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Report of External Evaluation and Review

Front-Line Training Consultancy

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 20 October 2016

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MoE Number: 9671
NZQA Reference: C22292
Date of EER visit: 21 and 22 June 2016

Final Report

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.

Introduction

1. TEO in context

Name of TEO:	Front-Line Training Consultancy
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	1 February 1993
Location:	416 Dee Street, Invercargill (Head Office)
Delivery sites:	180 Tainui Street, Greymouth
Courses currently delivered:	<p>Youth Guarantee: Career Track 1 and 2 – New Zealand Certificate in Retail, National Certificate in Employment Skills, NCEA Level 1</p> <p>Career Track 3: National Certificate in Business Administration and Computing, National Certificate in Computing, National Certificate in Hospitality, NCEA Level 3.</p> <p>Ministry of Social Development (MSD) contracts: Training for Work, Individual Employment Placement Service, New Horizons</p> <p>Intensive literacy and numeracy programmes, Adult and Community Education and Alternative Education (Greymouth site only).</p> <p>Front-Line also has a consultancy service and provides specific short-term courses on a user-pays basis (some of which may lead to achievement in a particular unit standard), for example the Licence Controller Qualification.</p>

Code of Practice signatory:	Not a signatory
Number of students:	Domestic: 41 full-time students in Youth Guarantee programmes in 2015 (10 identified as Māori, no learners identified as Pasifika).
Number of staff:	18 full-time equivalents, two part-time
Scope of active accreditation:	<p>Front-Line has accreditations from a wide range of subfields and domains at levels 1-6, but is currently offering unit standards up to level 4 in the areas of hospitality (non-food), retail, computing, and business administration. Refer to link below for a full accreditation list.</p> <p>http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/nqf-accreditations.do?providerId=967126001</p>
Distinctive characteristics:	<p>Front-Line was established in 1992 as a limited liability company. It is a family business and the original owners and directors are still actively involved in operations. Front-Line has been a single-site organisation over this time. However, in 2015 it fulfilled a strategic objective to be multi-site by purchasing a PTE in Greymouth. The Greymouth site was opened as Front-Line in 2016. Management acknowledges that there is more work to be done to build the PTE's reputation in the community, identify community and stakeholder needs, and socialise its company culture with Greymouth-based Front-Line staff.</p> <p>Front-Line's mission statement is to provide quality vocational client-centred education and training services to meet the needs of business and the service sector. The PTE's accreditations and qualifications provide a broad base of training for these industries, including business administration, computing, communications, retail, hospitality and NCEA. Literacy and numeracy is embedded in all programmes. Front-Line's current focus is at certificate level, although it has accreditation to provide programmes at diploma level (level 6).</p>
Recent significant changes:	Front-Line purchased a small PTE in Greymouth in December 2015, which opened for business in 2016. The managing director is also co-owner of a

new business recently opened called Impact Recruitment.

Previous quality assurance history:

At the external evaluation and review (EER) in 2012, NZQA was: Highly Confident in educational performance and Confident in the capability in self-assessment of Front-Line.

In 2014 and 2015, Front-Line met all standards submitted for moderation. In 2013, out of five unit standards submitted for moderation, only one (unit standard 26627 *Use measurement to solve problems*) did not meet the standard. Front-Line also met the moderation requirements of ServiceIQ.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

Table 1. Focus areas and rationale for selection		
1.	Governance, management and strategy	This is a mandatory focus area. It has importance for the quality of the educational experience for learners, matching the needs of key stakeholders, the employment experiences of staff, and the legal, ethical and compliance context for operating as a registered PTE.
2.	Youth Guarantee	<p>Career Track 1 and Career Track 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Zealand Certificate in Retail (Level 2) • National Certificate in Employment Skills (Level 1) • National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 1 or 2 <p>Career Track 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Certificate in Business Administration and Computing (Level 2) • National Certificate in Computing (Level 2) • New Zealand Certificate in Hospitality (Level 2) • NCEA Level 2 or 3 <p>These 40-week vocational pathway programmes are approved by NZQA and funded by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC).</p>

