

Briefing report

Education Review Office (ERO): Proposed New Operating Model for School Reviews

Date	8 May 2020
Security Level	N/A
ERO Priority	Medium
ERO Reference	M20-14
Date requested	ERO initiated
Date due	ERO initiated
Proactive release	Not recommended

Addressee	Action sought	Deadline
Minister of Education	<p>It is recommended that you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) note that ERO has completed Phase 1 in the development of a new operating model for school reviews b) note that subsequent phases will include detailed design of the process, frameworks and tools to support the model, a roadmap for implementation and wider consultation with external stakeholders and education agencies c) note that the new approach aims to strengthen the capability of all schools through embedding a continuous improvement focus, strengthening school's own engagement with and accountability to whānau and shifting ERO's role to that of an evaluation partner with the sector d) agree to discuss the contents of this paper with ERO senior staff e) note that this briefing is not recommended for proactive release 	



Attachments:

***Education Review Office (ERO):
Proposed New Operating Model for
School Reviews***



Comments:

Minister's Office to complete	
Noted	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>
Referred to:	
Date signed by Minister:	

Our Ref: M20-14

8 May 2020

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

Proposed New Operating Model for School Reviews

Purpose

1. Our briefing report 'Education Review Office response to Supporting All Schools to Succeed: Review of our current operating model for school reviews' (M20-4), was provided to you in February 2020.
2. This briefing outlines our progress in developing a new school reviews operating model and our intention to begin implementing the new model in the 2020/2021 financial year.
3. The new approach aims to strengthen the capability of all schools through embedding a continuous improvement approach, strengthening school's own engagement with and accountability to whānau and shifting ERO's role to that of an evaluation partner with the sector.
4. This paper does not discuss ERO's role in system wide evaluation. This will be the subject of subsequent advice to you, including advice in respect of an interim approach that ERO proposes to adopt for our engagement with schools as we move out of the current COVID arrangements.

Background

5. Our briefing report 'Education Review Office response to Supporting All Schools to Succeed: Review of our current operating model for school reviews' (M20-4), was provided to you in February 2020.
6. In the February briefing we outlined that ERO had begun a review of our current operating model for school reviews, to support a move to a stronger internal evaluation culture and a lighter touch on well performing schools, allowing us to work more intensely with those that are struggling.
7. ERO has completed the Phase 1 development of a new operating model.
8. The project involves extensive and ongoing internal consultation with ERO staff and with an external advisory group of school leaders.
9. The initial design (Phase 1) has produced a conceptual high-level operating model for school review (overview in Appendix 1; page 3).


10. Through this proposed model, ERO shifts from event based external review to supporting schools in a process of continuous improvement.
11. ERO will allocate its resources in a differentiated manner dependent on the maturity of the school's systems and capability.
12. Analysis of learner outcomes alongside assessment of a school's capability to maintain and improve performance will identify schools across a continuous improvement spectrum (Appendix 1; page 2). This will be used to determine EROs resourcing and approach. The segmentation is not meant to imply a grading system for reporting. ERO's support and engagement with the school might also be triggered by specific events such as identifying focus areas for a Board to consider in recruiting a new Principal, or supporting a principal coming into a school to understand the school's strengths and what might be areas for attention.
13. Key features of the new model include:
 - ERO shifts to a more developmental approach to evaluation, supporting each school's improvement over time, rather than the reviews being a 'one-off' event.
 - A differentiated approach where ERO resourcing and evaluative activity will be different depending on where a school is at on its improvement journey (one size fits one) (see Appendix 1; pages 2 and 3)
 - An ERO **evaluation partner** will work alongside the school. The evaluation partner builds a professional relationship with the school over time and is chosen for their expertise in understanding the needs, context and culture of the schools they work with.
 - Other expertise is brought in to support the evaluation activity, when needed. ERO's value here continues to lie in asking key evaluative questions that assist leaders and teachers with evidence-based thinking about their practice, so they can achieve better outcomes for learners.
 - ERO's evaluation role becomes critical to and connects with the school's strategic planning and reporting cycle as part of an ongoing improvement journey. The schools' planning both informs ERO's evaluation focus and direction and is informed by the insights captured through ERO's facilitated evaluation approach exploring the conditions that deliver equity and excellence for every learner (see Appendix 1; page 5)
 - This model involves ERO using evaluation to identify the support needs of the individual school or cluster of schools. ERO evaluation partners will also support schools to access or develop appropriate evaluation tools (such as the AYT survey tools) for their own evaluative activity and provide advice in respect of interpreting evaluation findings.
 - Evaluation activity within the school facilitated through ERO will actively involve the senior leadership team, and board representation as partners in the evaluation approach. This engagement will build on and complement the school's own assessment of its performance and confirm for the school its proposed direction forward.

