

# Report of External Evaluation and Review

## Whenua Iti Trust Incorporated Outdoor Pursuits Centre

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 16 July 2015

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*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:	Whenua Iti Trust Incorporated Outdoor Pursuits Centre
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	1 January 1992
Location:	Moutere Highway, Lower Moutere, Nelson
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adventure Leadership Trades Academy Training Scheme</li><li>• Multi-day school camps</li><li>• Ministry of Youth Development 'Active Youth Citizenship' programmes</li><li>• Ministry of Education 'Learning Experiences Outside of the Classroom' programmes</li><li>• Ministry of Social Development 'Community Youth' programmes</li></ul>
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Numbers vary significantly year-to-year and across different programmes. Thirty secondary school students had enrolled in the Adventure Leadership Trades Academy Training Scheme in the earlier part of 2015 (and 54 in 2014). Of the 30 learners enrolled in 2015, 61 per cent identified as either

	Māori or Pasifika.
Number of staff:	Nine full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adventure Leadership Trades Academy Training Scheme</li> </ul> <p>Whenua Iti also has consents to assess in the subfields: community recreation; outdoor recreation; recreation and sport; and snowsport, and in a number of domains and standards.</p>
Distinctive characteristics:	<p>Whenua Iti primarily delivers outdoor education to youth and intermediate and secondary school students.</p> <p>It is one of only two tertiary education providers delivering training under the umbrella of the Top of the South Trades Academy (TOTSA). By training at Whenua Iti, Trades Academy secondary school students are able to complete up to 23 credits towards the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). Schools and TOTSA are key stakeholders of the organisation.</p>
Recent significant changes:	<p>A new management structure and team was established in 2013. Whenua Iti's business model has recently switched from government-funded contracts to fee-paying/self-generated revenue.</p> <p>The Adventure Leadership Trades Academy programme was launched mid-2013.</p>
Previous quality assurance history:	<p>Whenua Iti met all requirements of an NZQA validation visit in 2013.</p> <p>Whenua Iti was last quality assured by external evaluation and review (EER) by NZQA in 2011, at which time NZQA was 'Confident' in both the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.</p> <p>NZQA required Whenua Iti to submit a moderation action plan at the end of 2014 because of 2013 and 2014 national external moderation results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core skills unit standard 1304 <i>Communicate with people from other cultures</i>: in 2013, initial assessment</li> </ul>

materials were not received. On submission, assessment materials required modification and none of the three assessor decisions were verified. In 2014, materials required modification. Two of the four assessor decisions were verified.

- Core skills standard 7123 *Apply a problem solving method to a problem*: in 2014 assessment materials required modification and all three assessor decisions were verified.

Whenua Iti has a good moderation history with the Skills Active Industry Training Organisation.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The Adventure Leadership Trades Academy Training Scheme was the sole programme focus area evaluated as it is the only programme delivering unit standards, and it is Whenua Iti's largest single programme with the most learners.

Governance, management and strategy was the other focus area evaluated.

## 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 EER over two days. The following people were interviewed for the EER:

- The Chair and one other member of the governance board
- Two managers
- Instructors
- Key stakeholders, including visits to three schools
- Two past learners and their parents

A range of documentation was reviewed including the organisation's self-assessment summary, student survey findings, completions data, achievement reports, a programme booking form, and short visual clips of past training.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Whenua Iti Trust Incorporated Outdoor Pursuits Centre**.

Whenua Iti is held in high regard by its stakeholders and communities of interest. The evidence clearly and comprehensively demonstrates that Whenua Iti is a responsive organisation and is meeting the needs of learners and key stakeholders very well. This is achieved through:

- Close liaison with stakeholders to develop programmes that meet the needs of schools and educational partners.
- The pre-planning that occurs before training commences to understand individual learners and desired learning objectives and to appropriately tailor and structure the training.
- Quality instructors who are reaching learners in important ways, and who facilitate and seamlessly and actively manage positive peer interactions.
- Small learner cohorts ensuring individual learners receive individualised attention and support.
- Innovation in response to needs identification.
- Strong leadership and evidence-based decision-making.

These highly effective processes are contributing to learning and important outcomes which are making a positive difference to learners' and their families' lives. Learners are re-engaging or becoming more engaged in their secondary school education. They improve their wellbeing and achieve or enhance core skills and attributes such as confidence, leadership and critical thinking. Examples were given of learners who have achieved despite recent non-achievement in the schooling context. In some cases, this is the first time that parents have seen their children's success acknowledged.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Whenua Iti Trust Incorporated Outdoor Pursuits Centre**.

Whenua Iti is a reflective organisation. Self-assessment is valued at all levels and is used to evaluate programmes and activities on an ongoing basis and to make sound decisions and worthwhile improvements. In particular, Whenua Iti's board valued the solid information and data provided by the management team to inform decisions that have an impact on the viability and ongoing direction of the organisation.

