

# **Te Pūkenga legacy:**

Successes, lessons and opportunities  
for new entities

October 2025



**Te Pūkenga**

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## Purpose

This legacy document records the key achievements and important lessons from our Te Pūkenga experience. As the vocational education system transitions back to a group of independent organisations, the intent is to ensure that the progress made – along with the innovations, insights, and hard-won experience – is preserved and made available to inform future directions.

This document acknowledges the considerable mahi and expertise of kaimahi across the network. Rather than an exhaustive collation, the intent is to provide key highlights, focussing on areas where there are opportunities for future entities. The aim is to provide transparency and some level of continuity through a period of significant change – offering a resource to guide thoughtful, well-informed transitions.

## Introduction

With the disestablishment of Te Pūkenga now underway, this is an important moment to reflect on the progress made, the challenges faced, and the lessons that can inform the future of vocational education in Aotearoa. The creation of a unified national network was driven by a vision of greater consistency, coordination, and improved outcomes for learners, while at the same time leveraging economies of scale, reducing duplication and maximising efficiencies. While that vision brought benefits, it also encountered practical limitations – particularly in relation to the scale of the task and the time and resources needed to fully realise the vision.

The pace and scale of change created uncertainty for many, contributing to change fatigue across the network. Restructuring people, systems, and services proved more complex and more resource-intensive than anticipated – in July 2022 the Chair and Acting Chief Executive apologised to the network for the lack of progress in the transition. These experiences serve as a reminder that meaningful, system-level transformation requires strong leadership and governance, time, stability, and sustained investment to succeed. The importance of social license and the role of regional and political stakeholders must not be underestimated either.

Nonetheless, Te Pūkenga delivered many meaningful gains. It elevated the profile of vocational education nationally, supported a shared vision for lifelong and equitable learning, enabled greater learner mobility, and fostered stronger collaboration between institutions that had previously operated independently and in competition with each other. These are foundations worth holding onto as the sector transitions.

As regional entities return to independent operation, there are risks to navigate – including the re-emergence of duplication, inconsistent practices, and institutional competition. The creation of Te Pūkenga was a structural solution to realise the benefits of scale and coordinated effort. However, even under a diversified sector model there will still be many opportunities to access these advantages. The over-riding theme throughout what follows is **collaboration**. Although some collaboration between institutions did occur prior to Te Pūkenga the challenge emerging from this document is for new entities to take that to a higher level, leveraging the experience and relationships gained from their Te Pūkenga experience for mutual and national benefit.

## Learner and Employment Experience and Engagement

The approach taken by Te Pūkenga to learner and employer engagement put ākonga at the centre and focused on creating a more inclusive and responsive vocational education system. By working nationally and in partnership with others, the organisation gained a deeper understanding of learners' needs – especially for Māori, Pacific, and disabled ākonga. This led to real improvements in outcomes and experience, supported by equity strategies, continual feedback, and targeted wellbeing initiatives. As the system transitions, there's a strong foundation to build on – shaped by learner voice and designed to adapt to local needs while keeping ākonga success at the core.

### Key successes

- Between 2020 and 2024, the Learner Journey and Experience (LJE) team developed a rich understanding of vocational learners across Aotearoa, culminating in the creation of the [Charting our Learner Success Journey portal](#). The platform captures key insights, resources, and practices to support a reimagined learner experience. As the system transitions, the portal is offered as a taonga for the sector – intended to be adapted to local contexts. It reflects a sector-wide commitment to learner success and remains a valuable resource for the next phase of vocational education.
- The **Ākonga Success and Equity Strategy** played a central role by embedding equity-focused practices across both teaching and learner support, helping to lift learner outcomes system-wide.
- This was complemented by **targeted investment through the Strategic and Learner Component Fund**, which enabled high-impact projects to be scaled nationally resulting in measurable improvements in success and experience. Together, these efforts contributed to a more inclusive, learner-centred environment. Details of specific initiatives can be found via the [Charting Our Learner Success Journey](#) portal and a summary of the [Tiriti Partnerships SCF Project Showcase Event](#) held in February 2025.

### Opportunities for new entities

1. **Embed equity-focused teaching and support practices**  
Continue to integrate equity approaches into both teaching and learner support, with a strong focus on improving outcomes for Māori, Pacific, and disabled ākonga. The Ākonga Success Strategy offers a valuable model for this work.
2. **Retain and enhance continuous feedback mechanisms**  
Co-design and maintain systems for capturing ongoing learner feedback – such as regular, collaborative surveys and advisory forums. Embedding these into institutional processes at all levels ensures ākonga voice informs teaching, service design, and governance decisions. These can be even more valuable if they contain common elements across different providers, supporting valid analysis of national trends and regional comparisons.
3. **Leverage national resources like Te Pae Ora**  
Continue to utilise and develop platforms like [Te Pae Ora](#), which provide holistic, online wellbeing support. These tools have proven impact in improving learner experience and should be retained, adapted, and expanded where possible.
4. **Use the [Charting our Learner Success Journey](#) portal as a foundational resource**  
The [Charting our Learner Success Journey](#) portal is a taonga - offering insights and practical tools

to support regional efforts to centre ākonga. Regional teams are encouraged to adapt the resource to fit their specific contexts while upholding its learner-first principles.

