



Tahua Huanga Ora, Māori Outcomes Fund

Evaluation Report 2025/2026

October 2026



Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	6
Purpose.....	6
About the Māori Outcomes Fund	7
About this evaluation	11
Key questions.....	11
Evaluation approach	11
Scope of evaluation	12
Māori Outcomes Fund Investment and Assurance in 2025/26	14
Why the He Waka Kōtuia 2024 recommendations matter	14
Findings	16
Finding 1: Auckland Council has substantially completed the improvements required by He Waka Kōtuia 2024	16
Finding 2: The Fund has a clearer strategic purpose and provides greater opportunity for Māori-led investment	16
Finding 3: Existing investments demonstrate significant benefits for Māori and the wider Auckland community	17
Finding 4: Monitoring and reporting have improved, but the collective impact of the Fund is not yet clear	18
Lessons learned	19
Lesson 1: Clear priorities support more deliberate investment choices	19
Lesson 2: Opening the Fund does not, by itself, create equitable access.....	19
Lesson 3: Stronger oversight must be matched by clear and timely processes.....	19
Lesson 4: Long-term investment requires proportionate, multiyear monitoring.....	20
Lesson 5: The Fund needs to be managed and reported as an investment portfolio	20
Overall conclusion	21
Appendix A: Māori Outcomes Fund investment and outcomes.....	22

Executive Summary

This evaluation finds that Tahua Huangā Ora Māori Outcomes Fund (Māori Outcomes Fund) is in a stronger position to manage the \$171 million investment provided through the Long-term Plan 2024–2034. Auckland Council has strengthened the Fund’s governance, strategic direction, financial management and reporting, while existing investments have delivered significant outcomes for Māori and the wider Auckland community.

The evaluation provides assurance in three areas. It assesses Auckland Council’s response to the recommendations of He Waka Kōtuia Te Tiriti o Waitangi Audit 2024 (He Waka Kōtuia 2024)¹, considers whether the refresh agreed in June 2025 is strengthening the Fund, and reviews the evidence of outcomes achieved through council’s investment to date.

Auckland Council has substantially completed the actions required by He Waka Kōtuia 2024, with seven of eight recommendations ready for closure. Political and senior staff oversight have strengthened, investment priorities are clearer, and improvements have been made to financial management, funding agreements, administration and reporting.

The evaluation also finds that the Fund has supported significant outcomes for Māori and the wider Auckland community. Investments have strengthened marae infrastructure and resilience, supported papakāinga development, increased opportunities for Māori businesses, restored and promoted te reo Māori and Māori identity, supported environmental restoration, and enabled Māori organisations to respond to whānau during emergencies. Several initiatives have also attracted wider investment or delivered economic and community benefits beyond the original council contribution.

The changes introduced through the refresh provide greater confidence that future investment will be more transparent, deliberate and aligned with Tāmaki Ora and the priorities of mana whenua and mātāwaka. The next phase is to embed these arrangements and strengthen the evidence available across the Fund as a whole.

What is working

Auckland Council has made substantial progress in responding to He Waka Kōtuia 2024. Seven of the eight recommendations relating to the Māori Outcomes Fund are ready for closure. The actions completed include refreshed Funding Guidelines, stronger elected member and senior staff oversight, financial training for funding recipients, strengthened funding agreements and reporting requirements, and consistent administration of external funding through SmartyGrants.

The refresh has strengthened the strategic direction of the Fund. The refreshed settings provide a clearer connection between future investment decisions and Tāmaki Ora Māori Outcomes Strategy and Performance Measurement Framework 2025-2027 (Tāmaki Ora) and place greater emphasis on proposals led by mana whenua and mātāwaka. The Policy,

¹ Houkura, *He Waka Kōtuia: Te Tiriti o Waitangi Audit Report 2024* (2024), <https://houkura.nz/te-tiriti-o-waitangi-audit>

Planning and Development Committee has greater visibility of proposed investments and responsibility for funding decisions, supported by advice through the Māori Outcomes Steering Committee.

Existing investments demonstrate that the Fund is supporting valuable outcomes. Marae and papakāinga investment has strengthened important cultural and community infrastructure. Te Kete Rukuruku has increased the visibility of te reo Māori and mana whenua narratives. Amotai has supported Māori and Pasifika businesses to participate in council and wider procurement opportunities. Environmental and emergency response initiatives have also supported Māori communities while contributing to outcomes for Tāmaki Makaurau more broadly.

Together, this evidence provides elected members, Houkura and Māori with greater assurance that the Fund is investing in areas of importance to Māori and generating wider community benefits.

Where further work is needed

The refreshed arrangements are relatively new, and their full effect will become clearer through future funding rounds. The remaining He Waka Kōtuia 2024 recommendation needs to be completed, with the evidence required for closure clearly recorded.

Council can demonstrate the results of a number of significant investments, but it does not yet have a consistent portfolio-level account of the Fund's collective impact. Project reporting varies, and some initiatives have stronger outcome information than others.

This does not diminish the value of the outcomes already achieved. It identifies the next stage of maturity for the Fund: bringing together financial, delivery and outcome information so elected members, Houkura and Māori can see more clearly how investment is distributed and what it is achieving.

What happens next

The next phase will focus on embedding the refreshed Funding Guidelines, completing the remaining He Waka Kōtuia 2024 recommendation, testing the strengthened arrangements and refining through future funding rounds.

Council will also develop a clearer portfolio-level view of investment and outcomes. This should include budget and expenditure, delivery progress, investment across Tāmaki Ora priorities, evidence of outcomes, and feedback from mana whenua, mātāwaka and funding recipients.

Overall, the evaluation concludes that Auckland Council has responded substantively to He Waka Kōtuia 2024, the June 2025 refresh is strengthening the Fund, and existing investment has delivered significant outcomes for Māori and the wider community. The Fund now has stronger foundations to manage the increased investment provided through the Long-term Plan 2024–2034.

Introduction

Auckland Council has invested in Māori outcomes through the Māori Outcomes Fund since 2018. Over that time, the Fund has supported marae infrastructure and resilience, papakāinga development, Māori businesses, te reo Māori and mana whenua histories, Māori-led environmental restoration, and Māori organisations responding to whānau during emergencies. Many of these investments have also generated wider benefits for Auckland's communities and economy.

The Fund has supported significant outcomes over a number of years. Its investments have strengthened marae infrastructure and resilience, supported the development of papakāinga, increased opportunities for Māori businesses, promoted te reo Māori and mana whenua histories, enabled Māori-led environmental restoration and supported whānau during emergencies. Many of these investments also generate wider benefits for Auckland's communities and economy.

The Long-term Plan 2024–2034 provides \$171 million for the Fund. This increased investment brings a corresponding responsibility to ensure funding is directed towards the right priorities, supported by appropriate governance and producing outcomes that can be demonstrated.

