

Projects and Initiatives Guidance

Purpose of the guidance

This guidance is for attendance service providers who are considering running a project or initiative aimed at improving attendance. It outlines expectations, what must be included in reporting, and where to go for help. You are encouraged to be creative, flexible and innovative, while also making sure work is purposeful, well-documented, and contributes to your attendance service provider contract outcome measures.

Is your initiative a good fit?

We encourage providers to be flexible and innovative. You can test and trial new practices (in relation to case management). You can see what works, what does not work so well, and can share your ideas and experiences. You could innovate in case management, administration or new approaches for example.

You know your communities best, so bring your ideas forward. Whether it is a group activity, a school-based role, or something new that builds connection and engagement, your initiative should align with the purpose of the attendance service.

Work with your Ministry regional team before you commit. They may be able to offer advice on alternative or already existing similar initiatives that you may be able to access rather than establishing your own.

Before you begin, check:

- Does it fit within your role as an attendance service provider.
- Does it reflect an understanding of local barriers to attendance, and aim to reduce or remove them?
- Is it culturally affirming and inclusive?
- Is it something you can reasonably resource?
- Does it complement, rather than duplicate, existing school or other local services?
- Is there a plan to track and report on attendance-related outcomes?

Examples of appropriate initiatives might include:

- Supporting transitions between schools to reduce disruption to attendance.
- Embedding a kaumatua in a school for a time, to support re-engagement and cultural connection.
- Running a whānau engagement programme that addresses specific attendance barriers.
- Starting a kapa haka or sports group with a clear plan to support improved attendance.

- Partnering with local services to address barriers like housing, health, or transport that impact attendance.

Initiatives that may not be appropriate include:

- Duplicating or competing with existing projects, for example a mentoring programme in a school, when there is already in-school mentoring.
- Activities unrelated to attendance barriers.
- One-off events with no plan, no follow-up, or no clear link to attendance outcomes.
- Projects that could unintentionally exclude or stigmatise ākonga.
- General wellbeing programmes with no clear, measurable link to improving attendance.

Capturing and measuring impact

You are expected keep records about your initiative, and to include a summary in your regular reporting to the Ministry of Education. You will initially need to keep these records within your own systems, but they will be included in a later version of the case management system. We will update this section once that functionality has been implemented.

You should record what you did; how many people were involved (children or adults); details of any specific ākonga (students) who took part and whether any of these have been referred to you and are receiving case management support; what changed because of the initiative; what you learned; and any expenditure or budget allocation. Keeping track of your activities and outcomes along the way will make this easier.

When you start a new initiative, it is important to capture enough information to be able to show whether it is making a difference. We expect that initiatives will be ceased if you cannot demonstrate they are having a positive impact on attendance.

Before you begin:

- Be specific. Define the purpose clearly. Is it designed to address specific attendance barriers? Who will your initiative help?
- Make your initiative meaningful. Why is it worthwhile? What are the benefits of achieving it? How will it help? What change do you expect to see?
- Figure out how you will measure success. Set your goals. How will you know if your initiative worked? When and how will you evaluate this? For example, will you use surveys, interviews, data or stories?
- Acknowledge complexity and be transparent about limitations. Not all outcomes are immediate or easy to measure for example, change in attitudes towards attendance.
- Record current attendance or engagement, so you can measure any improvements over time.
- Time-bound – what is the timeframe?

As you go:

- Monitor progress regularly using consistent, culturally appropriate and respectful reporting methods.
- Document and keep a record – things like activities or engagements.
- Evaluate and measure impact using both data and stories.
- Consider sharing your idea with others.

Sustainability and follow-up

Ideally, attendance initiatives should aim to create lasting change. Think about how its impact can be sustained, built upon or repeated.

Ask:

- What happens when the initiative ends?
- Is there a plan for continuation or handover or is this a one-off?
- Can the learnings be built into ongoing practice?
- Are there opportunities to share or adapt the initiative elsewhere?

Appendix 1. Project or initiative planning

You can use this list to help you plan and develop your project.

- Name of project or initiative
- Brief description
- Objectives
- Start date
- End date
- Project plan - how will you do this
- Specific attendance barrier/s
- Alignment to contract outcome measures
- Who will this help - cohort or ākonga and/or whānau?
- NSNs (if applicable)
- Provider case manager responsible
- Schools involved
- Other interested groups
- Reporting - how will you measure success?
- Reporting - how often will you measure?