

Foundation North feedback to Ministry for Pacific Peoples

Delivering for Pacific communities

October 2025



1. Introduction

Foundation North was established in 1988 as one of twelve regional community trusts. Our purpose is to enhance lives through responsible guardianship of our investments and focused funding, anchored by our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The value of Foundation North's funds under management on 31 March 2025 was over \$1.79 billion, with almost \$1.3 billion returned since our inception in grants to not-for-profit initiatives in Tāmaki Makaurau and Te Tai Tokerau.

2. Our interest in this Consultation

Our strategic plan is our pathway to the achievement of our vision of enhanced lives. We are committed to increasing equity (Hāpai te ōritetanga); enhancing social inclusion (Whakauru mai); regenerating the environment (Whakahou taiao) and enabling community support (Hāpori awhina) across our rohe.

Within the focus area of increased equity (Hāpai te ōritetanga) Pacific peoples are a priority community for the Foundation's funding and other support.

Our rohe is home to the largest pan-Pacific community in the world, and in recent years we have been exploring how we can better serve our Pacific communities, by reviewing what they have told us over the last ten plus years and holding talanoa with Pacific leaders.

Our submission reflects recent feedback from our Pacific communities about what they feel will most make a difference for them.

3. Our feedback

3.1 Economic Growth

Pacific communities emphasise that genuine progress comes through long-term, collective wealth creation, where no one gets left

behind. The building blocks are access to quality housing and the ability to achieve home ownership, quality education, health care, well paid employment, collective asset development, and access to procurement and business development opportunities. Pacific community leaders have encouraged Foundation North to prioritise Pacific-led economic empowerment that values collaboration and prepares communities for digital and technology-driven futures. Pacific leadership is emerging in the digital technology sector, working to create new employment pathways and ensure Pacific peoples are active participants in a rapidly evolving economy.

Our experience supporting Pacific enterprises and community ventures has shown us that when Pacific-led organisations are resourced with capital, mentoring and governance support, they expand their reach, create quality employment, and reinvest profits into community wellbeing. We are learning that funding differently reduces systemic barriers for Pacific communities and contributes to economic progression. Supporting youth transitions, vocational training, mentoring, and intergenerational financial literacy has lifted incomes, reduced debt burdens, and enabled families to build savings and assets. Talanoa confirm that collective ownership models, entrepreneurship hubs, and business networks are strengthening both economic outcomes and social cohesion. Government partnership through long-term strategic investment and strengthened capacity building can ensure Pacific enterprises are positioned to scale and lead in high-growth industries.

3.2 Health

The stark health inequities experienced by Pacific peoples undermine community wellbeing. These include disproportionately high rates of diabetes, heart disease, obesity and mental distress, influenced by barriers

such as housing stress, financial hardship, and systemic racism in health systems, which limit access to culturally safe services and care. Despite these challenges, Pacific communities are leading holistic, family-centred solutions that strengthen wellbeing and resilience. Community voices emphasise that health is intergenerational and collective, with family wellbeing closely linked to education, housing, and income level and security. Health is directly related to income and poverty.

Pacific communities are already modelling village-style, wrap-around approaches that centre values of family, faith, reciprocity, and *vā* (relationships). Elevating this cultural and holistic perspective of health is most impactful when it is recognised and resourced. We believe that these communal models build resilience and enable families to plan for long-term wellbeing. Culturally anchored health frameworks create lasting change by improving health outcomes and strengthening social and economic participation. While MPP's health priority highlights access to essential services, access alone is not enough. Achieving lasting equity requires system reform, integrated services, breaking down funding silos, and embedding family-centred, intergenerational wellbeing at the heart of delivery. Prioritising the scaling of Pacific-led wraparound health models offers a viable pathway to equity.

3.3 Housing

The most pressing housing issue for Pacific peoples is long-term stability. While MPP rightly identifies the supply of affordable, fit-for-purpose homes as essential, Foundation North's (FN) engagement with Pacific communities shows that supply alone is not enough to deliver equitable outcomes. Stable housing is a strong platform for education, health, and employment, enabling families to support children's learning, maintain access to healthcare, and plan for the future. Pacific families, however, continue to face insecure

rentals, rising costs, low home ownership and housing models that do not reflect multigenerational realities.

