Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects: Final Evaluation

Executive Summary Report

14 May 2014

Prepared for: Ministry for Primary Industries

Kinnect group

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Tuku mihi ki a koutou katoa.

Judy Oakden and Nan Wehipeihana

Executive summary

1. In December 2011 the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), in its previous incarnation as the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), started to try new ways of partnering to support Māori land-owning groups to improve the productivity of their land. The *Māori Agribusiness*[1] *Prototype projects* were organised by the Māori Primary Sector Partnerships (MPSP) team within MPI to test ways of working in partnership with Māori land owners and the private sector to improve performance and generate public value. Public value includes producing public knowledge, increasing capability of land owners or MPI and increasing productivity. These ways of working were evaluated in 2013 and are documented in this report.

2. Six projects that demonstrate possible prototypes were established, and these involved a range of land-holding structures including Māori freehold land, tribal land and Treaty settlement land. The property sizes ranged from small land blocks under 100 hectares (ha) to ones that spanned up to 200,000 ha[2]. Land utilisation and level of productivity also varied, from recreational use unrelated to primary sector productivity to high-performing farms. All six groups faced key challenges related to accessing the right capability to grow the productivity and profitability of their agribusiness. Two groups were also interested in ways to build economic scale without amalgamating ownership.

3. In the evaluators' view, the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects addressed a good mix of situations that allowed for the testing of different contexts, needs and opportunities for Māori land owners.

4. The evaluation found the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects made a **worthwhile and valuable contribution** by bringing Māori land owners together with experts in multiple fields, to transfer knowledge, build networks, and envision and commit to solutions to improve the productivity of Māori land. The following table outlines the key areas of focus, MPI support and the individual project outputs and outcomes.

[1] The term 'agribusiness' is generally used to mean all the businesses in the sector that are not farming/orcharding/growing/production. While one might typically say 'farming and agribusiness', in this instance 'agribusiness' also includes farming activities. In other contexts 'agribusiness' refers to businesses involved in other activities in marketing chain (e.g. processing, marketing, distribution) and suppliers of inputs (products and services) to farming.
[2] Tribal rohe.

Table 1: Summary of Māori Agribusiness Prototype

Project	Area of focus	MPI support resulted in the following project outputs and outcomes
Project 1	Successful transfer of land asset from Crown to Iwi as part of a Treaty settlement, along with establishment of a partnership to maintain productivity.	MPI provided access to expert advice and information to enable informed decision making by Māori land owners to achieve the following: • a formal partnership agreement amongst Iwi, and between Iwi and a farm management partner • greater knowledge of the financial and operational performance of the land asset • compare and consider alternative land use options.
Project 2	Shift from leasing out to establishment of a collective management structure for the land blocks to enable a dairy farm conversion.	MPI provided access to expert advice and information to enable informed decision making by Māori land owners to achieve the following: • feasibility study on a dairy venture that considered environmental aspects and owners' cultural needs • greater knowledge of the business structures to enable collective management while retaining original ownership.
Project 3	Convert from leasing out to dairy farming to raise productivity of an area of land.	MPI provided access to expert advice and information to enable informed decision making by Māori land owners to achieve the following: • develop a dairy farm plan that considers the environmental, social and cultural needs of their shareholders • obtain greater knowledge amongst governance of the technical and financial considerations for the dairy conversion and operating entity.
Project 4	Consolidate disparate beehives on an area of land and further develop manuka honey production.	MPI provided access to expert advice and information to enable informed decision making by Māori land owners to achieve the following: • a stock-take of current land assets to identify those suitable for manuka honey production • a feasibility study of surrounding Māori land assets to identify those suitable for a collaborative manuka honey venture.
Project 5	Develop beekeeping and manuka honey production through a license or lease arrangement with a beekeeping company.	MPI provided access to expert advice and information to enable informed decision making by Māori land owners to achieve the following: • a feasibility study and financial analysis of a possible bee venture.
Project 6(a)	Invest in raising productivity through high-performance orchard management and/or introduction of higher value kiwifruit varieties.	MPI provided access to expert advice and information to enable informed decision making by Māori land owners to achieve the following: • increase production, performance and profitability of Māori owned orchards based on the development and implementation of a high performance orchard management plan. • large scale productivity increases and information sharing through the establishment of regional forums of Māori orchardists (BOP, Gisborne, Northland). • develop governance and technical capability.
Project 6(b)	Options for working with Māori dairy farmers to raise productivity through expert assistance and mentoring.	MPI provided access to expert advice and resources to achieve the following: • scope a project aimed at designing and building a customised service for Māori dairy farmers.

