



Cook Islands Ministry of Education

Statement of Intent 2024 - 2027

Advancing Excellence · Preserving Identity · Preparing for the Future



COOK ISLANDS
Ministry of Education
Maraurau o te Pae Api'i

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Statement of Intent 2024–2027 outlines the strategic direction for the Cook Islands Ministry of Education over the next four years. This document operationalises the Ministry's long-term Education Masterplan 2024–2034 and is fully aligned with the MERL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning) framework. It focuses on three strategic pillars:

1. Learning and Educational Excellence – Te Mato 1

- Emphasising literacy, numeracy, curriculum reform, and student achievement.
- Advancing inclusive practices and revitalising Cook Islands Māori.
- Leveraging technology advancement into learning practices.
- Advancing Higher Education to support workforce development.
- Promoting teaching quality, leadership, and early childhood development

2. Corporate and Operational Excellence – Te Mato 2

- Strengthening financial management, human resources, and school infrastructure.
- Building climate-resilient, inclusive, and tech-enabled school environments.
- Strengthening performance management for principals, teachers, and staff.
- Strengthening investment in technological and ICT enhancements.
- Prioritise the welfare and wellbeing of students, staff, and Ministry personnel, promoting mental, physical, and emotional health through targeted programmes and support systems.
- Extending and enhancing the scholarship scheme.

3. Policy Development and Innovation – Te Mato 3

- Ensuring evidence-based policy development and regular legislative review.
- Launching communications and media strategies to build transparency and trust.
- Support the retention of indigenous knowledge & cultural practice.
- Developing a comprehensive digital strategy for education and utilization of data to enhance student achievement and school performance.
- Establishing a dedicated research unit to track global trends and implement innovation.

This SOI establishes clear objectives, outcome indicators, and a results-based framework to track progress. It reinforces a nationwide commitment to building a responsive, high-performing education system rooted in cultural identity, innovation, and equity.

All strategic actions are embedded into the Ministry's commitment to transparency, partnerships, and continuous improvement. This document serves as a compass for delivering transformation in education for the Cook Islands.





COOK ISLANDS MINISTRY OF EDUCATION - MARAURAU O TE PAE API'I STATEMENT OF INTENT 2024-2027

The Cook Islands Ministry of Education (the Ministry) is pleased to present this Statement of Intent, outlining our strategic priorities and goals for the next four years (2024-2027). This Statement of Intent is designed to deliver on the first four years of the transformative Ministry of Education Master Plan 2024-2034, aligning with the principles of excellence in education, cultural identity and heritage, equity and inclusivity, lifelong learning, sustainability and relevancy, partnerships and collaboration, and transparency and accountability.

Our vision is to build the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values of Cook Islanders to put their capabilities to best use in all areas of their lives - Akamatutuanga i te au karape, kite, te tu tangata e te irinakianga o te iti tangata Kuki Airani kia rauka ia ratou i taangaanga i ta ratou au tareni ki roto i to ratou oraanga. By focusing on the three strategic pillars - **Learning and Educational Excellence, Corporate and Operational Excellence, and Policy Development and Innovation**, this Statement of Intent aligns to the Ministry of Education Master Plan's 2024-2034 roadmap for implementing programs, achieving meaningful educational outcomes and positioning the Cook Islands to deliver high quality education that is relevant, inclusive and empowering.

Through the following three strategic pillars, the Ministry aims to:

- **Learning and Educational Excellence** - enhance quality teaching, learning and inclusive education by setting high standards for early childhood education, promoting cultural identity, and ensuring inclusive education for all learners.
- **Corporate and Operational Excellence** - ensure efficient and effective Ministry operations by strengthening financial management, human resources, Information Technology, and risk management practices, and by promoting sustainability and resilience in our educational infrastructure.
- **Policy Development and Innovation** - strengthen educational policies and drive innovation by adopting evidence-based policies, integrating technology, fostering effective communication channels and remaining ahead in educational trends.

We aim to create an environment that fosters educational excellence, innovative practices, equips learners to excel in a rapidly changing global landscape and quality education that reflects the cultural identity of our people. Our commitment to continuous improvement, stakeholder collaboration, and evidence-based decision-making will drive this transformation.

With the support of our learners, schools, providers, partners, and communities, the Ministry is committed to creating a dynamic and professional educational environment. We strive to provide quality services that are deeply rooted in the unique culture and identity of the Cook Islands, and promote lifelong learning for all. Together, we will build a resilient, innovative, and inclusive education system that meets the aspirations of our people and the demands of the future.

