

TE TAURA WHIRI  
I TE REO MĀORI

MĀORI LANGUAGE COMMISSION



# Level Finder Examination Programme Evaluation

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Prepared by R&K  
Consultants Limited

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# Foreword

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Fly, my prized stilt,  
Glide on tide  
But don't strike yet,  
till the sea turns on itself.

On Tangaroa's word,  
Strike, dive,  
dodge wave and wind  
to breach once more, it is done!

I am you, eager and keen  
Yearning for the hidden treasures below.  
Shatter hitch with ardour and cross the bar,  
So my language can elevate higher, rise up!



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I would like to acknowledge my hard-working colleagues at Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori. Thank you for providing a pathway for the recognition of proficiency in te reo Māori for the growing numbers of those who love and speak te reo rangatira. Thank you all for your dedication to ensuring that those who seek value in the depths of the ocean that is the Māori language, find it.

I acknowledge those who lead and implement the programme, *Whakamātauria Tō Reo Māori – Level Finder Examination*. Firstly, for the courage to not just allow but to also participate in the evaluation. The benefits of your work for participants in the programme are not just monetary but also an affirmation of the aroha, hard work and dedication that goes into learning and improving your proficiency in te reo Māori. We appreciate the opportunity to speak with staff, and to past participants in the programme to listen and to discuss aspects in more detail. While some had their own thoughts, all spoke of the immense value of the programme and its contribution to the revitalisation of our chiefly language.

At the end of this month, we will turn our thoughts to Matariki whanaunga kore (Matariki-of-no-relations soon lost into abyss). May the star Taramainuku, make haste to collect our treasured loved ones lost in recent times in his net and cast them into the night as stars. May you all rest in eternal peace as we continue the work you began and prepare for the new year ahead.

Kāti i konei, e rau rangatira mā. Tēnā koutou.

Ngahiwi Apanui

Chief Executive



# Executive summary

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Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori administers Whakamātauria Tō Reo Māori, the Level Finder Examination, a nationally recognised examination that tests a person's te reo Māori proficiency. It is available to anyone free of charge. Some people sit the examination to seek additional remuneration based on the level attained, though most people engage to assess their proficiency level.

On average, 130 people sit the Level Finder Examination every year, and most are from the public sector. Up until May 2022, people sat the examination in person. With the impact of COVID-19, the examination was unable to be offered in person, so some people have been waiting for over 18 months to sit the exam. Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori wants to improve the examination so that it can be delivered online, making it accessible to more people.

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## ► Programme evaluation

In November 2021, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori engaged R & K Consultants Limited to evaluate the Level Finder Examination to consider improvements to it as it moves to an online setting in the 2022/23 year. The evaluation considered:

- › what is working well
- › what is not working well
- › identification of areas where the effectiveness of the Level Finder Examination could be improved as it moves to an online setting.

Information was gathered through a desktop review; an online survey of 122 past participants; and interviews with stakeholders including Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, past participants and participant organisations (i.e. employers). An observation of an examination was also undertaken to better understand how it works in practice.

## ► Key findings

The evaluation found these areas of the Level Finder Examination that **work well**:

- › It provides a national examination for anyone wanting to test their reo Māori ability.
- › There is no cost to sit the examination.
- › Registration is simple and results are quickly disseminated.
- › Working relationships between Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori and participant organisations are effective.
- › Participants can sit the examination alongside work colleagues and friends.
- › There are sufficient resources to manage and implement the examination.

Areas that **did not work well**:

- › The absence of a readily available guide on the Level Finder Examination, to help participants to better understand the assessment framework.
- › The content of the examination has not changed for a number of years.
- › The Level Finder Examination is not aligned to common learning approaches to te reo Māori.
- › The Level Finder Examination requires responses to be handwritten rather than typed.
- › Examination papers are not distributed following the examination.
- › Cancellations by participants occur regularly.

The evaluation found that for the Level Finder Examination to be **successful online**, a wide range of changes need to occur:

Examination Process	Here is what success online looks like:
<b>Registration</b>	<p>Participant is authenticated.</p> <p>Participant or participant organisation can register quickly and easily.</p> <p>Participant receives examination handbook upon registration, including guidelines and examples of questions.</p>
<b>Delivery</b>	<p>Content covers, at a minimum, spoken conversational te reo Māori.</p> <p>Proficiency predictor tool for questions is built in (i.e. a tool that can predict the proficiency of the user through examination questions).</p> <p>Questions have time limits as does the overall examination.</p> <p>Access to the use of te reo Māori dictionaries is prevented.</p> <p>Access to help from a non-authenticated (proficient) person is prevented.</p> <p>There is stable internet connection throughout the examination.</p> <p>The examination can be sat online with other work colleagues, e.g. in a meeting room.</p>
<b>Monitoring</b>	<p>Automatic notifications are sent to participants.</p> <p>Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori is able to monitor examinations in real time.</p> <p>Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori is alerted to security issues such as location where authenticated user is signing in, or if participant is using copy and paste function.</p> <p>Analysis of performance (of individuals, of all participants or by organisation).</p>
<b>Marking</b>	<p>Instant results are available following examination.</p> <p>Moderation of results (if required) is available instantly.</p> <p>Certificate is emailed soon after completion.</p>

## ► Recommended improvements

The evaluation identified areas where the Level Finder Examination could be improved as it moves to an online platform:

# 1



Preparation of pre-examination material that covers:

- › guidelines and instructions for sitting Level Finder Examination online
- › assessment framework including achievement levels
- › sample questions.