5. Available evidence indicates **MPI staff were highly effective in working in partnership** with Māori land owners and a range of other stakeholders in these varied contexts. Amongst the key benefits of the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects are their **contribution** to:

   - building **capacity for problem solving** through improved access to knowledge of feasible agribusiness opportunities so Māori land owners can choose the best ways to improve the productivity of their land
   - **enhancing relationships and networks** between Māori land owners and a range of stakeholders[3] and enable them to work together to come up with practical solutions to what had appeared intractable challenges in the past
   - identifying feasible ways for multiple Māori land owners (at times including those with small shares) to consolidate their holdings **to achieve economic scale** needed to support profitable agribusiness
   - supporting the **development of appropriate governance entities** with effective decision-making amongst multiple Māori land owners (at times including those with small shares)
   - **producing public knowledge** by sharing the learnings with other Māori land owners
   - supporting **Māori self-determination**.

6. Two key unanticipated benefits of the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects were identified.

   - Firstly, Māori land owners and MPI staff both reflected that while project establishment and building trusted relationships took some time, once the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects were underway they were able to progress quite quickly.
   - Secondly, the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects achieved both short-term and longer-term solutions. The evaluation found the solutions achieved or plans developed were far reaching – in that they set the foundation, the systems, tools and processes for the ongoing management and development of the Māori land asset.

Conclusions and recommendations

7. MPI has successfully worked with Māori land owners through the Prototype projects to progress multiply owned Māori land development and productivity options. MPI took a relational approach, coupled with using strong processes and tools, to address 'intractable' Māori land related productivity and governance issues. It is worth MPI continuing to work in a similar way.

[3] Including a range of business consultants and scientists

8. Key learnings from this small and targeted evaluation are that there are opportunities to add value to MPI's ways of working by using the Prototype project learnings. The evaluators recommend focussing on the following areas:

- **Project readiness**: continue to identify and work with Māori land owners or other stakeholders who want to (and are ready) to take the next steps. MPI staff were skilled in identifying projects that were project ready.
- **Decision-making**: continue to reinforce that decision-making must rest with Māori land owners. The role of MPI therefore is to bring knowledge, information and networks to assist land owners to consider options and make good decisions.
- **Document prototype tools and ways of working:** At present the detailed knowledge of the project processes used by MPI resides within MPSP and documentation will assist its application and transfer to a wider audience. MPI needs to capture in more detail the ways of working and learnings with the projects for future use with others.
- **Relationships:** Retain a relational based approach to engagement and where necessary support other MPI staff to develop these skills or access this knowledge. It is important not to understate the significance of the technical, cultural and contextual knowledge that MPI staff brought to the projects with Māori land owners. They excelled in using this knowledge to build strong relationships with Māori land owners and other stakeholders.
- **Use of resources:** Future projects need to make provision for external advisors to engage with Māori land owners on more than one occasion to support decision-making. This is more costly than was initially envisaged. MPI harnessed the complementary skills of MPI staff, irrespective of which office or team they were in, for optimum effect in the project. This should be continued.

9. MPSP staff contend that the partnership-focussed, relationship-based approach could also be applied by others in MPI to build trusted relationships more generally.