Pillar 1: Learning and Educational Excellence

Te Mato 1: Akataungaanga e te Turanga Ngateitei

This pillar focuses on the delivery of educational services, ensuring that all learners have access to quality teaching, culturally responsive curricula, and learning environments that foster their holistic development. It emphasises the importance of nurturing our cultural heritage, advancing literacy and numeracy, and preparing our students to thrive in a dynamic global landscape.

Why this is a priority:

- **Ensuring Quality Teaching and Learning Experiences:** The foundation of a strong education system lies in the quality of teaching and learning experiences. By prioritising this, we ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have access to education that equips them with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in life.
- **Promoting Cultural Identity and Inclusive Education:** Embracing the Cook Islands' rich cultural heritage and ensuring inclusive education for all students, including those with special needs or are living in Pa Enea, are vital for fostering a sense of belonging, pride, and equal opportunity within the community.
- **Advancing Curriculum Development and Learning Outcomes:** A well-designed curriculum that meets national standards and promotes critical thinking is essential for student achievement. Regularly updating and enhancing the curriculum ensures that students are prepared for future challenges.
- **Fostering Educational Leadership:** Strong leadership is critical to driving improvements and sustaining high standards within schools and educational institutions. Investing in leadership development ensures that educational leaders are equipped to guide, inspire, and implement best practices across the system.

Addressing the significant challenges in student achievement—particularly in literacy, numeracy, and NCEA—is essential. These foundational areas require urgent, system-wide focus to raise standards and future opportunities for all learners.

What success looks like:

- The Cook Islands will have a robust and inclusive education system that nurtures early childhood development, embraces cultural identity, and supports lifelong learning.
- Students across the nation will experience higher levels of academic achievement, supported by well-trained educators and a strong curriculum.
- Leadership within the education sector will be strengthened, leading to sustained improvements in teaching quality and school performance.
- National benchmarks in literacy, numeracy, and NCEA will show measurable improvement, reflecting the impact of foundational learning interventions and quality curriculum implementation.
- Tertiary education will be closely aligned with workforce needs, preparing students for successful careers in a rapidly changing world.

Strategic Priorities for 2024–2027:

- Lead the national curriculum refresh to reflect learner progressions, cultural identity, inclusive practice, and relevance to local and global contexts.
- Integrate adaptive learning technologies and AI-supported platforms to personalise learning and enhance student engagement.
- Develop and implement clear key stage outcomes for every level of schooling to guide learning expectations.
- Strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy through structured national interventions and professional learning.
- Improve NCEA achievement by supporting foundational learning, quality teaching, and learner readiness.
- Finalise and implement a national Early Childhood Education (ECE) curriculum with developmental milestones and pedagogy.
- Expand Cook Islands Māori language immersion programmes and strengthening maori language literacy.
- Establish a national Teacher Education Centre and implement a tiered teacher certification and development system.
- Embed inclusive education practices through targeted teacher training and learner support programmes.
- Roll out digital learning platforms and devices, particularly in Pa Enea schools, to increase equitable access.
- Promote STEM(P) (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Physics) education through school programmes and subject pathway development.
- Establish a tertiary framework aligned with national workforce priorities and global standards.
- Expand flexible tertiary learning options using online and blended modalities.



Pillar 1: Learning and Educational Excellence

Te Mato 1: Akataungaanga e te Turanga Ngateitei

How we will measure progress and performance:

Objective	Measure	Evidence of success
Quality Early Childhood Education and Lifelong Learning		
Establish a responsive Early Childhood Education system with consistent pedagogical practices and a comprehensive curriculum.	Develop a standardised ECE curriculum that integrates cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development aspects, ensuring alignment with best practices.	Improved ECE participation rates, positive developmental assessments, and parent satisfaction surveys.
Ensure all ECE & Early Years programmes support the holistic development of children, including cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth	Implement teacher training programmes focused on holistic child development.	Increased teacher proficiency, better child development outcomes, and positive feedback from educational assessments.
Provide inclusive and accessible education for all age groups, encouraging continuous personal growth and learning throughout life	Expand adult education and lifelong learning programmes, including digital learning platforms.	Higher enrolment in adult education, increased certification rates, and positive learner feedback.
Define clear key stage outcomes for each level of the educational journey, promoting lifelong learning skills and critical thinking	Develop and communicate key stage outcomes across all educational levels.	Consistent achievement of key stage milestones, as evidenced by standardised testing results.
Cultural Identity in Education		
Honour and celebrate the Cook Islands' cultural heritage through revitalising Cook Islands Māori	Introduce and expand immersion programmes and cultural initiatives in schools.	Increased student participation in Māori language programmes, improved language proficiency, and greater cultural engagement.
Ensure every child, regardless of gender, socioeconomic background or geographical location, has equal access to quality education	Implement scholarship schemes and technology-driven educational opportunities in Pa Enua.	Higher enrolment and retention rates of Pa Enua Students, equitable educational outcomes across diverse student groups.
Leverage technology to provide educational opportunities in remote areas (Pa Enua), fostering respect for cultural diversity	Establish digital classrooms and online learning platforms accessible to all students.	Enhanced student access to education in Pa Enua, improved academic performance, and positive community feedback.

Objective	Measure	Evidence of success
Inclusive Education		
Develop and implement tailored educational programmes and resources that address the specific needs of students with learning disabilities or physical challenges	Design and implement specialised curricula and resources for students with learning disabilities or physical challenges.	Improved learning outcomes for students with special needs, increased educator confidence in supporting diverse learners.
Train educators to recognise and effectively support students with diverse learning needs, providing inclusive teaching practices and adaptive learning tools	Provide ongoing professional development in inclusive teaching practices.	Increased teacher competency in inclusive education, as evidenced by classroom observations and student feedback.
Foster collaboration with parents and communities, and specialised agencies to create a comprehensive support network for students facing barriers to learning	Establish partnerships with parents, communities, and specialised agencies to support students facing barriers to learning.	Stronger home-school partnerships, improved student outcomes, and positive community involvement.
Integrate digital technologies effectively into teacher planning, delivery, and learning	Provide teachers with tools, devices, and training to integrate digital technologies into classroom practice	Improved technology integration in lesson plans, usage of digital tools tracked through LMS or device logs, and positive teacher/student feedback
Curriculum Development and Learning Outcomes		
Raise levels of numeracy and literacy across the country through recognised structured programmes and interventions	Implement structured literacy and numeracy programmes in schools.	Higher national literacy and numeracy scores, improved student confidence in these subjects.
Enhance learning outcomes at ECE, primary, and secondary levels with well-designed curricula, effective teaching practices and consistent pedagogical approaches	Continuously update curricula and teaching practices based on data-driven insights.	Consistent improvement in student performance, as measured by national assessments.
Manage the learning growth of all students through regular standardised testing and individualised programmes of learning	Introduce regular standardised testing and personalised learning plans.	Clear evidence of student progress, increased student engagement, and positive learning outcomes.
Increase participation by students at secondary level in STEMP programmes of learning	Promote STEMP education through targeted programmes and initiatives.	Higher enrolment in STEMP subjects, improved STEMP-related academic achievements, and greater student interest in STEMP careers.

Objective	Measure	Evidence of success
Teaching Excellence and Educational Leadership Growth		
Develop leadership training programmes for educational leaders at all levels, from the Ministry to school principals	Design and implement leadership development initiatives for educators.	Increased participation in leadership programmes, improved leadership effectiveness, and positive impact on school performance.
Establish a mentorship and coaching framework to support emerging leaders and promote best practices in educational leadership	Develop a structured mentorship and coaching system for emerging leaders.	Enhanced leadership skills among mentees, improved educational outcomes, and successful leadership transitions.
Encourage a culture of continuous professional growth among educational leaders through targeted workshops, seminars, and conferences	Provide regular workshops, seminars, and conferences for educational leaders.	Higher engagement in professional development activities, improved leadership practices, and better educational results.
Foster collaboration among and networking opportunities among educational leaders to share experiences, challenges, and innovative solutions	Create networking opportunities and platforms for leaders to share best practices.	Stronger professional networks, increased sharing of innovative solutions, and improved school management.
Evaluate and refine leadership practices regularly to ensure they align with the evolving needs of the education system and drive improvements in school performance	Regularly assess leadership practices and align them with educational goals.	Continuous improvement in leadership effectiveness, positive feedback from school evaluations, and sustained school performance.
Train and retain highly skilled and passionate teachers through teacher training programmes and continuous professional development	Implement teacher training and retention strategies.	Higher teacher retention rates, improved teaching quality, and positive student outcomes.
Ensure school leadership is consistently high-performing and focused on student achievement	Develop principal-specific performance standards and evaluation tools	Improved school outcomes, strong principal reviews, higher retention of effective school leaders

