# External Evaluation and Review Report

## The Whanganui Learning Centre Trust

Date of report: 1 August 2023

# About The Whanganui Learning Centre Trust

*The Whanganui Learning Centre Trust (WLCT) provides education services and wrap-around care and support to people who seek their services, regardless of ethnicity, age, gender or capability.*

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| Type of organisation: | Private training establishment |
| Location: | 232 Wicksteed Street, Whanganui |
| Eligible to enrol intl students: | No |
| Number of students: | Domestic: 86 on short courses; Māori 60 per cent, Pasifika 6 per cent, disabled 90 per cent International: nil |
| Number of staff: | Five full-time equivalents, one part-time |
| TEO profile: | See: Whanganui Learning Centre |
| | WLCT is a stand-alone, not-for-profit community organisation registered with the Charities Commission. Seventy per cent of students have no prior qualifications. Over 90 per cent have significant learning, language and/or health needs. Over 80 per cent have no employment or income from paid work. WLCT has been in operation with this demographic for over 45 years. |
| Last EER outcome: | At the last external evaluation and review in 2019, WLCT was found to be Highly Confident in both educational performance and capability in self-assessment. |
| Scope of evaluation: | Adult and Community Education (ACE), Horizons Regional Council Learner Licence, Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) Guided Advocacy for Parents (GAPS) |
| MoE number: | 7956 |
| NZQA reference: | C52951 |
| Dates of EER visit: | 17-19 May 2023 |

*Final*

# Summary of results

*WLCT consistently enables priority learners to gain sufficient confidence to succeed academically and personally. Tutors partner with each student to co-design a personal learning programme. Measures of success and value include regular attendance, improved communication and social skills, increased sense of self-worth, and access to greater opportunities.*

**Highly Confident in educational performance**

- WLCT is a learner-centric organisation which has created a warm, welcoming, non-judgmental and safe environment for all learners.

- Tutors connect and work alongside learners at the learner's pace. Priority learners with significant learning, language and/or health needs and no employment or income history improve their wellbeing and enhance their abilities and attributes.

**Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment**

- WLCT provides an essential hub in its community. Learners are referred to the organisation and WLCT has a network of external stakeholders to whom it can refer learners.

- Effective self-assessment has led to close matching of funding to learner needs. Funding gained enables students to complete short courses that increase personal, social and educational opportunities.

- A continuous cycle of reflection and evaluation informs service provision and day-to-day practice. WLCT uses data analysis effectively throughout the organisation, including data input from commissioned external research.

- The organisation has a clear educational purpose and direction. An enthusiastic board with a range of skills, including in te ao Māori, works with the management team to support students and educational achievement.

# Key evaluation question findings[1]

## 1.1 How well do students achieve?

| Performance: | **Excellent** |
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| Self-assessment: | **Excellent** |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | Students learn at their own pace. Short and long-term goals are co-designed between students and tutors. Students also learn as a whānau, where they celebrate their own and others' successes. This holistic approach – combined with time, patience and developing mutual respect between students and staff – leads to student success. Around 1,500 students across all programmes benefited from attending WLCT over 2020-22.<br><br>Evidence of progress is reflected in regular attendance, social engagement, preparing food for others, volunteering to help with the WLCT community garden, or encouraging a friend to come along to WLCT.<br><br>As student confidence increases, so does the development of cognitive abilities. Gains in literacy and numeracy are made against learning progressions. This improves access to further opportunities, for example achieving a learner licence or employment.<br><br>Feedback from learners, staff, whānau, other agencies and community groups provides strong evidence of student achievement. Personal student and whānau reflections include a change of attitude to learning, a more positive mindset, better relationships with whānau and community, and enthusiasm for more learning. These reflections were also evidenced in stories, emails, oral and written surveys and interviews with stakeholders. |
| Conclusion: | Learner achievement is high and measured broadly. Positive outcomes result from attention to all aspects of a student's life. Students trust that WLCT will continue to work with them to meet their goals, however difficult or long this may take. |

