IWI STRATEGIC REFERENCE GROUP

NARRATIVE AND FUNDING PRIORITIES

to Tertiary Education Commission for construction and infrastructure training investment in 2027

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WAIHANGA ARA RAU
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IWI STRATEGIC REFERENCE GROUP NARRATIVE

The Iwi Strategic Reference Group (Iwi SRG) was brought together to identify areas where they could collaborate to address common issues and challenges. The group has met throughout 2025 to identify aspirations and priorities for iwi education, workforce, and pathways.

At the heart of these kōrero is the commitment to tino rangatiratanga, mātauranga Māori, and intergenerational wellbeing.

The group has acknowledged that there is no 'natural place' to sit within an ISB structure, and advocating as such is not one of their priorities. Options are being explored to place them within a wānanga.

The group have outlined key themes and funding priorities, reflecting iwi-led visions for education, training, and workforce development that strengthen whānau, hapu and iwi capability, protect mātauranga Māori, and contribute to Aotearoa's collective future.

By 2027, iwi expect to see a tertiary education and training system that fully honours mātauranga Māori, strengthens tino rangatiratanga, and embeds iwi-led solutions as central to Aotearoa's resilience and prosperity.

Funding priorities must move beyond narrow training inputs to empower iwi ownership of education and workforce pathways, while ensuring sustainability, cultural survival, and intergenerational wellbeing remain at the centre of programme design.

Key themes

The key role we played with this group, led by our Poumatua and Te Pane Taketake team, was to act as an advocate and facilitator, adding value to the work they do. This includes:

Mātauranga Māori & Iwi-led education

Leading the development of the Mātauranga Māori Accreditation Framework with MoE and NZQA. This framework allows iwi to align their knowledge of tikanga, the environment, history, etc., with C&I qualifications, while being owned and delivered by individual iwi. Suggestions include:

- **Iwi-led, iwi-owned education systems** designed "by iwi, for iwi," embedding tikanga, kawa, and mātauranga Māori into curricula, assessment, and micro-credentials.
- Protection of **intellectual property** and recognition of iwi systems of knowledge alongside NZQA frameworks.
- Development of bespoke education and employment pathways, particularly focused on rangatahi and the kura-to-career transition.

Mana Motuhake & governance

Facilitated presentation and discussion on indigenous procurement with the CEO of Downer, while also exploring iwi partnerships with a Tier 1 company. Suggestions include:

- Commitment to iwi self-determination in shaping education and workforce development, reducing dependence on Crown-led solutions.
- Support for succession planning, governance frameworks, and intergenerational leadership.
- Advocacy for procurement reform to ensure equitable access for iwi and Māori businesses.

Sustainability & Te Taiao

Facilitation of discussions with Environmental and Civil Engineers to inform iwi on what they should be asking when attending planning and design meetings for major roading and construction projects relating to Carbon Accountability and carbon emission mitigation.

It is worth noting that these projects run end-to-end and are not standalone programmes. For example:

- Renewable energy includes the construction and maintenance of ground-mounted solar farms. These are in mainly rural areas to ensure marae and small communities have power during extreme weather events. Iwi want to provide foundation skills training so schools can offer their people career choices and opportunities.
- Forest to Whare starts with school programmes and pre-employment training delivered by local providers. We've developed a complete framework out to 2032 when their first relocatable home is completed. In between there is the building of residential accommodation, a training facility, a Mill, and an offsite construction area.

Suggestions include:

- A holistic approach to sustainability - encompassing cultural, social, economic, and environmental wellbeing.
- Investment in iwi-led initiatives such as **renewable energy projects, forestry-to-whare projects, and food sovereignty programmes.**
- Integration of **carbon accounting and climate resilience** into construction and infrastructure training.

Innovation & technology

- Interest in digital futures, AI, and Māori data sovereignty, with iwi-led governance and tikanga-based ethical frameworks.
- Emphasis on indigenous innovation, global indigenous collaboration, and cross-cultural partnerships with Pacific communities.

IWI FUNDING PRIORITIES

1.   Iwi ownership and Mātauranga Māori

   i.   *Establish ring-fenced funding for iwi-led curricula, assessment frameworks, and micro-credentials.*

   ii.   *Recognise iwi mātauranga indicators (e.g., mauri-ometer, rāhui) as valid measures within education and workforce planning.*

   iii.   *Across all programmes, particularly those requiring iwi partnerships in C&I, a key focus should be on environmental management, including waterways/the moana, and sustainability, including the effects on the Taiao from extreme weather events.*

An example of an Iwi-led programme is: [Education Pataka Toa - Te Rūnanga O Toa Rangatira](#). Iwi want to develop similar programmes across the motu, but do not currently have the capability to do so.

2.   Holistic Sustainability

   i.   *Invest in iwi-led renewable energy and forestry-to-housing as both training and employment pathways.*

An example of this is the Ngāti Maniapoto / Tairāwhiti Marae renewable energy projects.

Ngāti Maniapoto have a small trial solar farm supplying power directly to the grid. This generates credits that are used to offset whanau power bills, regardless of where they are located. The next project is to expand the solar farm to support mill operations. They are also trialling a small hydro unit. Marae across Tairāwhiti have been funded to install a solar farm to support marae operations, with the residual benefits supporting the local community. Many iwi are looking to renewable energy, including waste wood.

   ii.   Support integration of carbon accounting frameworks and climate resilience practices into all TEC-funded programmes.

Carbon accounting is a relatively new concept, so while there are regulations requiring some accountability, they're loosely applied. For example, for every tonne of carbon generated on a project, you must plant 1 tree to mitigate the effects. Te Ahu a Turanga (Manawatū Gorge) planted 2.3 million trees.

The Iwi SRG would like TEC and the wider vocational network to consider how this could be implemented into every programme over time.

3.   Leadership and governance development

   i.   Fund Māori leadership, supervision, and governance capability programmes across operational, managerial, and governance levels.

   ii.   Resource iwi-led succession planning and procurement-readiness initiatives.

4. **Technology and future skills**

    i. Create dedicated funding for Māori digital innovation and AI literacy, prioritising iwi control of data and infrastructure.

    ii. Support iwi–Pacific collaborations in emerging industries.

5. **Removing systemic barriers**

    i. Provide wraparound support for learners - including driver licensing, digital access, pastoral care, and financial literacy - to ensure equitable participation.

    ii. Ensure pathways are flexible and accessible for rangatahi, wāhine, and whānau who have historically been underserved.

    iii. There needs to be a scope to develop assessments and learning resources for kinaesthetic learners.

    iv. The development and delivery of micro-credentials to acknowledge individual skill sets that can accumulate/stack across sectors to give learners a broader range of experience. Also, micro-credentials are a better fit for creating programmes to complement a particular project.