concerned in terms of joining the academic research community, attending conferences and publishing research outputs, whether in refereed journals or on websites.

The online survey asked respondents how they intended to disseminate the findings of their study to other tertiary teachers. The number of responses in each category mentioned are listed below, and demonstrate that the 53 respondents generally have ambitious plans for disseminating their findings, and that most expect to publish in more than one place.

Site for publication	No. respondents
Ako Aotearoa website	26
Conference	21
Peer reviewed journal article	16
Internal seminar or workshop	9
Other website	6
External seminar	5
Internal report	3
Working papers	1

Many of the respondents are planning publication in a number of forums in order to more fully reach their target audience and encourage cross-sectoral change:

> *I would like to use the outputs of the research project to support teaching and learning practice in other organisations - particularly to support other academics to experience using individualised, authentic assessments with regular formative feedback to see the impact it can have on student learning outcomes. (Survey respondent)*

For some of the case study respondents, a desire to publish the findings is hampered by a lack of time or experience in producing outputs such as journal articles: "I am writing an article. I have never done this before". Others have published internationally: "2009 co-authored a peer-reviewed article with a Korean University". The overall qualitative picture is that most fund recipients are keen to publish their findings beyond website publication, some have already done so, and others are currently working on their outputs.

Organisational support and workload issues

During case study interviews and in the online survey, a number of the researchers indicated that they were specifically supported by their organisations to do the project. For those organisations that are not traditionally involved in funded research and activity projects, having a staff member involved in a project of this kind can provide a kind of kudos, and is welcomed.

However, some of the same respondents that noted their workplaces were supportive also told of the costs of such work. For example:

> *I am writing an article. I have never done this before. The boss is very supportive and I presented the findings last year to staff and associate teachers. But I am a month overdue in completing my final report and am bogged down in my teaching work (I have three days off next week to get it finished). It's been a rocky road (Project Director, PTE).*

This story is not an isolated case. Others talked of the "double whammy" (case study 15) of having to run the project and undertake all their other organisational jobs. It appears a number of the projects were run on top of an already full workload:

> *My co-researcher leaving the organisation is a definite hindrance for the project as we worked well together and it has increased the time and workload spent on the project. Other hindrances include staffing cuts – less teachers, more work, less time to spend on the project (Research leader, Polytechnic).*

Once the work has been done, further support can be recruited and demand can grow for further expansion of projects. For example:

> *A high quality resource has been developed - many staff from other departments within our organisation now want to follow suit. The CEO and other senior managers are now aware and on board with this sort of resource development (survey response).*

The risk is, of course, that any further development will be under-resourced or not resourced at all– that organisational interest will not translate into resources, especially during a period in which the tertiary sector is under increasing financial constraint. This is probably what is behind the intention of so many fund recipients to apply for second, third or more grants, to keep refining the project and expanding the impact of their work (the tendency towards repeat applications is documented below). A number of respondents alluded to the need for further phases of their studies:

> *The project impacted on management and the way management provided resources to facilitate programmes and change to programming. Remembering that this was a small scale project. In essence this was the first phase of a bigger project that is projected to lead to greater change in pedagogy.*

Conclusion and recommendations

Respondents were enthusiastic about the effects of the projects on their own practice, citing increased confidence in research (and to a lesser extent teaching, finances and other factors), better understanding of their areas of interest and increased collaboration with others . They were able to point to a number of instances of improved teaching practice, and many stated they believed that these effects would increase over time.

Most of the changes observed by teams in teaching practice have involved those participating in the project, whether these are colleagues, collaborators across organisations or those working in a particular subject area. The way this occurs is demonstrated here through case studies.

A small number of projects included assessment and evaluation skills. For example, a project that aimed to improve the teaching practice of trades tutors also focused on assessment, because "they only know the ways to assess that they have experienced" (case study 11). Other courses that looked at new teachers involved reflection on practice in teaching, assessment and course evaluation. Some of the IT projects also involved new opportunities for assessment in the web or Moodle environment.