#### 5. **Strengthen inclusive learning environments**

Place learner success and wellbeing at the centre of institutional priorities. Build on the inclusive, responsive practices initiated under Te Pūkenga to create environments where all ākonga can thrive.

## Tiriti Outcomes

Te Pūkenga was established with a clear mandate to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and improve equity across the vocational education system. This marked a shift from isolated provider initiatives to a more coordinated, system-wide responsibility for addressing long-standing disparities in learner outcomes. The aim was to embed equity and Tiriti commitments into governance, delivery, and everyday practice. While progress was uneven, strong foundations were laid - national roles, shared capability, and greater visibility for Māori success and equity-led practice. Other areas, such as Māori governance and shared decision-making, remained underdeveloped. As the system transitions to regional leadership, this legacy offers a base to build on and strengthen equity and Te Tiriti practice in practical, enduring ways.

### Key successes

One of the most meaningful contributions of Te Pūkenga was its role in fostering a more coherent and system-wide approach to delivering on Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

- For the first time, vocational education providers across Aotearoa worked within a **shared framework that prioritised Māori success and equity** – [Te Pae Tawhiti](#). This collective commitment supported greater consistency, elevated expectations across the network, and strengthened accountability for outcomes. Importantly, it also enabled iwi and hapū to engage at a national level—an opportunity that had previously been fragmented or inconsistent.
- The national structure made it possible to offer **centrally coordinated expertise in equity and Tiriti practice**. This support was particularly valuable for smaller or less-resourced providers, helping to raise capability and integrate equity more fully into organisational functions. Equity and Te Tiriti-focused roles were established across both national and regional levels<sup>1</sup>, creating clear leadership, structure, and legitimacy for the work. These roles helped connect kaimahi across the network, enabling shared learning and stronger collective impact.
- Collaboration was key to progress. Providers worked together to **co-design national programmes that embedded culturally sustaining practices** from the outset - reducing duplication, strengthening quality, and supporting greater consistency for learners, while still allowing space for regional relevance and flexibility.
- A **system-wide approach to data and analytics** (see *Digital Services* below) improved the ability to track outcomes for Māori learners and target support more effectively. This shift toward evidence-informed practice helped build a stronger foundation for equity-focused decision-making.

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<sup>1</sup> [Taraia te anamata decision document](#)

- As noted elsewhere, professional development was another area where the scale of Te Pūkenga made a tangible difference. **Shared training in cultural capability and Tiriti-informed leadership** contributed to a more confident and aligned workforce, better equipped to uphold equity and partnership commitments.
- A number of very successful SCF-funded initiatives applied **Te Tiriti-based partnerships** – co-designing projects with iwi and hapū, embedding mātauranga Māori and tikanga into delivery, and creating culturally grounded support systems that directly lifted ākonga participation, achievement, and wellbeing. These projects were presented at an SCF-funded [project showcase](#) in February 2025.

## Opportunities for new entities

1. **Carry forward the collective approach to Te Tiriti and equity**  
Maintain the momentum gained through Te Pūkenga to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi and equity as shared responsibilities across the vocational education system. This includes retaining mechanisms for cross-regional collaboration, shared problem-solving, collective capability-building and continuing to encourage the use of Te Reo Māori.
2. **Invest in Māori governance and genuine partnership**  
Build structures that enable shared decision-making with iwi and hapū. Strong Māori governance is critical to fulfilling Te Tiriti commitments and cannot be assumed or tokenised.
3. **Retain and resource equity-focused roles and teams**  
Maintain dedicated roles and teams focused on equity and Te Tiriti. These roles provide essential leadership, coordination, and capability to sustain progress.
4. **Build on shared programme design and culturally sustaining practices**  
Where national or co-designed programmes exist, continue to refine and deliver them collaboratively. Ensure culturally sustaining practice remains embedded from the outset - not added in later.
5. **Use data to drive targeted action**  
Continue using data and analytics to monitor learner success, especially for Māori, Pacific, and disabled ākonga. Support teams to use this data in local planning and decision-making.
6. **Continue shared professional development**  
Partner with other regional entities to co-deliver professional development focused on cultural capability, Te Reo Māori, Tiriti-informed leadership, and inclusive pedagogy. Shared learning will help maintain alignment and consistency across the system.