3. Conduct of external evaluation and review

*All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published policies and procedures. The methodology used is described fully in the web document *Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review* available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction>. 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.*

Two evaluators conducted the evaluation over two days at Front-Line's Invercargill delivery site. The evaluators engaged with:

- The business owner and the operations manager
- Youth Guarantee tutors, MSD contract co-ordinator, and a consultant
- 15 Youth Guarantee learners
- Stakeholders (an employer, youth aid officer from New Zealand Police, drug and alcohol service provider representation, a graduate, STAR co-ordinator from a local secondary school, and a representative from Age Concern).

A comprehensive self-assessment summary was provided to the evaluation team prior to the on-site inquiry. In addition, while on site, the evaluators also reviewed a range of information including achievement data (generated from Front-Line's student management system and student grid); moderation results; business and investment plans; contracts and milestone reports; student handbooks, enrolment forms, attendance data and programme information.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Front-Line Training Consultancy Ltd.**

Front-Line has continued to meet the most important needs of learners and stakeholders in its community. Since the last EER, Front-Line has maintained a high level of quality delivery to a diverse range of stakeholders in a niche area (business and service sector training).

The Youth Guarantee programme is focused on growing core skills that prepare students for work, including working in teams, communicating effectively, literacy and numeracy, and workplace experience. Furthermore, high expectations of personal presentation, behaviour and attendance are expected. As a result, attendance is consistently high (on average 85 per cent), and the majority of learners achieve a range of qualifications (NCEA and industry qualifications) and successfully transition to further training and/or gain employment (for example in entry-level jobs in the building industry, childcare, retail, administration, hairdressing, and hospitality). These are excellent outcomes for youth who were disengaging (or in some cases disengaged) from the education system.

Staff are well qualified in teaching, with relevant industry experience and experience working with young people. Learners spoke highly of the tutors and their ability to engage, listen and support them to achieve. Front-Line also actively and regularly engages its key stakeholders formally and informally to ensure pathways are in place that support industry needs and those of their clients (including Youth Guarantee students and adult job seekers).

Front-Line is a long-standing and well-established family business which has robust systems and processes in place to inform decision-making. This is evident in Front-Line's growth as a multi-site organisation, combined with the continuation (and in some cases extension) of education, training and employment funding from government and business clients. Front-Line also has a clear organisational purpose and culture, and contributes to positive outcomes valued by key stakeholders (funder, employers, students and graduates).

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Front-Line Training Consultancy Ltd.**

Front-Line continues to self-assess its performance as a training organisation, including reviewing programme content based on systematic stakeholder feedback (including from employers, students and graduates). Front-Line also actively monitors its environment to ensure it is meeting priority needs and remaining competitive.

Learner attendance, achievement and destination data is collated and analysed regularly to inform improvements. Front-Line is not currently monitoring its progress annually against TEC performance indicators and/or mapping against its own knowledge of achievement (for example, course completions data). This is an area that is now being built into its self-assessment. Management is well informed of student progress and actively supports learning. In particular, resources are provided to ensure the facilities and learning materials are to a high standard; tutors have access to appropriate professional development and tutor performance is reviewed regularly; and learners have the guidance and support they need to achieve and transition to further learning and/or employment.

Furthermore, Front-Line is responsive to community and employer needs and open to making improvements that contribute to better outcomes for clients. Ongoing reflection and self-assessment is part of organisational culture.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

Front-Line provided convincing evidence to demonstrate that Youth Guarantee learners (and in fact the majority of its clients) gain useful skills and knowledge and/or qualifications that prepare them for further training and/or employment (Refer Table 2).

Since the last EER, Front-Line has continued to stay focused on meeting the needs of youth not in school or struggling to succeed in a mainstream school environment. Its programme is purposefully focused on life skills, work skills and work-readiness.

