



## Professional Learning and Development in Change:

*From: PLANZ (the Professional Learning Association New Zealand: Te Māngai Whakangungu Kaiako o Aotearoa)*

### (1) Introduction

The Professional Learning Association New Zealand: Te Māngai Whakangungu Kaiako o Aotearoa (PLANZ) has the vision of becoming the pre-eminent professional body for organisations and sole traders involved in professional learning and development (PLD) in Aotearoa New Zealand. It aims to promote excellence in PLD in schools and kura, represent PLD provider interests and contribute to effective facilitator practice through high expectations in learning, education and training. PLANZ is registered as an incorporated society representing professional learning and development providers which work with both Māori medium (MM) and English medium (EM) kura and schools. Within an overarching aim of promoting enhanced educational outcomes for all learners in Aotearoa New Zealand, we strive to:

- Develop and maintain a professional identity for education consultancies and professional learning and development facilitators
- Establish quality standards to encourage consistent professional practice
- Ensure a high level of professional practice
- Promote professional excellence within member organisations.

From January 1, 2018, the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand: Matatū Aotearoa (“the Council”) will assume responsibility for the design and management of government centrally funded PLD for learning organisations. The Council has requested this brief paper from PLANZ, outlining, with examples, its emerging views on the strengths and weaknesses of the new 2017 model of PLD provision. The paper considers the strengths and weaknesses of the new model in terms of:

- Access and allocation from both a school/kura and a provider point of view
- Workforce capacity

- The quality provision of PLD
- The business model for providers.

We conclude with a series of recommendations which we hope to explore with the Council.

## (2) Methodology

This paper is based on:

- Minutes of meetings of the PLANZ executive
- Letters from PLANZ to the Ministry of Education
- A survey conducted by PLANZ in July 2017 which represented the views of:
  - 14 EM providers and 8 MM providers<sup>1</sup>
  - 16 PLANZ members and 8 non members.
  - 8 organisations with over 20 accredited facilitators; 4 organisations of 10-20 facilitators; 4 organisations of 5-10 facilitators; 4 organisations of 1-5 facilitators; 2 sole traders. Collectively these organisations employed 535 facilitators or consultants comprising:
    - MM – 23 facilitators accredited for MM with 32 for both mediums;
    - EM – 203 facilitators accredited for EM with 277 for both mediums.

## (3) The positives and challenges of the new model

### Access and allocation

#### Positives

The benefits associated with the new model derive mainly from increased agency and choice for Kāhui Ako, schools and kura (hereafter referred to as schools/kura). However, as we highlight, several of these positives come with provisos.

**Increased agency** - School and kura leaders are now more directly responsible for determining the PLD focus needed to enable their student achievement goals to be met, for designing a PLD response which will meet their specific needs and context, for the choice of PLD facilitator and for monitoring the delivery of that PLD. They are no longer limited to pre-defined programmes of support.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this paper, Māori Medium refers to both the Level 1 and Level 2 immersion programmes where the curriculum is taught in Te Reo Māori for 51% or more of the time; English Medium refers to those programmes where the curriculum is taught in English.

Although many schools and kura appeared to have struggled initially in accessing the new system, there is some evidence that greater engagement is beginning to ameliorate some of the issues listed below under challenges. As well, the slow take-up reported below is, in some cases, due to an increasingly agentic and discerning view among leaders of what effective PLD should look like in their school/kura i.e. they are showing more professional autonomy in decision making around PLD which may or may not involve Ministry funded organisations/facilitators.

**Increasingly sensible allocations** - Allocations for both EM and MM need to be sufficient to enable the sort of ongoing support for capacity building which is necessary to make a long-term and sustainable difference. There was initial provider concern that the number of very small allocations (with a significant number under 50 hours per school/kura) might result in limited engagements with schools/kura and a diminished prospect of sustained, embedded improvement in the areas of focus (what has been termed “drive-by PLD”). However our survey revealed that the situation does appear to be improving, hence we list this as a positive. That survey revealed:

- In MM, based on responses from 7 providers, Statements of Work (SoWs) are, on average for 97 hours.
- In EM, based on responses from 11 providers, SoWs are on average 95 hours.

**Area Allocation Panel Representation** - Sector representatives involved as members of the area allocation panels have reported appreciation at being involved in decisions regarding PLD and, as a result, have improved understanding about the new processes. However, there appears to be regional variability in the composition of these panels, in particular in terms of appropriate representation from the MM sector as well as iwi groups. Although regional allocation panels do have Māori representation, in some regions at least, they do not necessarily have experience in MM posing a potential risk that MM proposals may not be considered equitably.