The organisation has effective self-assessment in place to ensure robust processes that contribute to important learner and stakeholder outcomes. Whenua Iti works closely with schools to understand specific needs and to tailor programmes as far as possible to match those needs.

Whenua Iti has a good understanding of individual learner achievement and the valued outcomes it is contributing to. However, the PTE is yet to define desired learner achievement outcomes or benchmarks to guide each member of the organisation, and against which it can measure and review the strength of educational performance and use this information to identify where it may need to strengthen performance. As such, the clear and comprehensive evidence of met needs and valued outcomes gathered during this evaluation was not evident from the organisation's self-assessment information alone, but also from the evaluators' discussions with the organisation and stakeholders during the EER.

The organisation is currently in the process of considering how it can effectively capture evidence of longer-term outcomes, and this is an area that the board is keen to see developed. But because the organisation does not systematically collate evidence of the skills and outcomes learners achieve over time, its self-assessment data does not demonstrate the extent of the outcomes achieved and the full extent of Whenua Iti's success.

Whenua Iti has recently implemented formal processes to inform effective teaching aimed at enhancing teacher reflection.

# Findings<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

Learners commonly develop important personal and life skills as a result of studying with Whenua Iti, including critical thinking, teamwork and leadership skills, self-awareness and the ability to respond to challenging situations, and self-belief and confidence (including to interact with new peer groups). These skills are important in supporting learners' ongoing engagement in their secondary school journey and were consistently identified across the interviews informing this evaluation.

The organisation does not collate evidence to show the extent to which core skills are consistently achieved. Nor has the organisation defined expected or desired achievement outcomes against which performance can be driven, measured and assessed. As such, although achievement appears strong, the organisation's self-assessment does not enable identification of how strong.

The organisation notes that learner attendance is particularly affected by individuals' school and extra-curricular activities. In the main, learners who fully attend for the duration of the training successfully complete and gain the number of NCEA credits individually sought. The exception in 2014 was three learners who did not successfully achieve all of the credits they had enrolled for, and in the 2015 year to date, two learners.

Course completions across Whenua Iti's other programmes are very high – mostly around 95 per cent. In the Trades Academy programme, the overall course completion result for 2014 was 73 per cent. Completions are strong for the block delivery. For example, 86 per cent of Māori learners and 80 per cent of Pasifika learners completed the programme.

There is a limited delivery of the programme through weekly classes (on Fridays), and completions have been much lower with this approach. For example, only 41 per cent of Pasifika learners completed through this option. Whenua Iti identified that Friday attendance was an issue and engaged with schools quite early on about this. However, for some schools the Friday has remained the only feasible option. Therefore it is very difficult for Whenua Iti to change the situation. As such,

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

Whenua Iti continues to run the weekly training, but has reduced its delivery and encourages schools to enrol in the block delivery, given its success.

Whenua Iti has a good understanding of individual learner progress through small programme cohorts and one-to-one learner interactions. Credit achievement information and a summary about each learner's progress are captured in a written report that is shared with learners and their schools.

## 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 **Good**.

Whenua Iti is a provider of choice for key stakeholders based on a proven track record. The organisation is recognised by the key stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation as offering a highly responsive, collaborative working relationship and providing training developed in response to stakeholder and community needs (examples of needs identification leading to the development of programmes are discussed in Findings 1.3 of this report).

Important outcomes of the training consistently evidenced by the evaluators across the different stakeholder interviews undertaken for the evaluation include:

- Secondary school students are gaining credits and/or motivation and skills to complete NCEA and to remain longer at school. The significance of this outcome was particularly apparent for learners on the verge of not-completing NCEA: 'Whenua Iti re-engages them. Settles them and gives them focus' (deputy secondary school principal).
- Learners are doing better in other areas of their education because of the different nature of the training Whenua Iti provides (from subject-based, education in an indoor environment of reading and writing), and the development and enhancement of life skills important to learning and wellbeing.
- Employment, including for one student previously deemed 'unemployable' by a potential employer because of shyness and a lack of confidence. That employer has since employed this student.
- The identification of future pathways relevant to individual aspirations.
- The achievement of leadership skills and subsequent application of these skills (e.g. as a school prefect, in outdoor activities, in family life).
- The development of critical thinking – learning how to respond effectively to challenging situations. Most people interviewed for this evaluation identified

that the tools learners were given or were helped to develop to cope with challenges, had been a key part of the positive change seen in learners after completing the training. Several examples shared by learners demonstrated how they had used these skills subsequently in their social lives.

- The development of other key skills, in particular confidence, self-belief, pride and self-esteem, teamwork and trust in others.