Objective	Measure	Evidence of success
Advance Higher Education to Support Workforce Development		
Review and update tertiary education programmes to align with our local job market and global trends	Align tertiary curricula with local job market and global trends.	Graduates' employability rates, positive feedback from industry partners, and high student satisfaction.
Establish curriculum co-design partnerships with key industry sectors to align education with evolving workforce needs	Collaborate with industries to develop and revise curriculum content relevant to local and global labour markets	Stronger industry-academia linkages, increased internship and job placement opportunities for students
Expand access to tertiary education through the development of flexible learning options, including online courses, to accommodate different schedules and geographical locations	Introduce online and blended learning options in tertiary education.	Higher enrolment in tertiary courses, increased access for remote learners, and positive learning outcomes.
Develop a tertiary framework that provides clear metrics and benchmarks for assessing institutional performance and outcomes	Establish benchmarks for assessing tertiary institutions.	Consistent achievement of benchmarks, improved institutional performance, and higher quality of education.
Enhance digital literacy and access to online resources for learners and tertiary staff	Provide digital literacy programmes and online resources for learners and staff.	Measured increases in digital literacy through assessments, analytics on online resource usage, and user feedback from learners and staff.
Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for tertiary staff to enhance their teaching, research and leadership skills	Offer regular training opportunities for staff to enhance teaching and research skills.	Improved teaching quality, higher research output, and better student satisfaction.
Invest in modern infrastructure and technology to support effective teaching, learning and research	Upgrade tertiary institutions with the latest technology and infrastructure.	Enhanced learning environments, improved student outcomes, and increased institutional reputation.
Digital Learning and Innovation		
Integrate AI and adaptive technologies to support personalised learning and enhance learner outcomes	Implement pilot AI-enabled platforms and adaptive learning tools in classrooms	Improved engagement, differentiated outcomes, teacher feedback showing enhanced support for diverse learners
Strengthen digital learning infrastructure and access for students and teachers	Deploy learning management systems (LMS), devices, and training programmes	Higher LMS engagement rates, increased digital literacy, and improved student outcomes
Train educators in digital pedagogy and blended delivery	Provide CPD focused on technology-enabled teaching	Improved integration of digital tools in lessons, positive teacher and student feedback



Pillar 2: Corporate and Operational Excellence

Te Mato 2: Aratakianga e te Akatereanga Ngateitei

This pillar focuses on strengthening the Ministry of Education's organisational capacity, systems, and infrastructure to deliver high-quality education across the nation. It ensures that human and financial resources are well-managed, risk is anticipated and mitigated, and that all educational facilities and systems are climate-resilient, inclusive, and fit for purpose.

Why this is a priority:

- **Ensuring Efficient Use of Resources:** Prudent financial management is essential for maximizing the impact of available resources. Ensuring transparency, accountability, and efficiency in resource use builds trust and supports the sustainability of educational programs.
- **Attracting and Retaining Skilled Personnel:** The Ministry's effectiveness depends on its ability to attract, develop, and retain skilled personnel. A strong human resources strategy ensures that the education sector is supported by competent and motivated professionals who can drive continuous improvement.
- **Enhancing Risk Management:** A comprehensive risk management framework is critical for identifying and mitigating potential challenges. Proactive risk management helps ensure the Ministry is prepared for and can swiftly respond to unforeseen events, safeguarding the education system.
- **Integrating Technological Advancements:** Embracing technological innovations, including Artificial Intelligence, is key to modernising education delivery. Technology enhances learning outcomes, streamlines operations, and prepares students for the digital future.
- **Promoting Sustainability and Climate-Resilient Infrastructure:** Investing in climate-proofing school infrastructure and promoting sustainability practices is vital for protecting educational facilities from climate-related risks and fostering a culture of environmental stewardship within the education community.
- **Elevating Educational Leadership:** School performance is driven by strong, effective principals and school leaders who ensure excellent teaching happens every day.