The hub projects often have the potential to materially improve teaching and learning and leave a lasting legacy. I.T. also constitutes an area of great change, with Moodle and other learning management systems transforming the learning process and offering great opportunities for changing practice in the tertiary sector (Minielli and Ferris, 2005).

The support of tertiary organisations are crucial to the longevity, continued dissemination and further support and development of the projects. In the course of this project, we spoke to a small number of senior managers in tertiary organisations, all of whom stated their support for the hub projects.

On the other hand, a number of respondents in the case studies noted that a cost of the projects was high workloads, but they were prepared to live with these because of the positive effects that arose from their projects, such as a sense of self-efficacy, skills they were learning, potential long-term benefit for themselves or others or simply as a commitment to their students. Therefore, while Ako Aotearoa should do what it can to continue to ensure that organisations 'sign up' to supporting projects and project teams, lack of formal and concrete organisational support should not be used as a criterion for the success or otherwise of a fund application.

This formative evaluation will need to be followed at some stage by a more summative and quantitative approach, and it is suggested that fund recipients be asked to document expected and actual impacts of the project during its course, and potentially update these for up to two years after the project is completed. As well as providing a verifiable trail, this tool could form the basis of a self-review process for the projects.

It is recommended that:

Ako Aotearoa note the wide range of impacts described by organisations in this section, and consider further ways, as necessary, to support project teams to produce such impacts.

In order to assist further evaluations, including self-evaluation of projects, current and future fund recipients should be asked to produce an 'impact diary', which charts potential impacts at the beginning of a project, actual at the end and then subsequent effects over an agreed period of (say) 2 years. The diary would discuss intended and unintended impacts of the project, subsequent project work and any transformative effects, and would attempt to gauge the scope of the impact.

Cultural factors and engagement with Māori

How do the projects engage with Māori and Pacific?
How do the over-riding policies and procedures of Ako Aotearoa play out in specific projects, and the focus on Māori and Pacific overall?

This section reports on engagement with Māori (and Pacific, and other ethnic groups to an extent). These factors are driven by Ako Aotearoa's commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, as follows:

> *Ako Aotearoa is committed to becoming a treaty-based organisation, embracing the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi. We will also work within the context of the Māori Tertiary Education Framework. In particular, Ako Aotearoa will look to develop partnerships with Māori through the establishment of a Māori caucus and a wider Māori reference group. We will support and learn from Māori for Māori initiatives.*

In undertaking this evaluation, there has been an attempt to consider what this means for this particular project fund. Does it simply mean that a proportion of projects will involve Māori teachers and/or learners? And, if so, what proportion should that be? The 2009 Business plan, for example, states as a goal that "At least 4 completed Regional Hub Projects are directly focussed on the success of Māori learners".

Should the term 'partnership' be read to have implications for *every* project, especially as the hubs have been expressly promoting collaborative projects? Should every project that is funded that has implications for Māori expressly include a Māori kaupapa in its design? Should all projects, whether or not they explicitly focus on Māori, ensure that Māori outcomes are analysed?

These are policy and relationship matters that need to be made explicit within the organisation. The hub project policy is silent on these issues[7] and the guidelines for applicants has just one mention in relation to ethics[8] and the need to consult.

The evaluation brief for the hub project fund required the evaluators to "engage with Māori and Pacific people", "including questions about Māori and Pacific engagement in each case study". Three of the fifteen projects chosen for case studies (20%) had an explicitly Māori focus, and one had a Māori and Pacific focus:

First year Māori and Pacific student engagement for success
This project trialled a programme of peer support for first year Māori and Pacific degree and diploma students in order to develop a culturally relevant and integrated support programme for these students in addition to guidelines for Māori and Pacific learning support practice in open and distance learning.

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[7] http://akoaotearoa.ac.nz/download/ng/file/group-4/n2414-regional-hub-project-funding---policy.pdf
[8] http://akoaotearoa.ac.nz/download/ng/file/group-4/n2283-regional-hub-project-funding---guidelines-for-applicants.pdf

> It helped us to consolidate strategies and be more specific about what we need to engage Maori and Pacific students. We received information from students about what is important for motivating, encouraging and creating a sense of belonging. The project has been underpinned by the theoretical strengths approach of identifying strengths and building on them, not focussing on deficits. It has encouraged staff to work with theory and information focussing on strengths approach.