Interviews with stakeholders demonstrated the important contribution, and sometimes life-changing difference Whenua Iti is making to young learners' lives. For some parents, attending a Whenua Iti graduation is the first time they have seen their children's success acknowledged. One school is now enrolling all Pasifika boys in the training after the tangible difference it made to two Pasifika learners who completed the leadership training.

Whenua Iti understands the immediate outcomes of the training and the post-course value for students (as identified in the above bullet points) primarily by:

1. Feedback from their close relationships with schools and the Trades Academy which is provided spontaneously by these stakeholders rather than being specifically sought by Whenua Iti.
2. Feedback from each learner at a graduation held at the end of every programme and which is specifically sought by Whenua Iti, although this information could not be evidenced as it is not recorded.
3. Unrecorded observations of learners during the course and if they come back for another course.

Whenua Iti's focus on understanding the subsequent value of the training has not been fully and proactively driven by Whenua Iti, and a more targeted approach to self-assessment would provide a more comprehensive picture overall. As such, the evaluators found out more about the wider value of the training through the interviews they conducted for this evaluation (for example, how learners had subsequently used the training and skills in their wider lives) than through a review of self-assessment information.

While the organisation has been actively thinking about the different ways to collect evidence of valued outcomes and to track long-term outcomes, it is yet to define expected or desired outcomes and establish a process to systematically collate a body of related information to demonstrate the extent to which valued outcomes have been achieved over time.

### 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 and activities match learners' and stakeholders' needs very well because Whenua Iti works closely with schools to understand specific needs and to tailor programmes as far as possible to match these needs. Whenua Iti's practice of working closely alongside stakeholders to understand and be responsive to needs is strongly valued by stakeholders. Examples of this practice were given in relation to the identification of community needs and the development of programmes to match those needs, as well as in terms of the forward planning that is undertaken in advance of the delivery of each programme.

The booking form is a further process facilitating the matching of needs. Clients are asked to indicate the specific learning objectives they would like instructors to incorporate in the programme. Instructors use this information in their planning, and also contact schools directly if more information is needed.

The block delivery of the Adventure Tourism programme and Whenua's Iti's transportation of learners to the training is valued for enabling access to the training, and particularly for learners from rural or distant schools across the top of the South Island. The Adventure Tourism programme brings learners together from different schools and this is valued for extending learners' social interactions.

Whenua Iti has well-established processes in place to capture learner feedback, and the feedback is used to make improvements to programmes and activities. Individual feedback sessions are held with each learner at programme completion. Instructors debrief immediately after each programme and use learner feedback as part of this process, and while the information is still fresh. A further debrief is held, including with management, once learners have left. This includes a review of the instructors' own observations, and information from a written survey that learners also complete and which includes questions about programmes and activities.

Examples of improvements that have been made following self-review include upgraded shower facilities, changes to a cycling activity to better reflect learners' different skills levels, and ongoing discussion about managing learners' mountain-bike safety.

Stakeholder input is a key part of Whenua Iti's review and development of current and new programmes. Examples of changes made following stakeholder input include Whenua Iti's approved programme change application to NZQA in 2015 to change some unit standards to improve relevance; shaping delivery to year 11 students, given concerns that this may be a key point where learners drop out of

school early; and developing cultural tourism training in response to knowledge and training gaps identified through community consultation.

#### 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 **Good**.

Instructors were commonly described as exceptional in all of the interviews undertaken for this evaluation. Student survey feedback reviewed was mostly positive about the teaching.

Stakeholders highly value the instructors for their ability to convey information to learners and to reach them in ways others cannot. The pre-planning and structure put into lessons contributes to positive interactions between diverse learners. The instructors themselves described to the evaluators the pre-planning that goes into lessons to ensure an understanding of individual learners' circumstances and needs to enable the teaching to be pitched appropriately.

Instructors often co-teach and use this opportunity to give 'live' feedback to one another, rather than waiting to the end of the course. Instructors consider co-teaching to be effective because it ensures increased responsiveness to learners and enables a swift response to any emergent challenges. A structured process for peer teaching observations has recently been established and is still being embedded.

Whenua Iti has recently established its internal moderation process to contribute to fair and consistent assessment. This has been a work in progress since a moderation action plan was required by NZQA following national external moderation results in 2013 and 2014. Whenua Iti has a good moderation history with Skills Active.

Individual student reports identify the unit standards that learners have achieved and give a small amount of information on the areas where each learner did well, the contribution they made, and areas to develop. These reports are provided to the relevant schools.

Regular shared discussion takes place among teaching staff on an ongoing basis, which reflects the small, closely knit team. Instructors have opportunities to engage with other trainers external to the organisation, which informs teaching practice. Instructors value the contribution this makes to their teaching and would value further external insights (e.g. external teaching observations).