The 2024 independent impact evaluation found that the Fund was supporting valuable initiatives and identified opportunities to strengthen its strategic focus and evidence of impact. He Waka Kōtuia Te Tiriti o Waitangi Audit 2024 also recommended improvements to the Fund's governance, accountability, administration and reporting.

In June 2025, Auckland Council agreed to refresh the Fund in response to these findings. The changes included stronger political and senior staff oversight, clearer investment priorities, greater access for proposals led by mana whenua and mātāwaka, and improvements to funding agreements, financial capability support, administration and reporting. Refreshed Funding Guidelines were subsequently approved to give effect to this direction and connect future investment more clearly with Tāmaki Ora.

The Fund is therefore at an important point in its development. It has an established portfolio of investments from which outcomes can be assessed, alongside a refreshed approach that is intended to guide future decisions. This evaluation considers both: what council's investment has achieved to date and whether the changes made to the Fund provide a stronger basis for its next phase.

Purpose

This report presents the findings of the 2025/26 evaluation of the Māori Outcomes Fund. It considers the Fund's development, the outcomes supported through council's investment, and the changes made following the June 2025 refresh.

The evaluation examines:

- progress in responding to the He Waka Kōtuia 2024 recommendations
- changes to the Fund’s strategic direction, governance, investment approach and accountability
- evidence of outcomes achieved through funded initiatives
- alignment between investment, Tāmaki Ora and the priorities of mana whenua and mātāwaka
- opportunities to strengthen the Fund’s future operation and evaluation.

The report also establishes a baseline for assessing the Fund’s performance and impact over time. It distinguishes between outcomes achieved through established investments and the refreshed arrangements, which are still being implemented and will require further evaluation as evidence becomes available.

About the Māori Outcomes Fund

The Māori Outcomes Fund is Auckland Council’s primary strategic investment fund for advancing Māori outcomes. It supports initiatives that contribute to the aspirations of mana whenua and mātāwaka and align with Auckland Council’s strategic direction for Tāmaki Makaurau.

The Fund enables investment in areas such as iwi wellbeing and development, Māori community and cultural initiatives, environmental restoration and kaitiakitanga, economic development and innovation, papakāinga and Māori housing, marae vitality, climate resilience and digital capability.

The Fund is a significant long-term council investment

The Māori Outcomes Fund was established through the Long-term Plan 2018–2028, with an initial allocation of \$120 million over ten years. A further \$30 million increased the total investment to \$150 million, supporting greater visibility and investment in Māori identity, relationships with mana whenua, Māori economic development and infrastructure associated with culturally significant places.

The Long-term Plan 2024–2034 increased the Fund to \$171 million over ten years. This expanded investment increases the importance of clear priorities, transparent decisions and reliable evidence about the results achieved.

The Fund is centrally coordinated to provide a more deliberate and visible approach to investment in Māori outcomes across the Auckland Council Group. Previous evaluation has emphasised, however, that the Fund represents only one part of the council group’s total contribution to Māori outcomes. Council departments and council-controlled organisations also deliver Māori outcomes through their core operational and capital budgets.

The Fund has evolved towards greater Māori leadership and external investment

The Fund originally operated primarily as an internal investment mechanism. Council departments and council-controlled organisations developed proposals, and investment decisions were made through internal governance arrangements.

The refreshed approach provides mana whenua, mātāwaka and eligible Māori organisations with a more direct pathway to propose Māori-led initiatives. Internal proposals remain possible but are more constrained, reflecting an intention to give greater priority to Māori-led investment and partnership opportunities.

This represents an important shift in the role of the Fund: from primarily funding council-generated programmes towards investing more directly in priorities identified and led by Māori.

The Funding Guidelines provide the strategic direction

Auckland Council approved refreshed Māori Outcomes Fund Guidelines² in June 2026. The Guidelines connect investment decisions more explicitly to Tāmaki Ora and the priorities identified through Mana ki te Mana engagement with mana whenua and mātāwaka.

Until 30 June 2027, the Guidelines prioritise three Tāmaki Ora outcomes:

- **Iwi Ora:** supporting the wellbeing, development and aspirations of mana whenua iwi
- **Marae Ora:** strengthening marae as centres of identity, connection, resilience and community wellbeing
- **Te Hapori Ora:** supporting the wellbeing and development of Māori whānau and communities.

Within these outcomes, the Fund can support Māori leadership and governance, community and cultural initiatives, environmental restoration and kaitiakitanga, economic development and innovation, housing aspirations and climate leadership.

This prioritisation does not mean that other Māori outcomes are unimportant. It provides a basis for making choices within a Fund that cannot meet every need or opportunity.

Investment is guided by four principles

The Funding Guidelines identify four principles for investment:

- **Te Tiriti o Waitangi:** uphold the council's Te Tiriti commitments and support by-Māori, for-Māori approaches
- **Equity:** address inequities experienced by Māori and reduce barriers over time
- **Partnership and co-investment:** enable Māori-led design and delivery and encourage investment from other partners

² Auckland Council, *Tahua Huanga Ora Ngā Aratohu: Māori Outcomes Fund Guidelines*, approved 9 June 2026.

- **Outcomes:** support lasting change aligned with Tāmaki Ora and the Auckland Plan 2050.

The Fund is intended to add value rather than become the sole source of support for an initiative. Co-investment may include financial contributions, land, expertise, services or support from council departments, government agencies, philanthropic organisations and other partners.

The Fund can also support the early stages of significant initiatives, including feasibility, planning, design, consenting and specialist capability, where this helps a Māori-led proposal progress towards delivery or attract wider investment. Recent investment in papakāinga and Māori housing illustrates this role: funding has helped initiatives address early planning and consenting barriers and develop a pathway towards longer-term delivery.

Mana whenua and mātāwaka can bring forward proposals directly

Priority applicants include Auckland Council's 19 recognised mana whenua entities and mātāwaka organisations that are Māori-led, active in Tāmaki Makaurau and serve Māori communities. Other not-for-profit organisations supporting Māori communities may also be eligible, while public sector agencies can participate as partners rather than receive funding directly.

The external application pathway uses a two-stage process. Applicants first submit an expression of interest setting out the proposed initiative, intended outcomes and alignment with the Fund. Applicants may then be invited to develop a full proposal. The two-stage approach allows the council to test strategic fit before requiring applicants to undertake the work involved in preparing a detailed application.

Funding applications remain open throughout the year, with decisions generally considered twice annually. The current settings provide a minimum grant of \$10,000, with no prescribed maximum for external proposals. Separate funding arrangements continue to apply to some established programmes, including marae grants administered through the Cultural Initiatives Fund.