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[1] The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

## 1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including students?

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| Performance: | **Excellent** |
| Self-assessment: | **Excellent** |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | WLCT facilitates valued outcomes for a range of diverse stakeholders in a wide variety of contexts. Examples include enabling ākonga and whānau to participate more confidently in their communities. This might include engaging more effectively with children's schools or social service agencies, supporting pathways for parents who have found their tamariki and rangatahi out of school, or supporting newly released prisoners for transition back into the community.<br><br>Evidence of valued outcomes came from many sources, including whānau and stakeholder feedback, student feedback on student files, media feedback and conversations with external stakeholders. Examples include positive comments from the Horizons Regional Council representative for the Learner Licence programme and an early childhood education specialist.<br><br>WLCT has a longstanding reputation of service that is responsive to and has actively engaged ākonga and their whānau over time. Generations of people have found an advocacy partner and 'life champion' at WLCT. WLCT steps into the gaps where learning support is lacking so that the whole community is strengthened. WLCT becomes whānau to students, and many return to visit to share important life events, such as a new member of the whānau. |
| Conclusion: | WLCT enables students to uplift themselves and contribute positively to their whānau and local community. Communities and iwi bodies are strengthened by WLCT's highly effective learner-centred approach. |

### 1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

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| Performance: | **Excellent** |
| Self-assessment: | **Excellent** |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | WLCT is a small organisation. Staff know the learners well and readily share and respond to their changing needs through individualised programme design and delivery. This flexibility uses each tutor's strengths to accommodate the high level of student needs and interests. Professional development is responsive to staff and learner needs and has included a youth mentoring course, mental health awareness, recognising neurodiversity, first aid training and cultural awareness workshops to inform teaching and learning. Staff maintain up-to-date knowledge of digital material and other interactive student resources.<br><br>WLCT is regularly approached by government agencies to provide a specific service. For example, the Guided Advocacy for Parents (GAPS) funding from the Department of Internal Affairs was the result of a gap in service provision for rangatahi who are not engaged with formal schooling (stood down, excluded or withdrawn from schooling). This programme has led to WLCT staff attending family group conferences with Oranga Tamariki and participating in discussions with schools, to support the learners to manage their learning more effectively. It has also led to engagement with Te Kura, to liaise and interpret, mentor and support non-engaged students and their caregivers.<br><br>Evidence of effectiveness includes learner case studies documenting the removal of barriers and how this was achieved for students, comprehensive stakeholder feedback, and formal and informal evidence from a range of stakeholders. |
| Conclusion: | Programme delivery and learning and assessment activities are guided by learner needs and students' specific personal circumstances. This ensures close matching of student with tutor, relevant programme content, leading to consistently positive learner outcomes. |

## 1.4  How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

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| Performance: | **Excellent** |
| Self-assessment: | **Excellent** |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | Student success is a function of highly effective pastoral support. WLCT interviews every learner, which provides them with a comprehensive understanding of each student's context, including mental health status and support systems. It is understood that when ākonga and whānau have their stress relieved they can focus on their learning needs. Connections are made to additional support services where needed.<br><br>Staff have expertise in working with differently abled and neurodiverse students. Barriers to learning are minimised. WLCT provides free services that include access to data and IT support, and transport and food if needed. Students are highly involved in their learning. Learning is self-paced. Short and long-term goals are discussed by the tutor and student, agreed, recorded and regularly reviewed. Responsibility for learning is passed back to the learner. WLCT provides learners with the tools to understand why they have experienced barriers to their learning, and how WLCT can help them remove these barriers.<br><br>Mental health issues with ākonga and whānau have increased over the past three years. WLCT has been working with many ākonga, as well as providing a community event where experiences of the Covid lockdown could be shared. This was designed as a platform for reconnecting and healing.<br><br>Students are supported to establish effective social and academic support networks. Feedback from whānau, community groups, funders and government agencies is consistently positive and highly appreciative of the effort, time and expertise with which WLCT engages with students and their whānau. |
| Conclusion: | The learning environment is inclusive and non-judgmental. Responses to the wellbeing needs of students are appropriate and lead to positive outcomes for students and whānau. |

