



A CASE STUDY REPORT FOR TAKOHA

Nōku te Ao Procurement Process

Takoha and Nōku te Ao

Takoha aims to inform ways of working in health promotion that are fit for purpose in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand.

Nōku te Ao, Like Minds (Nōku te Ao) is the new strategic direction for the *Like Minds, Like Mine* programme, seeking to end the prejudice and discrimination against those experiencing mental distress throughout Aotearoa. This redesign was motivated by the need to focus on those experiencing higher and compounded levels of mental distress, such as Māori and Pacific peoples. The move to a new strategic direction meant new opportunities to engage with providers in a way that honoured Te Tiriti, and could be mana-enhancing for those communities experiencing mental distress prejudice and/or discrimination. To achieve this, an adapted procurement process was formed to procure partners for three work-streams within *Nōku te Ao*: Management of Social Action Grants, a Social Movement Initiative, and Settings-based Education for Social Change.



Overall Objective

The procurement process for *Nōku te Ao* partners was designed to strengthen the voices of those benefitting from the programme

Key aims of the new procurement process were to encourage a more diverse range of organisations to apply and to target organisations representing the priority groups of *Nōku te Ao*. These priority groups, or benefit groups, are those with lived experience of mental distress, and those more likely to suffer higher rates of prejudice and discrimination, such as Māori. As such, *Nōku te Ao* procured partners explicitly based on the goals and principles that informed the programme itself; these goals and principles corner-stoned upon Kaupapa Māori philosophy – Tino Rangatiratanga, Taonga Tuku Iho, Ako Māori, Āta, Kaupapa, Whānau and Mana Tangata. As such, the following procurement principles were developed:

- Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- Investing for equity
- Equitable procurement
- Collaborative planning and design
- Leadership and guidance by *Nōku te Ao* benefit groups
- Having flexible contracting
- Commissioning for long-term sustainable solutions.

These principles align with key enablers of Takoha: applying **Te Tiriti articles, Ngā Manukura and Te Mana Whakahaere (community self-determination), and Mahi Tahi (strategic partnerships and collaboration).**

What was done differently

Key changes to the traditional approach included increasing decision-making power for partners, and communication efforts

Traditionally, standard competitive procurement models are process-orientated and revolve around transactions. Programme teams have key oversight functions, with little involvement from those outside the programme. Notification of the Request for Proposals (RFP) is usually via the Government Electronic Tender Service (GETS) only; although may be shared wider in some circumstances. Potential providers are generally given a timeframe within which they can ask questions to inform their proposal, before submitting. Written proposals are received and then discussed internally by the evaluation panel. Evaluation criteria are based on things like capability, capacity, cost, and other specific needs for the programme. The proposals are scored by the panel against these criteria, and a contract is drawn up for the successful candidate. For those who are not successful, feedback may be given so they can strengthen future proposals.

For *Nōku te Ao*, core elements of a standard procurement model were used, including RFPs, evaluation criteria, and panel scoring. However, some elements were revised to achieve the principles outlined earlier (summarised in Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of *Nōku te Ao* Procurement differences from traditional procurement

Procurement stage	Traditional procurement	<i>Nōku te Ao</i> procurement
Oversight	Programme teams	<p>Additionally involved expert benefit groups</p> <p>Independent Kaupapa Māori specialist from KPMG provided procurement advice and chaired all meetings</p>
Communications	GETS notification and other channels where appropriate	<p>Additional early sector engagement via regional <i>kanohi ki te kanohi</i> hui</p> <p>Additional creation of a dedicated <i>Nōku te Ao</i> procurement website</p>
ROI and RFP	Accepted long-written form in English only	Additionally accepted in Te Reo Māori and accepted in short-form accompanied with video
Evaluation	<p>Evaluation panel usually consists of Te Hiringa Hauora kaimahi, sometimes external subject matter expert panel members where appropriate</p> <p>Meetings chaired by Te Hiringa Hauora procurement representative or programme kaimahi chair evaluation</p>	<p>Evaluation panel additionally consisted of external lived experience and/or cultural experts as core members</p> <p>Wānanga held with shortlisted respondents</p> <p>Independent Kaupapa Māori specialist from KPMG chaired all meetings and wānanga</p>