Māori priorities reach the Fund through several pathways

The Fund forms part of Mana ki te Mana, Auckland Council's approach to strengthening relationships and working directly with mana whenua and mātāwaka. Māori priorities are identified through:

- direct engagement with mana whenua and mātāwaka
- Huinga Rangatira
- submissions and engagement on the Long-term Plan and Annual Plan
- local board plans and agreements
- iwi strategies, priorities and investment proposals.

These priorities may influence investment through the Māori Outcomes Fund, but they should also influence council's wider plans, budgets and operational decisions. Achieving Māori Outcomes (AMO) Plans provide another route through which departments and council-controlled organisations align their core work and budgets with Tāmaki Ora.

Governance and oversight have strengthened

The Policy, Planning and Development Committee provides elected-member oversight and approves significant allocations from the Fund. The Māori Outcomes Steering Committee (MOSco), an internal steering committee) provides senior staff governance and advice before proposals reach the committee.

External grants are administered through SmartyGrants and supported by funding agreements that set out delivery, financial management and reporting requirements. These arrangements aim to improve consistency, transparency and accountability while ensuring requirements remain proportionate to the scale and risk of each investment.

The Fund complements wider responsibility for Māori outcomes

The Māori Outcomes Fund does not replace the responsibility of council departments and council-controlled organisations to deliver Māori outcomes through their core functions and budgets. Nor should it become the default source of funding whenever an initiative has a Māori outcomes component.

Its role is to provide focused investment where it can:

- respond directly to priorities identified by mana whenua and mātāwaka
- support Māori leadership and Māori-led delivery
- address inequities or barriers that ordinary funding settings do not adequately respond to
- enable partnership and co-investment
- develop promising initiatives and help them attract wider or longer-term investment.

The Fund therefore connects Māori priorities with council investment while complementing the wider planning, engagement, delivery and performance arrangements that make up Auckland Council's Māori outcomes system.

About this evaluation

This evaluation examines how Auckland Council strengthened the Māori Outcomes Fund during 2025/2026 and the extent to which the changes provide a stronger foundation for future investment.

It builds on the independent impact evaluation³ completed in 2024 and focuses on changes to the Fund's strategic direction, governance, investment approach, administration and performance measurement.

The evaluation considers the Fund as an investment mechanism. It does not seek to reassess every funded initiative or attribute long-term changes in Māori wellbeing to the Fund.

Key questions

This evaluation seeks to answer five key questions:

1. To what extent has Auckland Council responded to the recommendations of the *He Waka Kōtuia 2024* relating to the Māori Outcomes Fund?
2. How have the governance, strategic direction and accountability of the Fund been strengthened?
3. Is the Fund better positioned to invest in initiatives that respond to shared priorities for Auckland Council, mana whenua and mātāwaka?
4. How effectively does Auckland Council monitor, evaluate and report on the performance and impact of the Fund?
5. What lessons should inform the next phase of the Fund?

The findings build on the 2024 impact evaluation and provide a baseline for assessing the operation and impact of the refreshed investment approach over the coming years.

Evaluation approach

This evaluation draws on quantitative and qualitative evidence about the operation, investment and performance of the Māori Outcomes Fund, including:

- the 2024 independent impact evaluation of the Māori Outcomes Fund
- the recommendations of the *He Waka Kōtuia 2024* and Auckland Council's response
- the Māori Outcomes Fund review and refreshed Funding Guidelines
- committee decisions, reports and other governance information

³ Awa Associates, *Māori Outcomes Fund Impact Evaluation Report*, prepared for Auckland Council, March 2024.

- information about Fund budgets, expenditure, commitments and delivery
- programme and project reporting, including case studies and reported outcomes
- information about funding agreements, administration and recipient capability
- interviews and insights from council staff and funding recipients.

The evaluation considers the evidence in its entirety to understand how the Fund has evolved, what has changed during 2025/26 and whether the new arrangements provide a credible basis for more strategic, transparent and accountable investment.

The evaluation distinguishes between:

- evidence that a new arrangement or requirement has been established
- evidence that funded activity has been delivered
- evidence that the activity has contributed to outcomes for Māori.

This distinction is important because completing an agreed improvement or audit action does not, by itself, demonstrate that the change is effective or has improved Māori outcomes.

Scope of evaluation

The evaluation covers changes made to the Māori Outcomes Fund during 2025/2026. It assesses:

- progress in responding to the Fund-related recommendations from He Waka Kōtuia 2024
- the strategic direction provided by the refreshed Funding Guidelines
- changes to governance, decision-making and accountability
- the approach to investment, funding administration and recipient support
- the information available about the delivery and outcomes of existing investments
- the arrangements for future monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

The evaluation considers the design and initial implementation of the refreshed Funding Guidelines. It does not assess their impact on investment decisions or Māori outcomes because the first external funding round opened in July 2026 and funding decisions under the new process had not been completed during the evaluation period.

As the changes to the Fund are recent, the evaluation is subject to the following limitations:

- many of the new governance, administrative and performance arrangements have only recently been introduced
- the first complete funding cycle under the refreshed Guidelines was not available for evaluation

- many funded initiatives are long term, and their full outcomes are not yet observable
- the quality and availability of financial, delivery and outcome information vary across funded initiatives
- some reported outcomes reflect contributions from other council budgets, delivery partners or external funders and cannot be attributed solely to the Māori Outcomes Fund.

These limitations mean the evaluation can assess whether Auckland Council has established stronger arrangements for the Fund, but it cannot yet determine whether those arrangements have resulted in better investment decisions or stronger Māori outcomes.

Future evaluations will use this baseline to assess how the refreshed approach operates in practice and the outcomes achieved through funded initiatives.

Māori Outcomes Fund Investment and Assurance in 2025/26

During 2025/26, Auckland Council continued to invest through the Māori Outcomes Fund while implementing improvements arising from the 2024 independent impact evaluation, He Waka Kōtuia 2024 and the Māori Outcomes Fund review⁴.

The Fund had a budget of \$17.4 million for the year. By 30 June 2026, \$13.2 million, or 76 per cent, had been spent. Eight funded initiatives were reported as on track and five were delayed, with funding carried forward to support existing commitments.

Investment continued across marae development, papakāinga and Māori housing, Māori business and procurement, cultural identity, environmental restoration and support for Māori communities during emergencies.

In May 2026, the Policy, Planning and Development Committee approved more than \$2.1 million for marae, papakāinga and Māori housing initiatives. This included up to \$1.56 million for 18 marae and \$554,218 for four papakāinga and Māori housing initiatives.

Why the He Waka Kōtuia 2024 recommendations matter

Houkura commissions He Waka Kōtuia as part of its independent statutory role to promote issues of significance to Māori in Tāmaki Makaurau and to help ensure Auckland Council acts in accordance with statutory provisions relating to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Together with He Whenua Makaurau Schedule of Issues of Significance, the audit provides independent scrutiny of the Auckland Council Group's performance and a continuing line of accountability to Māori. This independent assurance helps keep the council focused on its responsibilities to Māori and on giving effect to Te Tiriti through its decisions, investment and delivery.

