

Rongoā Māori Action Plan September 2023

Te Aka Whai Ora
Māori Health Authority

Naa Kiingi Taawhiao:

*E kore teenei whakaoranga e huri ki tua o aku mokopuna
Our mokopuna shall inherit a better place than I inherited*

He kupu whakataki nā te Poari o Te Aka Whai Ora

Foreword by Te Aka Whai Ora Board

Te Aka Whai Ora, which was established to drive transformative change to improve hauora Māori, has a specialist role to ensure the reformed health system responds to the needs and aspirations of Māori.

As was recognised by WAI 262, support and recognition of rongoā is a key pathway to good health outcomes for Māori. By supporting rongoā to flourish, we will be closer to ending wide-ranging health inequities for whānau Māori. We know that a thriving and well-supported rongoā sector and system of hauora will be a key enabler of oranga whānau.

In developing the Rongoā Māori Action Plan, Te Aka Whai Ora has undertaken in-depth engagement with tohunga, mātanga rongoā, rongoā collectives, hauora Māori partners, and iwi.

Our rongoā kaupapa has focused on:

- Moemoeā (visions and aspirations) for preserving, protecting, and supporting rongoā.
- Understanding the system levers available to deliver on the priorities for rongoā.
- Identifying the funding paths and other resources needed to invest in rongoā to support hauora.

The Plan is based around the key issues and solutions we heard during our engagement. It is guided by our understanding of rongoā as a taonga that is protected by Article 2 of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and the rights of Māori and responsibilities of the Crown that result from this protected status.

We are pleased to present the Rongoā Māori Action Plan as a guiding tool to drive action by agencies and Crown entities to better support rongoā, in ways which recognise and respect tohunga, mātanga rongoā and whānau as the experts and authority on rongoā Māori.

Why is Rongoā Māori so important?

Rongoā is a taonga tuku iho, a treasure passed down through the generations by tohunga and mātanga rongoā, and within whānau, hapū and iwi Māori.

It is an ao Māori approach to healing and wellbeing and has been part of the Māori way of life for hundreds of years, despite efforts to suppress rongoā. This demonstrates the strength and resilience of Māori ways of knowing and being – a source of strength and resilience that we want all Māori to have access to.

Rongoā Māori is a cultural healing practice and incorporates deep, personal connections with the natural environment. It is a complete and complex, uniquely Māori system of healing derived from mātauranga Māori. It includes (but is not limited to) practices such as mirimiri and romiromi, mahi wairua, wai rākau, whakairo, tā moko, moko kauae and rongoā rākau. It can also include understanding of and connection to whakapapa and te ao Māori, kōrero Māori, and protection of te taiao. Many Māori regard rongoā as central to their identity as Māori.

Rongoā Māori is a vital pathway to good health outcomes for Māori, and increasingly a treatment of choice for non-Māori. Increased support for rongoā Māori will enable the health system to deliver on priorities for improving health outcomes under Te Pae Tata (the interim NZ health plan), including around Pae Ora (better health in our communities), Kahu Taurima (māmā), mate pukupuku (cancer), māuiuitanga taumaha (chronic conditions) and oranga hinengaro (mental health and addiction).

To date, rongoā Māori has been hindered in realising its full potential by low levels of funding and a lack of organised and systemic support.

While there is a long way to go to realise moemoeā for rongoā, the Rongoā Māori Action Plan takes concrete steps towards achieving Māori aspirations for rongoā Māori, to enable rongoā to thrive. It is a plan to inspire, galvanise and organise action to support rongoā Māori. It is also a commitment to be led and guided by tohunga and mātanga rongoā in the implementation of the Rongoā Māori Action Plan.

