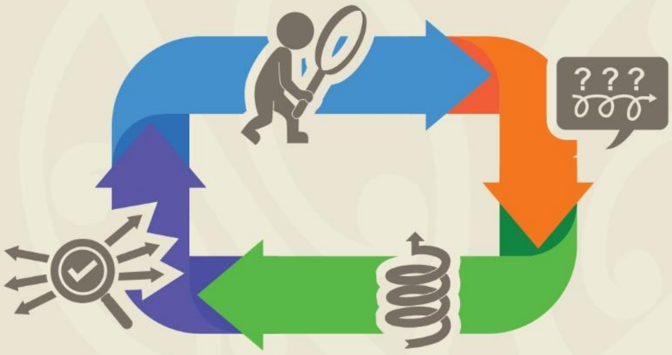
DESIGNING LOCAL CURRICULUM | GUIDE CAPTURE SHARE



Collaborative Inquiry

Guidance document

July 2019

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
TE TĀHUHU O TE MĀTAURANGA

Contents

About the Collaborative Inquiry Tool

You and your setting can enrich learning opportunities for ākonga by:

- taking a systematic inquiry approach to finding out what works, when, for whom and in what context;
- building and sharing knowledge about teaching practices that impact positively on ākonga learning; and
- using the knowledge gained from inquiry to review and refine the Community's strategic priorities.

The actual nature of the inquiries you undertake will depend on the context. It depends on your school, kura, Kāhui Ako, cluster, or early childhood centre (your setting).

However, all inquiries will be designed to address identified ākonga learning needs and provide insights that help the Community address its strategic priorities, particularly those around its achievement challenges. Information aggregated from Community inquiries can help leaders notice and respond to variations in teacher practice and ākonga outcomes, including both the 'hard spots' and the pockets of excellence.

Log into and use the curriculum tools at this site:

https://curriculumtool.education.govt.nz/

Wānanga

This tool is designed to help you to be strategic in the inquiries you support across your setting. It provides guidance about ways to design, implement, monitor, report and share the findings of your collaborative inquiries. The tool describes tasks for both leadership teams and inquiry teams. Inquiry works best when everyone understands their responsibilities and how they complement each other.

You can use the tool to capture and share the thinking and decisions made at each phase of the inquiry process. The tool has four elements:

- establishing an inquiry strategy
- developing a collaborative inquiry proposal
- taking action: implementing the inquiry and monitoring progress
- summary and review: identifying and sharing the learning.

You might choose to use all four elements, especially if your Community is embarking on its first collaborative inquiry. If your Community already has inquiries underway, you might want to start by using the 'reporting on progress' facility to oversee your current inquiries, adopting other parts of the tool as the need arises.

Establishing an inquiry strategy

This is the responsibility of the leadership team.
Leadership action: Invite inquiry proposals

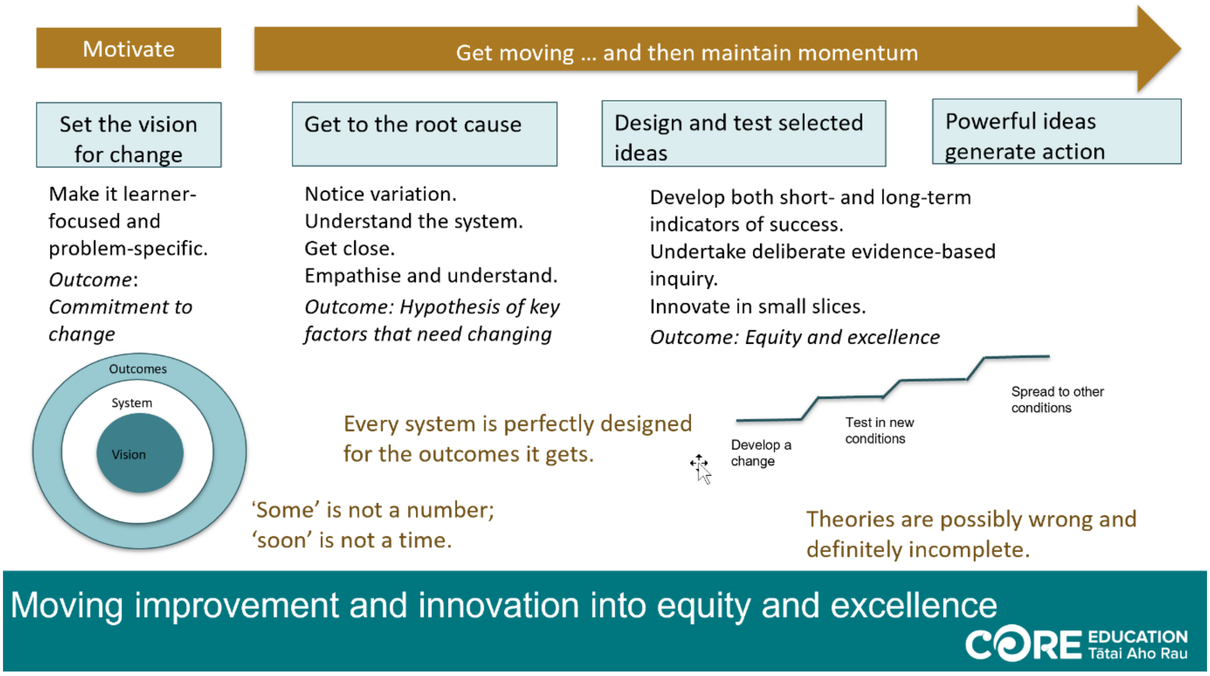
Establishing an inquiry strategy enables you to make good decisions about the collaborative inquiries you want to support across your setting. It involves the leadership team working with partners, teachers and other key people to reach agreement on:

- the purpose of the Community's collaborative inquiries; and
- how the Community anticipates the inquiries will support its goals and strategic priorities.

The suggestions below are intended to help you reach this agreement.

1. Design an inquiry strategy

The diagram below is intended to help your leadership team decide how you will use collaborative inquiries to generate improvement and support innovation across the setting.



Moving improvement and innovation into equity and excellence.

An effective inquiry strategy will include a plan for how the Community will learn from these inquiries. For example, will you expect inquiry teams to develop tools and resources that others can use? This might be something you discuss with the inquiry team once you approve an inquiry. Alternatively, you might leave it until the final stages of the inquiry when the team is considering the findings, what has been learnt and how best to share the learning with others.

2. Identify your priority areas for inquiry

The process of identifying priority areas of inquiry for your setting:

- ensures that your Community's inquiries are embedded within your overall strategy and address your agreed priorities
- guides prospective inquiry teams to where their work is most likely to impact positively on the intended outcomes, both for the team and across your whole Community
- creates a sense of collective ownership that enables learning from each inquiry to contribute to knowledge-building for the inquiry team and across your Community.

Inquiry strategy checklist

This checklist sets out the actions required in taking a strategic approach to collaborative inquiries across your setting.

Agree on the priority areas for collaborative inquiry within your Community.	
Complete an *Establish an inquiry area* template in the tool for each priority area.	
Communicate your priority areas for collaborative inquiry to the whole Community.	
Plan how your learning from inquiry will be shared and communicate your expectations to your Community.	
Invite teachers to develop and submit collaborative inquiry proposals that address one or more of your Community's priority areas for inquiry.	

Developing a collaborative inquiry proposal

This is the responsibility of the inquiry team – a group of teachers within or across settings.

Inquiry team actions: submit a proposal and agree ways of working.

Phase 1: Scoping

During the scoping phase, your inquiry team will decide on a specific inquiry focus. That focus must sit within your Community's priority area/s for inquiries. For example, a Community priority may be mathematics achievement for ākonga in years 6 and 8. The inquiry team might decide to explore the design of a rich learning opportunity that has the potential to improve outcomes in mathematics for ākonga in year 7. The team might plan for all teachers to do similar things with their ākonga or it might decide on a series of small-scale inquiries, with each teacher trying something slightly different. Whatever the approach, the purpose of the inquiry would be to grow the Community's collective knowledge about what works, when and with whom when the focus is year 7 mathematics.

The scoping process would be led by your inquiry team leader, working with an inquiry team. Initially, this team is likely to be quite small. It will include at least two others from within your Community. Ideally, it will also include an expert partner with knowledge of inquiry.

In this initial phase, the inquiry team would:

- choose an inquiry approach;
- think about planning and implementation;
- decide on the expertise required to complete the inquiry.

Choosing an inquiry approach

There are many *Models of inquiry*. Each was designed for a specific purpose and has evolved to meet local needs. No one model is better than another; your selection depends on what you think is best for your purpose. You can adapt any of the models to suit your requirements.