The 2024 audit made eight recommendations relating to the Māori Outcomes Fund. These addressed the Fund's strategic direction, governance and oversight, recipient financial capability, funding agreements, administration, monitoring and reporting.

A recommendation is considered ready for closure when Auckland Council has completed the agreed actions and can provide evidence that the requirements have been met. Closure confirms implementation of the required response. It does not, by itself, demonstrate that the change is operating effectively or has improved Māori outcomes.

Seven of eight recommendations are considered ready for closure, subject to confirmation through the formal audit monitoring process. The actions completed include refreshed

⁴ Auckland Council, "Māori Outcomes Fund Review," report to the Policy and Planning Committee, 12 June 2025, CP2025/11009, <https://aucklandcouncil.resolve.red/portal/meeting/84/49245?type=2&docId=27984>

Funding Guidelines, stronger political and senior staff oversight, financial training for recipients, strengthened funding agreements and more consistent administration of external grants through SmartyGrants, an online platform used by Auckland Council to receive and manage grant applications and recipient reporting.

The remaining recommendation continues to be progressed. The effectiveness of the completed changes will need to be tested through future funding rounds and evaluation.

Findings

This evaluation makes four findings in response to the evaluation questions:

- To what extent has Auckland Council responded to the *He Waka Kōtuia 2024* recommendations relating to the Māori Outcomes Fund?
- How have the governance, strategic direction and accountability of the Fund been strengthened?
- Is the Fund better positioned to invest in initiatives that respond to shared priorities for Auckland Council, mana whenua and mātāwaka?
- How effectively does Auckland Council monitor, evaluate and report on the performance and impact of the Fund?

Finding 1: Auckland Council has substantially completed the improvements required by He Waka Kōtuia 2024

Auckland Council made substantial progress during 2025/26 in responding to the seven He Waka Kōtuia 2024 recommendations relating to the Māori Outcomes Fund. Seven recommendations are considered ready for closure, subject to confirmation through the formal audit monitoring process.

The work completed includes approving the refreshed Funding Guidelines, strengthening political and senior staff oversight, providing financial capability training to funding recipients, improving external funding agreements and reporting requirements, and administering external grants consistently through SmartyGrants.

This represents meaningful progress. The audit prompted Auckland Council to address weaknesses in how the Fund was directed, governed and administered and to put more consistent arrangements in place.

Closure confirms that the agreed response to a recommendation has been implemented. It does not, by itself, demonstrate that the change is operating effectively or has improved Māori outcomes. The remaining recommendation should be completed, and future evaluation should test the effectiveness of all seven responses in practice.

Finding 2: The Fund has a clearer strategic purpose and provides greater opportunity for Māori-led investment

The refreshed Funding Guidelines provide clearer direction about the purpose of the Fund, its investment priorities and how proposals should be assessed. They connect investment more directly with Tāmaki Ora and the priorities and aspirations of mana whenua and mātāwaka.

The revised approach also changes who can bring proposals forward. Previously, much of the Fund supported initiatives generated or delivered within the council group, while direct external access was largely limited to the Cultural Initiatives Fund. Mana whenua, mātāwaka and eligible Māori organisations can now propose initiatives directly through the refreshed external funding process. Internal applications have been limited to an annual allocation of \$1.2 million.

This is an important shift towards greater Māori leadership of funded activity. The emphasis on partnership and co-investment should also help attract contributions from other funders and increase the value generated from Auckland Council's investment.

The first external funding round under the refreshed Guidelines opened in July 2026. As decisions had not been completed during the evaluation period, it is too early to determine whether the new approach has changed the distribution, quality or outcomes of investment.

Future evaluation should examine who applies, which priorities receive funding, the reasons for approvals and declines, the balance of investment across mana whenua and mātāwaka priorities, and the extent to which council funding attracts wider investment.

Finding 3: Existing investments demonstrate significant benefits for Māori and the wider Auckland community

The Māori Outcomes Fund has supported initiatives across marae development, papakāinga and Māori housing, Māori business and procurement, cultural identity, environmental restoration, organisational capability and emergency response.

Evidence from the 2024 independent impact evaluation, project reporting and case studies demonstrates benefits from individual investments. Examples include:

- marae infrastructure and capability investment that has strengthened marae as centres of identity, connection and community resilience
- support for papakāinga and Māori housing proposals to progress through feasibility, planning and consenting
- Te Kete Rukuruku, which has increased the visibility of te reo Māori, Māori place names and mana whenua narratives
- Amotai, which has supported Māori and Pasifika businesses to participate in council and wider procurement opportunities
- environmental initiatives that support kaitiakitanga and Māori-led restoration
- emergency grants and other support that enabled Māori organisations to respond to whānau needs during emergencies.

Several initiatives have also attracted investment from other organisations or generated benefits beyond the original council contribution. This demonstrates the Fund's potential to

enable partnerships and support outcomes for both Māori and the wider Auckland community.

The evidence is strongest at the level of individual initiatives. Projects differ in purpose, scale, maturity and reporting quality, and some outcomes reflect the combined contribution of council budgets, Māori organisations and other funding partners. The Fund should therefore be understood as contributing to these outcomes rather than being solely responsible for them.

Finding 4: Monitoring and reporting have improved, but the collective impact of the Fund is not yet clear

Auckland Council has strengthened the foundations for monitoring and reporting. External funding agreements now contain clearer reporting requirements, SmartyGrants provides a more consistent administrative system, and the Tāmaki Ora Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework provides a common basis for connecting investments with intended Māori outcomes.

These changes should improve the quality and consistency of information available in future. However, the Fund does not yet have a complete portfolio-level account that brings together:

- annual budgets, expenditure, commitments and carry-forwards
- recipients and initiatives funded
- alignment with Tāmaki Ora and Māori priorities
- delivery status, outputs and intended outcomes
- co-investment and contributions from other partners
- evidence of outcomes and feedback from mana whenua, mātāwaka and funding recipients.

Current reporting enables Auckland Council to describe the benefits of significant individual investments, but not to assess reliably the Fund's collective impact or compare performance across different types of investment.

The next stage of maturity is to manage and report the Fund as an investment portfolio. This does not require every initiative to use identical measures. It requires a small and consistent set of information across the Fund, supported by measures that reflect the purpose, scale and maturity of individual investments.

Lessons learned

This section responds to the final evaluation question: what lessons should inform the next phase of the Māori Outcomes Fund?

Lesson 1: Clear priorities support more deliberate investment choices

A fund that can support a wide range of activities risks becoming dispersed unless its purpose and priorities are clear. The refreshed Funding Guidelines provide a basis for assessing competing proposals, making trade-offs and directing investment towards the outcomes that matter most to mana whenua, mātāwaka and Auckland Council.