## Challenges

There has been slow engagement with the new system from many school leaders. Informal discussions with the Ministry of Education (“Ministry”), along with provider feedback, suggests a significant drop-off in allocated hours in the first months of implementation in 2017 compared to previous years. This could be viewed as a predictable response to any new model of provision but newness is only one of several barriers to take-up. Of most significant concern is the anecdotal, though triangulated reports we get from both providers and the Ministry that, to date, engagement with the new model has been less than hoped for in those schools/kura which most need it, many of which are lower decile, rural, and with significant Māori and Pasifika student populations. This is a serious concern for students at risk of underachieving for whom PLD has previously made a significant difference to the quality of pedagogy and enhanced engagement leading to improved academic and social outcomes.

**Unwieldy application processes** - The transactional costs involved in the new system for school/kura leaders and, as we report later, for providers, are significant. We assume they are equally significant for the Ministry. Both school/kura leaders and providers report that the process is complex and time consuming. The process of preparing an application, regional committee deliberation, journal development and negotiation of a SoW is cumbersome with many opportunities for error and with significant, unrecompensed transactional costs for providers.

Every PLANZ member organisation has experienced errors in SoWs. These often differ from initial expectations in terms of hours or other information they had previously received from school leaders. Unless schools provide us with their delivery plans, we do not receive these with the SoWs, hence processing SoWs takes longer because, without the delivery plans, providers cannot check the basis for the hours allocation.

**False Assumptions** - Some school/kura leaders have not engaged with the process after realising that they had wrongly assumed that allocated hours could be used for, for example, teacher relief. Many have also wrongly assumed that providers receive income for the support they provide prior to the SoW being signed off. In addition, many schools have assumed that they could plan 1 or 2 terms ahead (rather than for the full length of their allocated PLD), and have logged those in the delivery plan, rather than the entire number of hours allocated. They have done this because they want to inquire into practice and gather data and reflect on impact before determining how all allocated hours would be allocated. As a result, SoWs sometimes contain only a portion of the allocated hours.

**Technical Issues** - There are a number of technical issues associated with PLD journals, a key one being an inability to co-develop journals in cloud based platforms. School leaders are busy and sharing Excel spreadsheets and making adjustments via email can be time consuming and confusing.

**Duration of Allocation** - Some schools are being allocated funding for one year only, creating uncertainty about whether they will be able to continue initiatives in future years. It would be helpful for sustainability and planning if longer-term allocations were more common.

**The Need for Relationship Building** – An issue related to the highly targeted nature of allocations is that Indicative guidelines to schools/kura for completing the journals may tend to marginalise whangaungatanga, tangata whenuatanga and wānanga as promoted in [Hei Raukura](#). Relationship building is critical in both MM and EM but these important conditions are not recognised in allocations.

**The development of Kahui Ako** - Some schools/kura are holding back on engaging with the new model because of the need to identify wider Kāhui Ako professional learning needs, for example, some Kāhui Ako have identified a need to focus on establishing relationships, building leadership across the cluster and developing and embedding the new in-school and cross-school roles. These are critical for sustainability but do not necessarily align with the professional learning goals for centrally funded PLD.

**Issues for Māori medium** - MM providers report significantly lower engagement in centrally-funded PLD when compared to previous allocation models. They attribute lower engagement to:

- the timing of implementation, i.e. towards the end of 2016
- the quality of communications to the MM sector about the redesign, how kura and schools could best engage with the new model and why they should engage
- limited capacity in Ministry regions to provide coordinated support for kura and schools
- the reduced visibility of the National Provision Leads which were an important part of the previous allocation model for MM through their identification, prioritisation and brokering of support for high needs MM kura and schools
- insufficient guidance in using the template
- the time, resources and capabilities required to complete a proposal, especially for small MM kura and schools

As well, there are still a significant number of small allocations in MM. As MM are generally smaller in staffing and roll size than EM, it is unclear if and how area allocation panels ensure there is equitable allocation of PLD contact hours for MM. There is also a concern about how level 1 and level 2 MM student needs are being met. There is no clear process to track dual medium schools and Kāhui Ako with dual medium schools.

A further challenge for MM is that accredited facilitators are increasingly unavailable to MM kura as they are engaged in EM PLD. This is because facilitators have become accredited in both to make themselves more 'marketable' causing a further access issue for MM.