- A critical element in the proposed approach is bringing the skills and expertise of partners from outside ERO at various stages of the evaluation. The intention is to challenge and enrich insights into the school's performance and direction setting. This wider involvement of external partners will include currently practising school principals or senior managers from schools and other partners such as Iwi, specialist experts or community representation relevant to the school's context. Once established engagement of Leadership Advisors from the Educational Support Agency.
 - Working with an individual or clusters of schools, ERO will use its knowledge of the system to broker potential pathways to address developmental needs, or to support further growth and development in the school's improvement journey.
 - The key shifts described here are shown in Appendix 1; page 4
14. Consideration of a school within its wider network and community is woven throughout the individual school assessment. The future operating model also identifies an opportunity to undertake evaluations at a community level, and details this separately.
 15. The proposed model has been shared and tested with an external advisory group of school leaders, who have responded very positively to the key concepts and shifts.
 16. Phase 2 of the project builds on the initial design from Phase 1 for a finalised design in early June, and intentions of progressive implementation in the 2020/21 financial year.
 17. Phase 2 involves:
 - designing the future end-to-end process.
 - determining what organisational functions are required, what they deliver, capabilities, accountabilities, and how they will interact
 - identifying and designing the new and changed framework and tools that are needed in the new operating model
 - providing a high-level roadmap sequencing the activity required to implement the design.
 18. Further engagement with external stakeholders and education agencies is being considered within the implementation planning.
 19. Clearly having an appropriate suite of responses and interventions for "struggling schools" based on their own and ERO facilitated evaluations will be critical. As a consequence, we have a strong interest in the reforms in the rest of the sector. The interface between ERO's role and the model adopted for the Education Service Agency will be important.
 20. It is expected that the adoption of this model will be done within ERO's existing resource base. Resource demands will be managed both by the frequency and intensity with which ERO engages with an individual or cluster of schools, and the growing maturity of schools in terms of being able to carry out and respond to their own self-evaluation.

Recommendations

21. It is recommended that you:

- a) **note** that ERO has completed Phase 1 in the development of a new operating model for school reviews **noted**
- b) **note** that subsequent phases will include detailed design of the process, frameworks and tools to support the model, a roadmap for implementation and wider consultation with external stakeholders and education agencies **noted**
- c) **note** that the new approach aims to strengthen the capability of all schools through embedding a continuous improvement focus, strengthening school's own engagement with and accountability to whānau and shifting ERO's role to that of an evaluation partner with the sector **noted**
- d) **agree** to discuss the contents of this paper with ERO senior staff **agree/disagree**
- e) **note** that this briefing is not recommended for proactive release **noted**



Nicholas Pole
Chief Executive

NOTED APPROVED

I think the new operating model has real merit, but I'd like to see the sector more fully consulted before it is finally approved and implemented. I would hate to see sector confidence in this model weakened by them learning about it only when it is all locked and loaded. Allowing more sector voices into the process earlier will help garner their support.
CH 30/5/20



Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

30 / 05 / 2020

Supporting all schools to succeed – a changing environment

The Independent Taskforce in reviewing the Tomorrow's Schools system published a report on the future of schooling. The government response to this review provides important context for the future for the education sector and ERO.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION SYSTEM

The implications of the Government's position on the Taskforce's report for the education system, and the Ministry of Education are below:

- Greater focus on collaboration and equity – a deliberate shift away from the competitive schooling model.
- Establishment of the Education Services Agency (ESA) a regionally based part of the Ministry of Education to work collaboratively with schools and place frontline support closer to schools to give every child the best chance to succeed.
- Generate a system that has the networks and feedback loops necessary to drive continuous improvement.
- More support for Principals and school boards including a new centre of leadership and local leadership advisor roles.
- System that ensures that our teachers and leaders are supported to be more responsive and receptive to the needs and aspirations of all learners and their whānau. This must happen at every part of the system and reflect the diverse identities, languages, cultures, and needs of all learners in our schools.
- New independent disputes panels for parents and learners.
- Management of school property simplified and/or transferred to the Ministry to free up boards' time.
- Enrolment zones to be managed locally, not by each school.

30 year vision for education

The guardians of the Education Conversation have developed the following vision to develop an enduring 30 year approach to education in Aotearoa, New Zealand. This will have implications moving forward on ERO.

Whakamaua te pae tata kia tina – Take hold of your potential so it becomes your reality.... We are descendants of explorers, discoverers and innovators who used their knowledge to traverse distant horizons. Our learning will be inclusive, equitable and connected so we progress and achieve advances for our people and their future journeys and encounters. Whaia te pae tawhiti kia tata – Explore beyond the distant horizon and draw it near!

IMPLICATIONS FOR ERO

The implications for ERO from the Government's position on the Independent Taskforce's report are below:



The Taskforce recommended changes to the functions of ERO to focus on system wide evaluation rather than individual school reviews. The Government does not intend to progress this recommendation, as they believe that individual school reviews provide important information for schools, whānau and communities.



The Government's position - Supporting all Schools to Succeed was to strengthen the capability of schools to undertake internal-evaluation and continuous improvement, including ensuring effective engagement with whānau and communities.



The Chief Review Officer will provide advice about how its approach can support this, so that, over time, the ERO can increasingly free up resources to focus on system-level evaluation.



ERO, the Ministry of Education and NZCER will ensure their respective research and evaluation functions provide a strong basis for generating effective system level information and evaluation that informs prioritisation, action, and improvement.

ERO's key contribution to the sector

- ERO has a role in supporting a system that is embedded in the evidence, to improve outcomes for all learners in bi-cultural Aotearoa, New Zealand.
- ERO will support schools to succeed through targeted and tailored evaluation to build evaluation capability and the conditions for success within a school.
- ERO will work collaboratively with the Ministry of Education, Leadership Advisors, NZCER and other key partners to improve learner outcomes.

PILLARS

Given the Supporting all schools to succeed changes, and ERO's strategic intent – pillars were developed to guide the future operating model. These pillars support how ERO will undertake school reviews given the Supporting all schools to succeed landscape.

Insight-based, needs based differentiated approach to school evaluations

Evaluations are co-constructed and critical to the school's planning and continuous improvement cycle

We evaluate at a school, community and system level and know our impact

We meet the needs of the learners, people and communities we serve

We explicitly invest in growing evaluation capability to enable insights to be shared across the system

We are culturally conscious and responsive

Our staff are empowered to be highly effective evaluation partners

We are trusted and valued partners

Continuous improvement for improved educational outcomes

Note : This model supports ERO's decisions about resource allocation and evaluation approach. It is not meant to imply a grading system for reporting purposes.

What is the purpose of external evaluation?

- Participation in external evaluation supports the school's cycle of continuous improvement through providing an external lens on its improvement journey. Evaluation can highlight how well the school is achieving equity and excellence of outcomes for all learners so they can succeed as lifelong learners. Evaluation can also identify the extent to which organisational conditions support continuous improvement and next steps for development.
- An integrated approach to external and internal evaluation is designed to empower the school by building knowledge of evaluation and inquiry

Ongoing improvement pathway for improved student outcomes

All schools are on an evolving continuous improvement journey to improve organisational conditions to ensure that all our learners in Aotearoa, New Zealand, have opportunities to succeed and become lifelong learners. We have an increased focus on improving outcomes for Maori, Pacific and those with additional learning support needs.