The priorities will need to be reviewed periodically as Māori aspirations, council priorities and the wider funding environment change. Decision reports should clearly explain how recommended investments align with those priorities.

Lesson 2: Opening the Fund does not, by itself, create equitable access

Providing a direct application pathway is an important change, but mana whenua, mātāwaka and Māori organisations have different levels of capacity and experience with council funding processes.

The success of the refreshed approach will depend on clear guidance, proportionate information requirements, timely communication and appropriate support for applicants. Auckland Council should monitor who applies, who does not apply, the reasons proposals are declined or withdrawn and applicants' experience of the process.

Lesson 3: Stronger oversight must be matched by clear and timely processes

Political and senior staff oversight strengthens transparency and accountability for a significant public investment. However, additional governance steps can also increase the time and administrative effort required to make decisions.

Clear responsibilities, assessment criteria, decision timeframes and conflict-management arrangements will be important. Governance should provide appropriate assurance without creating unnecessary barriers or delays for applicants and recipients.

Lesson 4: Long-term investment requires proportionate, multiyear monitoring

Many Māori outcomes initiatives take several years to progress from planning to delivery and to produce observable outcomes. Annual activity reporting alone cannot provide a complete account of their value.

Funding agreements should include realistic milestones and outcome measures suited to the scale, maturity and risk of each investment. Reporting requirements should be strong enough to support accountability and learning but should not impose a burden that is disproportionate to the funding provided.

Lesson 5: The Fund needs to be managed and reported as an investment portfolio

Project-level reporting explains what individual initiatives have delivered, but it does not show the overall pattern or impact of investment.

Auckland Council needs a consistent portfolio-level view of:

- where funding is directed
- which priorities and communities it supports
- whether delivery is progressing as expected
- what co-investment has been attracted
- what the combined evidence shows about outcomes.

This portfolio view will support stronger governance, more informed investment choices and a clearer account to elected members, Houkura, mana whenua and mātāwaka of what the Fund is achieving.

Overall conclusion

Auckland Council made substantial progress in strengthening the Māori Outcomes Fund during 2025/26. The Fund now has clearer strategic direction, stronger political and senior staff oversight, improved funding administration and a more direct pathway for proposals led by mana whenua and mātāwaka.

Existing investments demonstrate significant benefits for Māori and the wider Auckland community. However, the quality and consistency of evidence vary, and Auckland Council cannot yet provide a complete portfolio-level account of the Fund's collective contribution.

The refreshed arrangements provide a stronger foundation for managing the \$171 million investment included in the Long-term Plan 2024–2034. The next phase should focus on completing the remaining He Waka Kōtuia 2024 recommendation, embedding the new funding arrangements and testing whether they result in transparent investment decisions, greater Māori leadership and stronger outcomes over time.

Appendix A: Māori Outcomes Fund investment and outcomes

This appendix brings together the available evidence about Māori Outcomes Fund investment, delivery and outcomes. It includes financial information, selected outputs and findings from the 2024 independent impact evaluation.

The quality and completeness of the evidence vary across initiatives and reporting periods. Several outcomes also reflect contributions from other council budgets, Māori organisations and external partners. They should therefore be understood as outcomes to which Māori Outcomes Fund investment contributed, rather than outcomes attributable solely to the Fund.

A1. Investment over time

The Māori Outcomes Fund was allocated \$150 million through the Long-term Plans 2018–2028 and 2021–2031. The Long-term Plan 2024–2034 increased the investment to \$171 million over ten years.

Figure A1 shows the annual budget and actual expenditure of the Fund since 2018, including the percentage of the available budget spent each year.