**Unintended outcomes** - Allocations may depend more on the quality of proposal writing than the professional learning needs of a school and the achievement challenges of its students. This is particularly pronounced in smaller, often MM schools/kura, many of which need the effective PLD the model is designed to provide, but are not able to access it.

The new model has the commendable goal of greater agency for schools/kura in their management of PLD, however this is somewhat undermined by a widespread expectation, encouraged by the Ministry, that, when a school/kura does not have the capability to develop a proposal based on evidence of leader, teacher and student need, the PLD provider will take the lead in completing the journal, the development plan and the milestone report. While provision of such help was practical for providers under transition funding, this cannot be sustained beyond that funding, especially as supporting a school to write a proposal does not necessarily result in that school selecting the provider to deliver the PLD.

**Increased Competition Between and within Providers** - There are increasing reports from schools and providers that the new model has resulted in an increase in competition between providers resulting in much more focus on marketing of services to maintain market share and workforces in an uncertain environment. Facilitators are increasingly focused on the 'selling' of their services in order to sustain

their own income and employment. The pressure to continually secure new work often entails facilitators encouraging the ongoing use of their expertise by school leaders. This tends to work against sustainability and the selection of the most appropriate external support.

**Timely Communications** - Although Ministry communications to both schools/kura and providers have been helpful in clarifying emerging issues, these have not been consistent or ongoing. This has caused issues for providers as schools/kura do not always grasp the financial realities of the new model e.g. informing a facilitator who has travelled some distance that they need to postpone a PLD event to another day has significant financial ramifications for a provider being paid on an hourly basis.

## Workforce Capacity

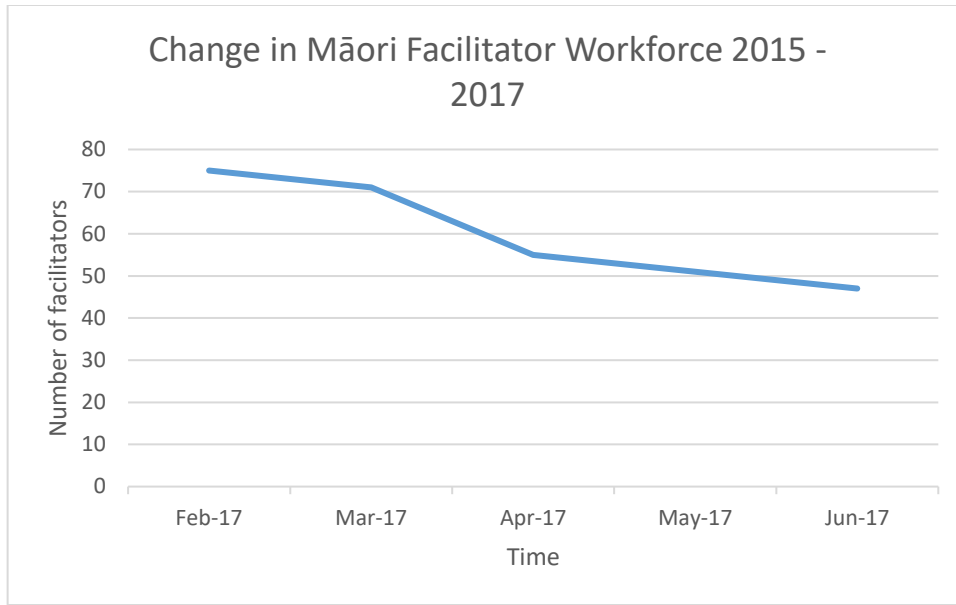
### Positives

Transition funding provided by the Ministry has enabled providers to retain a proportion of their workforce. Many providers have also been able to maintain staffing due to other contracts they have with the Ministry or other agencies and through selling their services direct to schools/kura.