As discussed in Findings 1.3 above, instructors use one-to-one feedback from learners and student survey feedback (which includes specific questions on teacher effectiveness) to reflect on programme delivery. This is undertaken initially after

each course, with improvements implemented before the next course begins. Subsequent debriefs between the manager and instructors, and a team meeting ensures that all information collated for each delivered course is reviewed, areas are identified for improvement, and these are actioned.

## 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**.

Whenua Iti closely liaises with schools to convey programme information and Whenua Iti's expectations of learners to inform programme recruitment and information provided to learners. The purpose of this close liaison means that Whenua Iti understands the backgrounds of individual learners enrolling in the Adventure Tourism programme and identifies and responds to particular support needs in advance of the training. The organisation has insightfully developed the booking form as a further information source contributing to learner guidance and to enable Whenua Iti to understand and respond to individual support needs.

The course booking form asks schools for information about any learning or behavioural support required, and any medical conditions or medication. Whenua Iti works with schools to ensure specific needs are responded to. The booking form also contains key information to appropriately guide schools about the equipment and provisions that need to be brought to the training.

Whenua Iti identifies that the upfront focus on learner guidance and support has been a key contributor to strong learner achievement.

One-to-one support is provided to appropriately support learners throughout the training. Where any ongoing or specific support needs are identified by Whenua Iti during the training, schools are immediately advised. Several examples were given to demonstrate this responsiveness. A report is provided to schools at the end of the training which identifies ongoing areas for development and support for each learner.

Instructors provide learners with information and guidance about continued learning opportunities and potential future pathways in outdoor education. Other examples of support provided to learners include a 'catch-up camp' and transport to and from the training.

Overall, Whenua Iti has effective processes in place to identify and respond to learners' support needs in advance of courses commencing. Despite the short nature of the training, Whenua Iti has implemented a reporting process that ensures ongoing support needs are advised to schools. The quality of guidance

and support and Whenua Iti's responsiveness to learners is constantly reviewed as a part of end-of-course debriefings and during staff meetings.

## 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**.

Community engagement is highly effective. Whenua Iti's internal and external communication is of a high standard. Stakeholders are clearly identified and engagement is ongoing. Whenua Iti actively seeks stakeholder input to identify community needs and to develop training to respond to these needs. Stakeholders are kept well informed of developments.

Schools interviewed for this evaluation indicated that they felt involved in programme development and Whenua Iti's decision-making. Stakeholders said they could not talk highly enough about Whenua Iti and particularly valued the organisation for its flexibility and ability to act quickly.

Instructors value the supportive work environment and, in particular, the flat management structure which enables instructors to have a key part in decision-making and programme review. Professional development is valued by the organisation.

The manager is highly valued for his strong leadership, robust planning and innovation in guiding Whenua Iti through a period of significant change. Several key stakeholders told the evaluators that the management team has led Whenua Iti to greater professionalism and wider community reach. There appears to be an excellent balance between innovation and continuity in the organisation.

Whenua Iti's board, management and instructors are community minded and share a vision and passion for engaging young people who are becoming disengaged in the school system. Despite a significant change in funding and an expanded client base, this vision remains central to Whenua Iti's direction and purpose.

The board is active and involved in supporting educational achievement. It regularly receives and reviews information from management (e.g. course completion information, learner progress, learner feedback) to inform its understanding about how well programmes are running. The board also ensures financial provision to ensure safe, quality training equipment and to support learning and teaching. One example is the recent upgrade to shower and toilet facilities in response to learner feedback.

The board ensures its own effectiveness through evaluating how it is operating. Recently the governance and management team has been in discussion about how long-term learner outcomes can be tracked.

Whenua Iti is a reflective organisation that values self-assessment. Self-assessment permeates all levels of the organisation and information is used powerfully to make sound decisions and worthwhile improvements. At a time of significant change potentially impacting the viability and ongoing direction of the organisation, the board highly valued that the management team provided it with solid information and data that enabled it to be well informed and to make key, successful decisions based on rigorous analysis.

While self-assessment is valued and everyone in the organisation is reflective, the organisation has not defined specific achievement outcomes to guide a common understanding of the strength of performance. This limits a full understanding of how well learners achieve and where improvements may be targeted. Valued outcomes of the training are known but are not proactively collected by the organisation in a targeted way. Currently the organisation is considering how it might collect information about the longer-term outcomes of the training.

Management has introduced systematic processes to formalise and enhance self-reflection and educational performance in the area of teaching. An example is formalising the well-established reflection and sharing that occurs among instructors, and establishing specific criteria to shape peer teaching observations and a consistent internal moderation process. Management and instructors come together to debrief at the end of every training and work together to define and achieve resulting actions.

## 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: Adventure Leadership Trades Academy Training Scheme

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

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

# Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Whenua Iti Trust Incorporated Outdoor Pursuits Centre implement a process to systematically collate and review information about the longer-term outcomes of learning and to develop an organisation-wide understanding of what success means for the organisation and to align its self-assessment to this.

# 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](http://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*