## Strengthening Teaching and Academic Systems

Through the combined work of the Academic Centre and Ako Delivery functions, significant progress was made in strengthening the quality, consistency, and equity of teaching and learning across the network. These gains were largely made possible by the scale and coordination afforded by a national network. Shared systems, collaborative design processes, and learner-centred practices contributed to a more joined-up and responsive vocational education system. Preserving and adapting these elements can help ensure continuity, minimise disruption, and maintain the momentum built during the establishment phase of Te Pūkenga.



## Key successes

The national model of Te Pūkenga enabled the transformation of academic systems and delivery practices. By integrating into a single network, Te Pūkenga reduced duplication, enabled deeper collaboration, and created more coherent and strategic approaches to vocational education.

- One of the most impactful outcomes was the development of [Te Kawa Maiorooro](#) a **unified academic regulatory framework**. Designed in partnership with kaimahi, ākonga, and sector stakeholders, this framework replaced fragmented local processes with a single, learner-centred approach that prioritised equity, quality, and consistency.
- Another major success was the **unification of programmes** across the network. In many areas, Te Pūkenga moved from having up to 16 or more versions of the same programme—each with different curricula, assessments, and delivery models—to a single national programme co-developed by regional teams and informed by industry. This was a significant achievement that reduced duplication, strengthened quality, and enabled learners to move more easily between providers without disruption. It also made it easier for employers and industry to engage with the vocational education system, knowing that the same programme outcomes and standards applied nationwide.

While the core curriculum and qualification outcomes were consistent, flexibility was built in to allow for regional delivery contexts and local employer needs. This balance of national consistency and local adaptability was a hallmark of the approach and a key advantage of the scale of Te Pūkenga.

- The scale of Te Pūkenga also allowed for **investment in staff capability**. Through the People, Culture and Wellbeing Strategy, coordinated national professional development was delivered at scale, supporting Te Tiriti-based practice, equity-focused teaching, digital delivery, and inclusive pedagogies across the network.
- The Ako Delivery function was designed to centre teaching, learning, and pastoral care within a single, coordinated structure<sup>2</sup> - ensuring that ākonga were consistently supported across regions and delivery modes. Although full implementation was halted, this approach would have enabled more **integrated, learner-focused delivery** and act as key enabler of wider transformation goals.
- Formal Ako Networks were established across programme domains and aligned with WDCs, enabling **coordinated programme design and delivery** oversight. These networks brought together teaching staff, academic leaders, and industry representatives to collaboratively guide the quality, relevance, and implementation of programmes nationwide.
- **Flexible delivery modes** were another strength of the model. The national scale made it possible to invest in systems and curriculum design that supported learning across campus, online, and workplace contexts - providing learners with greater access and choice.

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<sup>2</sup> [Tāraia te anamata decision document](#)

## Opportunities for new entities

### 1. **Maintain national consistency through collaboration**

Continue working through national or cross-regional programme networks, academic forums, and shared governance mechanisms to support good practice in programme design, delivery, and assessment while avoiding unnecessary or inefficient duplication.

### 2. **Embed ākonga voice and equity commitments**

Keep systems in place for meaningful ākonga input - such as surveys, focus groups, and learner advisory panels- and ensure these insights influence curriculum, support services, and delivery models. Prioritise equity for Māori, Pacific, and disabled learners in all planning and review processes.

### 3. **Continue unified curriculum and programme delivery**

Make use of the knowledge hub<sup>3</sup> being developed via the Apōpō project to access academic resources. Where national programmes have been developed, maintain their delivery and participate in ongoing refinement. Shared curriculum design and moderation helps reduce duplication, sustain quality, and support shared innovation while allowing for local context.

### 4. **Invest in capability and cultural competency**

Sustain professional development in inclusive teaching, equity, and Te Tiriti-led practice. Regional collaboration in capability-building initiatives can ensure ongoing alignment in learner experience and delivery quality.

### 5. **Build on relationships and collaboration between provider-based and work-based learning**

Consider how to continue the move towards more flexible, multi-modal delivery started when both WBL and ITPs were within a single structure under Te Pūkenga.

### 6. **Preserve regional leadership connected to sector strategy and workforce planning**

Maintain leadership structures that connect regional delivery teams to national conversations, sector-wide strategy, ISBs, regional workforce planning groups and employers. This will ensure continued alignment with future workforce and learner needs while representing local economic priorities.

### 7. **Support communities of practice and shared networks**

Continue cross-regional collaboration through formal and informal communities of practice. These groups proved invaluable for solving shared challenges, maintaining quality, and building capability across the network.

### 8. **Uphold robust governance and academic oversight**

Adopt governance structures that retain academic quality and ensure ongoing learner input, while remaining agile enough to respond to regional and national needs.

## Digital Services

The Digital function also demonstrated the strategic value of shared systems, centralised expertise, and sector-wide collaboration - elements that enabled more consistent digital experiences for learners and staff, while supporting greater efficiency and innovation.