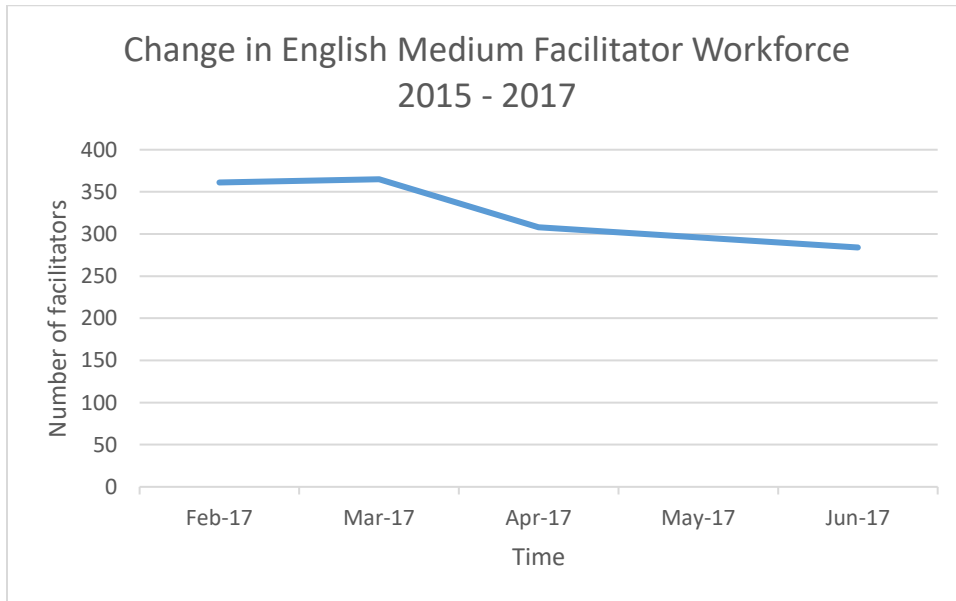
### Challenges

Most capacity issues are due to the significantly increased flexibility of the new model which provides for only limited certainty of allocation of resource to providers which in turn has meant limited certainty of tenure for facilitators in many organisations. This makes planning for, and managing resourcing, extremely challenging in the following ways:

**Workforce Size and Retention** - The graph below shows the drop off in numbers of facilitators employed by the eight MM providers which responded to the survey. This represents a decrease of approximately one third in the workforce of those providers.



A similar, although less dramatic trend, can be noted in EM where the 14 providers which responded to our survey reported a combined decrease in the workforce of approximately 22%. Of note here is a significant reported drop off in Te Reo Māori EM expertise because this is not a priority area.



Both MM and EM providers attributed these decreases to:

- The slow take up by schools/kura. This appears to be more pronounced in secondary schools than primary schools and in MM than EM, posing particular challenges for those providers which focus on those sectors
- The ensuing need for organisations to reduce numbers in the face of resourcing uncertainty
- Facilitators seeking greater security by returning to roles in schools/kura
- Facilitators rejecting more casualised contracting arrangements
- Facilitators taking early retirement
- Resistance to the accreditation process
- Facilitators preferring not to work in what they perceived as a highly commercialised role.

Several respondents commented on the disincentives for innovative, dynamic teachers from schools to become facilitators when the employment arrangements are less favourable and the work flow uncertain. One MM respondent noted that although they “still have the same number of MM facilitators, the majority of their work has moved to EM facilitation (which they are also accredited for) as this was the work that was first available to them”. Another noted the increased difficulty they have had in recruiting suitably qualified speakers of Te Reo in the face of workforce attrition. Only one respondent organisation noted an increase in staffing attributable to the new model.

**Workforce Development and Management** - The new model has posed challenges for providers in terms of the management, induction and professional development of facilitators. These include:

- The need to employ new facilitators who are yet to be accredited and trying to provide them with work ahead of their being accredited and requested by schools
- Providers needing to cover large staff costs during school holidays when there is little or no paid engagement with schools
- The need for providers to cover the costs of staff induction and PLD
- The difficulty of medium to long-term staffing projections due to the unpredictable peaks and troughs in demand, especially as more Kāhui Ako are signed off
- The difficulty of planning for 2018 until there is more certainty in the Council’s plans.

## Quality provision of PLD

### Positives

**Accreditation** - A system of quality control of facilitators should be positive for all stakeholders, helping to professionalise the provision of PLD and develop trust in consistent provision of professional support. The independent accreditation panel appeared to cope with the intense pressure to work within a new and developing process.

**Increased Agency** – Despite the considerable work involved for organisations and facilitators, providers view the accreditation of facilitators as a positive development. The informed use of external expertise,



along with the increased focus on identifying and collaboratively leveraging local, in school expertise, aligns with the research on effective PLD. Providing schools/kura with the opportunity to search for and choose a facilitator(s) who best meets their specific needs is a positive development. However, we note that schools/kura are often making choices on the basis of past experience and word of mouth, not the criteria for accreditation.