There is no "end point" to the journey – there is always room to grow, and to extend beyond a school's own boundaries to positively influence other schools in the community and the country.

Improvements must be sustained

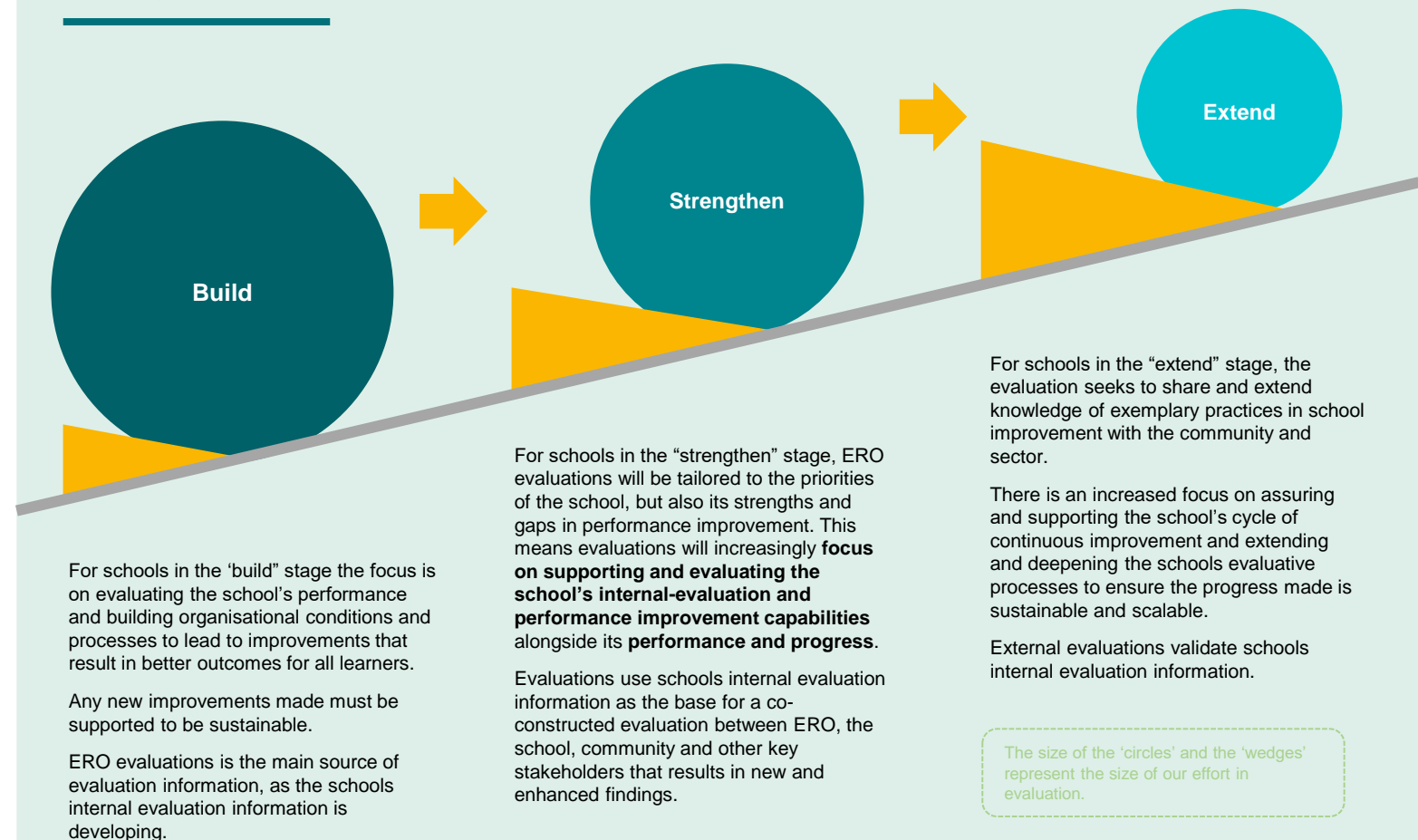
Schools may be at different stages of the continuum in different aspects e.g. building internal evaluation capability, strengthening teaching and learning. ERO will provide a differentiated response to evaluation which reflects this context.