What success looks like:

- The Ministry achieves financial stability and earns increased trust through transparent and accountable financial management.
- Human resource systems attract, retain, and develop a skilled and motivated education workforce across all islands.
- School leadership is consistently strong, with high-performing principals driving teaching and learning excellence.
- Corporate functions operate cohesively, guided by a culture of innovation and continuous improvement aligned to strategic goals.
- A comprehensive risk management framework ensures the education system is resilient and responsive to challenges.
- Financial investment in education is increased through strategic government funding and external partnerships, ensuring sustainability.
- School infrastructure is climate-resilient, safe, and sustainable, promoting environmental stewardship.
- Modern IT infrastructure and integration of emerging technologies, including AI, enhance teaching, learning, and administration.

Strategic Priorities for 2024–2027:

- Implement a revised HR structure and recruitment strategy that supports retention, succession planning, and high performance.
- Develop and implement a performance management system for principals, teachers, and auxiliary staff, linked to student outcomes and professional standards.
- Strengthen school leadership capacity through targeted principal training and coaching.
- Strengthen and enhance the Government scholarship scheme and bonding scheme aligned with national workforce demand.
- Conduct a national audit of school infrastructure and begin climate-proof upgrades across all islands.
- Implement a wellbeing framework for students and staff with measurable mental, physical, and emotional health outcomes.
- Centralise Ministry IT systems and improve connectivity across all Pa Enea schools.
- Build internal financial capability and align education investment as per the recommended regional GDP benchmarks.
- Maintain facilities plan for maintenance and future construction projects.
- Develop a risk management framework and emergency response plans for all educational institutions.
- Review school utilisation to ensure quality education and equity of access, and engage communities where optimisation may be required.
- Leverage partnerships to secure external funding for innovation, climate resilience, and education technology.



Pillar 2: Corporate and Operational Excellence

Te Mato 2: Aratakianga e te Akatereanga Ngateitei

How we will measure progress and performance:

Objective	Measure	Evidence of success
Financial and Resource Management		
Implement robust financial management practices to ensure transparency, accountability, and efficient use of resources	Establish transparent financial reporting systems, conduct regular audits, and provide financial management training for staff.	Consistently clean audit reports, stronger budgetary control, and improved stakeholder confidence
Regularly assess and upgrade school facilities and resources to maintain high educational standards	Develop a facility assessment schedule and allocate funds for prioritised upgrades.	Upgraded school facilities meeting safety and educational standards, and positive feedback from school communities.
Explore school rationalisation to improve quality and efficiency while maintaining access and equity	Conduct analysis of school utilisation, community consultation, and demographic trends	Evidence-based decisions, improved student–teacher ratios, and maintained access
Enhance accessibility and inclusion in school infrastructure	Upgrade facilities with universal design features	Increased access for students with physical challenges, and positive community feedback
Grow financial investment in education by the government to reach a universally recognised percentage of GDP	Conduct a comprehensive review of school utilisation and resource allocation, considering demographic trends and educational needs.	Optimised resource allocation, enhanced education quality, and maintained or improved access and equity.
Explore partnerships and opportunities to secure additional investment in education from non-governmental sources	Advocate for increased government education spending and align it with GDP benchmarks.	Increased education budget as a percentage of GDP, sustained funding for education programs, and improved educational outcomes.

Objective	Measure	Evidence of success
Human Resources and Organisational Development		
Enhance human resource management to attract, develop, and retain skilled personnel within the Ministry	Implement recruitment, retention, and professional development strategies aligned with the Ministry's goals.	Higher retention rates of skilled personnel, increased job satisfaction, and improved staff performance.
Strengthen communication and collaboration across all departments within the Ministry to ensure cohesive and aligned operations	Develop and implement communication strategies and platforms for cross-departmental collaboration.	Improved interdepartmental communication, faster decision-making processes, and aligned operations across the Ministry.
Foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation within the Ministry's corporate functions	Introduce initiatives and incentives that encourage staff to innovate and improve existing practices.	Increased adoption of innovative practices, positive staff feedback, and measurable improvements in operational efficiency.
Regularly review and update policies, procedures, and practices to ensure they meet current and future needs	Establish a policy review cycle to ensure all policies and procedures are current and effective.	Updated and relevant policies, reduced operational inefficiencies, and better alignment with strategic goals.
Extend and enhance the scholarship scheme in alignment with national priorities or the National Workforce Development Plan	Align scholarship offerings with national priorities and workforce development needs.	Increased participation in scholarship programs, alignment with workforce demands, and positive outcomes for scholarship recipients.
Prioritise the welfare and wellbeing of students, staff, and Ministry personnel, promoting mental, physical, and emotional health through targeted programmes and support systems	Implement and monitor comprehensive wellbeing initiatives, including mental health support, physical fitness programs, and emotional resilience training across all levels of the education system.	Increased participation in wellbeing programs, improved mental and physical health indicators, reduced absenteeism, and enhanced overall satisfaction among students, staff, and Ministry personnel.