# 2



In preparation for the online version of the Level Finder Examination, the content needs to:

- › include a library of examination questions that can be used to cover proficiency LFE levels one to five
- › include, at least, content that covers what the majority of learning programmes teach, i.e. conversational te reo Māori, as seen for example in the Te Ātaarangi programme.

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3



Invest in appropriate software that automates the marking and issuing of results to participants and participant organisations. If required, moderation can still happen manually.

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4



Investment in appropriate software that:

- › tests a range of proficiency levels
- › allows for authentication of users/actual sitters
- › provides individualised assessments
- › enables different types of questions, including aural, multi-choice, etc.
- › provides certificates
- › provides analytics on users, e.g. attainment levels of employees of a specific organisation, or a report on the types of mistakes made by participants
- › provides for real time observation.

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5



Provision of additional avenues to minimise deceptive behaviour through:

- › additional authentication requirements
- › pre-testing or post-results testing to ascertain the true level of the participant
- › proctor software, noting risks involved in its use
- › reminders to participants about guidelines and instructions.

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▶ **Conclusion**

The Level Finder Examination is a key vehicle for examining te reo Māori proficiency across a large group of people in different locations throughout Aotearoa.

Organisations use it to ascertain remuneration benefits, and will continue to use it, based on effective working relationships with Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori. An online solution will enable access by anyone provided they have access to a computer and stable internet connection. With an improved online solution, the Level Finder Examination programme has the opportunity to reach a wide audience, in Aotearoa and overseas.



# Introduction

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1. In November 2021, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori engaged R & K Consultants Limited to undertake the programme evaluation of Whakamātauria Tō Reo Māori, the Level Finder Examination (LFE).
2. The evaluation seeks programme improvements as the LFE moves to an online setting in 2022/23 to accommodate COVID-19 safety precautions, improve accessibility and deliver to larger sitting numbers.
3. The evaluation looked at information since the programme was set up in the late 1980s. Information was gathered through a desktop review, an online survey and interviews with stakeholders including Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, past participants and participant organisations.



# Background

## ▶ History

4. Since the late 1980s, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori administered a Māori language test as part of the then government Māori language allowance scheme. This was an incentive scheme to improve workers' reo Māori ability to a level which would enable dealings to be carried out in te reo Māori, (for example in teaching and broadcasting). Following discussions with the State Sector Commission and the Public Service Association of that period, the government Māori language allowance scheme was made available to all public sector staff employed under the collective contract of that period.
5. Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori became the official examining body for the scheme, providing a scaled remuneration schedule for employees based on the Māori language test results. Since the introduction of individual employment contracts,<sup>1</sup> the offer of the scheme was left up to each department. Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori continued to be the examining body, and the examination was run on demand.

## ▶ Assessment framework

6. In 2000, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori looked to revamp the assessment approach to increase the validity, reliability and appropriateness of the test. In June 2001, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori commissioned Haemata Limited to develop a new assessment system to establish benchmarks for te reo Māori in the public sector and assist the then government in meeting its language goals.<sup>2</sup> Haemata Limited engaged an advisory group comprising expertise in language testing, te reo Māori, linguistics and the public sector.
7. From this project, Haemata Limited developed and trialled<sup>3</sup> a new testing system consisting of a five-level proficiency testing framework, defined by a descriptor of language ability for each level. The system tests Māori language knowledge or proficiency of a candidate and is referred to as the LFE. The test tasks include dictation, self-assessment, grammar and vocabulary, including:
  - › ability to aurally recognise te reo Māori words
  - › knowledge of vocabulary and grammar of te reo Māori.
8. Haemata Limited, in association with the advisory group, also prepared LFE marking schedules, rating scales, an examiner training programme and a handbook to mark the LFE. These resources continue to be used today.

1. Employment Contracts Act 1991.

2. Protect, promote and revitalise the Māori language.

3. 140 adult speakers involved in trial.

9. At that time, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori also established a public sector Māori language examination (PSM) which was used to further test those candidates who completed the LFE for Māori language use in the public sector. For most candidates, the LFE was used as a precursor to the PSM examination. The PSM is not in the scope of this evaluation.

## ▶ The programme today

10. Participants register online through Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori website, or through direct engagement between the participants' organisation and Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori. Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori usually advertise the LFE a few months prior to the sitting date. Once registered, participants are invited to attend the LFE in person for one hour.
11. The LFE comprises an aural section (dictation), and multi-choice questions to ascertain participants' understanding of te reo Māori. The dictation is delivered in person by Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori and participants handwrite the passage as they understand it. Responses to the other LFE questions are all handwritten. Once the hour comes to an end, all examination papers are collected by Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori and assessed.
12. On average, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori will have papers marked and moderated within two weeks. Participants are emailed the results of their level attained. Actual examination papers are not shared, as the LFE is exactly the same for every sitting.
13. In the last few years, an average of 130 candidates each year sat the LFE. More recently, there has been an increase in those who want to sit it. For this financial year (2021/22) Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori has a target of 150 candidates,<sup>4</sup> compared to a target of 132 candidates in 2020/21.<sup>5</sup>
14. On average, in pre-COVID-19 times, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori would have 10 LFE sittings per annum. In the past three years, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori has had to cancel sittings several times, creating a backlog of registrations. To address the backlog and ongoing postponements, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori tested an examination through Zoom with South Island participants in May 2022. It is expected that sittings will be through a similar online platform in the 2022/23 year.