Procurement stage	Traditional procurement	<i>Nōku te Ao</i> procurement
Contracting	<p>Te Hiringa Hauora create and deliver contracts to be signed based on existing static templates</p> <p>Services based on RFP and agreed between both Te Hiringa Hauora and the preferred respondent</p>	<p>Bespoke relationship agreements created</p> <p>Terms and Conditions and Activity Schedules negotiated between Te Hiringa Hauora and partners</p>
Feedback	<p>Feedback is offered for all respondents depending on the size, scale and complexity of the event</p> <p>Preferred is phone call or written, but <i>kanohi ki te kanohi</i> is also available</p>	<p><i>Kanohi ki te kanohi</i> hui favoured to provide feedback</p>

Procurement design and early communications emphasised collaborating with benefit groups

Mahi Tahī, Ngā Manukura and **Te Mana Whakahaere** can be seen in the early stages of the process, as the procurement plan was designed in collaboration with *Nōku te Ao* benefit groups. This was informed by *Nōku te Ao*'s principles of collaborative planning and design, and leadership and guidance by *Nōku te Ao* groups. These expert groups included the Tangata Whenua Advisory Group and Te Hiringa Hauora internal Lived Experience staff. Additionally, an independent Kaupapa Māori specialist from KPMG provided procurement advice, as well as chaired all meetings and wānanga. This was to ensure and uphold tikanga and kawa through the process.

Mahi Tahī, and upholding the articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, can also be seen in the expansion of the procurement communications. For the *Nōku te Ao* team, this was motivated by the principle of investing and procuring for equity. In addition to standard GETS communication, a dedicated *Like Minds* procurement website was built to circulate information to a wider and more relevant audience ([link here](#)). The website included a glossary of key terms, in-depth FAQs, and a personalised video - 'He Karanga', featuring Te Hiringa Hauora Chief Executive Tane Cassidy and Programme Lead Harley Rogers, inviting organisations to apply. The website took a unique approach to provide an easier and more personal platform for potential partners to engage with the procurement opportunities.

The *Nōku te Ao* team held three *kanohi ki te kanohi* hui in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch in order to *wānanga* and engage with people who were interested in the kaupapa. This again allowed for discussion to be held before any organisation committed to applying. Overall, these strategies meant potential providers had more time and opportunity to ask questions and discuss the kaupapa before applying. This accommodated and increased accessibility for organisations outside of mainstream providers.

Interested partners were invited to submit ROIs, and short-listed respondents were invited to discuss their proposals before evaluation

To further increase accessibility for potential providers, Registrations of Interest (ROIs) for the Social Movement Initiative and the Settings-based Education for Social Change work streams were requested first. Social Action Grants did not require ROI due to limited market capacity, instead opting just for RFPs (explained below). An ROI allowed potential providers to show interest and learn more about the programme, without committing the resource to a full proposal in the first instance. These were accepted not only in standard, written long-form, but also written short-form accompanied by a short video, and were also accepted in Te Reo Māori (or a mix of Te Reo Māori and English). By increasing efforts to reach out to a wider community and increasing forms of communication allowed, the response process was intended to be more accessible and to encourage more benefit group organisations to apply.

Following ROIs, three short-listed candidates for each of the two work-streams were invited to submit a proposal (RFP), and then attend a *wānanga* with the evaluation panel, *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face-to-face, in person or via Zoom), to discuss their interest and the development of their proposal. Here, Te Hiringa Hauora could ask questions of potential partners; ask focused questions on behalf of the evaluation panel members; and encourage potential partners to ask questions of their own as a way to balance and shift power in decision-making. This form of open communication was intended to lay the foundation for more authentic relationships with prospective partners. In terms of the Framework, this demonstrates **Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Ngā Manukura and Te Mana Whakahaere, and Mahi Tahi.**

Proposals were submitted for all three work-streams to be evaluated. The proposal evaluation panel included people who represent the benefit groups of *Nōku te Ao*. Additionally, the criteria for evaluation of proposals included:

- prioritised cultural expertise and lived experience of mental distress;
- nationwide connections with the sector and lived experience communities;
- alignment of organisational values with the *Like Minds* kaupapa;
- and the ability to work in partnership with other organisations (*kotahitanga*).