This project was a 'Māori and Pacific only' study. It had arisen from hui and fono within the organisation, had the support of the Kaiārahi Akoranga Māori (Learning Advisor Māori) and the Pacific Advisor and proceeded from kaupapa Māori principles (especially of collectivity and community).

The only Māori/Pakeha project that formed a case study related to a study of early career academics. Unfortunately, the case study interview contained no information on any partnership model adopted for that study, and the final report is not on the website. This was a cross-institutional study that has subsequently developed into a much larger international study. It is not clear whether a bi-cultural focus has been maintained.

The third selected project had a complete Māori focus, but was unable to proceed because the project leader was not available during the evaluation. With a number of Māori focus projects still in process, we were unable to clearly evaluate these.

Participants in the qualitative interviews were specifically asked about the impact of their project in relation to "cultural skills, including te reo and kaupapa Māori". Aside from those with a specific focus on Māori, none reported any such impact. While a number of the projects were collaborative, none had collaboration between a Māori or Pacific organisation and one or more pakeha-dominant organisations.

Around a quarter of the projects funded to date have specifically either a Māori (16) or a Pacific (8) focus. Many of them have a focus on Māori learners, and others involve integration of Te Reo Māori into learning tools, Treaty education and support issues, and teacher/tutor issues.

The regional hub project fund is a valuable tool for improving learning outcomes for Māori and Pacific learners. Although organisations often have their own programmes to improve learning, Ako Aotearoa-funded projects often add an innovative additional edge to such programmes, and are able to home in on specific difficulties. The case study above relates to peer support; other programmes include enhancement of systems to improve retention, relevant assessment tools and approaches for first year tertiary students, adding a kaupapa Māori approach to tourism education by training the trainers, some fundamental research into factors influencing Pacific success, and many similar projects.

One element of capacity building is working to strengthen cross-cultural links. At the heart of this is Ako Aotearoa's commitment to being a Treaty-based organisation and

working to develop partnerships with Māori. The research tasks for this evaluation did not glean much information about how the projects reflected this mission. A number of projects noted the potential for cross-cultural work while stating they did not pursue this:

> *Not in this one business course. Moodle can be a cultural tool – there are two Māori language packs (case study 3).*

While supporting the project of a cross-cultural approach in principle, in most projects there was no evidence of this. Projects were either 'about' Māori or Pacific issues relating to teaching and learning, or did not cover such issues at all, as far as the evaluation was able to find.

For example, on the one hand there are current projects looking at supporting first year Māori and Pacific students, there are also projects looking at support for students that do not mention Māori and Pacific – such as the project that is looking at ways of supporting extramural students. The current trajectory of projects is that they are mostly (over 90%) monocultural – either Māori, or Pacific, or pakeha, or 'migrant'.

An example is a project that looked at difficulties that students faced in the transition to university. The title, objectives and method were all couched in general terms, even though there is evidence that Māori and Pacific students have more difficulties than other groups. Whether the project analyses and discusses such problems in the final report is unknown at this point, as although the project was completed in February 2010, no report has been lodged on the website.

The issue that remains to be clarified is whether projects that are developed to resolve issues that are known to affect Māori and Pacific students should, in fact, always have a specific cross-cultural focus.

There was little evidence of Māori-Pakeha partnerships at the team or organisational level. The closest was one project that offered Māori learning mentors to Māori students (case study 9). The projects that focused on Māori sometimes had overlap for Pakeha, but this was an effect, not an intention:

> *It helped staff work with Māori students in a positive way and also to transfer to their work with non-Māori students (case study 3).*

> *The kaupapa did have a Māori theoretical basis but we received information from the students about what is important for motivating, encouraging and creating a sense of belonging (case study 3).*

It may be that the lack of partnership in these projects reflects difficulties within the sector in high quality collaboration between cultural groups. Or, possibly the costs of cross-cultural collaboration are high and unable to be achieved within such small projects.