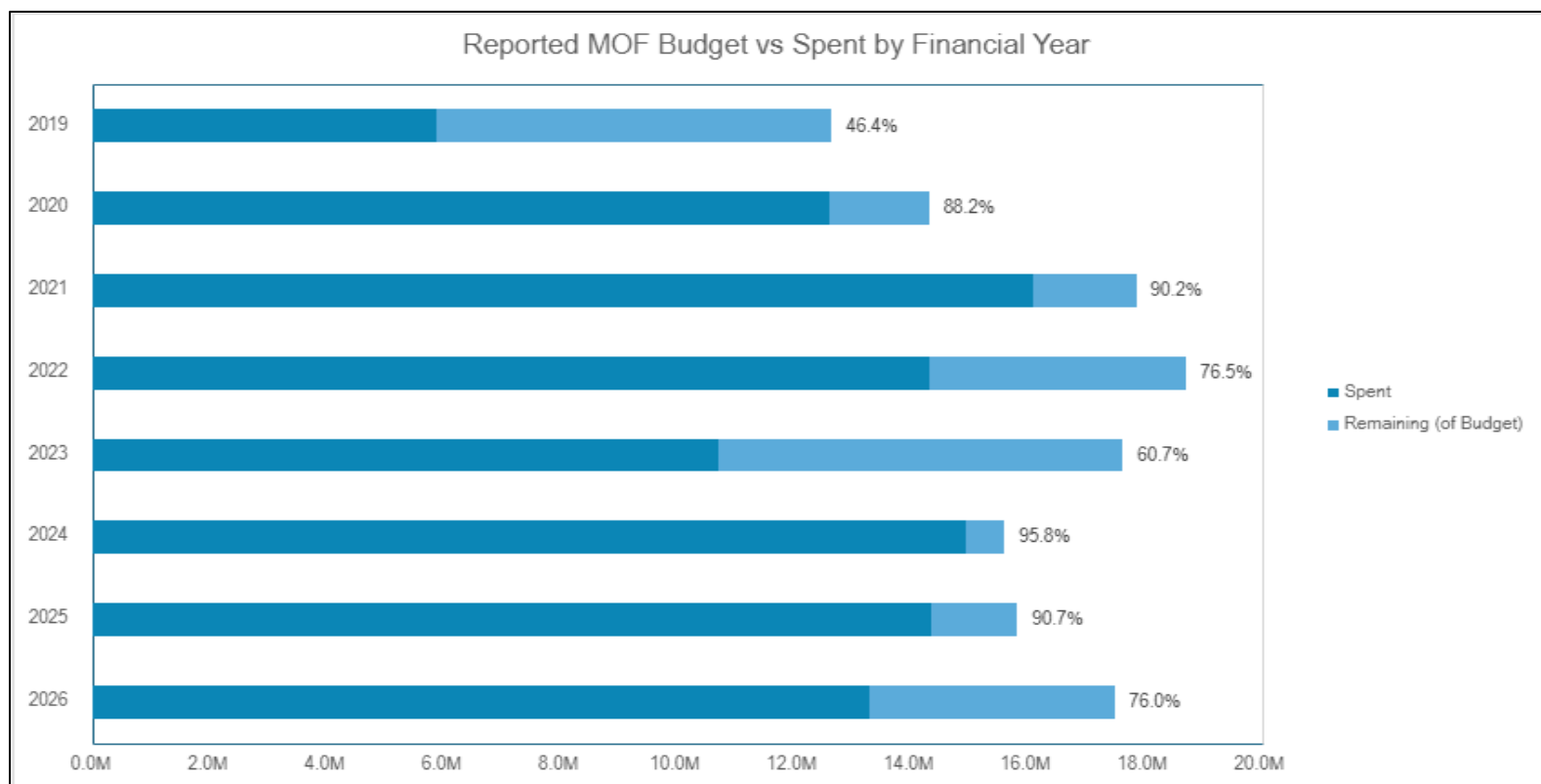


Figure A1: Māori Outcomes Fund annual budget and actual expenditure since 2018

During 2025/26, the Fund had a budget of \$17.4 million. By 30 June 2026, \$13.2 million, or 76 per cent, had been spent. Eight funded initiatives were reported as on track and five were delayed, with funding carried forward to support existing commitments.

Variations between budget and actual expenditure can reflect the multiyear nature of major initiatives, changes to project scope or timing and dependencies such as planning, consenting, governance and co-investment arrangements.

A2. Investment by Tāmaki Ora outcome

Based on the available Māori Outcomes Fund records, 241 projects have been mapped to the seven Tāmaki Ora outcomes and three Tūāpapa. Together, these projects represent approximately \$101.9 million of recorded investment.

Tāmaki Ora outcome or Tūāpapa	Unique projects	Recorded investment
Tuakiri Ora (cultural identity wellbeing)	65	\$22.9 million
Te Hapori Ora (whānau and community wellbeing)	35	\$3.2 million
Iwi Ora (iwi wellbeing)	28	\$15.0 million
Marae Ora (marae vitality)	26	\$37.6 million
Te Taiao Ora (environmental wellbeing)	26	\$8.5 million
Tūāpapa Hāngai (strengthening capability)	22	\$3.7 million
Whai Rawa Ora (economic wellbeing)	16	\$8.2 million
Tūāpapa Haumarū (enabling Māori outcomes)	11	\$1.2 million
Huatau Ora (future wellbeing)	8	\$1.4 million

Tūāpapa Hononga (foundational partnerships)	4	\$0.2 million
Total	241	\$101.9 million

Figure A2: Recorded Māori Outcomes Fund projects and investment by Tāmaki Ora outcome and Tūāpapa

The number of projects does not necessarily correspond with the value of investment. Tuakiri Ora has the largest number of projects, with 65, while Marae Ora accounts for the largest value of recorded investment, at \$37.6 million. Together, Marae Ora and Tuakiri Ora account for \$60.5 million, or approximately 59 per cent, of the recorded investment.

This shows that a substantial proportion of Fund investment has been directed towards initiatives principally aligned with marae vitality, Māori cultural identity and the visibility of te ao Māori across Tāmaki Makaurau.

Project numbers should therefore be considered alongside the value, duration and nature of each investment. Neither the number of projects nor the amount invested should be interpreted on its own as a measure of impact.

The classifications provide an indicative view of how the Fund aligns with Tāmaki Ora. Many initiatives contribute to more than one outcome or Tūāpapa. To avoid double counting, each project has been assigned to its principal outcome. The classifications may be refined as the underlying data is reviewed.

A3. Marae infrastructure and vitality

The Māori Outcomes Fund has supported marae through both the Cultural Initiatives Fund and the Marae Infrastructure Programme.

Cultural Initiatives Fund

Available records indicate that **36 unique marae and marae developments have received support through the Cultural Initiatives Fund**. Of these:

- 27, or 75 per cent, received support through multiple funding rounds
- nine received support once.

Historical information before 2021 was difficult to verify. These figures represent Auckland Council's best assessment based on the records available.

The reconciliation:

- excludes funding for Te Tumu Paeroa and Ngā Maunga Whakahii o Kaipara because it related to papakāinga rather than marae development
- excludes Te Tahawai from the headline count because of its institutional marae status
- counts Uruamo and He Oranga Wairua as one marae development
- includes new marae developments such as Te Atatū and Ngāti Manuhiri/Te Whare o Tenetahi
- retains funding originally provided through the Cultural Initiatives Fund and subsequently managed through the Marae Infrastructure Programme without counting the transfer as another funding action.

Marae Infrastructure Programme

The Marae Infrastructure Programme includes 32 marae infrastructure projects:

- 20 have been completed
- six are in progress
- six are yet to begin.

Please note - the Cultural Initiatives Fund and Marae Infrastructure Programme figures should not be added together to calculate the total number of marae supported. Some marae have received support through both programmes.

2025/26 allocations

In May 2026, the Policy, Planning and Development Committee approved up to \$1.56 million for 18 marae. The funding supports marae infrastructure and capability and recognises the role of marae as centres of identity, connection, resilience and community wellbeing.

A4. Papakāinga and Māori housing

Since 2022, ten papakāinga and Māori housing initiatives have received funding towards feasibility, planning or consenting.

This early-stage support helps proposals establish feasibility, address technical and regulatory barriers and progress towards delivery or wider investment. The number of initiatives supported should not be presented as the number of houses delivered.

In May 2026, the Policy, Planning and Development Committee approved \$554,218 for four papakāinga and Māori housing initiatives to progress during 2026/27.

A5. Emergency response

The Māori Outcomes Fund has enabled Māori organisations to respond directly to whānau needs during significant emergencies.

Manaaki COVID-19 response

During the August 2021 COVID-19 lockdown, 30 mana whenua, mātāwaka and marae applicants received Manaaki grants totalling **\$297,570**. The grants enabled recipients to activate hauora initiatives in response to the lockdown.⁵

Manaaki flood and cyclone response

Following the 2023 floods and Cyclone Gabrielle, 15 Māori-led responders received Manaaki grants totalling **\$266,444**.

Recipients included mana whenua entities, marae and Māori community providers. The funding supported the provision of kai parcels, clean and dry bedding, hygiene products and other immediate assistance for whānau Māori.⁶

⁵ Auckland Council, *Māori Outcomes Annual Report 2021/22*.

⁶ Auckland Council, *Māori Outcomes Annual Report 2022/23*.

A6. Culture and identity Te

Kete Rukuruku

Te Kete Rukuruku supports the restoration and visibility of Māori place names and mana whenua narratives across Tāmaki Makaurau.

Between 2019 and 2023, while Te Kete Rukuruku received Māori Outcomes Fund investment, the programme recorded **467 naming and storytelling outputs**. This included seven library naming outputs. Excluding libraries, 460 names and stories were recorded.

No outputs were recorded for 2019 and 2020 because the programme was being established during that period.