1 Summary of key findings

Introduction

10. In December 2011 the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), in its previous incarnation as the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), started to test new ways the organisation could work in partnership with Māori land-owning groups to help them improve the productivity of their land. It was recognised that this would also generate public value (for example by producing public knowledge, increasing land owners' and MPI's capability, and increasing productivity).

11. This project was led by MPI's Māori Primary Sector Partnerships (MPSP) branch. They began by undertaking a series of meetings, including site visits, with trustees, shareholders, advisors and managers of several land blocks and Māori agribusinesses representatives to explore the range of challenges and opportunities faced by Māori in the primary sector.

12. Over the following 18 months, the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects were initiated to focus on providing Māori land owners with access to information that would enable them to improve the productivity of their land. These built on existing and established relationships with Iwi, Māori land owners and key stakeholders such as the Federation of Māori Authorities, Te Tumu Paeroa[4], other government agencies, local government and the business community.

13. Through the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects MPI tested a number of ways of working in partnership with the private sector and Māori land owners to improve the productivity of Māori land. The projects enabled MPI to identify and develop approaches whereby it could support Maori landowners improve land productivity

14. MPSP selected and established six prototypes to be tested and brought on board other MPI teams and resources as required. As the prototypes progressed, MPI worked proactively in partnership with the Māori land-owning groups and other strategic partners to assist the land owners to overcome challenges to improving the productivity of their land.

15. This evaluation assesses the benefits to the groups and to MPI in taking part in the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects. The specific challenges the evaluators refer to were finding ways to:

- consolidate multiple land owners into a mandated governance entity with effective decision making
- achieve the economic scale needed to support profitable agribusiness

[4] Te Tumu Paeroa is the name of the new Māori Trustee organisation, which is headed by the Māori Trustee, Jamie Tuuta. Te Tumu Paeroa staff are located in six offices around Aotearoa New Zealand.

- access or build the capability needed to grow agribusiness productivity and profitability.

16. This evaluation report combines data from two data collection periods, mid-July to mid-August 2013 and November to December 2013,. It also references a number of reports and internal papers from 2012 and 2013 that document how the prototype approach evolved. MPI[5] provided feedback on the baseline and final prototype evaluation report.

Evaluation objectives

17. The overall objective of this evaluation was to provide MPI with evaluative feedback on the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects and to enable discussions on what the learning and parameters for a business-as-usual programme would be and contribute to answering the following Key Evaluation Questions:

1. How, and in what ways, have the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects assisted Māori land owners to overcome the challenges to increasing productivity?
2. To what extent have the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects contributed to generating public value and delivering on MPI's *Our Strategy 2030* and Government priorities?
3. Which new ways of working for MPI have worked well and not so well and why (considering different contexts, constraints and resources)?
4. What are the learnings and parameters for a business-as-usual programme?

Evaluation methodology

18. Data was collected using a mix of methods, including self-completion questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Following is an overview of numbers of responses in the self-completion survey data set:

- benchmark data collection: 13 responses across the six projects from prototype participants and 8 self-completion responses from MPI staff
- follow-up data collection: 7 responses across five projects from prototype participants and 8 responses from MPI staff.

19. All survey interviews with non-MPI project participants were conducted by MPI staff. The evaluators did not have any direct contact with the projects for this evaluation.

[5] Note: For the rest of the report reference to "MPI staff" includes those from MPSP.

20. In February 2014 the evaluators ran a sense-making session with 12 MPI staff, including those who worked on the Prototype projects. The evaluators also conducted a further seven one-hour interviews with MPI staff responsible for each of the projects. This provided an additional depth of information for the reporting and helped verify some of the findings from the self-completion questionnaires.

21. An evaluation-specific methodology[6] was used for the evaluation, and the data available was synthesised using a generic evaluative rubric to build layers of evidence[7] from which to make an assessment of value, merit and worth of contribution of the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects.