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<sup>3</sup> Access to the knowledge hub will be provided to the sector by the end of 2025.



## Key successes

The national model enabled a level of digital integration and collaboration that individual providers could not have achieved alone. Several standout successes emerged from this collective approach.

- Significant **procurement savings** were achieved through national contracts, allowing digital tools and services to be delivered at a fraction of the usual cost. For example, the cost of the Articulate learning platform was reduced by up to 300% through group negotiation. This not only delivered financial efficiencies but ensured that smaller divisions had equal access to tools that were once only affordable to larger providers.
- **Strengthened cybersecurity** was another major benefit. The establishment of a centralised cybersecurity team, led by a national Chief Information Security Officer (CISO), enabled consistent enforcement of security policies, faster incident response, and streamlined risk management. By consolidating this critical function, Te Pūkenga significantly reduced duplication and improved its overall readiness, resilience and recovery from cyber threats.
- **Centralised programme management** brought structure and visibility to the network's digital change initiatives. Shared frameworks and governance ensured alignment with strategic priorities, while a single view of all projects supported better decision-making and prioritisation. This system-wide oversight was instrumental in managing complex change.
- **Access to highly specialised roles** was made possible at scale. Positions such as cybersecurity experts, enterprise architects, and data engineers - often unattainable for individual institutions - were resourced centrally and made available across the network. This lifted the digital maturity of the entire system.
- **Communities of practice** flourished within the national structure, enabling kaimahi to collaborate across institutions, share solutions, and develop capability through peer learning. These organic, cross-functional groups supported a culture of innovation and continuous improvement.
- The digital divide was narrowed through **consistent access to infrastructure and technology**. Ākonga, regardless of geographic location, benefited from reliable connectivity and tools that enabled participation in online learning (EduRoam<sup>4</sup>). This equitable access was a cornerstone of Te Pūkenga commitment to inclusion.
- **Staff capability was significantly enhanced**, as kaimahi engaged with new tools, platforms, and training opportunities that were previously out of reach. Exposure to advanced systems - such as modern data platforms - helped build digital confidence and readiness across the workforce.

## Opportunities for new entities

As independent institutions re-establish their own digital capabilities, there is an opportunity to build on the collective knowledge and successful practices developed under Te Pūkenga. The following opportunities are intended to support sustainable, forward-looking digital strategies that reflect local needs while retaining the benefits of system-wide thinking.

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<sup>4</sup> Eduroam (which is short for Education roaming) is the worldwide access service developed for the international research and education Community. In NZ it is managed by REANNZ. Eduroam allows any user from a participating site to get network access. This means that students, researchers or staff can use single sign-on and move seamlessly between different member sites without having to log on again.

**1. Develop a digital strategy aligned to business goals**

A strong digital strategy should be closely linked to each institution's business plan and operating model. Technology investments often enable efficiencies in service delivery rather than direct cost savings in IT budgets. To ensure meaningful outcomes, benefits should be clearly defined, quantified where possible, and agreed upon with key stakeholders at the outset.

**2. Implement portfolio management for change initiatives**

Without a clear view of all digital and business change initiatives, it becomes difficult to prioritise, coordinate, or assess impact. Regional entities should implement a simple yet effective mechanism to track change activity, identify interdependencies, and ensure alignment with organisational goals. This does not require complex systems - high-level summaries may suffice.

**3. Build AI readiness and data foundations**

With the growing influence of artificial intelligence, new entities must proactively prepare. This means embedding AI considerations into digital strategies, investing in high-quality, well-structured data, and establishing governance frameworks to guide ethical and effective AI use. Institutions should focus both on immediate productivity gains and on long-term opportunities to enhance ākonga outcomes through AI.

**4. Strengthen cybersecurity practices**

Cybersecurity should remain a strategic priority. Aligning with recognised frameworks such as the Center for Internet Security (CIS) Critical Controls can provide a strong foundation for risk management. Where full-time in-house expertise is not feasible, institutions should consider engaging virtual or fractional CISOs to access industry-specific guidance and ensure ongoing resilience.

**5. Maintain good practice and economies of scale in procurement**

Continue to apply established procurement processes, such as using GETS, AoG contracts, and formal RFP/RFI approaches. These practices not only ensure compliance and value for money but also support transparent and strategic investment decisions. Regional collaboration on procurement should be encouraged, particularly for large-scale or high-cost solutions, to preserve the purchasing power previously gained at the national level.

**6. Stay connected to national and sector networks**

Ongoing engagement with industry bodies such as CAUDIT, and participation in events like the Tertiary ICT Conference, will help digital teams remain current with sector trends, good practice, and emerging technologies. These networks offer valuable opportunities for collaboration, capability development, and shared problem-solving - benefits that should not be lost as the system decentralises.