Front-Line monitors its own student achievement data monthly to ensure learners are on track to achieve. It also collates this data annually on a student grid against other variables (e.g. employment outcomes) to monitor and evaluate what learners achieve (unit standards, credits and qualifications) and their destinations.

Achievement information is monitored by tutors and shared with management through weekly and monthly reports from both sites (Invercargill and Greymouth).

Table 2. Front-Line Youth Guarantee achievement 2013-2015

	2013	2014	2015
Total learners	34	47	41
NCEA Level 1	10	24	11
NCEA Level 2	8	17	17
NCEA Level 3	3	4	9
Industry qualifications	11	18	25
Total number of qualifications achieved	32	63	62
Number of enrolled learners who gained unit standards	34	44	41
Number of enrolled learners who gained no unit standards	-	3	-
Post-programme outcomes – in further education and training	13	32	20
Post-programme outcomes – in employment	19	11	9

Source: Front-Line Training Consultancy Ltd's data based on its student grid

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

The majority of Front-Line learners identify as New Zealand European; Māori learners represent on average 25 per cent of learners (in 2013 Māori learners represented 41 per cent). Based on Front-Line's analysis of data, Māori achievement is on par with non-Māori.

Tertiary education indicator data shows that course completions have increased slightly since 2013, from 48 per cent to 51 per cent in 2015; and qualification completion has increased from 38 per cent (2013) to 70 per cent (2015). However, Front-Line has yet to actively monitor its progress against TEC performance data. This is an area that it is now building into its self-assessment.

Front-Line attributes learner success to the high standards and expectations it has for all staff, clients and learners, and its relationship focus and attention to quality customer service. This was validated across the key evaluation questions.

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

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Youth Guarantee learners achieve a range of qualifications including NCEA Levels 1-3 and industry-based qualifications in retail, hospitality, business and/or computing. Front-Line keeps track of student destinations to monitor student progression (an improvement since the last EER). Between 2013 and 2015, the majority of learners went on to higher-level education and training. Some returned to Front-Line to complete level 3 study, or transition to Southern Institute of Technology (for nursing, childcare/nanny, building/engineering courses) and/or other local PTEs, while a smaller group gained employment. Learners gain entry-level jobs in the building industry, childcare, retail, administration, hairdressing, and hospitality.

This data, along with feedback gathered formally by employers each year, provides Front-Line with useful information to self-assess its contribution to outcomes valued by its key stakeholders (in particular graduates, funders and employers). MSD contracts have been renewed for a further year (in some cases two years) based on the quality of the PTE's performance against contract expectations. Employers continue to engage Youth Guarantee learners on workplace experience and, in some cases, employment.

Youth Guarantee learners also contribute to wider community needs through their work with local secondary schools (on a contract basis to support the delivery of specific unit standards); through Age Concern (Youth Guarantee learners run a

'Use your Technology' programme in which the learners teach the elderly how to use their electronic devices); and fundraising for charities.

Front-Line's excellent outcomes for a diverse range of clients attest to how well it is continually gathering and self-assessing its own information effectively.

1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Programmes are tailored to meet the needs of youth. Content and delivery reflects the different abilities and interests of learners, with a focus on core skills and knowledge, including literacy and numeracy. Programmes also integrate workplace learning which allows learners an opportunity to apply their skills and knowledge in a real-life work context (e.g. in retail and hospitality) as well as to gain practical work experience. Learnings on work placements are closely monitored, supported and assessed by Front-Line tutors.² This experience provides learners with the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of course content, and also their work ethic. In some cases, learners secure part-time work as a result of the attitude and aptitude they have shown to the employer during their work placement. Feedback about students' employment experiences (including their preparedness for job interviews) is also used to inform programme content.

A new activity (mid-season ball) was incorporated into the programme last year based on student feedback.³ The ball is managed, promoted and organised by the learners (including developing budgets and project plans, fundraising, catering, decorations and so on) with support from tutors. Youth Guarantee learners at other local tertiary education providers are invited to attend. The tutors carefully integrate the assessment of relevant unit standards to ensure learners gain credits for their work organising the ball (e.g. measurement, writing, communication, working as a team, etc). Portfolios are kept of learner individual and group work.