22. The generic rubric provided an explicit basis for evaluating progress and specified for each of the key evaluation questions a range of levels of performance rating: poor, adequate, good, very good and excellent. Each data source was converted into a rating. The following table briefly outlines the process used to make those conversions.

Table 2: Generic rubric and synthesis process

Rating	Qualitative data
Excellent: (Always)	Clear example of exemplary performance or great practice; no weaknesses
Very good: (Almost always)	Very good to excellent performance on virtually all aspects; strong overall but not exemplary; no weaknesses of any real consequence
Good: (Mostly, with some exceptions)	Reasonably good performance overall; might have a few slight weaknesses but nothing serious
Adequate: (Sometimes, with quite a few exceptions)	Fair performance; some serious but non-fatal weaknesses on a few aspects
Insufficient evidence	No clear evidence available that the aspect of performance in question has occurred
Poor: Never (or occasionally with clear weaknesses evident)	Clear evidence of unsatisfactory functioning; serious weaknesses across the board on crucial aspects

[6] For further information on what constitutes an 'evaluation specific methodology' see the following publications:
Davidson, E.J (2013) Evaluation-Specific Methodology: the methodologies that are distinctive to evaluation. GenuineEvaluation. Retrieved 20 December 2013 from http://genuineevaluation.com/evaluation-specific-methodology-the-methodologies-that-are-distinctive-to-evaluation/
King, J., McKegg, K., Oakden, J. & Wehipeihana, N. (2013) Rubrics: A Method for Surfacing Values and Improving the Credibility of Evaluation. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Evaluation, 9:21,* 11-20.
Scriven, M. (2008). A summative evaluation of RCT methodology: & an alternative approach to causal research. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Evaluation, 5,* 11-24.

[7] Scriven, M. (2008). A summative evaluation of RCT methodology: & an alternative approach to causal research. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Evaluation, 5,* 11-24.

Findings

Introduction

23. This summary of key findings starts with an assessment of the overall effectiveness of the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects and provides additional information that addresses each of the Key Evaluation Questions.

24. Overall, the evaluation found the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects made a **worthwhile and valuable contribution** by connecting Māori land owners with specialists in multiple fields for transfer of knowledge, building networks and working together to conceptualise solutions to improve the productivity of Māori land.

25. The following dashboard shows that overall MPI staff were able to work in partnership with Māori land owners to support them to take steps towards improving the productivity of their land, and so the programme is rated as making a worthwhile and valuable contribution overall.

26. Specifically, the evaluation found the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects demonstrated:

- there was evidence the Prototypes assisted Māori land owners to overcome challenges to increasing productivity and so they were rated good
- there was some evidence that the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects contributed to generating public value and that they made steps towards delivering on MPI's *Our Strategy 2030* and Government priorities, and so they were rated adequate. The exceptions were due to the short timeframe for the prototype projects.
- and there was clear evidence that MPI's new ways of working worked well for Māori land owners, and so they were rated very good.

Table 3: Dashboard summary overall rating of the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects

	Poor	Insufficient evidence	Adequate	Good	Very good	Excellent
Overall rating						
Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects assisted Māori land owners to overcome challenges to increasing productivity						
Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects contributed to generating public value and delivered on MPI's *Our Strategy 2030* and Government Priorities						
New ways of working for MPI worked well for Māori land owners						

Question 1: Assisting Māori land owners to overcome challenges

27. Overall, Māori land owners reported **positive progress** was made in **overcoming challenges to increasing productivity** as a result of the projects.