4. *Statement of Performance Expectations 2021/22, measure 4.3, page 25*

5. *Statement of Performance Expectations 2020/21, measure 4.3, page 19*



# Evaluation approach

15. A broad approach was applied in the evaluation to gain a better understanding of how the programme currently runs, the resources required, the stakeholders involved in the programme and identifying factors that enabled or inhibited successful delivery. In light of the motivating factors to transfer the LFE to an online examination, the evaluation considered the contributing and inhibiting factors of successful online delivery. One of the motivators to move the programme to an online platform is to manage the increasing demand for the examination by the public sector.
16. The programme evaluation answers the following key questions:
  - a.) How well is the LFE being implemented? (What is working well/not so well?)
  - b.) What activities or approaches have and have not worked well?
  - c.) What changes are required to improve the effectiveness of the LFE?
  - d.) Is online delivery a suitable platform for LFE?
17. A list of these evaluation questions and sub-questions to guide the collection of data is contained in appendix four.
18. The evaluation involved the following steps:
  - a.) **A logic model** of the LFE programme was developed at the start of this evaluation, with the intention of testing it over the course of the evaluation. Short-term and long-term outcomes were generated based on Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori outcomes and the Maihi Karauna outcomes. Based on the evaluation findings, no changes were made to the logic model. A copy of the logic model is set out in appendix one.
  - b.) **A desktop review** of key programme documentation, and comparable online examination processes was undertaken. Documents reviewed included Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori corporate documents, programme process maps, past LFE review reports, and information on similar online programmes.
  - c.) **An online survey** of 122 past participants captured data about the experiences of people who sat the LFE in the past 24 months. A copy of the survey is attached in appendix two.

- d.) **Interviews** were held with stakeholders including Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (5), participants who sat the LFE over the past 24 months (15) and two participant organisations.<sup>6</sup> The majority of past participants were from Te Puni Kōkiri, Inland Revenue, Ministry for the Environment, Auckland City Council, Auckland University of Technology and the Ministry of Education. Interviewees were provided with an information sheet and a consent form for these interviews. Copies are attached in appendices three and four.
- e.) **An observation** of an examination taking place was undertaken. Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori held examinations at its offices in Wellington over two days in December 2021.

6. Participant organisations are those that regularly use the LFE to assess the proficiency in te reo Māori of their staff. The key contacts within the participant organisations are HR managers.



# Key findings

19. The findings section is arranged to give a better understanding of how the LFE has been operating to date, and to provide insights into areas of improvement for the future delivery of the programme within an online setting. **Table 1** sets out a summary showing how the key findings are arranged and what each subsection covers in order to address the key evaluation questions.

Table 1: Summary of how key findings are arranged

Sections	Covers
<b>Participant survey findings</b>	Survey findings from 122 participants who sat the LFE in the past two years
<b>What worked well</b>	What worked well during the LFE (registration, examination, results, administration)
<b>What did not work well</b>	What did not work well during the LFE (registration, examination, results, administration)
<b>Online delivery</b>	What success looks like in an online setting
<b>Recommended improvements</b>	Identification of areas where the effectiveness of the LFE could be improved as the programme is moved to an online setting.

## ▶ Survey findings

20. The online survey sought the experiences of 122 participants who sat the LFE in the last two years, across the following areas:
- › the number of times participants sat the LFE and reasons why they sat it more than once
  - › how they found out about the LFE
  - › why they sat the LFE
  - › experiences in registering for and sitting the LFE, including any difficulties or issues
  - › suggested improvements to the LFE
  - › views on moving the LFE to an online examination, including any potential challenges.

21. Of the 122 participants who sat the LFE, 87 per cent sat it once, 10 per cent sat it twice and five per cent sat it more than twice. Most of these participants sat the LFE to test their reo Māori capabilities (84 per cent). One third of the participants acknowledged that they sat the LFE for remuneration benefits.
22. Just under 50 per cent of the participants found out about the LFE through their employer. Others saw it promoted on Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori Facebook page or Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori website (22 per cent).
23. All but 10 per cent of the survey participants agreed that the registration process was simple. While the majority found the registration process simple, a small number of people commented that there was a delay between registration and the actual sitting. This delay was due to the COVID-19 lockdown, and the uncertainty of timing for the actual examination.
24. With regards to preparation, 54 per cent of survey participants found the handbook informative, however this handbook was not readily available, as people found it through an internet search. Some people communicated directly with Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori to ask about what to expect for the examination.
25. A small minority (10 per cent) did not find the location accessible, because they did not live in the immediate vicinity of the examination location. The employer paid for the participants' travel to the LFE location, as well as their leave for the day of the sitting.
26. A small number of conversational speakers found the LFE difficult, stating that they were more conversationalists, than written te reo Māori experts. Despite this:
  - › 62 per cent of survey participants found that the grammar and vocabulary sections tested their knowledge
  - › 81 per cent of survey participants agreed that the oral dictation section was clear and audible.
27. Just over 70 per cent of the survey participants agreed that the results accurately reflected their proficiency level. However, 18 per cent were not satisfied with their results. Some that sat the LFE more than once commented that while their proficiency improved between the first and second sitting, they received the same results. These people wanted better indications of progressions for those that sit the LFE more than once. Alternatively, receiving a copy of their exam paper would assist them to better understand where they went wrong.
28. Less than 10 per cent of survey participants received their results later than they expected. On following up with Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, results were received the next day or soon after contact.