Conclusion and recommendation

There is a strong commitment among respondents to use tools to work collaboratively with a range of organisations and to disseminate findings. Aside from the question of Māori visibility and partnership with the funded projects, there is evidence of strong intent to work with others across organisational boundaries, as documented in earlier parts of this report.

There is a lack of evidence of Māori and Pacific partnerships within the various projects. Despite probing, in most projects any focus on Māori teachers, learners, approaches, organisational collaborations or tangata whenua partnerships was missing. Two recommendations arise from this:

> The hub project fund policy and guidelines should clearly outline the organisation's intention to support treaty-based projects and partnerships, and the implications of this for individual projects supported by the fund.

> Ako Aotearoa should examine how to ensure that a focus on Māori and Pacific students, teachers, knowledge systems, organisations and partnerships can be more effectively integrated into all relevant projects.

Funding issues

Funding issues influence what the projects can do, what impact they have, their influence and outcomes, and relate to most of the evaluative questions. Funding may specifically be a 'key factor that helps/hinder the impact of projects' and potentially 'aspects that could be improved'. Particular questions are:
Is the funding of the right kind and adequate?
How does the funding shape the projects?

This final section considers the issues around funding, some of which have been raised in other parts of this report. Of those who responded to this question in the online survey (n=68), 91% received all the funding they applied for from the fund. In addition, 13 teams received additional funding from other sources, and especially their employer organisation. Actual sums granted range from $300 to $20,000 (with most reporting between $5,000 and $10,000), with a number of organisations also providing assistance 'in kind' e.g. with teaching relief and administrative support, rather than with actual cash.

Respondents were asked whether the funding received from all sources was enough to meet the total project costs. The results are outlined in Figure 6 below:
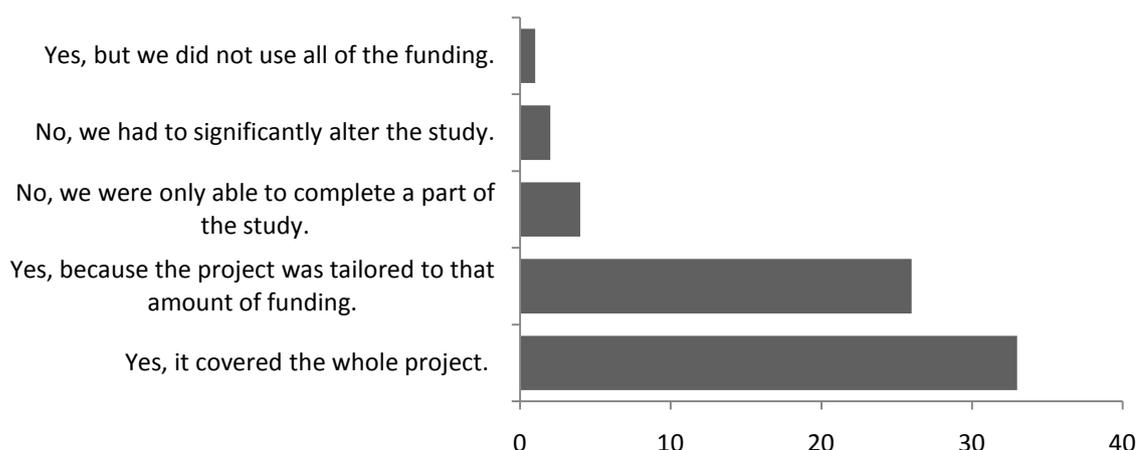
Figure 6. Whether funding from all sources met the project costs n=66

With a small number of exceptions, the project was able to be completed within the funding available, either because it was small enough, or because the project had been specifically tailored to available funding, for example by breaking the project into several parts or limiting the design.