Front-Line uses a range of formal and informal processes to self-assess how well its programmes and activities are meeting needs, including regular engagement and feedback from stakeholders such as funders, employers, students, tutors and

² Alternative work experience is also arranged by Front-Line to meet specific needs of learners on a case-by-case basis.

³ Most Youth Guarantee learners left school at 16 and never had the opportunity to participate in school balls.

corporate clients⁴, and the PTE's work with schools and other community organisations.

Front-Line management formally invites employers to meet once a year (employers' forum) to discuss employer needs and priorities. This information is used by Front-Line to inform programme reviews, develop relationships that foster opportunities for student work placements, and to guide their MSD-funded clients and Youth Guarantee learners into employment. Front-Line also regularly assesses and improves the way it engages with key stakeholders. A recent example was the evolution of its engagement with employers, from industry advisory groups in 2011 to a general advisory group for all employers, to individualised one-to-one engagement, to an employer advisory seminar in 2016. The employer advisory seminar supplements individual engagement with employers and industry partners and is tailored to discussing topical issues and information within industry as well as current and future employment skills needs. The first seminar was held in June 2016 (prior to the EER visit), and feedback has been positive.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Front-Line prides itself on its careful recruitment of staff who match the values of the organisation and its diverse client base. Teaching staff, for example, are qualified in teaching (two have experience teaching in primary and secondary school sectors); they bring a mix of industry experience; and they have the skills and disposition to engage and relate well to Youth Guarantee learners. This was affirmed by students and stakeholders.

Learners noted how tutors make the time to talk with them openly and honestly, answer their questions, and make learning fun and relevant. Learners are expected to treat the learning environment as a work environment. Tutors therefore engage respectfully with learners (as adults), and clear boundaries regarding timeliness, attire and behaviour are set and adhered to. Learners are encouraged to ask for help if needed and take responsibility for their own learning. Underpinning this philosophy is a focus on establishing caring and effective relationships that empower learners to gain skills and improve their confidence and self-esteem.

⁴ Front-Line employs a corporate consultant who engages with clients and develops training that meets their needs. The delivery of the Licence Controller Qualification, for example, is offered as part of Front-Line's corporate service on an as-needed basis.

Tutors are highly reflective practitioners. They continue to be co-located to encourage collegial and professional conversations about learning, and they co-teach, observe and reflect on teaching practice regularly in order to improve. Front-Line teaching staff are involved in the development and review of teaching materials and assessments. Teaching staff understand the intent of moderation and undertake internal moderation effectively. They are experienced educators and understand naturally occurring evidence and how best to capture, document and moderate assessments (as reflected in the positive external moderation results). Front-Line has consistently met external moderation requirements set by NZQA and ServiceIQ.

Individual staff have professional development plans tailored to their specific needs. However, management is also proactive in identifying and supporting staff to attend training that is relevant to working with youth more broadly, including neuro-science and suicide prevention workshops.

Front-Line has well-established processes for reviewing tutor performance and purposefully gathering and using learner feedback to make improvements. For example, as a result of student feedback, Front-Line improved how the computing class was being taught by making the learning objectives clearer and incorporating more teacher-directed content (as opposed to primarily self-directed learning).

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Learners are well supported at Front-Line. Tutors are involved in interviewing all learners prior to enrolling, and expectations are made clear from the outset so the learner and their family/whānau have the information they need to make a decision to enrol. After many years of providing guidance and support to youth and self-assessing how best it can support learners to achieve, Front-Line is clear that its skills, experience and resources are targeted more towards supporting students capable of studying and achieving at levels 2 and 3. Therefore, those students with no qualifications or those who have high and complex needs are often not referred to the PTE or opt not to enrol.