**Growing Evaluative Capability** - The onus for demonstrating impact is now on school/kura leaders rather than providers. This should, in theory, stimulate the growth of schools' evaluative capability, and the rigour of their cycles of inquiry, especially in Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako. Although school/kura leaders may not currently have the evaluative capability to determine the impact of the PLD on student outcomes, the new model has the propensity to develop the capability of leaders to continually reflect on and evaluate the impact of interventions and resourcing decisions.

## Challenges

**Implementation** - Many of the challenges of accreditation could be seen as predictable in embedding any new system. There have been numerous errors in the processing and confirmation of accreditation outcomes. Some facilitators have not been listed under the appropriate medium, for example some MM facilitators are appearing as having been accredited for EM. As well, the PLD website is not user friendly for school leaders to access the information they require with information not always current or accurate. The process of correcting errors or updating facilitator details is arduous and, even after several attempts at correction, some facilitator details are incorrect.

**Developing Facilitation Expertise** - If professional support is to be more than simply practice transplanted from one classroom to another, facilitation skills need to be consciously developed. A classroom teacher does not necessarily have such skills, nor the research and theoretical base upon which to develop them.

Organisations spend considerable resource developing the adaptive expertise of their staff. Typically, an organisational provider of PLD might provide its people:

- 4-6 professional development days per year
- Access to education conferences
- Ongoing, structured networking and updating, both regionally and nationally
- Access to the theory and research of facilitator practice
- Rigorous performance appraisal.

We would argue that the development of facilitator expertise is best done in a collegial and networked professional environment either within or between organisations. To gauge whether the new model provides the fertile environment and resourcing for such collaborative professional development, we attempted to estimate relative facilitator employment in different sized organisations. Informed by our own survey and a scan of the Ministry PLD website (which in July 2017 listed 636 accredited facilitators

comprised of 88 MM and 548 EM), we estimate that a majority of facilitators – albeit a decreasing one - work for organisations with more than 5 facilitators with an increasingly large minority working as sole traders or in organisations of fewer than 5 facilitators. The rapid growth of sole trader and small operators, which has been encouraged by the new model, raises questions about currency, consistency of message and professional support for many facilitators.

Under the new model, providers are not resourced for such professional support hence investment in facilitator development would seem to be an even greater challenge and less of a priority for very small organisations, especially MM providers or sole traders.

## Business model for providers

### Positives

This is the most challenging aspect of the new model from a provider point of view. We do acknowledge that the provision of transitional funding was critical in enabling the survival of providers in the initial months of implementation and that the new model recognises the need for planning and travel time.

### Challenges

**Administration** - Providers have experienced large administrative costs compared to the previous contracts for service. These increased transactional costs were not predicted when the hourly rate was negotiated and include:

- Significantly increased contract administration (including checking the paperwork for errors) and transactional costs as organisations move from perhaps 1-5 contracts with the Ministry to managing a plethora of SoWs<sup>2</sup>. This includes the significantly increased associated financial transactions
- The often significant delays in getting SoWs issued and signed by the MoE and in getting invoices paid
- Considerable time spent by facilitators supporting schools with PLD journals and implementation plans prior to receiving a SoW
- The frequent mismatch between anticipated hours and those that are finally allocated and recorded in the SoW
- Increased marketing and communication costs
- The professional support required to introduce, implement and socialise a new system
- Issues associated with travel, including:
  - Understanding travel allocations which sometimes appear complex, inconsistent and illogical and which are not clarified in SoWs

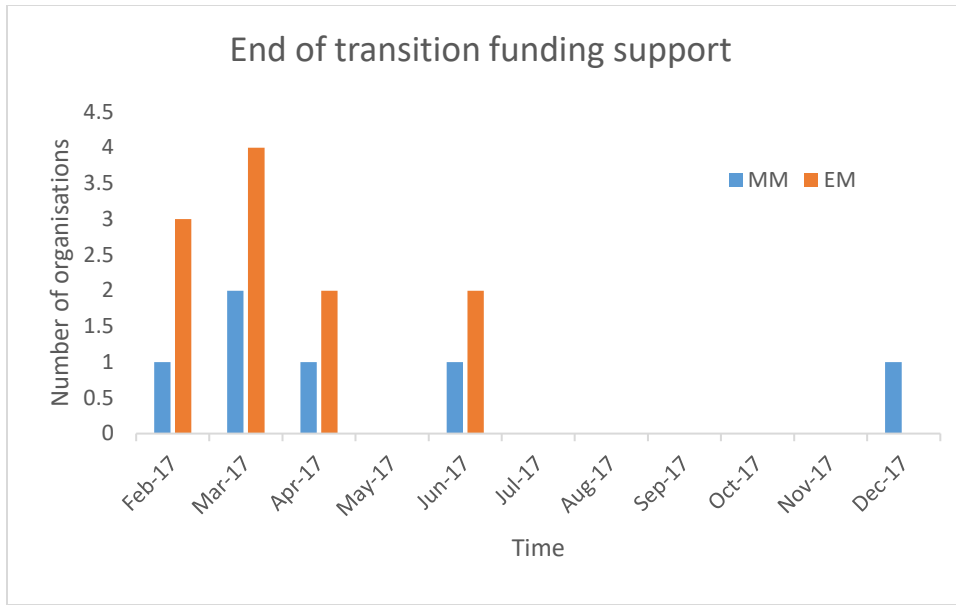
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<sup>2</sup> The Ministry reports that as of July 6, there were 749 SoWs, 431 of which had been signed.