These outputs contribute to the visibility of te reo Māori, mana whenua histories and mātauranga Māori in Auckland's public places and facilities.

Te Matatini Herenga Waka Herenga Tangata

Auckland Council Group reported investing \$1.3 million in Te Matatini Herenga Waka Herenga Tangata 2023. Internal Māori Outcomes Fund data records \$1.319 million against the Te Matatini budget for the relevant period:

- \$177,853 in 2021/22
- \$1.141 million in 2022/23.

This indicates that the reported \$1.3 million Auckland Council Group investment in the 2023 festival came from the Māori Outcomes Fund.

The Fund's financial records also include approximately \$425,000 of earlier Te Matatini-related expenditure. Total Te Matatini expenditure recorded through the Fund between 2018/19 and 2022/23 was therefore approximately **\$1.74 million**. The earlier expenditure relates to previous Te Matatini budget lines and is separate from the \$1.3 million associated with the 2023 festival.

The independent evaluation of the 2023 festival estimated that Te Matatini made a direct economic contribution of approximately **\$22 million** to Tāmaki Makaurau.⁷ The event also generated significant cultural and social benefits through the celebration and visibility of te reo Māori, kapa haka and Māori identity.

The \$22 million estimate reflects the effect of the event as a whole. It should be understood as an outcome to which the Māori Outcomes Fund contributed, rather than an economic return produced solely by the Fund.

⁷ Angus & Associates Limited, *Te Matatini Herenga Waka Herenga Tangata 2023 Evaluation Report* (2023). See also Auckland Council, “Auckland Council reaffirms its commitment to Māori cultural wellbeing,” *OurAuckland*, 2023, <https://ourauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/news/2023/10/auckland-council-reaffirms-its-commitment-to-maori-cultural-wellbeing/>

A7. Findings from the 2024 impact evaluation

The 2024 independent impact evaluation examined six initiatives supported by the Māori Outcomes Fund. It used the Tāmaki Herenga Waka scale to assess the significance and reach of the outcomes achieved, the Fund’s contribution to those outcomes and recipients’ satisfaction with its support.

The Tāmaki Herenga Waka scale is a five-level kaupapa Māori evaluation scale developed by Awa Associates specifically for the evaluation. It uses the metaphor of waka finding prosperity and a place within Tāmaki Makaurau. The scale progresses from **He Waka Hourua**, where potential outcomes are beginning to emerge, to **Tāmaki Herenga Waka**, where profound or transformational outcomes are being achieved for many waka.

The 2024 evaluation assessed the Māori Outcomes Fund overall as sitting between **Papa Pounamu**, where benefits are broad and reach most waka, and **Tāmaki Herenga Waka**, the highest level of the scale.⁸

Initiative	2024 assessment	Principal contribution	Fund investment recorded
Amotai	Tāmaki Herenga Waka	Growth in Māori and Pasifika business procurement, supplier capability and influence on procurement policy and practice	\$4,935,411
Te Wharekura	Tāmaki Herenga Waka	Digital storytelling, mana whenua visibility and environmental education	\$1,105,480
Te Kete Rukuruku	Near transformational	Visibility of te reo Māori, Māori place names, mana whenua narratives and mātauranga Māori	\$3.2 million

⁸ Awa Associates, *Māori Outcomes Fund Impact Evaluation Report*, prepared for Auckland Council, March 2024.

Initiative	2024 assessment	Principal contribution	Fund investment recorded
Cultural Initiatives Fund	Near transformational	Marae development and resilience, papakāinga support and organisational capability	Not separately confirmed
Marae Infrastructure Programme	Papa Pounamu	Marae infrastructure renewal, organisational capability and community services	Not separately confirmed
Te Whakaoranga o te Puhinui	Emerging	Environmental restoration, community involvement and regeneration of te reo Māori and maramataka	\$672,524

The ratings reflect the evidence and perspectives gathered during the 2024 evaluation. They represent each initiative's position at that time and should not be interpreted as an assessment of current performance.

The investment figures are not directly comparable because the initiatives have different start dates, delivery periods, purposes and funding arrangements.

A8. Amotai and wider economic contribution

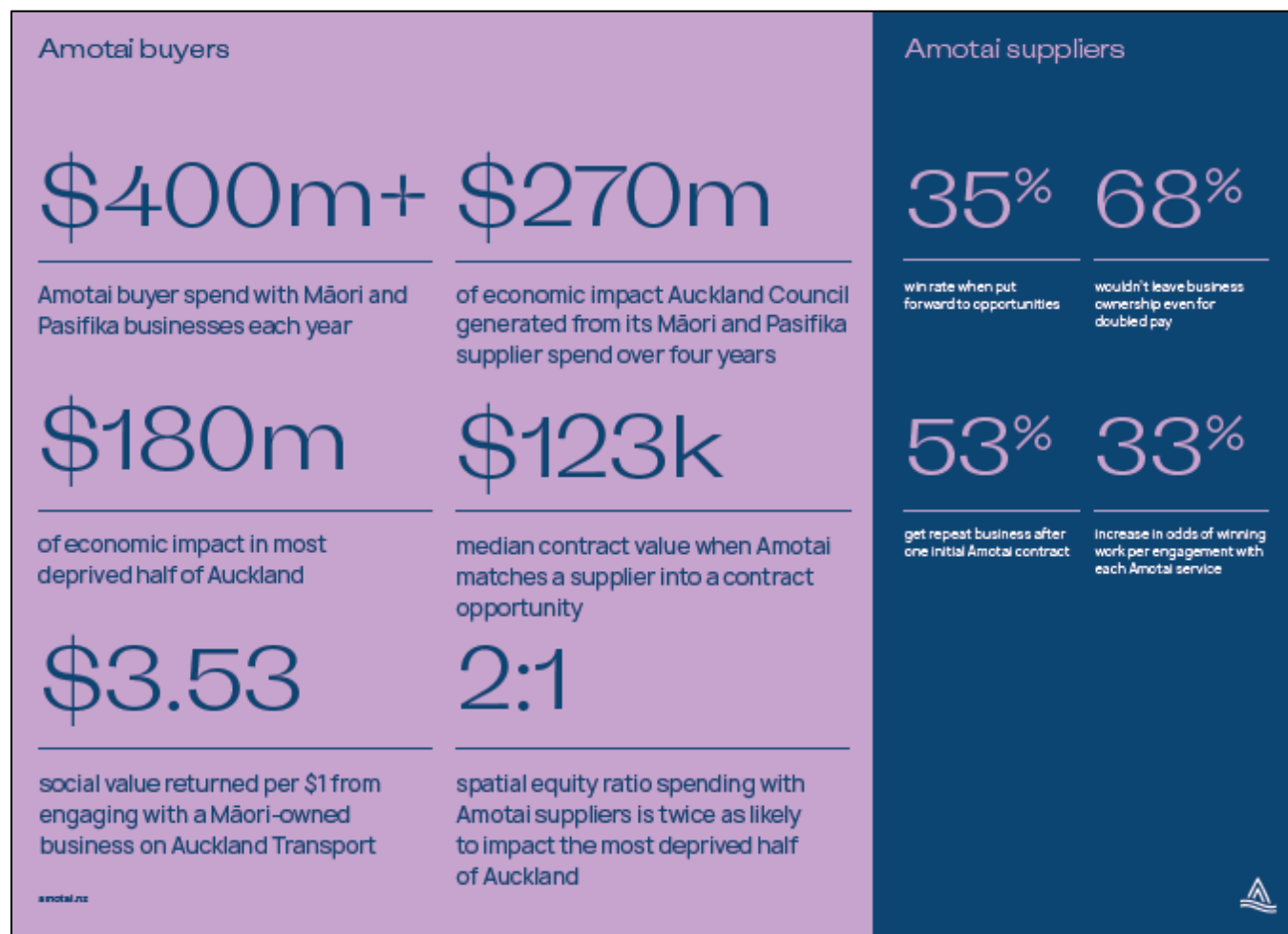
Amotai provides an example of how Māori Outcomes Fund investment can contribute to wider economic outcomes through supplier diversity.