## People and Culture, and Wellbeing and Safety

The People, Culture and Wellbeing (PCW) function - and later the People and Culture and the Wellbeing and Safety functions - played central roles in shaping the organisational environment of Te Pūkenga during its time as a national entity. By taking a unified approach to areas, such as remuneration, employment relations, equity, learning and development, and wellbeing, these functions aimed to build a fairer, more inclusive, and more connected vocational education network.

## Key successes

### People and Culture

- The development of a **national remuneration and reward framework**, which began to address long-standing disparities in pay and entitlements. This work established a fairer and more transparent foundation for employment across the network.
- People and Culture also commenced work on **streamlining payroll and HRIS systems**, improving compliance, data quality, and reducing duplication across regions. These systems provided a clearer, more unified view of the national workforce. This work also included the Holidays remediation project.
- The commencement of work towards **centralised Collective Employment Agreements**.
- Strong progress in **embedding equity and organisational development** through national capability-building initiatives and leadership development programmes aligned with Te Tiriti o Waitangi commitments.
- Through national learning and development offerings, kaimahi across all regions gained **equitable access to professional development**. Shared tools and platforms supported leadership growth and compliance training at scale.
- The centralised approach led to a number of **cost efficiencies**, including immigration processes, recruitment processes and remuneration framework processes.
- Development of **strong change management processes** in support of *Creating our Futures*, which has continued to be successfully applied through the disestablishment phase of Te Pūkenga.

### Wellbeing and Safety

- Improved understanding that **wellbeing and safety is a specialised function**, that operates for kaimahi and ākonga, as well as for visitors to our workplaces and people who are affected by our work activities.
- Stronger awareness of the **criticality of wellbeing** to business performance and its foundations in psychological and psychosocial safety, work design, work environments and interpersonal relationships.
- A focus on **seven critical wellbeing and safety areas** and the implementation of strategic goals linked to these areas, our values and leading practice.
- The introduction of a **national wellbeing and safety framework** to provide kaimahi, ākonga and other interested parties with access to consistent and high-quality support, documents, processes and resources.

### Opportunities for new entities

#### 1. Embed equity as a core principle

Equity should remain a cornerstone of all people-related practices. New entities are encouraged to continue applying equity lenses to recruitment, remuneration, development, and wellbeing initiatives. The work started nationally to align with Te Tiriti o Waitangi and promote inclusive systems could be built upon, rather than reset. Local approaches could reflect the unique needs of communities and learners, while remaining anchored in shared equity goals.

## 2. **Maintain national communities of practice**

New entities are encouraged to continue sharing resources and information through communities of practice. The People and Culture communities would include employment relations information, learning and development, change management, leadership frameworks and remuneration policies and decisions.

The Wellbeing and Safety communities would include areas such as psychosocial demands, hazardous substances, air quality, machinery and work-related illnesses.

These communities would enable some of the work that commenced as national teams to continue and, for small People and Culture, and Wellbeing and Safety teams, give access to information that some of the larger entities can develop due to size, scale and additional capability.

## 3. **Prioritise wellbeing**

Wellbeing relates to functioning well and feeling good. When individuals, teams and organisations function well, they empower effective, productive performance. Leaders at all levels should gain the necessary awareness and competence to identify signs of good - and poor – psychological and psychosocial safety, to facilitate conversations and actively listen, and to proactively work on better outcomes for their people when they are at work.

# Finance and Property

The national structure of Te Pūkenga created a unique opportunity to take a strategic, system-wide view of finance, property and infrastructure. For the first time, vocational education providers across the country were able to step back and look collectively at how resources were being used, where duplication could be reduced, and how future investment could be better aligned with delivery models and regional needs.

## Key successes

- Establishing **enabling groups for improved financial planning** delivered more than just cost savings. For the first time, the network could clearly piece together what was required to manage finances effectively at a national level. This framework provided a foundation for improved medium- to long-term financial planning, enabling informed decision-making about priorities and investments. It also facilitated more meaningful dialogue with stakeholders around the level of funding required to deliver on strategic goals. The development of a Strategic Financial Framework gave the organisation a shared set of guiding principles to ensure consistency and transparency in financial management.
- The approval of a business case for an overall **integrated Financial Management Information System (FMIS)** was a standout achievement. While the rollout was underway, the network benefited from enhanced system alignment, improved reporting, and shared capability. These benefits were somewhat diluted following the Government's decision to stop progressing with a fully centralised system. However, for those regional entities that choose to retain the integrated FMIS, there are positives – benchmarking can continue, and entities can provide cover and support for each other.
- A **centralised pool of financial and property expertise** was assembled, that could be called on for advice, guidance, and problem-solving, regardless of a region's size or local capacity. For smaller business divisions in particular, this access was transformative – giving them the benefit of high-level expertise that they would not have been able to sustain locally. Over time, this

approach built greater consistency in financial practice, reduced duplication of effort, and supported higher standards in financial management across the network.