Objective	Measure	Evidence of success
Teaching Excellence and Robust Educational System		
Recruit and retain passionate, skilled teachers through robust hiring and professional development systems	Implement targeted recruitment strategies, provide ongoing professional development, and create supportive work environments.	Improved teacher recruitment and retention rates, higher teacher satisfaction, and enhanced teaching quality.
Strengthen governance and resource allocation within the education system to support effective teaching and learning	Develop and implement governance frameworks that ensure effective resource distribution and accountability.	More effective governance, efficient resource use, and improved educational outcomes.
Foster collaboration among stakeholders to ensure sustainability and continuous improvement in educational practices	Establish regular forums and partnerships for stakeholder engagement and collaboration.	Stronger stakeholder relationships, continuous improvement initiatives, and enhanced sustainability of educational practices.
Establish a national performance management system for principals, teachers, and auxiliary staff	Develop role-specific performance criteria, professional growth plans, and annual reviews	Improved leadership and teaching quality, better alignment with school goals, increased staff accountability
Strengthen principal leadership to drive school improvement	Implement structured professional development, coaching, and appraisal systems for school leaders	Enhanced principal effectiveness, improved school performance indicators, and stakeholder satisfaction
Technology and Risk Management		
Develop a comprehensive risk management framework to identify, assess and mitigate potential risks	Conduct risk assessments, develop mitigation strategies, and provide risk management training for staff.	Reduced incidents of unmitigated risks, quicker response times to challenges, and increased resilience of the education sector.
Strengthen investment in ICT infrastructure, technological enhancements, and increase the availability of technological devices in education, including Artificial Intelligence	Allocate budget for infrastructure and technological upgrades and ensure access to the latest educational technology, including AI.	Upgraded network and increased availability and use of technology in schools, improved learning outcomes, and positive feedback from educators and students.
Ensure the integration of technological advancements within educational practices to enhance learning outcomes	Provide training for educators on integrating technology into their teaching practices.	Higher levels of technology integration in the classroom, enhanced student engagement, and better digital literacy skills.

Objective	Measure	Evidence of success
Climate-Proofing School Infrastructure and Promoting Sustainability		
Develop and implement climate-resilient upgrades for existing school buildings to improve their ability to withstand extreme weather events and environmental challenges, prioritising essential areas that are within budget	Conduct assessments of school infrastructure and implement climate-proofing measures within budget constraints.	Increased resilience of school buildings, reduced damage from extreme weather events, and improved safety for students and staff.
Integrate sustainable energy solutions, such as solar power and energy-efficient systems, into all educational facilities to reduce carbon footprint and promote environmental stewardship within the school community	Utilisation of energy-efficient technologies in schools.	Reduced energy costs and increased awareness of sustainability within school communities.
Establish and regularly update emergency preparedness and response plans for schools, ensuring the safety of students and staff in the event of natural disasters or climate-related emergencies	Develop and regularly update emergency response plans for all schools.	Improved readiness for natural disasters, faster response times during emergencies, and enhanced safety for students and staff.
Promote environmental education and awareness programmes within schools, encouraging students and staff to engage in sustainable practices and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts	Integrate environmental modules into curricula and launch student-led sustainability projects	Number of sustainability projects completed, measurable changes in school waste/energy use, and student climate knowledge scores
Collaborate with local and international partners to secure funding and technical expertise for the implementation of climate-proofing and sustainability initiatives within the education sector	Secure funding and technical expertise from local and international partners for sustainability projects.	Successful implementation of climate-proofing initiatives, increased funding for sustainability projects, and stronger partnerships with local and international stakeholders.



Pillar 3: Policy Development and Innovation

Te Mato 3: Te Kaveinga Rangatira

This pillar emphasises evidence-based policy development, future-focused innovation, and effective communication. It ensures that policies are regularly updated, educational trends are monitored, and that national identity, indigenous knowledge, and community input are embedded in the education system.