Reported results include:

- Amotai member buyers spent at least **\$437 million** with Māori and Pasifika suppliers in 2024 and **\$400 million** in 2025.
- Auckland Council's spending with Māori and Pasifika suppliers generated an estimated **\$270 million in local economic activity** between 2021 and 2025.
- An estimated **\$180 million** of that activity occurred in the most deprived half of Auckland's neighbourhoods.
- Diverse supplier expenditure was twice as likely to generate economic activity in the poorer half of the city.
- Each engagement with Amotai services was associated with **33 per cent higher odds of a supplier winning work**, regardless of supplier size or previous experience of government contracting.

These results indicate that supplier diversity is operating at a material scale and that structured engagement and support can improve suppliers' access to procurement opportunities.

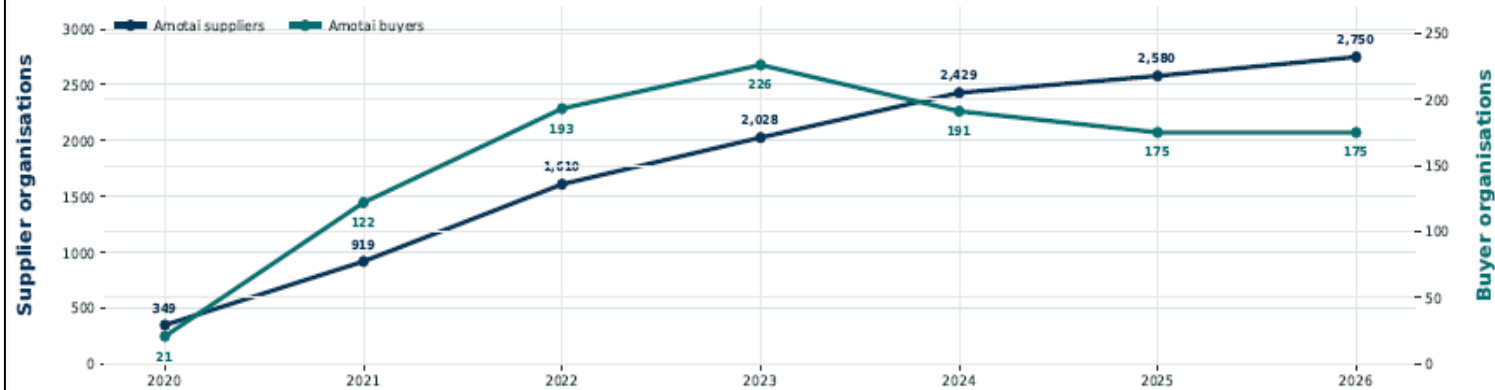
The measures describe Amotai's wider operation and Auckland Council's procurement activity. They are evidence of outcomes to which Māori Outcomes Fund investment contributed and should not be attributed solely to the Fund.



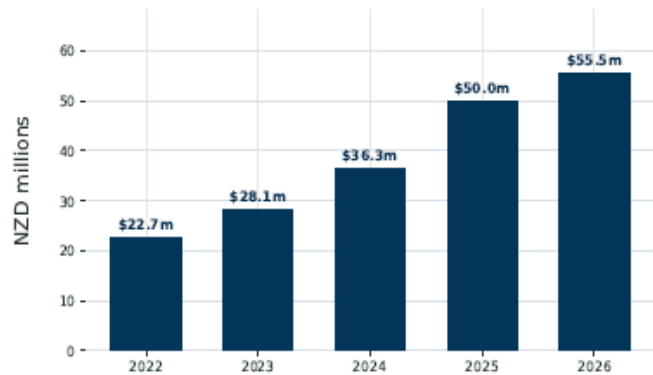
Amotai movement: network growth and Auckland Council Māori supplier spend

Supplier and buyer network data: 2020–2026 | Auckland Council spend and spend share: 2022–2026

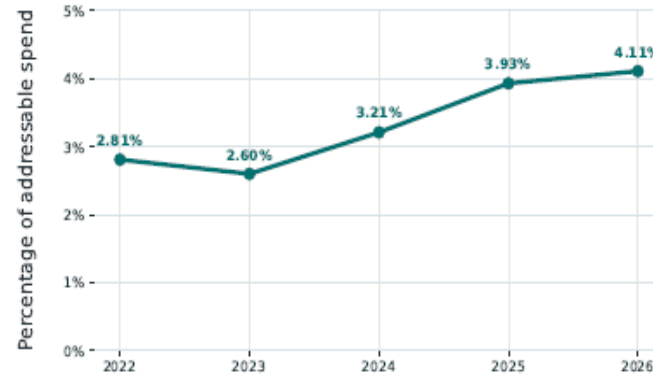
Amotai network growth



Auckland Council spend with Māori suppliers (identified and verified)



Auckland Council spend with Māori suppliers (identified and verified)



A9. Interpreting the evidence

The available evidence demonstrates significant outputs and benefits from individual investments. It does not yet provide a complete or directly comparable account of the Fund's collective impact.

Key limitations include:

- different financial and reporting periods across initiatives
- incomplete historical data for some programmes
- changes in how projects and investments have been classified
- variation in the quality and maturity of outcome reporting
- limited baseline information against which to assess change
- outcomes produced through several funders, council budgets or delivery partners
- difficulty separating the Fund's contribution from wider Auckland Council investment.

These limitations do not diminish the value of the outcomes already achieved. They explain why the evaluation can identify significant examples of impact but cannot yet combine them into a single portfolio-wide measure.