29. In regard to suggested improvements, more than half agreed with the following:
- › Appropriate preparation material should be given to all participants so that they know what to expect in the exam, including any sample questions and/or mock examinations.
  - › The content is outdated and should include more every day conversational content.
  - › Material could be more relevant to what is learnt in most classes, or aligned to the public sector (i.e., work-related corpus).
  - › Participants should have an opportunity to review their examination papers to determine where they went wrong.
  - › There should be more sittings throughout the year.
  - › There should be a section for kōrero/oral assessment.
  - › An assessment for those with less proficiency should be included, as these people had a negative experience of sitting the LFE and may not sit it again.
  - › Additional feedback should be provided with results so that those who received anything lower than five would have an idea on what, and how, they could improve.
30. Only 43 per cent of surveyed participants agreed that having the LFE online would improve the examination process. Thirty-eight per cent of survey participants neither agreed nor disagreed, while 12 per cent disagreed that an online version would improve the examination process. The majority of surveyed participants (65 per cent) would be more inclined to re-sit the LFE if it was offered online. If it was online, the vast majority said that their results would not be any different. For future examinations, most of the surveyed participants would find online examinations convenient (67 per cent).
31. There were no major issues regarding participants being able to sit the LFE online, with only eight per cent stating that they would prefer to sit with their colleagues while doing the examination.<sup>7</sup> Ninety-six per cent of survey participants had access to a computer and the internet. Some people wanted more time to sit the examination if it was offered online, and not just the currently allocated one hour. This additional time was to ensure there were no technical issues.

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## What works well

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32. The evaluation findings are arranged into process areas to discuss what works well with regard to the administration, management, registration, examination and results of the LFE programme. In summary, areas that work well are:
- › registration that is simple and results that are quickly disseminated
  - › no cost to sit the examination
  - › effective working relationships between Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori and participant organisations

7. The evaluation interviews also supported an option for organisation employees being able to sit together while sitting the examination online.

- › the provision of a national examination for anyone wanting to test their te reo Māori ability
- › the ability to sit the examination alongside work colleagues and friends
- › sufficient resources to manage and implement the examination.

## ▶ Registration and results

33. Registration for the LFE programme is simple and quick according to the majority of participants. Usually one month out from the LFE sitting, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori invites interested participants and organisations to register through a link on their website. Participants register themselves, or an organisation registers their staff.

*Registration was simple. I clicked into their website link, and within a minute it was all done. I love that there I didn't have to pay anything, that was one of the reasons I sat it.*

PAST PARTICIPANT

34. Organisations praised the ease of the registration, enabling them to bulk register several staff members for the examination.

*Either gets participants to self-register via the website link or I will bulk register staff members.... Simple.*

PARTICIPANT ORGANISATION

35. Participants like that there is no cost to sit the LFE. The only costs incurred are for travel (which employers usually cover) to the location where the LFE is being held.<sup>8</sup> Of those surveyed, approximately eight per cent of survey participants were required to travel out of their local town to attend the sitting.

36. Participants and organisations all agreed that results are provided soon after the LFE sitting, with people receiving the results within two to three weeks.

## ▶ Effective working relationships

37. Through open and regular communication, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori formed effective and direct engagements with participant organisations to recruit potential participants. This open and friendly relationship has led to many people sitting the LFE.

*A lot of direct contact with Taura Whiri. They allow us to send as many people as we want, even with some sittings we may only have a few, but others we can have more than 20 along. We have a good relationship with Taura Whiri, friendly and helpful.*

PARTICIPANT ORGANISATION

8. Travel costs for those participants who do not live close to the examination venue.

38. The relationship is effective as Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori goes above and beyond to support participant organisations. Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori accommodates whatever is easier for the participant organisations in relation to registration and sitting the examination. At times, the participant organisation will register their staff, while at other times Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori will register the staff. Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori will invite participant organisations to host the LFE if there are more than 20 people sitting. Alternatively participant organisations will send staff to sit the LFE at Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori.

▶ **Nationally recognised examination**

39. Outside of education institutions, other than the LFE, there is no other nationally recognised examinations offered to the public that assesses a person's general level of te reo Māori ability. The evaluation found that the LFE is useful for public sector employers to remunerate staff based on their test results.

*I found it useful, as once the results are in our staff can be remunerated recognising their language ability, but the exam also acts as an incentive for staff to improve their ability to achieve a higher result each year.*

PARTICIPANT ORGANISATION

▶ **Sitting the LFE alongside colleagues**

40. Participants liked to sit the LFE with their colleagues. It gave people a sense of unity and managed any anxiety that people had.

*I felt like we were in this together, you know, calmed my nerves. I felt more confident with my work mates there.*

PAST PARTICIPANT

▶ **Sufficient resourcing**

41. One person administers the registrations, sittings and results. At times, there is another person on hand who provides support at sittings, and support with any participant organisation engagements. According to Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, the current resources (FTE positions) sufficiently support the implementation of the LFE programme, and will also be sufficient once the LFE goes online.

## ▶ What did not work well

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42. The following areas did not work well:
- › A guide to enable better understanding of the assessment framework of the LFE was not provided.
  - › The examination content has not changed for many years.
  - › The LFE is not aligned to common learning approaches to te reo Māori.
  - › The LFE requires participants to write by hand instead of typing.
  - › Examination papers are not distributed following the examination.
  - › Cancellations occur regularly.

## ▶ Absence of a guide prior to sitting

43. Some participants who sat the LFE for the first time did not know what to expect as they did not receive any background information about the examination other than the LFE videos.<sup>9</sup> Some participants did an internet search, or spoke to past participants to better understand what the LFE was, and what to expect.

*We had two people who had done it before and told us how specific and technical the topics were so we didn't get too big a surprise. Their input was invaluable.*

PAST PARTICIPANT

44. Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori advised that they are finalising a guide with information on the format, assessment framework and types of questions. This will be available for the 2022/23 year.