Comments about funding in the online survey fell into a number of categories. The first category were those who were very pleased with the amount of the grant and felt it met their particular needs:

> *The amount has been great to enable a manageable first level project to be achieved.*

> *Sufficient to cover the project / we endeavoured to keep costs to a minimum*

$10,000 is a very helpful amount to be able to apply for.

I think that the amount of funding is fine, it means that one tailors projects and it provides an avenue to go to for small projects where a little bit of money makes a considerable difference.

The second set of comments were those who were happy with the amount so long as it was supplemented with additional funding from other sources, concurrently or subsequently:

I thought the amount that was available was appropriate. We went for additional funding because we had the big main project to get underway too, but the funding was just right for the subproject.

This is good standard amount for a special project. However, if an organisation was not able to match it with other funding, salaries, equipment and resources it would be inadequate.

Although it only covered part of a larger project for which we had to find ongoing funding from elsewhere. We deliberately applied for funding only for this part of the project because of the limited funds available. That is we fitted the project to the available funds and then found other ways to complete it.

The third set of comments were from those who found that the cost of projects was higher than anticipated, leaving a gap that was usually met by unpaid work:

My naivety led me to underestimate the time it would take for my own part - hence my hourly rate is actually tiny but still worth it (just!) - next time I will be more assertive in costing my time - everything else OK though.

However, as the tutor who led this project on behalf of the College I did 80% of the project in my own time without using the funding. I would like some help here knowing the rights of the project leader in regards to the use of funds if the College is the receiver of the funds.

The funding did not cover the goodwill of mentors and support from Pacific researchers and colleagues who wanted the project to be successful. We did this project in this form to establish a platform for more extensive research on Pacific student success looking towards wider coverage internally and a wider collaborative project with a tertiary provider with larger Pacific student population.

A number of survey respondents commented that (in the succinct words of one) "more would be good". However, these comments came from only about 10% of the overall sample, and tended to reflect the inexperience of the researchers in costing the projects, especially in terms of their own time and commitment.

Sustainability of the fund

The final question asked of survey respondents was whether they intended to apply again to the fund for another project. At the time of doing this evaluation, a number of project teams had already had two (seven cases), or in one case three, 'dips' into the funding pool. If this demand were to be replicated across the whole sample, and first time applicants also continued to increase, the drain on the fund could be very large, and the organisation could run out of funding very quickly.

Figure 7 lays out the likely future demand for funding from those teams which have already received at least one project grant:
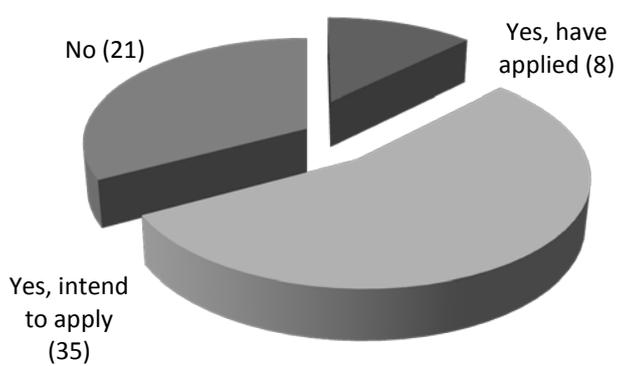

Figure 7. Intention to reapply for Hub Project Funding n=64.

This is an important finding. The hub project fund has already funded seven teams twice, and one team has received three grants. There is no limit to the number of applications that can be made. The issue that the hubs may have to consider is developing a system of selection to ration resources, should demand come to exceed supply. This may be based on the quality of the application, the extent and reach of collaboration, the number of applications per team or other criteria as required. It is important that the criteria are unambiguous and transparent.

Conclusion and recommendation

To date the amount of funding available at the hubs has more or less matched the demand. No projects have been turned down because they could not be funded. This situation is unlikely to continue. More than half of those who answered the question about future applications intend to apply again.

If all those who answered this question were to apply this year, that would constitute $350,000 in additional grants on top of any new applications. With an annual budget of around $100,000, such a glut of applications could not be funded and a selection process would need to take place.