## 1.5 How effective are governance and management at supporting educational achievement?

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| Performance: | **Excellent** |
| Self-assessment: | **Excellent** |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | Organisational purpose and direction are clear. Examples of the effectiveness of governance and management's support of educational achievement are varied and many. WLCT is sometimes burdened by its own success. The organisation quickly reaches student capacity because of ongoing referrals and their positive community reputation of inclusivity. Recruitment and development of staff is effective. Staff are valued. Resourcing is sufficient to support learning, teaching and research. External consultants have made improvements to the database, website, IT server and equipment, and the social media presence of WLCT.<br><br>Innovation, responsiveness and continuity are balanced. Strengths in project development, strategic management, research-based practice, self-assessment and evaluation guide innovation. A range of services fill recognised gaps in community-focused sector services. Data collection methods adapt as new services are contracted and WLCT pivots to meet emerging community needs.<br><br>Since the last external evaluation and review in 2019, WLCT has signed new contracts with the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), the Ministry of Social Development, Oranga Tamariki, Youth Justice and the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA). These contracts are in addition to other new and ongoing private philanthropic sources of funding. Securing, reapplying and reporting progress to private and public funders is time consuming but effective. WLCT has also gained NZQA approval for level 1 and 2 training schemes. These have been delivered as programmes called Stepping Stones and My Future Directions.<br><br>Board strategic planning has included contracting in external expertise to develop board capability. WLCT is seeking new and more board members to complement existing board members' skill sets. |
| Conclusion: | Governance and management are committed to WLCT's vision and educational approach. WLCT operates a sustainable |

| | business model which is closely aligned to its educational purpose of empowering under-served learners. |
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## 1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

| Performance: | **Good** |
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| Self-assessment: | **Excellent** |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | Compliance management is comprehensive and effective. Evidence includes:<br><br>• NZQA and TEC reporting requirements are managed effectively<br><br>• organisational efficiencies are evident through renewed funding contracts and grants<br><br>• finances have been outsourced to a professional accounting firm which signals when compliance dates are due<br><br>• the financial audit is completed externally every year and made public on the Charities Commission website.<br><br>WLCT regularly updates its compliance and reporting schedule. Policies and procedures are also updated on a regular basis to comply with legislative changes, and WLCT has ongoing legal advice regarding contract employment compliance and other legal matters. The Code of Practice[2] self-review was comprehensive, thoughtful and included input from all staff.<br><br>In 2020, WLCT sought consent to assess a broader range of unit standards (as training schemes). This was to meet learner demand for unit standards that could contribute credits towards the National Certificate in Education Attainment (NCEA) levels 1 and 2.<br><br>While WLCT met moderation requirements for the Financial Capability and Literacy unit standard systems, it did not meet requirements for the Numeracy and Core Skills unit standard systems. In consultation with NZQA, WLCT developed a comprehensive action plan which not only included becoming compliant but, more importantly, building capability in the organisation to avoid a repeat. This action plan recognised that |

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[2] The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021

| | external support was needed to assist WLCT in unit standard compliance and that this was a priority. The plan includes creating more robust moderation and assessment practices through staff professional development, resources and sharing across other providers. |
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| Conclusion: | WLCT has effective compliance management processes. Policies and practices are legal and ethical. WLCT responded promptly to poor moderation results by developing an action plan to understand the reasons for non-compliance and to build capability in moderation practice. |

# Focus areas

*This section reports significant findings in each focus area, not already covered in Part 1.*