Why this is a priority:

- **Evidence-Informed Decision Making:** Data-driven decisions are crucial for shaping effective educational policies and practices. By capturing and analysing data on student performance, school effectiveness, and national trends, the Ministry can ensure that its policies are both responsive and effective.
- **Comprehensive Policy Development:** A robust policy framework is essential for creating a cohesive and adaptable education system. Regular policy reviews and stakeholder engagement ensure that the system remains relevant and aligned with best practices, while also addressing the unique needs of the Cook Islands.
- **Emphasis on Communication and Transparency:** Effective communication is key to building trust and support among stakeholders, including parents, educators, and the broader community. Transparency in school and Ministry performance fosters accountability and encourages public engagement in educational initiatives.
- **Innovation and Global Alignment:** Keeping pace with global educational trends and innovations is vital for ensuring that the Cook Islands' education system remains competitive and forward-thinking. Integrating new technologies and teaching methods prepares students for the future while enhancing the overall quality of education.
- **Cultural Preservation and Language Revitalisation:** Incorporating strategies for Māori language revitalisation and the retention of indigenous knowledge within the education system is crucial for preserving the cultural identity of the Cook Islands. This ensures that education not only prepares students for the global stage but also instills pride in their heritage.
- **Responsiveness to Emerging Trends:** Horizon scanning and internal research capacity are essential to adapt to change and lead with foresight.

What success looks like:

- The Ministry will establish a comprehensive, evidence-informed approach to decision-making, ensuring educational policies and practices are data-driven, transparent, and effective.
- A robust policy development framework will be implemented, with regular updates ensuring alignment with current educational needs and best practices, including a thorough review of the Education Act (2012).
- High standards for Early Childhood centres will be set and regularly reviewed, ensuring consistent delivery of quality early education across the country.
- Stakeholders will be actively engaged in policy development processes, resulting in inclusive, relevant, and community-informed education policy.
- A transparent and effective communication strategy will promote openness, accountability, and awareness of educational priorities and initiatives.
- A dedicated research and innovation team will monitor global trends and lead strategic foresight work, ensuring the education system remains innovative, technology-integrated, and culturally grounded.

Strategic Priorities for 2024–2027:

- Review and update the Education Act (2012) to incorporate ECE, clarify governance, and align with best practice.
- Establish an Education Research and Innovation Unit to lead MERL implementation, policy testing, and trend analysis.
- Build internal Ministry capacity to undertake educational research and horizon scanning.
- Develop national standards and regulations for Early Childhood Centres.
- Launch and embed the Ministry's first Communications and Media Strategy to build public engagement and trust.
- Publish annual national education performance reports and make data publicly available.
- Embed Cook Islands Māori language revitalisation programmes across all levels of education.
- Develop and implement policies that promote the retention of indigenous knowledge and cultural practices.
- Collaborate with international education bodies to pilot and adopt innovative solutions tailored to Cook Islands needs.
- Explore the ethical and inclusive use of AI and emerging technologies in teaching, learning, and administration.
- Ensure all policy development includes robust community consultation, particularly with Aronga Mana, churches, and parent bodies.
- All initiatives will be guided by the Ministry's MERL Framework to ensure systematic monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning inform every stage of policy and programme delivery.



Pillar 3: Policy Development and Innovation

Te Mato 3: Te Kaveinga Rangatira

How we will measure progress and performance:

Objective	Measure	Evidence of success
Data-Informed Decision Making and Technology Integration		
Capture and utilise data on individual student learning, school performance, and national trends to inform educational policies	Implement data collection systems that track student performance, school effectiveness, and national educational trends.	Data-driven policy adjustments, improved student outcomes, and enhanced school performance metrics and annual publication of national education statistics.
Develop a comprehensive digital strategy to integrate technology into education, enhancing learning experiences and preparing students for the digital age	Design and implement a digital strategy that integrates technology into teaching and learning processes.	Increased use of digital tools in classrooms, higher digital literacy rates among students, and positive feedback from educators on technology integration.
Ensure data transparency, analysis and accessibility to enhance learning outcomes and address educational challenges effectively	Develop platforms for public access to educational data and analysis.	Regular publication of school performance reports, increased public engagement with educational data, and informed decision-making at all levels.
Communications and Media		
Develop a comprehensive communication strategy to share successes, challenges, and performance results with the public, parents, and stakeholders	Implement a multi-platform communication strategy with defined outreach frequency and reporting content	Increase in public engagement metrics (e.g., newsletter opens, social media reach), media coverage of education, and parent satisfaction survey results
Ensure transparency of school and Ministry performance through regular public reporting and accessible data	Publish quarterly and annual performance reports accessible online and in community forums	Evidence of use by stakeholders (e.g., views/downloads, references), improved trust indicators, and participation in feedback loops
Promote awareness of educational initiatives, programmes, and achievements to build a community that values education	Disseminate information via newsletters, radio, social media, and school-led events	Increased reach (radio airtime, post interactions), school event attendance, and community survey results indicating increased awareness and support
Utilise various media platforms to engage with the community and gather feedback to improve educational policies and practices	Create feedback mechanisms through social media, surveys, consultation hui, and town halls	Volume and quality of feedback, percentage of policies with community-informed changes, and increased trust scores in community evaluations.
Foster a culture of openness and accountability within the Ministry and schools to build trust and support from the public	Encourage transparency and accountability in all communications from the Ministry and schools.	Enhanced trust in the education system, more open dialogue between stakeholders, and better alignment with community expectations

Objective	Measure	Evidence of success
Policy Development and Analysis		
Establish a robust policy development framework to ensure all educational policies are evidence-based, relevant and effective	Develop a standardised process for policy creation, review, and implementation.	Clear and effective policies, regular updates to align with best practices, and strong stakeholder support.
Conduct regular policy reviews and updates to align with current educational needs and international best practices	Schedule and execute periodic policy reviews to ensure alignment with current needs and global trends.	Updated policies that reflect current educational priorities, improved policy effectiveness, and positive impact on educational outcomes.
Engage stakeholders in the policy development process to ensure policies are comprehensive and inclusive	Facilitate stakeholder consultations and feedback sessions during policy development.	Broad stakeholder buy-in, inclusive and comprehensive policies, and enhanced relevance of educational policies.
Develop and implement a system for monitoring and evaluating the impact of educational policies	Implement mechanisms for tracking the outcomes and effectiveness of educational policies.	Data-driven adjustments to policies, continuous improvement in educational outcomes, and greater policy efficacy.
Implement Māori language revitalisation strategies across the education system	Develop and roll out Māori language programmes at all educational levels	Increased student Māori proficiency, more use of Māori in school settings, community and iwi support
Promote and embed indigenous knowledge and cultural practices in education	Integrate indigenous content into curricula, school life, and celebrations	Observable increase in cultural content delivery, stronger cultural identity, positive community evaluations
Enhance the education system's capacity to support and promote the retention of indigenous knowledge, cultural practices, and traditions	Integrate indigenous knowledge and cultural practices into the curriculum and school activities.	Greater student engagement with cultural content, preservation of cultural traditions, and positive community feedback.
Review and update the Education Act (2012) to include Early Childhood Education from 0-5 years and reassess the transition from ECE to Year 1	Conduct a comprehensive review of the Education Act	Updated legislation that better supports improved early childhood education quality.
Develop and regularly review standards and regulations for Early Childhood centres to ensure high-quality early education	Establish and enforce high-quality standards and regulations for Early Childhood centres.	Improved ECE quality, higher compliance with regulations, and better early learning outcomes.
Educational Trends and Innovation		
Establish a dedicated team to research and analyse emerging educational trends and innovations globally	Establish a dedicated team to monitor global educational developments and identify relevant trends for the Cook Islands.	Adoption of cutting-edge educational practices, improved learning outcomes, and sustained educational innovation. Documented policy or curriculum shifts informed by foresight insights, improved agility in adopting relevant trends
Implement programmes to test new educational strategies and technologies before wider adoption	Launch and evaluate pilot initiatives before wider implementation.	Successful pilot programs leading to wider adoption, positive feedback from educators and students, and enhanced educational outcomes.
Collaborate with international educational organisations to bring innovative practices to the Cook Islands	Form partnerships with global education bodies to bring innovative practices to the Cook Islands.	Access to international expertise, successful adaptation of global best practices, and improved educational quality.
Provide professional development opportunities for educators to stay current with the latest educational trends and innovations	Offer ongoing training and development opportunities focused on the latest educational innovations.	Increased educator engagement with new teaching methods, improved classroom practices, and positive student outcomes.



COOK ISLANDS
Ministry of Education
Maraurau o te Pae Api'i