The recommendation is, therefore:

That selection criteria be developed, agreed and published for the hub project fund, that are available to be utilised should demand for funding begin to exceed the number of eligible project applications.

Conclusion: overall impact of fund

It is clear from this formative evaluation that the fund has plugged a gap and met a need for small scale funding of projects to support teaching and learning. Whether these are used as 'starter' projects of something bigger, or to facilitate a different kind of study or as a complete project in its own right, the fund is strongly endorsed and supported by recipients, organisations and research partners.

The impact of the projects is clearly documented through case studies and the survey results. Impact is strong at the point of implementation of the project, and there is a significant actual and expected ripple effect onto other courses, institutions and sectors.

> *This project should have an enormous impact on the way courses are offered through Polytechs (case study 14) (shift to distance learning options/ online courses).*
>
> *Clearly have had a significant impact on that particular course and how it is delivered. Also broader graduate certificate programme and I hope the publications that we put out about workplace learning will have impact too (case study 15).*
>
> *I think we can measure use and satisfaction from Ako funded projects through reports noting any long term improvement in quality teaching that is captured through retention and success data, student satisfaction surveys and the like (case study 4).*
>
> *We will hopefully be able to re-evaluate the differences the project made to tutor teaching and student learning. New project in 2011 to re-interview current participants on effects of the intervention as they become teachers (case study 11).*

The factors that affect impact are skills and new tools developed through the projects (e.g. mentoring, action research approaches, new teaching models, IT tools developed for specific purposes), new programmes and their implications (e.g. systems of support for at-risk students, course-sharing across institutions, new delivery of curricula, field supervision models) documented findings that can have transformative effects across sectors (e.g. cultural analysis of trades teachers, e-learning handbooks, cross-cultural opportunities, new models of assessment) and global collaboration (e.g. conferences and meetings to discuss teaching and learning, and research).

This report has provided qualitative evidence and survey results that demonstrate that the Regional Hub Project Fund is an effective intervention to improve teaching and learning in tertiary education. The type of interventions are so pervasive that it is difficult to measure the overall impact, but there is good evidence of impact in a range of projects and strong signs of ripple effects. Positive trends include a culture of collaboration (fostered by the hub co-ordinators), significant intentions to publish findings and disseminate them and good support from host organisations.

There are personal costs and benefits in the projects for the teams. On the one hand, the projects can add to full workloads for those involved. On the other, creating new ways of teaching and learning, new resources and effective approaches is highly

satisfying. Some have gained new positions and promotions out of their work; at least one team leader missed out on a pay rise due to competing pressures. But it is highly significant that not only are the teams still enthusiastic, most of them are considering applying to the fund again to extend their project or run a new one.

The recommendations provide ways to streamline the fund and protect it against increased demand in the future. There are no recommendations for significant changes of direction for the fund. This evaluation shows a fund that is popular, well-used and that may have an impact on the target sectors well out of proportion to its relatively small size.

In terms of the overall mission of Ako Aotearoa to transform teaching and learning in the tertiary sector, it is impossible to imagine a more dynamic and effective tool than the hub project fund. The characteristics that make the fund so effective are: proximity of the hub to the funded organisations; encouraging collaboration; supporting small projects that are innovative and exciting; support from hub staff; encouraging new researchers; and the potential to launch research careers and further research into teaching and learning at the tertiary level.

A summative evaluation should be undertaken in about two years time, which revisits a sample of projects and considers the quantitative impact and effects at that time via an in-depth survey. In the meantime, this evaluation lists a number of recommendations that may serve to clarify and improve the scheme.

Nga mihi

Lesley and Liz would like to thank Kirsty, Bridget, Ian, Ruth and Peter of Ako Aotearoa for their help in making this formative evaluation possible. We would also like to thank the team leaders, managers and research partners who agreed to be interviewed for the project, and those who completed the online survey.