## ▶ Examination content and programme structure

45. All evaluation participants agreed that the content of the examination needs to change, as the same content has been used since the early 2000s. Given this situation, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori does not allow past participants to re-sit the test within a six-month window as it is more likely they would remember the questions (and correct answers).

*It was like déjà vu when I saw the exam.*

PAST PARTICIPANT WHO SAT THE LFE TWICE

46. Suggested content and structure for an improved LFE programme included:

### *Content*

- › conversational te reo Māori (written and spoken)
- › more commonly used te reo Māori words
- › te reo Māori used in the public sector.

9. These videos are on YouTube and Facebook.

### Structure

- › provision of marks for each section of the examination
- › inclusion of lower-level examinations for those less proficient
- › provision of mock examinations or past examinations as preparation for the actual examination
- › support for learning following the dissemination of results, e.g. suggestions on what to learn to reach the next level.

## ▶ Alignment to common te reo Māori learning programmes

47. Participant organisations and participants did not agree with the current format of the LFE, with an aural (dictation) section and a comprehension section. The majority of participants were learning te reo Māori when they sat the LFE. The learning programmes focus on how to speak and use te reo Māori in everyday conversation (e.g. Te Ātaarangi),<sup>10</sup> personal pepeha, mihi, karakia and waiata. The learning also involved learning simple words and sentences to use in the office, e.g. salutations to use in office emails. Many participants struggled with the contrast between this learning format and the LFE format. On the other hand, more proficient te reo Māori participants were not concerned with the LFE format.

*I expected to see more conversational stuff. Both sections were hard. Some of it I was familiar with and that was just luck. The dictation was really hard even if the questions were written. I hadn't done much in comprehension beforehand.*

PAST PARTICIPANT

48. Most participants were unfamiliar with some te reo Māori words used in the examination. While some participants could understand some words, the presence of unfamiliar words caused them to not understand the sentences.

*I had to guess the answer, as I could not understand the full sentence cos there were words I just hadn't seen before.*

PAST PARTICIPANT

## ▶ Writing by hand

49. A small number of participants preferred to do the LFE by computer as they were slow writers, especially with regards to the aural section. With the aural section being the first part of the LFE, these slow writers lost confidence in themselves as they moved to complete the comprehension section.

*If there is an opportunity, maybe we can do it on an approved laptop that is owned or managed by them (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori). I just lost faith in the exam after that dictation.*

PAST PARTICIPANT

10. More than half of the survey participants commented that their learning is based on everyday conversational use.

## ▶ Dissemination of results

50. Two to three weeks after the LFE, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori emails the results to participants on the level attained. Participants do not receive their LFE examination papers back. Many of the participants wanted their examination papers so that they could:
- › see where they made mistakes so that they could adapt their learning
  - › understand how they achieved their awarded level.
51. Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori does not provide completed examination papers as the same examination is used at each sitting, meaning the questions would be disclosed and possibly shared to future participants.

## ▶ Last minute cancellations

52. Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori almost always receives last minute cancellations from people either on the day or two to three days prior to the LFE sitting. LFE sittings, especially ones outside of Wellington, require careful preparation of people and resources. When last minute cancellations occur, this can lead to the sitting being postponed.

## ▶ Online delivery

53. Online delivery refers to the LFE being delivered through an online function such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, rather than in person. The survey and interviews sought views on what changes need to be made to the current LFE programme for it to be successful online.
54. For Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, the important factor is that the LFE needs to be able to accurately measure a person's te reo Māori proficiency, as for some organisations, each level translates to specific remuneration amounts ranging between \$500 and \$7,500 per annum.

*The really important thing is that LFE is our flag bearer. We have had people do this exam for 20 years or longer. So it's what people look for and what they look forward to doing to ascertain what proficiency level they are at.*

TE TAURA WHIRI I TE REO MĀORI

## ▶ What does success look like?

11. These LFE processes are aligned to the LFE process maps as provided by Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (November 2021).
  12. Majority of participants interviewed commented that te reo Māori commonly taught is conversational, not written.
  13. Despite an automatic certificate being available immediately, participants would still be satisfied with the current timeframe of two to three weeks.
55. The evaluation found 'success' of the LFE online means it is:
    - › quick and easy to access
    - › accessible anytime during the day
    - › supported by a stable internet connection
    - › low maintenance (i.e. does not require any intervention)
    - › able to provide instant results soon after sitting the examination online
    - › capable of predicting proficiency levels
    - › able to stand alone
    - › time-bound as to the completion of the examination
    - › secure and fair.
  56. Furthermore, the new online LFE would be able to generate automated result reports for Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, such as a report on the number of attainments of each candidate across attainment levels one to five. This type of information would be valuable for participant organisations who have active strategies to improve te reo Māori capability of their staff. These statistics could also enable annual tracking for Maihi Karauna implementation efforts.