28. There was good evidence the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects assisted Māori land owners to overcome challenges to increasing productivity, and so the projects were rated as making a good contribution for this dimension. For instance, there was clear evidence that as a result of the Prototype projects many of the groups had:

- built new relationships and strengthened relationships with each other and the industries or sectors of interest, cementing some of these relationships with formal agreements
- the opportunity to conceptualise greater possibilities for their land than had previously been on their horizon
- implemented new or improved governance arrangements that support effective and timely decision making
- secured advice and resources, and identified where immediate and future investment of capital might be required
- been supported to grow sector-specific knowledge, particularly around land productivity options, and a structured way of assessing the potential of the land
- the opportunity to engage in considered and robust processes, and gain increased confidence to enquire, engage and problem-solve independently and with experts to make decisions about optimal land use
- strengthened and reaffirmed their governance mandate, garnering more support and interest from land owners and the community as a result of showcasing the progress and achievements of projects.

Question 2: Contribution to public value

29. Public value in the context of the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects included: new knowledge being used by Māori land owners beyond the projects; increased capability of Māori land owners spreading beyond the projects; and increased productivity of resources spreading beyond the projects. Based on the MPI support over a short-term period (June 2013–January 2014)[8], there was evidence that the Prototype projects made some contribution to generating public value by making small steps towards delivering on MPI's *Our Strategy 2030* and Government Priorities. Thus, the projects were rated as making an adequate contribution for this dimension, with potential for further value.

[8] It should be noted that support is still ongoing, but for this report is limited to the time-frame specified.

30. **Extent new knowledge is used by Māori land owners beyond the projects**: There was evidence that several projects had found ways to amalgamate small land blocks to achieve performance that would not have been possible in isolation. As the projects are still working through the mechanics, the knowledge is just starting to be used by others. It is not yet being widely promulgated, as is evidenced by this report anonymising the projects.

31. **Extent of increased capability of Māori land owners that spreads beyond the projects**: There was evidence of direct sharing from the projects with nearby Māori land owners about the new ways they are using their land or techniques to increase productivity of existing use. It was acknowledged that Māori capability would take time to build. At the outset, several Māori land owners elected to work in partnership with other stakeholders with existing capability while longer term strategies were developed to support the longer-term transfer of expertise to those within their own Iwi. MPI staff were credited with playing a key role in the development and brokering of these relationships and partnerships to support more effective and efficient capability building – at times by supporting other stakeholders to engage with Māori land owners. Furthermore there was also evidence of indirect sharing – where awareness of the benefits of the process used by the projects encouraged other Iwi and Māori land owners to consider engaging in similar processes.

32. **Extent of increased productivity of resources beyond the projects:** There is emerging evidence that the development of a Māori land block or blocks can act as a nucleus for further blocks to link to in future. Māori land owners talked of the desire to increase both the number of blocks within amalgamated land blocks and boost the blocks' overall productivity.

Question 3: Testing MPI's approach

33. It is important to acknowledge that for many MPSP staff, the approaches applied for the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects were not actually new ways of working. From their perspective, these projects drew on a tried and tested relationship-based approach that focused on understanding the needs and aspirations of those they were working with, in this case Māori. MPSP staff were open-minded about exploring opportunities for partnering and collaboration, and continuing with conversations even when they are challenging. Staff from MPSP also explained that this open approach had worked previously to increase Māori participation in fisheries management through the development of Forum and Iwi Fish Plans and to improve Māori engagement in the biosecurity system. The approach is, therefore, a new way for MPI to work in this space.

34. There was considerable evidence that MPI's approach worked well for Māori land owners, and so the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects were rated very good overall for this. The projects successfully assisted Māori land owners to work together and with others. In some instances, the

progress made was quite substantial – for example, there was evidence of projects developing memorandums of understanding and selecting business approaches that will work for their people. Some projects also identified ways to achieve economic scale, and some are now on the journey to developing profitable agribusinesses.

35. Key aspects of MPI's approach were the way they assisted Māori Land owners by firstly **forming effective working relationships** with them. Ways this occurred are outlined as follows:

- There was clear evidence that MPI staff demonstrated **high levels of skill in building relationships**. They were highly skilled at bringing together Māori land owners with experts in multiple fields, to transfer knowledge and build networks. Project readiness and the identification of project leaders were important selection criteria. For instance, MPI, Iwi and Māori land owners explored partnership opportunities - which at times were to involve third parties.