## 2.1 Adult and Community Education (ACE), Horizons Regional Council Learner Licence

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| Performance: | **Excellent** |
| Self-assessment: | **Excellent** |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | This programme is part of a suite of ACE programmes that includes Whānau Health and Wellbeing, Foundation Skills, Financial Literacy, Digital Literacy and Whānau Learning.<br><br>The Learner Licence programme met the needs of 165 students in 2022. Twenty students are currently enrolled.<br><br>The regional council liaison person interviewed by the evaluators applauded the programme for increasing safety on the roads and providing students with the opportunity to gain employment more easily.<br><br>Waka Kotahi is unable to provide results for students due to privacy rules. However, there is strong evidence that most learners successfully attain their learner licence through the WLCT programme. |
| Conclusion: | The Learner Licence programme is a response to community demand that has been well met by WLCT. It demonstrates the value of a partnership model to effectively meet individual and community needs. |

## 2.2 Department of Internal Affairs Guided Advocacy for Parents (GAPS)

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| Performance: | **Excellent** |
| Self-assessment: | **Excellent** |
| Findings and supporting evidence: | This programme was developed in response to an overwhelming anxiety by parents and caregivers for their tamariki or rangatahi who had been stood down, suspended or were disengaged from school. WLCT successfully sought and gained funding in 2022 from DIA to provide this service.<br><br>WLCT works alongside students and whānau, to navigate with and for them to access appropriate schooling. In 2022, 17 |

| | whānau were part of the programme. There are currently seven whānau in the programme. |
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| | The Te Kura liaison person said the success of this programme could be attributed to the quality of WLCT's engagement and approach to these students which was caring, non-judgemental and maintained student and whānau dignity throughout. |
| Conclusion: | WLCT recognised a need to support students who were disengaged from school and worked proactively and effectively to secure funding to meet this need for students and whānau. |

# Recommendations

*Recommendations are not compulsory but their implementation may improve the quality and effectiveness of the training and education provided by the tertiary education organisation (TEO). They may be referred to in subsequent external evaluation and reviews (EERs) to gauge the effectiveness of the TEO's quality improvements over time.*

NZQA recommends that The Whanganui Learning Centre Trust:

- Consider applying for consent to assess for Driver Licence Class 1, (comprising unit standards 29363, 29364 and 29365) as a way to further support NCEA attainment for students.

- Consider proactive collaboration with the TEC to secure additional funding to increase its capacity to serve the needs of currently under-served priority learners, including the needs of learners with disabilities.

- Consider ways to share WLCT's exemplary practice with other providers in the priority learner sector.

# Requirements

*Requirements relate to the TEO's statutory obligations under legislation that governs their operation. This include NZQA Rules and relevant regulations promulgated by other agencies.*

There are no requirements arising from the external evaluation and review.

# Appendix

## Conduct of external evaluation and review

*All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.*

## *Disclaimer*

*The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.*

*For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:*

- *Identify organisational fraud[3]*

- *Provide comprehensive coverage of all programmes within a TEO, or of all relevant evidence sources*

- *Predict the outcome of other reviews of the same TEO which, by posing different questions or examining different information, could reasonably arrive at different conclusions.*

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[3] NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) comprehensively monitor risk in the tertiary education sector through a range of other mechanisms. When fraud, or any other serious risk factor, has been confirmed, corrective action is taken as a matter of urgency.

# Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

*External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2021, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.*

*Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for:*

- *maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities, and*

- *maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs including ITOs but excluding universities, and*

- *maintaining training scheme approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

*The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2021, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2021 and the Training Scheme Rules 2021 respectively.*

*In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2021 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration.*

*NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes, training schemes and consents to assess and registration. The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.*

*This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2021. The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.*

*External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.*

*External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website ([www.nzqa.govt.nz](www.nzqa.govt.nz)). All rules cited above are available at [https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/](https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/), while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at [https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/](https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/).*

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E [qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz](mailto:qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz)

[www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)

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