All models of inquiry have four or five phases, such as the following:

Phase 1	Scoping: scanning, focusing, developing a hunch and at least one inquiry question, assembling the full inquiry team
Phase 2	Developing an action plan and agreeing on ways of working
Phase 3	Taking action: implementation and monitoring progress
Phase 4	Summary and review: identifying and sharing the learning, and identifying your next actions to meet ākonga needs.

The phases of inquiry are not always linear and can overlap. At times, it's necessary to loop back to an earlier phase.

Spirals of inquiry is an online resource that provides helpful guidance about inquiry design and implementation. It gives links to papers that could be shared with the inquiry team.

Thinking about planning and implementation

The experiences of teachers involved in Teacher-led Innovation Fund inquiry projects have taught us a great deal about collaborative teacher-led inquiry. These lessons are applicable to teams leading inquiries within all settings. They are captured in Lessons learned in the 2015/2016 TLIF Funding Round and the summary of Implementing an effective teacher-led inquiry.

Deciding on the individual and collective expertise you need in the inquiry team

Once you are clear about your inquiry focus, it's time to consider the individual and collective expertise you will need to undertake the work. Some questions to consider include:

- Looking within your setting, whose expertise can help you with this work?
- How could your expert partner assist with the inquiry? The report Implementing an effective teacher-led inquiry provides examples of how an external expert can contribute to the success of an inquiry.
- Given your focus, would it help to include an external expert and/or a discipline specialist within the team?

Scoping phase checklist

This checklist sets out actions for the inquiry team as you complete the scoping phase of the proposal development.

Decide how you will approach the inquiry. It helps to seek advice from your Community's expert partner or another person with experience in collaborative teacher-led inquiry.	
Discuss the scope of the inquiry and possible options for investigation.	
Consider meeting with the leadership team to get a full understanding of the rationale for its selection of priority inquiry areas.	
Collect relevant data and evidence from across your Community, including from learners themselves.	
Select a focus for inquiry that sits within the Community's priority inquiry areas and that your data and evidence tell you is important for your Community.	
Identify research that informs the rationale for the inquiry.	
Decide your inquiry question/s.	
Decide on the length of the inquiry and resources required.	
Identify the range of expertise that you will need in the full inquiry team.	
Complete Phase 1 of the *Develop an inquiry* template in the tool.	

Phase 2A: Developing an action plan

Your action plan will describe how you intend to address your inquiry question/s and how the team will work together.

Inquiry action plans

There are many ways to construct an action plan.

It's important that all team members can contribute to the plan. This ensures a shared understanding of the purpose of each activity and how each person will contribute.

If you're conducting a shorter inquiry of just one or two terms, it's advisable to complete a full action plan. If the inquiry is to take place over a longer period, you may find it useful to think about it as a series of short inquiries. It's better if you only provide the full detail for the first two terms, describing the rest of the plan in more general terms. Your team can then review progress after the first two terms and adjust your intended actions considering the emerging findings.

Checklist: Developing an action plan

This checklist sets out actions for the inquiry team as you develop the action plan in this second phase of proposal development.

Work together to draft an inquiry action plan that describes your intended outcomes, the actions you will take (what, who and when), and the resources you will need.	
Have the draft action plan reviewed by at least one other person, including an inquiry expert. Ask your reviewer/s to consider whether the planned actions will enable you to address your inquiry question/s.	
Discuss the question, "In light of our selected inquiry focus and plan of action, how will we know we have been successful?"	
Complete Phase 2 of the *Develop an inquiry proposal* template.	

Phase 2B: Ways of working

People are busy, so it’s important that everyone involved in the inquiry is clear from the outset about:

- their roles and responsibilities, as detailed in the action plan
- the times when they will work with the whole team.

Communication and meetings

Take time to think about the best ways for the team to communicate during the implementation (taking action) phase. For example, it’s likely that some tasks can be completed online while others are better completed face-to-face.

Use the inquiry action plan as a template for preparing a detailed meeting plan that includes:

- times and locations
- the purpose of each meeting
- who needs to be present.

Each meeting is likely to include:

- an update on progress through the action plan
- an update on any emerging issues
- an opportunity to share emerging findings
- discussion of next steps
- updating the action plan.

When you’re ready to analyse the data you have collected, it will be time for longer meetings of a half or whole day. Try to have all team members at these meetings. It’s especially important that anyone who is providing expert support for the analysis can attend.