- It was clearly evident that MPI staff had a **nuanced understanding of Māori land owners' values** and this was an important enabler for establishing and building relationships and for envisioning possible opportunities that resonated with Māori communities. It made it possible for MPI staff to support Māori land owners within a range of appropriately nuanced engagement processes. However, MPI staff working on the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects believed that while an understanding of tikanga was helpful, anyone focused on building meaningful relationships could work effectively with Māori, if they seek support to engage with Iwi and Māori in culturally appropriate ways.

- There were multiple examples of MPI staff involved in the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects being **highly skilled at working collaboratively** with each other – they presented as a cohesive team to the Māori land owners they worked with and to other stakeholders including government agencies (central and local) and industry organisations.

- Māori land owners also believed the **projects helped build awareness and understanding of MPI**. Because of the projects, Māori land owners reported becoming better informed about who MPI are, and how and in what ways MPI could support them to develop productive and viable farming assets. Māori land owners surveyed also reported being more likely to initiate contact and engage with MPI in the future.

36. While this section has provided an overview of MPI's new ways of working that have worked well, it does not identify *which* ways worked best. Further, while some isolated challenges occurred, there were no specific patterns identified of aspects that did not work well.

37. Based on the small sample sizes, it was not possible to identify whether the different ways of working for the various projects were more or less effective. However, the range of flexible and adaptive approaches used by MPI staff on the projects appeared to work within their contexts. Therefore, the evaluators recommend documenting the suite of options and ways of working used during this project, as they all have promise as being flexible and responsive to the needs of Māori land owners.

Question 4: Learnings for a business-as-usual programme

Introduction

38. The evaluators found that MPI staff operated in a highly effective manner to support the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects. MPI staff demonstrated a range of relationship building skills that are vital for working in partnership and collaboration.

39. The evaluators believe that a key learning from this project is that the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour of the MPI staff played a vital role in supporting high trust-based and purposeful relationships to be built with Māori land owners and other partners in the prototype projects, and that these relationships predicated the success of the projects.

40. Therefore, this section teases out the approaches taken by MPI staff in more detail and in a more structured manner to help MPI adopt this relationship-based approach as part of its business as usual. The evaluators found evidence that MPI staff:

- worked with Māori land owners to engage and establish relationships with each other and with other stakeholders
- played a facilitator role with Māori land owners enabling them to listen, express views and be heard with each other and with other stakeholders
- helped Māori land owners and stakeholders to develop an understanding of and frame the issues to be addressed
- supported Māori land owners and stakeholders to envision or conceptualise solutions
- supported Māori land owners and stakeholders to make commitments.

41. This relationship-based approach closely mirrors a model from management consulting literature called the "Trusted Relationship Model".

Origins of the Trusted Relationship Model

42. This section introduces a model that is proving useful for describing the process of building trusted relationships that MPI staff used to support the Māori Agribusiness Prototype projects. Through several previous and current evaluation projects, the Kinnect Group has looked to the literature

for ways to capture and record the process of building trusted relationships – and how this provides a foundation for working together to address challenges and opportunities.

43. We have found support for the importance of building strong relational trust in the literature from a range of sources. All contain examples of ideas that support building trusted relationships:

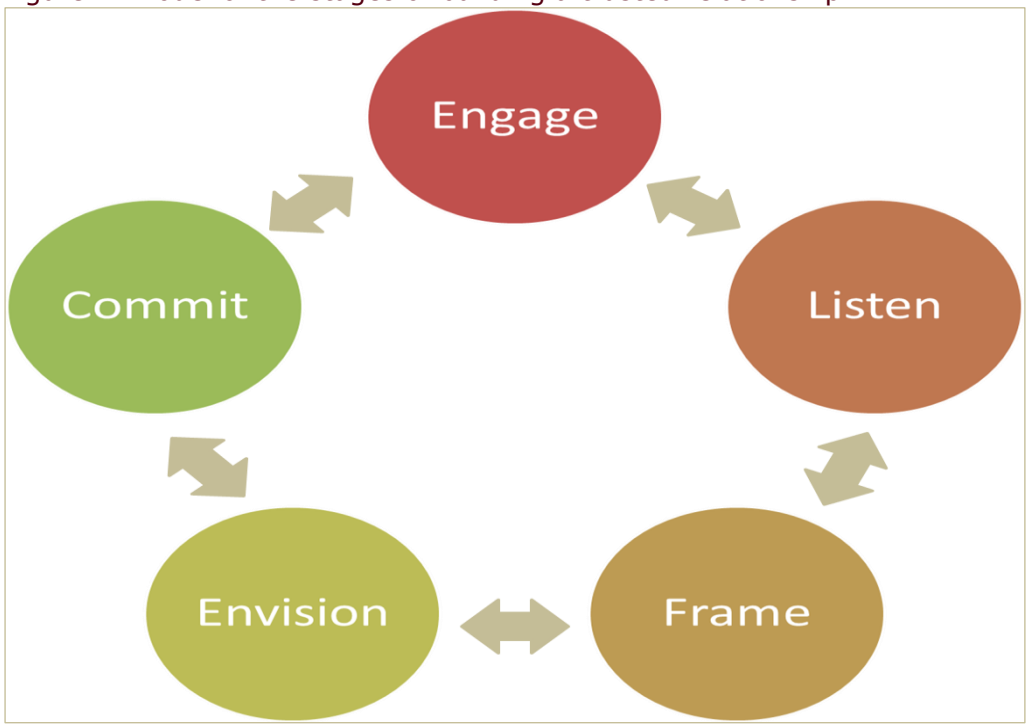
- the management consulting literature (Covey, Link, & Merrill, 2012; Maister, Green, & Galford, 2000; Katz & Kahn, R.L., 1978)
- literature from the Australian Government sector (Department of Human Services, 2011, p. 19)
- the international development literature (Baser & Morgan, 2008)
- the evaluation literature (Patton M. Q., 2008, Patton M. Q., 2011)
- the indigenous literature (Cram, 2009; Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000; Smith, 1999) – which has always maintained the importance of building relationships.

44. The trusted relationship model also draws on the evaluators' practical experience including:

- the *Evaluation of the Māori Oral Health Providers Project* (Wehipeihana, N., Oakden, J., Spee, K., Cram, F., Pipi, K., and Porima, L., 2011)
- the *Evaluation of the Vulnerable Pregnant Women's Multidisciplinary Team, Hawke's Bay District Health Board,* (Cram, F. & Ormond, A. 2011)
- current work the Kinnect Group is undertaking in the local government sector.

45. For this evaluation, the evaluators adapted a model from *The trusted advisor* (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2000) which identifies five distinct stages in the development of trusted relationships. These stages are: engaging, listening, framing, envisioning and committing. Maister et al's original diagram (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2000, p. 85) was modified to take into account two further factors: the iterative nature of building relational trust and the ongoing and cyclical nature of engagement.

Figure 1: Model of the stages of building a trusted relationship



Applying the model in practice

46. The following table presents evidence that illustrates how MPI staff adopted a partnership-focussed, relationship-based approach to work with Māori land owners and with key stakeholders at each stage to build trusted relationships. This included attitudes, beliefs and behaviours.