- Similarly, centralisation of internal audit enabled national programmes of work to be developed for the benefit of business divisions at a price point that some would not have been able to sustain locally.
- One of the key advantages of a national property function was the ability to take a **strategic view of the asset base**. With a centralised perspective, Te Pūkenga was better able to identify underutilised spaces, prioritise future investment, and plan for more efficient use of campuses across the network.
- Physical condition assessments and seismic assessments were progressed across the motu, with consistent data structures developed to inform asset management practices. The 2025 Capital Asset Management (CAM) Capability Assessment undertaken by AECOM noted Te Pūkenga made excellent progress in the development and implementation of CAM.
- Workplace and campus design also benefited from greater coordination. **National strategies** enabled providers to better align space planning with modern modes of teaching, learning, and working – particularly as flexible and hybrid delivery models became more common. Consequently, identification and declaration of surplus space has been progressed, with divestment projects initiated.
- National coordination also created real **efficiencies in procurement**. By approaching capital works, and vendor relationships collectively, the network reduced duplication, improved consistency, and achieved cost savings - while lifting the overall quality of property-related services.
- A **consistent approach to health, safety, and compliance** was another strength. Shared reporting frameworks and risk management practices supported higher standards and more robust governance across multiple sites, helping to build confidence and reduce organisational risk.
- Operating at scale allowed capability to be developed and shared across the network. This included access to **common templates, reporting frameworks, and the ability to connect through communities of practice** - ensuring that property teams could learn from one another and collectively strengthen their impact.

## Opportunities for new entities

### 1. Rebuilding local capability with intent

Returning financial functions to the regions is a chance to rebuild capability deliberately, ensuring Chief Executives and senior leaders have the skills to lead effectively. This is not a greenfields start, but an opportunity to strengthen leadership for a more competitive environment.

### 2. Leveraging the FMIS network

For those retaining FMIS, continued benchmarking, shared cover, and pooled resources can sustain efficiency and resilience. This smaller network is well placed to support emerging new entities and share sector insights.

### 3. Adapting collective practices locally

The Strategic Financial Framework, network-wide support model, and FMIS relationships offer a

blueprint for collaboration. Regions can adapt these to local needs while keeping the best of the collective approach, maintaining high standards and avoiding duplication.

4. **Leverage existing data and tools**

Make use of the national asset data and sustainability frameworks already developed to support continuity and reduce the need to start from scratch.

5. **Align property planning with delivery models**

Continue to link infrastructure decisions with teaching and learning priorities, including blended and work-based delivery. Increasing space utilisation / reducing total spatial requirements will be central to robust CAM.

6. **Collaborate where it makes sense**

Explore opportunities for joint procurement or shared vendor arrangements - some scale efficiencies can still be retained through cross-regional coordination.

7. **Retain consistency in compliance**

Build on the national standards developed for health, safety, and legislative reporting - these are worth maintaining where they support quality and reduce risk.

8. **Stay connected through communities of practice**

Ongoing connection between regional property and facilities teams will be key to maintaining momentum, sharing innovation, and solving common challenges.

## Executive Operations

The scale and national perspective of Te Pūkenga afforded the opportunity to provide specialist expertise and facilitate collaborative approaches in areas that may previously have been a challenge for individual organisations.

### Key successes

- **Provided legal support across the whole national network.** Most business divisions did not have a dedicated lawyer or legal team prior to coming into Te Pūkenga and, due to their small size, would not be able to justify employing their own lawyer as an independent entity. A central legal resource that understands the business and can provide free legal advice was a huge benefit.
- Established Kōpua Raraunga, the national data platform for **data collection, analysis and reporting**. Common data definitions, pipelines, cloud repository, and a platform for management, analysis and reporting was developed using the latest technology. This platform produced a step change in the ability of the sector to extract insights and use data-driven decision making across all areas of the business.
- The scale of Te Pūkenga supported early progress in environmental sustainability. The development of a **national carbon reduction tool and a shared sustainability reporting baseline** laid the groundwork for a more joined-up approach to climate action.
- Through economies of scale, Te Pūkenga was able to employ **dedicated governance professionals** to oversee both organisational and academic governance responsibilities. Having senior staff with strong organisational knowledge, and a degree of independence from management, proved to be an advantage. This strengthened oversight and provided valuable continuity at a national level.