**Table 2: Summary of what success online looks like within each process**

LFE Process <sup>11</sup>	Here is what success Online looks like:
<b>Registration</b>	<p>Participant is authenticated.</p> <p>Participant or participant organisation registers quickly and easily.</p> <p>Participant receives examination handbook upon registration including guidelines and examples of questions.</p>
<b>Delivery</b>	<p>Content covers, at a minimum, spoken conversational te reo Māori.<sup>12</sup></p> <p>Proficiency predictor tool for questions is built in.</p> <p>Questions are time-bound (as is overall examination).</p> <p>Access to the use of te reo Māori dictionaries is prevented.</p> <p>Access to help from a non-authenticated (proficient) person is prevented.</p> <p>There is stable internet connection throughout the examination.</p> <p>The examination can be sat online with other work colleagues, e.g. in a meeting room.</p>
<b>Monitoring</b>	<p>Automatic notifications are sent to participants.</p> <p>Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori is able to monitor examinations in real time.</p> <p>Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori is alerted to security issues such as location where authenticated user is signing in, or if participant is using copy and paste function.</p> <p>Analysis of performance (of individuals, of all participants or by organisation).</p>
<b>Marking</b>	<p>Instant results are available following examination.</p> <p>Moderation of results (if required) is available instantly.</p> <p>Certificate is emailed soon after completion.<sup>13</sup></p>

57. If all of the proposed changes were made to the LFE programme, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori would save time and costs as follows:
- a.) Core functions outlined in the **registration** process map would no longer be required, including:
    - › completion of expression of interest form
    - › emailed confirmation to participant that registration is accepted
    - › requirement for participant organisations to have at least 20 people to validate a sitting
    - › venue for, and travel to, non-Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori locations by Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori and non-local participants
    - › completion of LFE registration sheet
    - › internal approval for non-Wellington examination sittings
    - › printing of examinations for in-person delivery.
  - b.) Core functions outlined in the **delivery** process map would no longer be required, including:
    - › funding disbursements for non-Wellington examination sittings
    - › preparation of non-Wellington venues for examination
    - › signing in of participants
    - › briefing of participants including health and safety issues
    - › onsite oversight of examination
    - › collection of examination papers.
  - c.) Core functions outlined in the **marking** process map would no longer be required, including:
    - › marking of examination papers
    - › moderating marked examinations
    - › emailing results to candidates
    - › scanning and storing examination papers.

## ▶ Minimising risks

58. The new LFE needs to ensure the person registering is the actual person doing the examination, so **users need to be authenticated**. Stakeholders agreed that having an online programme would be more accessible, but it would need to be subject to people being **unable to access any te reo Māori aides** during the examination.
59. Stakeholders want to ensure any new approach prevents any deceptive behaviour (i.e. cheating) by participants. Some local universities use proctoring software to prevent cheating in examinations. That online software would enable Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori to view the participant's screen and utilise the mouse and keyboard as if the participant was sitting the examination in person. Once the examination starts, the proctor would monitor everything on the participant's computer screen. The issue in using this software is that, even though it is legal, it uses artificial intelligence including face recognition, gaze detection and keystroke biometrics to verify identity and flag any other behaviour (e.g. the use of other devices).
60. In the event that COVID-19 continues to impact on the delivery of face-to-face examinations, whatever new online platform that is developed should be able to work in an environment that does not involve any personal contact.

## ▶ Recommended improvements

61. The findings of this evaluation identified several areas where the LFE could be improved as it moves to an online platform. Other improvements are noted throughout the findings section.

**Table 3: Recommended improvements to Level Finder Examination**

Focus	Finding	Improvement
<b>Pre-examination material for participants and participant organisations</b>	Absence of a guide on the LFE to better understand the assessment framework	Preparation of pre-examination material that covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› guidelines and instructions for sitting LFE online</li> <li>› assessment framework including achievement levels</li> <li>› sample questions.</li> </ul>
<b>LFE Content</b>	The LFE content has not changed for years Alignment of learning to LFE, with less focus on written te reo Māori Handwriting instead of typing	In preparation for the online version of the LFE, the content needs to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› include a library<sup>14</sup> of examination questions that can be used to cover proficiency LFE levels one to five</li> <li>› include, at least, content that covers what the majority of learning programmes teach, i.e. conversational te reo Māori.</li> </ul>
<b>Results</b>	Manual system in place to mark, moderate and issue results	Invest in appropriate software that automates marking and issuing of results to participants and participant organisations. <sup>15</sup> If required, moderation can still happen manually.
<b>Examination online</b>	The LFE needs to be easy to access at any time, low maintenance, provide instant results, capable of predicting proficiency of participant, stand alone, be time-bound, secure and fair	Investment in appropriate software that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› tests a range of proficiency levels</li> <li>› provides individualised assessments</li> <li>› enables different types of questions including aural, multi-choice, etc.</li> <li>› provides certificates</li> <li>› provides analytics, e.g. reports on achievement levels of employees of a specific organisation</li> <li>› provides for real-time observation.</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	Cancellations Prevention of cheating Participant organisations enjoy the direct relationship they have with Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori to discuss the LFE	On the introduction of an online programme, the following improvements will address the findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Cancellations will likely be reduced as people can undertake the LFE at a time that suits them.</li> <li>› Deceptive behaviour can be minimised through a range of options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› authentication requirements</li> <li>› pre-testing or post-results testing to ascertain the true level of the participant</li> <li>› proctor software noting the risks with its use (refer to previous section)</li> <li>› guidelines and instructions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>› Participant organisations should be able to continue the direct relationship that they have with Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori. Online software also enables the provision of analytics and reports to participant organisations, should they require them for any in-house language planning.</li> </ul>

14. The library can be updated regularly in the event some people choose to sit the LFE more than once per annum.

15. Only to participant organisations who require results for the management of remuneration benefits of participants.



# Conclusion

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The evaluation found that, on average, people have had a good experience of the LFE.

A small number of less proficient people stated that they would not sit it again due to its being so difficult, and not recognising any in-class conversational learning. This finding aligns with national surveys that ask if a person can converse in te reo Māori about a lot of everyday things, and asks questions relating to people's ability to speak, listen, read, and write in te reo Māori. There is overwhelming evidence that the content needs to change and, in addition to aural testing, the LFE needs to align with conversational day-to-day spoken reo Māori.