Short-term (by December 2024)

Medium to long-term (from January 2025)

 <p>Aronga tahi Increase investment in rongoā Māori</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the evidence base to support the case for increased agency investment in rongoā Māori, including the rongoā Māori workforce, through whānau voice, and qualitative and quantitative analysis of research and insights. Work across Te Aka Whai Ora and with health agencies to understand potential opportunities for funding Rongoā for the next three years through other pathways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore investment opportunities to increase the investment in rongoā Māori (provider funding, workforce and facilities) based on our engagement and the evidence base. Work with other parts of the health system to better enable Māori to access rongoā providers directly (without needing a referral from another health service). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek to establish a sustainable investment in rongoā Māori, for tohunga and mātanga rongoā to meet the current needs, and future aspirations of Māori for rongoā. Look to invest in rongoā providers across the motu both within existing clinical settings and as a stand-alone system of hauora, to ensure Māori in all parts of the country have access to rongoā services.
 <p>Aronga rua Implement a partnership approach to rongoā commissioning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the potential to move away from using the 2014 rongoā standards in Te Aka Whai Ora commissioning documents, and work with rongoā providers as necessary to ensure the safety of whaiora will continue without the standards in place. Shift to more flexible and broader outcome-based contracts at Te Aka Whai Ora, which enable rongoā providers to determine what rongoā means to them. Explore co-partnering opportunities with other agencies and Crown entities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission for outcomes, instead of outputs, allowing Rongoā practitioners the flexibility to determine what they need to spend funding on to meet the outcomes of their contract e.g. Rongoā rākau, workforce training, māra kai. Streamline the commissioning approach for rongoā Māori across agencies and Crown entities to reduce the administrative burden for providers while simplifying access to services by kiritaki. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Across the sector, shift contractual frameworks for rongoā to high-trust, strengths-based, mana-enhancing and orange/outcome focused commissioning agreements with tohunga and mātanga rongoā. Enable Māori to design and deliver their own solutions for rongoā Māori.
 <p>Aronga toru Support and grow the rongoā workforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Te Whatu Ora to remove barriers to partnering with rongoā providers who are traditionally trained, including being guided by Māori in recognising skilled rongoā providers. Work with Te Whatu Ora to grow existing, tailored programmes which support tauira into rongoā Māori pathways. Facilitate regional wānanga for tohunga and mātanga rongoā to share knowledge and support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how investment can be used to support the existing rongoā workforce through the areas identified in Te Pae Tata 2024-27. Explore our ability to extend access to Te Pitomata grants to ākonga undertaking rongoā training including learning alongside tohunga and mātanga rongoā in a more traditional way. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the potential for educational institutes which currently offer rongoā certificates or diplomas to consider offering rongoā apprenticeships more aligned with traditional ways of learning. Work with Te Whatu Ora to grow funding for Māori to access training opportunities in rongoā settings. Enable further regional wānanga for tohunga and mātanga rongoā, including opportunities for young people and others interested in developing their rongoā skills to network and meet with tohunga and mātanga rongoā. Review health workforce training programmes to include rongoā and increase understanding of rongoā as a Māori cultural system of healing and wellbeing.
 <p>Aronga whā Strengthen system coordination for rongoā Māori</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Te Puni Kōkiri and Te Taumata Whakapūmau to create channels for the sharing of insights to protect rongoā Māori and enable rongoā to thrive. Strengthen collaboration and coordination between agencies and Crown entities that have work programmes relevant to rongoā. Develop cross-agency working relationships, and work with Māori to strengthen environmental protection of rongoā rākau, without impeding Māori access to rongoā. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Māori, including Te Taumata Whakapūmau, & Te Puni Kōkiri to implement the Government response to WAI 262 & WAI 2575; and to resolve issues such as Intellectual Property protections or other issues that may constrain rongoā Māori. Explore other levers agencies & Crown entities may have to support rongoā, including opportunities to shift resources and devolve decision-making to Māori to design and deliver their own solutions for the sustainability of rongoā Māori. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a comprehensive cross-agency agreement for a Māori-led approach to supporting rongoā Māori, including better understanding within the health sector of rongoā Māori and moemoeā Māori for rongoā.
 <p>Aronga rima Increase awareness and understanding of rongoā Māori</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Te Whatu Ora, health practitioners and mātanga rongoā who work within the public health system, to increase health practitioner understanding of rongoā Māori. Enable kaimahi across Te Aka Whai Ora and Te Whatu Ora to access rongoā as a staff support service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a health sector awareness campaign of what rongoā is and the benefits of rongoā. Produce resources for whānau to increase knowledge about rongoā Māori as a system for healing and hauora. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and resource Māori-led solutions to raise awareness of the benefits of rongoā and the availability of local rongoā providers amongst whānau and communities across the country.