29 June 2010

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Appendix 1. Online survey

AKO AOTEAROA HUB RESEARCH FUND
This survey is to be filled in by ONE person from each project. Thanks.
Please enter the ID code you have been given to participate in this study

[   ]

Is the team made up of...
◯ Academic staff only
◯ Administrative or IT staff only
◯ Both academic and administrative staff

How did you first hear about Ako Aotearoa hub project grants?
Make the single best choice
◯ Ako Aotearoa website
◯ Communication via Ako Aotearoa hub
◯ Internal memo/ report on research opportunities
◯ Media or publicity
◯ Word of mouth

◯ Other, please specify: [   ]

What features of the hub project grants attracted you to apply?
Tick all the boxes that apply
☐ Tertiary teaching and learning focus
☐ Reputation of Ako Aotearoa
☐ Prior relationship with Hub staff
☐ The funding criteria
☐ Accessible source of project funding
☐ Fast turnaround
☐ Regional focus

☐ Other, please specify: [   ]

What were your reasons for applying?
Tick all the boxes that apply
☐ Focus on teaching and learning
☐ Needs identified in our organisation(s)
☐ Through involvement in Ako Aotearoa programmes;
☐ We had a specific project to be funded;
☐ Encouraged to apply by others;
☐ Encouraged to apply on behalf of organisation;
☐ Part of a larger research programme;
☐ Part of job in fostering teaching and learning in the organisation;
☐ To build on previous research;
☐ To build capability in my/our area of expertise

☐ Other, please specify: [   ]

Were there any factors that concerned you about making the application?

- [ ] No concerns at all
- [ ] Difficult to reach the funding standard
- [ ] The Hub's funding priorities were unclear
- [ ] We did not expect to win the funding
- [ ] Limited support from the host organisation for our application
- [ ] Our team had little research experience

- [ ] Other, please specify:

Were you successful?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

Did you receive a satisfactory explanation of why your project was declined?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

If 'no', please explain what additional explanation you needed

Have you, or are you intending to, re-apply for funding from the Hub Project Fund?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

Is this for...

- [ ] The same or a similar project?
- [ ] A new or different project?

Looking to your application, please rate your experiences on a five point scale
1= not at all satisfactory 5= extremely satisfactory

	1	2	3	4	5
Undertaking an application (forms, technical advice etc)	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Submission process, including guidance and support from Ako Aotearoa staff	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Timeliness and efficiency in dealing with the application	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Feedback received on your application from Ako Aotearoa	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Any other comments you would like to make about the application process?

What is the current status of this project?

☐ In progress
☐ Completed
☐ As noted above, our application was declined

Did you receive all the funding you applied for from the Hub Project Fund?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Did you receive any funding from other sources for the same project?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Please name the source(s) of any other funds received for this project

[ ]

Please name the total amount received from other sources

[ ]

Was the funding (from this and other sources) adequate to undertake the study as originally conceived
Please select the single best answer

☐ Yes, it covered the whole project.
☐ Yes, because the project was tailored to that amount of funding.
☐ No, we had to significantly alter the study to fit the funding we received.
☐ No, we were only able to complete a part of the study.
☐ Yes, but we did not use all of the funding applied for

Please make any comment on the amount of funding available from the Hub project grants?

[ ]

To what extent did the project include the following aims or processes ?
Score from 1 to 5 – 1 being not relevant to this study, 5 being it was a central, most important, element

	1	2	3	4	5
Aim to improve teaching practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	1	2	3	4	5
Aim to improve learning for specified learners	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Aim to influence teaching and learning practices across sector	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Review of previous research in area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Partnerships across departments or organisations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
'Good practice' focus or findings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sharing of findings in a larger context (within organisation or beyond)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Building capability across one or more organisations or departments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How satisfied were you working with Ako Aotearoa during the course of the project, in relation to the following matters?
Score from 1 to 5 – 1 not at all satisfied, 5 being extremely satisfied

	1	2	3	4	5
Finalising the contract	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Liaison with Hub staff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Support from Ako Aotearoa	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Timeliness in producing funds	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Timeliness in response to requests	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feedback	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Final report process	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How satisfied are you with support provided by Ako Aotearoa in developing the final report?
☐ The support offered by Ako Aotearoa was very satisfactory
☐ The support offered by Ako Aotearoa was satisfactory
☐ The support offered by Ako Aotearoa was not satisfactory
☐ Our final report is not yet written

How satisfied are you with support provided by Ako Aotearoa in publishing public outputs?
☐ The support offered by Ako Aotearoa was very satisfactory
☐ The support offered by Ako Aotearoa was satisfactory
☐ The support offered by Ako Aotearoa was not satisfactory
☐ Our final report is not yet written

Please make any additional comments you wish to about working with Ako Aotearoa on this project.