The LFE is a key vehicle for examining proficiency across a large group of people in different locations throughout Aotearoa. Organisations use it to ascertain remuneration benefits, and will continue to use it, supported by effective working relationships with Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori.

An online solution enables access by anyone, provided they have access to a computer and stable internet connection. With an improved online solution, the LFE programme has the opportunity to reach a wide audience in Aotearoa and overseas.



## Appendix One: LFE Logic model

Drivers and Opportunity	Intervention	Inputs	Outputs	Short term outcomes <sup>16</sup>	Long term outcomes <sup>17</sup>
<p>Provide a nationally recognised examination for individuals, and for organisations (government and non-government) to test the reo Māori proficiency of their employees</p> <p>Provide benchmarks for reo Māori proficiency for recognition such as remuneration reward</p> <p>Priority groups of the public sector and tāngata matatau are supported to have their proficiency recognised and acknowledged</p>	<p>A programme is delivered to test a person's proficiency in te reo Māori through aural, vocabulary and grammar examinations</p> <p>Provision of a benchmark for employers to use to assess remuneration to recognise te reo Māori proficiency of their employees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› \$36,000 programme management</li> <li>› \$100,000 online operation<sup>18</sup></li> <li>› LFE policy and guidelines</li> <li>› course materials</li> <li>› assessment framework</li> <li>› course participants</li> <li>› ICT support (software and hardware)</li> <li>› Examination sites</li> </ul>	<p>Participants sit the LFE</p> <p>Participants complete LFE</p> <p>Post-programme surveys and evaluation report</p>	<p>Participant recognition of their personal proficiency / advancement in the acquisition and use of te reo Māori</p> <p>Participants are encouraged to further their reo Māori learning</p> <p>Participants are encouraged to improve their proficiency in reo Māori</p>	<p>NZers have the ability and confidence to talk about at least basic things in te reo Māori</p> <p>More people highly proficient in te reo Māori</p>
<p>Online testing manages the impact of COVID-19 preventing in-person testing</p> <p>Online increases management of participant volume and regularity</p>	<p>Facilitation of reo Māori relationships with government, private, professional bodies and community sectors</p>	<p># FTE to manage, administer deliver and assess</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation activities</p>	<p>Certification for recognition of reo Māori proficiency provided to participants</p>	<p>Improved confidence of participants in using, seeing, hearing and learning te reo Māori</p>	<p>NZers value te reo Māori as a key element of national identity</p>
<p>Online reduces administration, time and cost</p> <p>Enable large volumes of people to sit the LFE through online testing</p>	<p>Promotional events for LFE to encourage participation, targeting public sector and tāngata matatau as priority groups</p>	<p>Where required, employers provide location and technological support for LFE</p>	<p>Remuneration recognition for employees received</p>	<p>Organisations recognise and value an employee's proficiency in te reo Māori through a reward system such as remuneration</p>	<p>Māori aged 15 and over use te reo Māori as much as English</p>

16. These short-term outcomes have been generated based on (initial) understanding of the programme.

17. These outcomes have been taken from Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori Statement of Intent 2020–2024 and Maihi Karauna 2019–2023.

18. In 2021/22 budget TTWh provided.



# Appendix Two: Level Finder Examination participant survey

- 
1. How many times have you sat the LFE?
- a.) Once
  - b.) Twice
  - c.) More than twice
- 
2. If you have sat the LFE more than once, what was your reason?
- a.) Not happy with the results of previous attempt(s)
  - b.) Gained more knowledge and skills since previous attempt
  - c.) Continuing testing my te reo capabilities
  - d.) Other (please specify)
- 
3. How did you find out about the LFE?
- a.) I already knew about it
  - b.) Someone told me about it
  - c.) Internet search
  - d.) My employer/organisation told me about it
  - e.) Other (please specify)
- 
4. Why did you sit the LFE? Tick all that applies and/or provide reasons
- a.) To test my abilities
  - b.) To be recognised through additional remuneration benefits
  - c.) To have formal recognition of my ability
  - d.) To support further te reo Māori training
  - e.) Other (please specify)
- 
5. In terms of the registration process, please rate the following statements:
- a.) The registration process was simple
  - b.) The candidate handbook was informative
  - c.) The instructions about the examination (i.e. arrival time, etc.) were clear
  - d.) The location of the examination place was easy to access
  - e.) Information about the LFE was readily available
  - f.) Any queries I had about the LFE were promptly answered
  - g.) Please specify reasons for your response

6. In terms of sitting the LFE, please rate the following statements:
- a.) The examination really tested my abilities
  - b.) The instructions were clear
  - c.) The oral dictation section was clear and audible
  - d.) The grammar and vocabulary sections tested my knowledge
  - e.) Please specify reasons for your response
- 

7. Were there any difficulties or issues during the examination, registration, and/or sitting?
- 

8. In terms of your LFE results, please rate the following statements:
- a.) My results were communicated in a timely manner
  - b.) The results reflected my proficiency level
  - c.) I was satisfied with my results
  - d.) Please specify reasons for your response
- 

9. How can the LFE be improved? (Please add as much detail as possible.)
- 

10. Moving the LFE to an online examination, please rate the following statements:
- a.) LFE online will improve the examination process
  - b.) More inclined to re-sit the examination in the future if it was online
  - c.) More likely to do better if it was online
  - d.) Online is more convenient for me
  - e.) Please specify reasons for your response
- 