- The lack of recognition of the sometimes significant time involved in travelling relatively short distances in our larger cities, which is problematic given that we absorb all travel costs (including time) to travel to schools within a 50km radius.
- Onerous requests from the MoE to supply indicative travel breakdowns
- The constant negotiation around travel requests, especially about travel within a region, which often involves significant costs.

**Workforce Utilisation** - MM respondents to the survey reported in June 2017, an average 4.89 facilitator FTE per organisation for which they had an average 1.63 FTE of confirmed work ie they were maintaining a workforce for which they had just 33% confirmed utilisation, underscoring one MM comment that “We are very unlikely to be able to (or want to) provide centrally funded PLD services in the future”. EM are faring a little better reporting in June 2017 an average of 15.4 facilitator FTE per organisation for which they had an average 7.5 FTE of confirmed work i.e. just under 50% confirmed utilisation.

**Contractual Variance** - The Ministry completed individual negotiations with each provider. The precise terms of each provider’s contract are confidential, however we understand from the survey responses and other sources that there is significant contractual variation between providers. These include variance in the provision of transition funding as reflected in the graph below. This shows that funding for most organisations was to the end of March 2017 but that a minority of providers are being funded for longer periods. There are also contractual differences between providers in the ratio of planning to contact time and differences in the interpretation of planning and contact. Informal feedback from personnel within organisations suggests that the ratio of planning hours to contact hours varies from 1:1 to 1:3. Some PLANZ members have expressed concern that these differences may have an impact on the reputation of providers with the sector, i.e schools/kura may perceive that they are getting better service from a provider which has a more favourable contact to planning time ratio. Another implication of these different ratios is that travel time is based on contact time, further compounding contractual inconsistency and inequity.



## (4) Recommendations

PLANZ looks forward to constructive partnership with the Council aimed at building upon the strengths of the new model and working through the challenges. We believe that iterative and evolutionary change will be more positively received by stakeholders than a further radical revamp of the model of PLD provision. The PLANZ Māori medium committee are however, interested in working alongside the Ministry and Council to recommend changes that would positively impact on the engagement of Māori medium kura, schools and Kāhui Ako. In particular we look forward to exploring with you, concrete ways to:

- Work in the competitive, contractual model to ensure that schools that most need the PLD resource are able to access it to lift achievement for young people in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Reduce transactional costs for all parties through simplification of access and allocation, including review of application processes and templates, the nature, number and duration of SoWs and the development of an online tool for proposals and journals.
- Maintain the quality of PLD provision through:
  - Ensuring that those delivering PLD can themselves be professional learners
  - Development of professional standards for those delivering PLD  
Developing a simplified but credible accreditation process that enables the seamless addition of new facilitators, provides feedback on unsuccessful applications and reflects [Hei Raukura Mō Te Iwi](#)
  - Addressing the wider needs of Māori students in EM.
- Address the significant business challenges that both EM and MM providers face in:
  - Managing many more transactions with schools and the Ministry than under the previous model
  - Maintaining and managing a quality workforce in a flexible, user-driven model of provision in which there will always be peaks and troughs in demand, including holiday periods
  - Providing consistent, nation-wide provision of PLD when contractual provisions vary significantly
  - Supporting schools in “the work before the work” which must precede a formal PLD engagement
  - Rationalising complex travel provisions.
- Address the particular and severe issues faced by MM schools, kura and providers
- Support ongoing evaluation, informed by increasingly robust data, of the impact of the new model.