Table 4: Stages of building trusted relationships, with examples of how MPI staff supported this

Stage	How MPI staff supported building trusted relationships
Engage and establish relationships	MPI staff recognised the importance of appropriate engagement and sound relationship-building and appreciated the: • importance of historical context • importance of mandate (agreement of Māori land owners to proceed) • need for effective project leaders and that different types of leaders are needed for different projects and contexts • need to get the right people at the discussion table • need to allow sufficient time to get to know one another – especially at the beginning of the project • need to build on existing relationships where possible, to enhance credibility • signaling of readiness to move forward is an assessment best made by leaders • need to offer genuine choice and support Māori land owners to select the experts they wished to work with • appropriateness of using tikanga Māori approaches where possible.
Listen, express views and be heard	MPI staff recognised the need to: • ensure Māori land owners and other key stakeholders had a chance to express their aspirations and be heard • ensure Māori land owners had a chance to meet with other Māori land owners and discuss others' aspirations • work will all involved towards agreement on the possibilities to be explored.
Develop an understanding of the issues; frame the issue	MPI staff appreciated that: • issues may be complex and there may be a number of different aspects and perspectives to be considered when making business decisions – including not only economic values but also social, environmental and cultural values • issues may be considered from a very long-term, intergenerational view • expert input may be required, and the selection of experts needed to be made by Māori land owners (with some limited, judicious and impartial support from MPI, if specifically requested) • there is a need for a clear understanding of the options, which are framed in ways that are understandable, before people can move forward • everyone may not immediately understand the potential and some may need to see different options in practice before they can envision potential for their own situation.
Envision or conceptualise solutions	MPI staff recognised that there may be a range of possible solutions so: • Māori land owners needed to able to consider the options carefully, to their own time-frames and from their own value base or world view – including social, environmental and cultural values as well as economic values • a long-term view might predicate a different approach than might be considered desirable over a shorter timeframe.
Make commitments	MPI staff recognised that different people had different approaches to making a commitment and that: • Māori land owners needed to make the decisions for themselves with support – but not undue influence – from MPI • there needed to be genuine solutions available within current legal and financial frameworks before commitments could be made • as many as possible of the Māori land owners who show up or engage needed to fully understand the possible solutions, and at times this required several meetings • commitments might be intergenerational and therefore set-up at times required a wider range of aspects to be considered • the commitments made were likely to be robust due to this process.

Conclusion and recommendations

47. MPI has successfully worked with Māori land owners through the prototype projects to progress multiply owned Māori land development and productivity options. MPI took a relational approach, coupled with using strong processes and tools, to address 'intractable' Māori land related productivity and governance issues. It is worth MPI continuing to work in a similar way in other work programme areas.

48. Key learnings from this small and targeted evaluation are that there are opportunities to add value to MPI's ways of working by using the prototype project learnings. The evaluators recommend focussing on the following areas:

- **Project readiness**: continue to identify and work with Māori land owners or other stakeholders who want to (and are ready) to take the next steps. MPI staff were skilled in identifying projects who were project ready.
- **Decision-making**: continue to reinforce that decision-making must rest with Māori land owners. The role of MPI therefore is to bring knowledge information, and networks to assist land owners to consider options and make good decisions.
- **Document prototype tools and ways of working:** At present the detailed knowledge of the project processes used by MPI resides within MPSP and documentation will assist its application and transfer to a wider audience. MPI needs to capture in more detail the ways of working and learnings with the projects for future use with others.
- **Relationships:** Retain a relational based approach to engagement and where necessary support other MPI staff to develop these skills or access this knowledge. It is important not to understate the significance of the technical, cultural and contextual knowledge that MPI staff brought to the projects with Māori land owners. They excelled in using this knowledge to build strong relationships with Māori land owners and other stakeholders.
- **Use of resources:** Future projects need to make provision for external advisors to engage with Māori land owners on more than one occasion to support decision-making. This is more costly than was initially envisaged. MPI harnessed the complementary skills of regional and head office staff for optimum effect in the project. This should be continued.

49. MPI staff contend that the partnership-focussed, relationship-based approach could also be applied by others in MPI and the wider public service to build trusted relationships more generally. We concur – however, this assertion was untested in the evaluation.

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