11. What challenges would you face in sitting the LFE online? Please rate the following statements:
- a.) Access to computer
  - b.) Access to internet
  - c.) Access to appropriate setting (e.g. quiet room)
  - d.) Need to sit with colleagues and/or other people
  - e.) Likely to make more errors in an online setting
  - f.) Not confident using a computer
  - g.) Other (please specify)
- 

12. What things will support online delivery of the LFE?  
(e.g. more time for online vs in-person examination)



# Appendix Three: Information sheet

## Evaluation of the Level Finder Examination: Information Sheet

<b>What is the purpose of the evaluation?</b>	The purpose of this evaluation is to identify what activities and approaches have been/not been most effective for the Level Finder Examination. We also want to identify what changes need to be made to improve the Level Finder Examination for it to be successful online.
<b>Who is conducting the evaluation?</b>	The evaluation is being conducted by R&K Consultants Ltd and Associates on behalf of Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori. The evaluation team members are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› Toni Roberts: Waikato, Te Waiohua, Ngāpuhi,</li><li>› Reece Kohatu: Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Maniapoto</li><li>› Mahinarangi Maika: Ngāti Porou ki Harataunga, Tūhourangi, Ngāti Whakaue</li><li>› Chelsea Grootveld: Ngāti Porou, Ngāi Tai, Whānau ā Apanui, Whakatōhea, Tūhourangi</li><li>› Vini Olsen-Reeder: Ngā Pōtiki a Tamapahore, Ngāti Pūkenga, Ngāti Whakaue</li></ul>
<b>How is information being gathered?</b>	Information will be gathered through a desktop review, and interviews with past participants. Interviews will be held by phone, Zoom or MS Teams.  How will information be stored and used? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› Data is stored securely on the evaluation team's Dropbox.</li><li>› All notes, transcripts, audios, and consent forms are in password protected folders and are anonymised.</li><li>› Data will be used to inform an evaluation report</li></ul>
<b>What are the timeframes for this evaluation?</b>	Interviews will be conducted from January to February 2022. A draft evaluation report is due by 27 May 2022, with the final report due by 30 June 2022.
<b>What are my rights?</b>	It is your choice whether or not you wish to take part in the evaluation. If you do not wish to participate, you do not have to give a reason. Only the evaluation team will know who has been approached to participate and this will not be shared with Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori.  If you agree to take part, you will be asked to read and complete a consent form. The evaluation team will also verbally outline your rights. If you wish, your interview can be in te reo Māori.
<b>Will I get a copy of the final report?</b>	The report is being prepared for Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori and maybe released once key stakeholders (including yourself) have been consulted.
<b>Who do I contact with questions or concerns?</b>	If you have any questions or concerns, please contact one of the evaluation team members.



# Appendix Four: Consent form

## Evaluation of the Level Finder Examination: Consent Form

I understand that:

- › My participation is voluntary, and I can withdraw at any time.
- › If I do take part, I can refuse to answer any questions I do not want to answer.
- › I can choose to be interviewed in te reo Māori.
- › My name or identifying information will not be included in the evaluation without my permission. If I work for an organisation, the type of organisation I work for may be identified.
- › With my permission, the discussion will be audio recorded, and may be transcribed.
- › I have the right to request a copy of the audio or transcript of my discussion.
- › Digital recordings, notes, and summaries will be stored securely. Hard copies of stored information will be destroyed one month after project completion.
- › My information will not be shared with anyone outside of the evaluation team. Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori may request my notes in exceptional circumstances. If so, these notes will not include any personal identifying information.
- › Any information I provide can be removed at my request up until 1 July 2022.

I have read the information sheet and consent form and been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this evaluation.

Name

---

Signature  
(confirm by email if no e-signature)

---

Date

---

If you have any pātai, you can call Toni



## Appendix Five: Level Finder evaluation interview guide

This table was used to guide conversations during the interviews with stakeholders.

Focus	Key evaluation questions	Sub-questions (not an exhaustive list)
Activities and approach	<p>What activities or approaches have been most effective for the LFE programme?</p> <p>What activities or approaches have not been most effective for the LFE programme?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› What was the intent of the programme? Do you think that is being achieved?</li><li>› How is the programme administered and/or managed? (FTE, funds, other)</li><li>› What feedback (participant or organisation) is provided about the programme?</li><li>› What sort of engagement is needed with organisations in preparation for the LFE? Any issues?</li></ul> <p><b>Participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› What was your personal experience in registering for the LFE, participating in the LFE and receiving your certificate? Any highlights?</li><li>› Were there any difficulties you experienced during your registration, examination and/or certification?</li><li>› Do you think your grade reflects your proficiency level? If not, why?</li></ul> <p><b>Participant Organisations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› What has been your experience in facilitating the LFE on behalf of your organisation's employees?</li><li>› Any issues with resourcing, finding participants, or the examination?</li><li>› What are your organisation's drivers for staff sitting the LFE?</li></ul>
Improvement areas	<p>What changes need to be made to improve the LFE programme?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› What areas, from your perspective, need to change across the LFE? Why?</li><li>› Do you think the changes are easily resolvable or require additional resource?</li><li>› Once the LFE is online, do you think these improvement areas would be more difficult to resolve, or easily resolved?</li></ul>
Online delivery	<p>What changes need to be made to improve the LFE programme for it to be successful online?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› What, in your opinion, are the drivers for moving the LFE to online delivery?</li><li>› Do you see any problems with an online setting? E.g. access to internet, access to hardware and software, access to quiet setting, sitting the LFE in isolation of other staff members (at desk or from home)</li><li>› If the LFE was available online would your organisation allow more staff to sit it?</li><li>› What sorts of resources can your organisation offer to support staff to sit the LFE online?</li></ul>