In the diagram to the right, the 'circles' represent school performance and progress; the 'wedges' represent the organisational conditions and processes a school has in place to protect the improvements and progress that they have made to ensure their sustainability and further develop the conditions that contribute to improved outcomes for learners.

Our effort focuses where schools need it the most

As schools move through their journey from build to extend in different areas, ERO's focus re-balances away from directly evaluating school performance to evaluating schools' internal improvement capability, their internal evaluation practices, plans, and actions.

Continuous Improvement pathway for schools



Operating model on a page

IN DEVELOPMENT

An outside-in view of how our future operating model could look for schools at different stages of the improvement continuum, communities and ERO evaluation partners. This operating model is centred upon ERO's whakataukī where improving outcomes for learners is at the core.

Evaluation for continuous improvement



Build

We place our effort more intensely in schools of greatest need. Our in-depth evaluation process informs a collaborative and iterative evaluation approach. We work with other organisations to broker support and build the school conditions necessary to ensure all learners experience success.

- ERO has an ongoing relationship with the school over time to build internal evaluation capability.
- Full in-depth evaluation at the front end to identify key conditions needing turnaround to support successful teaching and learning and equitable outcomes for all learners
- Use of evaluation panel in in-depth evaluation with external partners, community, learners, kaitiaki and other community representatives that represent diverse communities involved during the evaluation.
- High collaboration with Education Service Agency and other organisations.
- Combination of internal documents for iterative evaluation purposes that assist in the school's improvement pathway with a public facing report.



Strengthen

An iterative evaluation approach that involves a long term partnership with schools, community and other organisations to identify key priorities and strengthen the conditions operating in the school, so that every student is supported to be a successful lifelong learner.

- ERO has an ongoing relationship with the school over time with less contact time than the 'build' context to strengthen existing internal evaluation capability
- in-depth evaluation helps sharpen the focus to improve the school conditions necessary to support success for every learner
- Expectations for increased involvement with community, iwi, hapū, whānau, and parents.
- Evaluation includes external partners as required
- Regular collaboration with ESA and other organisations to achieve outcomes
- Frameworks to help more fine-grained collaborative evaluation to identify key next steps and priorities
- Combination of internal artefacts for iterative evaluation purposes and public facing report



Extend

We partner with the school to extend its internal evaluation and continuous improvement process and ensure the conditions to support equitable and excellent student outcomes are embedded, coherent and well aligned. We support schools to share best practice with the sector.

- ERO has an ongoing relationship with the school over time with less contact time than in the 'build' and 'strengthen' contexts to enhance existing internal evaluation capability
- Utilisation of in-depth evaluation tools within school's internal evaluation processes
- Evaluation activity is driven by school choice and ERO's resource for the school
- Internal evaluation enhancing activities onsite
- Internal validation could include the use of external partners
- Validation process of internal evaluation with light touch validation artefact
- Creating opportunities for their system leadership (supporting others to grow)
- Produce case studies to share best practice with the sector



Tailored community evaluation

Collaborative community evaluation helps us and partners to identify existing strengths and challenges in communities, particularly where learners are not well served. Evaluation supports and empowers communities, schools and organisations to improve outcomes for learners.

- Factors that instigate community evaluations at high level to focus on communities, particularly those that are not well served to strengthen learning outcomes and wellbeing (schools and systems in the community)
- More likely to be event based and contribute to a wider piece of work
- Nationally scheduled and resourced
- Will draw on already held regional school relationships
- We have purposeful relationships to improve outcomes for Māori
- Use of evaluation panels essential
- Methodology developed to fit the purpose of the reports

What the operating model means for schools

How the operating model will change the experience of schools

From...