You may find it useful to explore what it means to have ‘professional conversations’ – formal and informal conversations between teachers, mentors, coaches and school leaders about education in general and practice in particular. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership offers a good summary of the enablers for effective professional conversations.

Managing the data and relevant inquiry information

Use the tool to set up an online system that allows your team to share its data and view all other inquiry information. The latter will include meeting notes, records of key decisions, and reports sent to the leadership team.

Submitting your inquiry proposal to the leadership team for endorsement and approval

The leadership team will review the proposal to ensure it addresses a worthwhile issue that is situated within one of the Community's priority inquiry areas. This scrutiny helps the leadership team in its tasks of:

- maintaining strategic oversight and ownership of the Community's inquiries;
- taking joint responsibility for implementing the Community's inquiries; and
- sharing and building knowledge across the Community.

Checklist: Agreeing ways of working

This checklist sets out actions for the inquiry team as you establish how you will work together when you implement the inquiry.

Agree how you will work together.	
Decide where you are going to record inquiry information (for example, meeting notes, raw data and data you have analysed).	
Set up the *Shared spaces* in the tool.	
Review your complete proposal as it appears in the tool.	
Submit the completed *Inquiry proposal template* in the tool to the leadership team for approval.	
Prepare to implement your inquiry.	

Approving the proposal

This is the responsibility of the leadership team. ***Leadership action: Approve and resource***

The approval process enables the leadership team to maintain its oversight of all the collaborative inquiries being undertaken across your setting. It contributes to the team's ability to monitor progress and provide additional support where that is needed to ensure quality outcomes.

Checklist: Approval process

This checklist sets out actions for the leadership team as part of the approval process.

Review the inquiry proposal. This might include meeting with the inquiry team leader.	
If necessary, seek clarification of issues and/or request additional information.	
Approve the proposal, including the resources required.	
Complete the *Approve inquiry proposal* template in the tool.	

Phase 3. Taking action: implementing the inquiry and monitoring progress

Responsibility of the inquiry team ***Inquiry team action: Implement the inquiry***

Keeping the action plan up-to-date

It's advisable for your team to meet at least once a term to review progress and notice and respond to emerging patterns and issues. These regular reviews enable the team to modify the initial plan as new evidence emerges.

It's recommended that inquiry teams outline their action plan for at least two terms. This helps ensure that everyone can commit to the agreed times, including the times for review.

Sometimes unexpected things happen as an inquiry is implemented. When this happens, it is important that the team thinks together about the implications for the timeline and/or the nature of the ongoing inquiry.

A key to effective inquiry is ensuring that everyone who has responsibility for the inquiry continues to have a shared view of the overall goals. For this reason, it's important to negotiate any significant change to your agreed action plan with the leadership team.

If you are proposing a significant change, it will help to provide:

- a rationale for the change
- an outline of the implications of the change, including for the timeline, resources required, and the possible outcomes
- an updated action plan.

Reporting to the leadership team

Report to the leadership team after each progress meeting and at least once a term. These reports help you to:

- maintain a shared view of the purpose of the inquiry
- keep in mind the possible options for the setting once the outcomes from the inquiry are clear
- work with the leadership team to address emerging issues in a timely way.

The tool supports two approaches to reporting: 1) an overall judgement about progress in relation to the agreed action plan and 2) commentary on emerging issues and findings.

1. **Dashboard reporting** against the actions agreed upon for the reporting timeframe: The dashboard prompts you to judge progress in terms of:

- task completed
- actions that are in progress and on track
- actions that are at risk – this signals an issue that will be elaborated in the commentary part of the report.

2. **Comment on emerging issues:** Signal any issues that are impacting on the implementation of the inquiry. Issues might include a change of personnel, the need for additional data or a request for additional funds.
3. **Describe emerging findings:** The indication of preliminary findings will help the leadership team notice patterns and trends as it reviews progress reports from inquiries across the Community.

Checklist: Implementation phase

This checklist sets out actions for the inquiry team during the implementation phase.

Complete the tasks described in the action plan.	
Review the action plan on a regular basis, modifying it where required.	
Liaise with the leadership team if and when a significant change to the plan is required. In some instances, you may need to step back and revise the full action plan.	
Report regularly to the leadership team.	
Complete the *Collaborative inquiry progress report* [select the Inquiry from the tool dashboard and select report progress] template in the tool at times agreed with the leadership team.	
Submit the *Collaborative inquiry progress report* [select the Inquiry from the tool dashboard] to the leadership team.	