Similar to traditional procurement, these criteria reflect the key values of the kaupapa being procured for. When partners were chosen, bespoke Relationship Agreements were negotiated between Te Hiringa Hauora and preferred partners, with support from Kaupapa Māori lawyers. Negotiations were made around the scope of work expected. The Agreements helped to foster more reciprocal relationships, and keep both parties legally accountable to each other, as opposed to solely transactional relationships. The standard contract templates, such as Government Model Contracts used in traditional procurement, limit the input of partners on agreements and give more weight to Te Hiringa Hauora priorities over community priorities – Relationship Agreements are more dynamic. The evaluation panel and Relationship Agreements demonstrated a commitment to power-sharing by giving priority communities high-level decision-making power.

Debriefing for all applicants was offered, with *kanohi ki te kanohi* debriefings being favoured more than in traditional procurement, continuing relationship-building and the embedding of Kaupapa Māori principles.

Overall, the procurement approach was successful and meant a similar process could be adopted for the research partner's procurement

The success of the revised procurement approach can be seen in the variety of applicants the procurement opportunity attracted. Over the three work-streams, 13 responses were received, most of which were organisations who had had little to no prior involvement with Te Hiringa Hauora. By specifying the types of organisations of interest (eg, Māori, Lived Experience), and also increasing means of communications, the procurement process could attract the interest of those organisations which could meet the specific needs of the programme. These aspects were key for the success of the *Nōku te Ao* team's approach.

One criticism received from potential partners was the length of time that the procurement took, with a few stating that it was taxing on organisations, time-wise, financially, and emotionally. Although the revised process meant procurement took longer than traditional procurement, this was largely due to navigating a new way of working. It is expected that in future, similar procurement processes will become more streamlined.

The research arm for *Nōku te Ao* has undergone a similar procurement process, designed with the intention of upholding the mana of those with lived experience. This signals strength and longevity of this procurement process. Outside of *Nōku te Ao*, the procurement team has drawn on this process for the Pacific Vaping Qualitative research, including accepting RFP's varying formats and with non-English language (in this case, a Pacific language).

Overall, this adapted procurement process was focussed heavily on relationships, communication, and power-sharing. It demonstrates how Framework enablers **Mahi Tahi, Ngā Manukura and Te Mana Whakahaere, and the articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi** can be embedded and facilitate optimal practice.

Appendix: Method

The method for this case study included compiling information via documentation review, and checking it for accuracy via interviews. The documentation review involved reading over relevant documents to gain a base understanding of the process and key features of this procurement. These documents were the project plans, presentation slides, and the procurement plans. These key documents were identified and supplied by the *Nōku te Ao* procurement team.

Following this initial information collection, further detail and clarification were sought from key persons involved in the procurement process. The *Nōku te Ao* team lead was interviewed in a semi-structured interview, whilst other key staff (identified by the *Nōku te Ao* team) were approached via email correspondence for targeted information to fill key knowledge gaps. For example, detail of traditional procurement methods were sought from procurement staff. Staff were then given the opportunity to review the finalised case study and advise on accuracy.

The following template was used to guide interview questions and discussion:

Different from plan – Was the procurement plan you shared with me followed exactly? Were any changes made from it?

Overall objective of the project – What were you hoping to achieve? Why did you do the project?

What you did differently – What was different about this project? How did you intentionally work in a Tiriti-dynamic way?

Who did you work with? – Who was involved in the project? How was this different to other projects?

What you learned along the way – What could you share with others in Te Hiringa Hauora to help them work in a Tiriti-dynamic way? What worked well, and what could you have done better?

Next steps or recommendations – What's next for the project?

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