Individual needs assessments are undertaken (informed by numeracy and literacy assessments). This information is used to ensure learners are enrolled in a programme that matches their skill level; and to inform teaching. Attendance is monitored and Front-Line's records show regular and high attendance (at least 85 per cent attendance on average). As mentioned, high expectations are set for all learners (in terms of personal appearance, behaviour and attendance) with an

emphasis on preparing learners to be work-ready. Learners and stakeholders felt that the high expectations contributed to learner success.

Learners have the opportunity to participate in other organised activities, including Youth Week Sports Tournaments, Māori Language Week and an intergenerational quiz (hosted by the mayor) to encourage social interaction among themselves as well as with their local community. These activities have been integrated over time as Front-Line has self-assessed how best to support learners in ways that keep them engaged and also ultimately to achieve success.

To minimise barriers to attendance, Youth Guarantee learners are given the option of being picked up or provided with travel allowances if using their own vehicles. Pastoral support is provided by tutors in the first instance, but Front-Line also has well-established relationships with youth aid and support services who refer students to Front-Line but also respond to any issues as needed. Engagement with social services is both formal and informal, and it was evident through discussions that Front-Line actively looks to improve its support to learners.

Stakeholders were of the view that Front-Line provides an important stepping-stone for students who have disengaged from secondary schooling but want to continue studying and ultimately transition to employment or higher-level study. There was a range of evidence provided that confirmed this was happening for the majority of learners.

1.6 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

Front-Line is a family-owned business which has been operating successfully for 23 years. During this time it has built on its successes and learnt from its mistakes to constantly refine and improve the quality of its offering to the Invercargill community. Front-Line has consistently met its MSD targets to move adult job seekers into employment, which has resulted in a continuation of contracts. It is a valued contributor to youth programmes in particular, supporting youth to transition to higher education and/or employment. More work is required to assess its TEC performance data and how it maps against Front-Line achievement data.

In 2015, Front-Line purchased a small PTE in Greymouth. This was a deliberate business strategy to expand provision in a way that was manageable. The operations manager based in Invercargill has oversight of the Greymouth site and is based there one week a month. Her role primarily has been to identify and engage with community stakeholders and employers to determine their needs and priorities and build the reputation of Front-Line as a quality learner and community-

focused provider. While Front-Line Greymouth opened in 2016, it is still finding its feet as staff (many of whom continue to work for Front-Line) adjust to a new organisational culture and embed new processes, systems and policies.

The operations manager has been part of the organisation in various roles for nearly 18 years. Over this time she has been nurtured to take on more senior responsibilities as part of an overall succession strategy. Equally, all staff have the opportunity to grow and develop within the organisation, which has meant on occasion staff leaving Front-Line to pursue other work opportunities and subsequently returning to more senior roles.

The organisation is well managed, with strategic plans, business plans and risk management plans guiding decision-making. The Front-Line director is aware of and monitors compliance requirements to ensure they are being met. Client success (for youth learners and adult job seekers) is at the forefront, with close monitoring and attention given to achievement results and employment outcomes.

Staff are well qualified, supported to develop, learner-focused and highly valued by the organisation. The facilities are well presented and fit for purpose, and resources are available to support teaching and learning. The programme is diverse to meet the needs of corporate clients requiring training in specific areas of youth and adults looking to return to the workforce.

Front-Line is responsive to community and employer needs and open to making improvements that contribute to better outcomes for their clients. Self-assessment is embedded across the organisation. Front-Line captures and analyses achievement and outcomes data, and actively seeks information from its key stakeholders (including students, tutors and employers) to inform decision-making and to make worthwhile improvements.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Governance, management and strategy

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

2.2 Focus area: Youth Guarantee

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Front-Line Training Consultancy Ltd:

- Track and analyse its performance against the TEC performance indicators (that is course and qualification completion rates) as part of overall self-assessment.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

Self-assessment and participation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, which are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes and/or 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 External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013.

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). The External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013 are available at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Rules/EER-Rules.pdf>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.

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Final Report