Phase 4. Summary and review

This is the responsibility of the inquiry and leadership teams.

Inquiry team action: Identify and share the learning; make recommendations about future actions

Leadership team action: Review inquiry strategy

The summary and review phase involves identifying what you have learned, capturing it, and sharing it with others. During this phase, you will want to consider significant questions, including:

- What were the outcomes?
- What did we learn?
- Who needs to know?
- What are the implications for our inquiry strategy?
- What do we want to do next?

Writing the final report

The purpose of your final report is to tell the story of your inquiry. If others are to learn from the inquiry, it is important that your story:

- is clear about what you did, the data that was collected and what was evident from your analysis
- includes a description of what you found out; that is, the outcomes of your inquiry in terms of ākonga learning and teacher practice
- identifies what the team has learned
- provides recommendations for the leadership team, identifying what should happen next to meet ākonga needs.

Outcomes

In reporting on outcomes, be sure to provide evidence that illustrates how you have addressed your inquiry question/s. This might be evidence of shifts in ākonga engagement or achievement and/or changes in teacher practice. The nature of the evidence will depend on the focus of the inquiry.

Learning

There is a reason that this kind of work is referred to as 'spirals of inquiry'. The findings from one inquiry lead to new questions and new possibilities for ongoing inquiry. Your team can make a valuable contribution to the knowledge building across your setting and beyond by identifying what you think would be most productive for the Community to pursue next and what learning will be useful to others in the sector.

Your audience

Your setting's leadership team is a key audience, but you also need to consider ways to share findings with others within your Community. Might they be of interest to other Communities of Learning or to people in other contexts?

Earl and Timperley (2014)[1] point out that the actual use of new knowledge in new settings requires the active engagement of the user:

> *Sharing and mobilising knowledge means creating new learning environments locally and beyond for others to engage with the ideas. This does not mean "going out and telling others" what has worked or not worked. Rather it means engaging in a wider process of evidence-informed inquiry with those not involved in the original interpretive knowledge building activities to activate existing knowledge, infuse the new knowledge from the innovation and socially construct new understanding.*

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Before recording your story, think about what might be useful to others and how best to engage with your audience. One strategy would be to organise workshops where you present your findings and then ask participants for their perspectives and how the findings could be used to inform the work of schools and kura in your setting.

What next for the inquiry team?

The inquiry itself will generate new questions, as will engagement with your audience after the project is completed. The inquiry strategy sets out your Community's expectations for how learning from inquiry should be shared. This may include sharing resources and tools that you have developed as part of the inquiry.

After sharing the work with the leadership team and others across the Community, call a final inquiry team meeting to discuss your recommendations about the next steps for the Community. By allowing some distance from the actual implementation and incorporating feedback from the various groups with whom you have explored the ideas, your team will be able to offer the Community much richer advice about where to place its future efforts.

Inquiry team checklist: Summary and review

This checklist sets out actions for the inquiry team as you complete and submit your final report.

Complete the *Final inquiry report* [select the Inquiry from the dashboard and select Final Report] template in the tool and submit this to the leadership team.	
Consider ways to share findings with others within and beyond the setting, beginning with the expectations set out in the inquiry strategy.	
Provide recommendations and advice to the leadership team, including suggestions about what should happen next to meet ākonga needs and about future inquiries.	

[1] Earl, L., & H. Timperley (2015). Evaluative thinking for successful educational innovation, *OECD Education Working Papers, No. 122*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

What next for the leadership team?

It will be important to keep your inquiry strategy dynamic. This will involve regular review of the outcomes of your collaborative inquiries. The review will:

1. identify successes—such as effective practices—that you want to share across the Community and beyond
2. establish processes to support others to learn from completed inquiries
3. provide an opportunity to rethink your inquiry strategy and possibly identify new areas for inquiry.

Inquiry team checklist: Summary and review

This checklist sets out actions for the leadership team as you consider the outcomes of the Community's inquiries.

Consider ways to communicate the outcomes of your collaborative inquiries and to support others in your Community to build new knowledge about effective practice.	
Review your inquiry strategy considering the findings of your collaborative inquiries. If necessary, identify new areas of inquiry for your Community.	