Pacific communities highlight the strengths of multigenerational living, which sustains language, cultural identity, and collective wellbeing. FN's *talanoa* confirm that home ownership provides stability, strengthens communities, and enables families to deepen social cohesion and civic participation. Communities are clear that effective solutions require wrap-around support such as financial literacy, tenancy advocacy, and pathways to ownership, alongside culturally grounded housing models. Systemic barriers, including rigid eligibility rules, the exclusion of churches and grassroots collectives from accessing funding for housing initiatives, and short-term investment settings, continue to constrain progress. Sustained commitment to equitable social housing provision and supported pathways to home ownership are essential to deliver housing outcomes that reflect Pacific realities and secure intergenerational wellbeing.

3.4 Education

The most important education issue for Pacific peoples is embedding Pacific-centred learning and identity in education systems. Education is a strong driver of entrepreneurship and innovation, enabling Pacific peoples to shape future industries while safeguarding knowledge within their own communities. Our long-term experience funding Pacific-led education through our Māori and Pacific Education Initiative, demonstrates that when culture and opportunity are connected, Pacific *rangatahi* thrive. Initiatives in youth leadership, digital equity, and village-based learning show that Pacific-led educational programmes lift achievement and contribute to economic progress.

While MPP recognises the need to boost skills and invest in languages, cultures,

and identities, Foundation North's engagement shows that skills alone are not enough. Although qualification rates have improved, systemic barriers persist where Pacific learners are still disproportionately streamed into low-wage pathways and face discrimination and exclusion. Pacific-led approaches to education and Pacific learning approaches, such as storytelling, help strengthen cultural identity, ensuring that language, history, and values remain grounded in Pacific ways of knowing. Aligning education with identity, cultural pride, and innovation will transform outcomes and ensure Pacific learners thrive as future leaders. Be led by Pacific educational leaders, support Pacific-led schools, educational models and programmes, broaden bilingual and digital access, and embed Pacific identities as foundations for Pacific success.

3.5 Law and Order

The most important issue for Pacific peoples in law and order is prevention rather than punishment. MPP's focus on culturally responsive justice initiatives is welcome. Our engagement shows that justice outcomes cannot be improved through the justice system alone. Talanoa confirm that harm is driven by systemic factors such as poverty, housing uncertainty, unemployment, poor health, and disrupted education. By the time interventions reach courts or prisons, trust has already been eroded. Preventative measures are more effective and save significant investment down the track.

Pacific-led wraparound models that combine mentoring, cultural identity, and family support reduce risks for rangatahi, strengthen communal support, and re-engage young people in education and training. Cultural connection is a protective factor against harmful behaviours and long-term, relational investment delivers more effective outcomes than punitive responses. Communities also highlight that negative experiences with police and courts, alongside

stigma, discourage victims and offenders from seeking help. To improve outcomes, place a greater emphasis on prevention by amplifying Pacific-led, culturally grounded models, values, and commitment to long-term integrated investment. Shifting the focus from punishment to prevention is the most effective pathway to safer and more resilient communities.

4. Conclusion

Foundation North recognises that the Ministry for Pacific Peoples' five priority areas—economic growth, health, housing, education, and law and order—are deeply interconnected. Any focus on one area inevitably shapes outcomes across the others. Pacific communities have told us that meaningful change cannot be achieved in isolation. We note that economic empowerment and progression are inseparable from education, while housing and health outcomes are strengthened through collective, village-based approaches to wellbeing. For Pacific communities, safer and more equitable justice outcomes flow naturally when essential needs are met and families are supported to thrive.

Delivering for Pacific Communities will be most effective when it recognises Pacific peoples as active partners and leaders, not just beneficiaries. Pacific organisations and communities are already designing innovative, culturally anchored solutions that demonstrate measurable impact. Government can build on this by shifting from short-term, compliance-driven funding to flexible, long-term investment that strengthens Pacific capability and leadership. Embedding Pacific values of reciprocity, collective responsibility, and intergenerational wellbeing across all five priority areas will ensure policies are grounded in lived realities and create enduring change for Pacific peoples and Aotearoa as a whole.

P.O. Box 68-048
Victoria St West
Auckland 1142

info@foundationnorth.org.nz
www.foundationnorth.org.nz



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