- **Te Poari Akoranga**, the national academic board, benefited from collaboration across the network. Drawing on perspectives from a broad range of providers enriched academic discussions and strengthened decision-making. This diversity of input was a notable advantage of operating at national scale.
- Greater opportunities for **ākonga, kaimahi, and Māori voices** to be heard within governance structures. This broadened participation strengthened representation and brought new perspectives to decision-making. It also reflected the organisation's commitment to equity and partnership under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- A single national communications team managed all national media stories, providing a **consistent "one source of truth"** and avoiding mixed messages. This allowed regional teams to focus on local priorities with their ākonga, kaimahi, stakeholders, and iwi, helping staff maintain stronger local connections and focus their efforts where they were most needed.
- Clear, timely organisational updates - such as those delivered through the "Creating Our Future" change process - helped reduce uncertainty for staff, kept them informed during periods of change, and were recognised as examples of **effective internal engagement** that supported morale and trust.

## Opportunities for new entities

### 1. **Consider collaborative resourcing**

For many functions previously provided via the Te Pūkenga Office of the Chief Executive, where expertise may be valuable, positions could be shared across several individual institutions.

### 2. **Continue the sustainability journey**

Use the shared carbon reduction tools as a base to develop local approaches that meet regional climate and resilience goals

### 3. **Centralised governance capability**

While smaller entities may not be able to replicate the Te Pūkenga model in full, there is an opportunity to appoint or designate a senior governance role to provide dedicated focus. Even within a regional context, ensuring someone has the capacity and independence to support governance can help maintain oversight and consistency.

### 4. **Academic governance**

Future regional entities may find it more challenging to replicate the scope achieved under Te Poari Akoranga, as membership will be drawn from smaller pools. However, the experience underscores the value of seeking diverse voices in academic governance. Regional boards may wish to explore ways to broaden input—for example, through cross-regional forums, external advisors, or structured engagement with industry and community stakeholders.

### 5. **Ākonga, kaimahi, and Māori voice in governance**

A key learning is the importance of clearly defining the scope of advisory committees. At times, staff expected these forums to act as channels for feedback to management, which led to disappointment when this was not their purpose. Future entities should be clear about committee roles and expectations from the outset. Councils should also recognise that learners or staff appointed to governance bodies may not initially have the baseline knowledge expected of a Director. Providing robust induction, including the development of a workplan, and ongoing mentoring – particularly around financial reporting – will help these representatives contribute meaningfully and confidently.

## 6. Resource communications from day one

Fully resource communications teams from the outset to deliver proactive storytelling, engage stakeholders early, and respond quickly and confidently when issues arise. Adequate resourcing supports staff by providing timely, accurate information, reducing uncertainty, and enabling them to represent the organisation consistently.

## 7. Build stakeholder relationships as a long-term asset

Treat stakeholder relationships as a deliberate, long-term investment in organisational reputation, trust, and success. Ensuring stakeholders understand and align with the organisation's vision helps staff build stronger partnerships, reduces tension, and supports collaborative working relationships.

## Reflections on Challenges

The transition to a unified national vocational education provider brought significant opportunities but also substantial challenges. The scale and complexity of change, combined with varied regional readiness, tight timeframes, and evolving priorities, made it difficult to fully embed new systems and approaches before further changes were introduced.

The experience offers valuable lessons for managing large-scale sector change while balancing national consistency with local responsiveness.

### Scale and complexity of change

Diverse systems, processes, and regional contexts made it challenging to embed national frameworks consistently, while large-scale restructuring proved more resource-intensive than expected. The pace of change added pressure, with national consistency needing to be balanced against local strengths.

Against all of this, the global COVID pandemic added significant additional challenges, not least of which was the almost complete loss of international revenue at a time when there were high expectations for Te Pūkenga to improve the financial viability of the sector.

- Restructuring of people, systems, and services was more complex and resource-intensive than anticipated.
- Embedding People and Culture, and Wellbeing and Safety frameworks consistently across all divisions required more time than was available.
- Centralised services and a national data platform improved capability and consistency but relied on strong cross-network coordination.
- Programme unification was resource-intensive and slower than planned.
- External factors can severely test resilience and adaptability in organisational change processes.

### Variation in Regional Readiness and Capability

Differences in maturity, systems, and resources across regions meant that national initiatives were adopted unevenly. Some divisions had well-established processes and specialist capability, while others needed substantial support to align with shared frameworks. Legacy arrangements - such as multiple Quality Management Systems (QMS) and varying compliance experience - also affected the pace of change.

- Wide variation in existing systems, capability, and property management maturity.
- Multiple legacy QMS and differing compliance experience (e.g. ITOs adapting to NZQA provider rules).

- Uneven access to specialist expertise, such as curriculum writers, quality assurance staff and governance expertise with smaller divisions relying more on centrally-provided support.

### **Time constraints and shifting priorities**

Compressed timeframes limited the ability to fully implement or embed changes before organisational priorities shifted. In several areas, longer-term initiatives lost momentum when attention turned to immediate operational demands, particularly following the decision to disestablish Te Pūkenga. This meant some projects remained at a strategic or design stage without reaching full implementation.

The breadth of national programmes and the need for coordination across multiple divisions added further complexity to meeting tight timelines. In some cases, engagement with key stakeholders or finalisation of supporting structures could not be completed within the planned schedule, resulting in delays or the need to rework material later.