One size fits all. ERO has a one size fits all approach even if a school's needs are different to the school down the road. ERO spends the same amount of time and resources with all schools, even though some schools may benefit from more support.



Changing team. Schools have contact with a team of ERO reviewers that change each review cycle. Reviewers may or may not be familiar with the schools context.



Once every three years. Schools have a review once every three years, a summative process of how the school has been performing during that time (note: exception of longitudinal and high priority schools)



Evaluation expertise held by ERO. Evaluations do not always allow for strong internal evaluation capability building component.



ERO tells schools what is wrong, but does not show a path to fixing it. Schools feel that the reports say the same things every time, but they don't know any better on what they are supposed to do or what will make the most difference for learners.



Do to us. Schools feel that ERO is doing their reviews "to them" not with them.



Limited stakeholder involvement. Only a few people from schools are involved in the process – mainly senior leaders. Some kaiako were not involved in the review that wanted to be.



Compliance focus. Evaluations are compliance and data driven.

To...



Differentiated approach. ERO resourcing will be different depending on where a school is at on its improvement journey. The evaluation is tailored to schools' unique challenges, that are understood by the evaluation partner they will work with.



Evaluation partner works alongside the school. An evaluation partner works alongside each school and is the key contact. The evaluation partner is chosen to understand the context and culture, and other expertise is brought in to support the evaluation activity to meet needs.



Ongoing improvement process. The report is part of the ongoing continuous improvement process and reflects where the school is on their improvement journey. It is linked into school's strategic and annual planning. Schools feel more empowered by the evaluation, and are taking ownership for the improvement journey



Supporting the school's internal evaluation capability. Evaluation activity has a strong focus on building, strengthening and extending the schools internal evaluation capability to support sustainable improvements. ERO evaluation partners will also support schools to access or develop appropriate evaluation tools for their own evaluative activity and provide advice in respect of interpreting evaluation findings.



ERO will use its knowledge of the system to broker the sharing of best practice. Working with an individual or clusters of schools, ERO will use its knowledge of the system to broker potential pathways to address developmental needs, or to support further growth and development in the school's improvement journey.



Do with us. Schools co-construct evaluations with ERO evaluation partners to meet the school needs.



Wider involvement. Active involvement of the senior leadership team, and board representation as partners in the evaluation approach. Bringing the skills and expertise of partners from outside ERO to challenge and enrich insights into the school's performance and direction setting. This includes current practising school principals or leaders from schools and other partners such as iwi, hapū, whānau, specialist experts or community representation relevant to the schools context.



Outcomes focus. The focus of evaluation is on improving outcomes of all learners. Evaluations are improvement focused and EPs work with schools to help them identify and improve their systems and processes for assuring student health and safety



Schools



Integration of evaluation as part of schools planning and reporting cycle.

ERO's evaluation is critical to, and connects with the school's planning and evaluation process.

ERO's evaluation sits within the school's improvement planning processes as part of their continuous improvement journey. Internal and external evaluation findings are an integral part of informing the school's continuous improvement journey. Embedding these in the school's planning and reporting processes supports an aligned and focussed approach to ongoing improvement and improved outcomes for learners.

Evaluation insights (both external and internal) enable the school (trustees, leaders, teachers, iwi, hapū, whānau and community) to identify the key areas for development to be included in the school's strategic and annual plans.

Through ongoing engagement with the school, evaluation partners work alongside school personnel and other partners to evaluate the effectiveness of its planned initiatives in improving outcomes for learners.

ERO supports the school to build their evaluation and planning capability by identifying:

- Key areas for development to support continuous improvement.
- Evaluative questions to support the schools continuous improvement journey :
 - Are the plans and actions supporting school improvement?
 - Are there improved outcomes for learners?
 - Which learners have improved outcomes?
 - Are the plans sufficiently focused on improving outcomes for students?
 - Is the pace of improvement what is needed?
 - Does the plan need to change?
- The provision of focussed and specific school reporting – what is being reported, how frequently, to whom?
- Transferability and sustainability – How can improvements be sustained? What have we learned that we can transfer to future initiatives in this school or in other contexts?