A core goal of Ako Aotearoa is to improve teaching in the tertiary sector. Please score the following points as accurately as you can on the realistic likely effects of your project on the sector.
A score of 1 means no effects at all, and a score of 5 extremely positive effects.

	1	2	3	4	5	Don't know
Improvements in attitudes or approach to teaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improved teaching preparation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Better content of courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improved teaching practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improved online course/teaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improved assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improved course evaluation processes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please describe how receiving this project funding has enhanced your confidence in undertaking this kind of project work?

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Please describe how receiving this project funding has enhanced your teaching and learning practices?

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IMPACT refers to the reach of the project effects noted above. Please provide an estimate of the likely impact of your project on the various groups listed
A score of 1 signifies no impact at all, and a score of 5 indicates the biggest possible impact. If the project was not designed to have impact in a particular area, please select 'not applicable'.

	1	2	3	4	5	Not applicable
Tertiary teachers in your organisation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tertiary teachers across more than one organisation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learners in a particular course, programme or department	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learners across a whole organisation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learners in more than one organisation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Regional or sectoral change in teaching and learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Specific elearning or eteaching practices within one area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please comment about either the effects or impact of your project on teaching and learning?

Please describe, in your own words, how (if at all) your findings are to be disseminated to interested tertiary teachers.

Is your organisation or professional association involved in disseminating your findings and, if so, how?

Are you intending to, or have you already, applied for or received further Ako Aotearoa hub research funding?

☐ Yes, have already applied
☐ Yes, am intending to apply
☐ No

Appendix 2. Qualitative research schedule

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH SCHEDULE
Interviews with team leaders

Can you explain how the project came about, including the decision to apply to the Ako Aotearoa Hub for funding? (prompts – drivers of project, funding).

What made you decide on this particular project? (internal factors such as interest of team members, or external such as needs of organisation).

What role(s) did the Ako Aotearoa hub play in your project? (at the formation stage, during the project, at the end/reporting)

In working with the Ako Aotearoa Hub, were there any areas of good practice, or of particular difficulty, that you would like to highlight or give feedback on? (highlight – good things, personnel, processes, timeliness, expertise, ideas etc; difficulties – same things)

What aspects of the regional hub funding process can maximise the potential of the project to 'make a difference'?

The rest of the questions have to do with the impact of the project. By impact, we mean the nature and amount of any changes that have occurred as a result of the project. It is important for us that we receive a clear assessment for you about the real impact of this project.

Can we please explore any impact that the project had on you and your team, in the following areas: workload, innovation, leadership, increased involvement in teaching and learning processes, promotion or change of position, project funding from other sources to continue the work, publications, leadership in your field (e.g. conference papers) and other.
Collect examples of impacts where they can be quantified….

Following on from that, has the teaching and learning practice of you or your team members changed as a result of this project? If so, how?

Can we now look at the impact that your project may have had on the organisation you work for, and/or other similar organisations, in the following areas:
teaching practice, skill or quality…

assessment and evaluation skills….

IT skills…

access to teaching quality support…

access to cultural skills, including te reo and kaupapa Māori…

others……..

Any facts and figures – changes to assessment and retention, learning materials etc, student assessments.

What factors do you think have helped or hindered the impact of your project in target organisations?

What impact, if any, do you think or know your project has had or will have on learners in your organisation?

The project funding has not been in place all that long. Looking forward around twelve months, what longer term impacts do you think the project will have on teaching quality or learning experience in your organisation or in others? Why do you think this, any other areas etc.

Anything else?