- Tight approval-to-delivery schedules for unified programmes increased workload and reduced preparation time for delivery teams.
- Workforce and organisational development initiatives slowed as focus shifted to transition planning.
- The unified Bachelor of Nursing programme was withdrawn from approval due to unrealistic timelines and incomplete organisational support.

### **Change fatigue and uncertainty**

The pace, scale, and frequency of organisational change created widespread fatigue among kaimahi. Successive initiatives were often introduced before earlier changes had been fully embedded, leaving limited time to consolidate progress. The prolonged transition period, coupled with uncertainty about the final operating model, roles, and governance arrangements, made it harder to maintain engagement, focus, and confidence in the process. In some cases, resistance to centralisation and new ways of working reduced participation in national initiatives.

- Network-wide change fatigue due to ongoing large-scale initiatives with overlapping timelines.
- Uncertainty over future structure, accountabilities, and roles during the multi-year transition.
- Differing expectations about governance committees or advisory group scope and purpose, leading to inconsistent engagement.

### **Data and information gaps**

Gaps and inconsistencies in data limited the ability to plan effectively, allocate resources accurately, and measure outcomes with confidence. Variations in systems, definitions, and governance made it difficult to maintain consistency across the network, particularly when working across multiple legacy platforms.

The creation of Kōpua Raraunga, the national data platform, improved the ability to collect, analyse, and report on information in a consistent way, but its full benefits relied on the quality and completeness of the information entered by each division. In some areas, missing or outdated data still constrained the insights that could be drawn.

- Inconsistent asset and property data limited effective planning and prioritisation.
- Multiple Student Management Systems (SMS) with differing requirements, complicated reporting and quality assurance.
- Lack of a central, accessible product repository made it harder for staff to access current programme materials.

## Alignment and integration challenges

National strategies and initiatives were not always fully aligned across functions or integrated into day-to-day delivery. In some cases, technology-led projects progressed ahead of organisational readiness, and differences in processes between divisions made it harder to achieve consistency. Early gaps in portfolio-wide oversight reduced visibility of dependencies, priorities, and opportunities for coordinated action.

- Some digital initiatives were implemented without being fully embedded into organisational business plans and delivery models, limiting their impact.
- Having two distinct programme unification approaches (transition vs transformation) led to process inconsistencies and confusion for business divisions.
- Limited integration of national quality processes into regional operations created variability in delivery and assessment standards.
- Early absence of a central portfolio view reduced the ability to identify interdependencies, align priorities, and coordinate resources across projects.

## Governance and decision-making pressures

At national scale, Te Pūkenga benefited from dedicated governance professionals, a diverse national academic board, and increased representation for learners, kaimahi, and Māori voices. However, governance bodies also operated under tight timeframes and during a period of evolving organisational arrangements, which sometimes limited the depth of review. Differences in members' readiness, experience, and access to information influenced how effectively responsibilities could be carried out. In some cases, the scope and purpose of advisory committees were not clearly defined, leading to mismatched expectations.

- Compressed approval schedules for programmes reduced the time available for detailed governance review and discussion.
- Some academic committee members felt underprepared for their roles, underlining the value of induction, clear expectations, and access to relevant information.
- While national academic governance drew strength from a diversity of perspectives, smaller future entities may find it harder to replicate this breadth of input, making cross-regional collaboration an important consideration.

## Stakeholder engagement

Early stakeholder engagement was limited, and due to delayed implementation of the national organisational structure the national communications function was not fully resourced, affecting the consistency and timeliness of information. Without regular, proactive engagement, it was harder to build and maintain alignment with stakeholders or to prepare them for upcoming changes. This reduced the ability to set the narrative, manage media coverage effectively, and ensure stakeholders were kept informed throughout the process.

In the early stages, national media coverage of Te Pūkenga was frequent and often negative, reflecting both the high level of public interest and the absence of consistent, proactive messaging.

When negative media coverage occurred, local communications teams often needed to prepare responses quickly without the benefit of centrally coordinated messaging or stakeholder-focused guidance. By contrast, government relations activities were supported by a well-resourced and experienced central team that engaged early and provided clear, consistent advice. This difference highlights the value of adequate communications resourcing, early and planned stakeholder

engagement, and proactive information management to support staff, maintain stakeholder trust, and keep ahead of public commentary.

### **Legacy constraints**

Pre-existing contractual, property, and system arrangements limited flexibility to adapt quickly. Long-term lease commitments, ownership structures, and legacy IT or administrative systems often slowed efforts to consolidate, repurpose, or modernise facilities and services.

- Existing lease terms and ownership structures slowed adaptation or consolidation of facilities.
- Legacy IT and administrative systems limited integration of national processes and platforms.



**Te Pūkenga**

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