

Leadership in our Aotearoa Pacific village: practicing values and unlocking strengths

Practical lessons for each Public Service leader from
the COVID-19 Pacific welfare response

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1. Why I chose to do this

When I applied for the fellowship, my initial interest was in “how do you improve financial security for Pacific peoples and families with a view to growing intergenerational wealth”. At the time, we had only just experienced the first lockdown of COVID-19 and now we have managed through two further resurgences.

In the last two years, we have seen the ultimate strengths of Pacific communities in action when enabled and supported by government. Through our faith, strong connections to each other and love for our home in Aotearoa New Zealand, Pacific peoples, with the support of government, achieved great things during COVID-19.

I have been privileged to be part of the government’s enabling environment.

While the social and financial impact on Pacific peoples has been great, I believe what we have done in the last two years together could potentially solve issues that have challenged Pacific peoples for years and caused intergenerational transfer of unwellness.

Personal and professional reflections

Being a fellowship recipient has enabled me to grow personally and professionally.

I was able to explore and bring together my passions - Pacific and communities, both play a huge part of who I am. It also allowed me to share my lived experience as a woman with Pacific, Māori and European heritage who has been challenged with being defined in deficits, to flip the narrative and focus on the strengths of my people. The ability to produce something that might make a difference for my people, family and community is very important to me.

The relationships I formed with a range of people opened up my own thinking around how I work with others, what leadership style I have and how to support other leaders, but also influence spaces.

Being able to share the fellowship to help build others understanding and capability has been an important outcome of this process for me. Whilst it is one person’s opinion, mine, I think with the support of those that have been with me on this journey, the final piece will be able to help others in their work. This in turn should improve the way we engage, work with and improve outcomes for Pacific.

2. Executive Summary

As Public Service leaders, we have a key role in the Pacific village in Aotearoa. My fellowship explores what I think you, in your role as Public Service leaders, can do to lift Pacific intergenerational wellbeing as seen through our values.

Over the past two years, we have seen our Pacific peoples practice love in a way that showed true compassion and kindness to all. COVID-19 has also shown the incredible impact that government can have as a partner in enabling Pacific peoples.

Pacific and government achieved great outcomes during COVID-19 because government listened, trusted and changed its practices, and Pacific peoples led. Together, we have prevented further hardship due to COVID-19. The enabler in this success was that government and Pacific practiced shared values.

However, I see too many daily examples, particularly outside of the permissive space of COVID-19, of government not understanding Pacific peoples. And this leading to Pacific being disadvantaged and missed opportunities for greater Pacific wellness.

I explain what it means to be Pacific – our values and strengths. I give you examples of how the system misunderstands us and causes ongoing disadvantage.

I also offer recent examples and personal lessons on possible solutions. I analyse what worked during COVID-19 and have created from these lessons, and my own experiences, practical actions you can take to help reverse Pacific disadvantage.

Imagine what we could achieve together with Pacific peoples, if we unlocked Pacific strengths and consistently enabled them. Let's not revert to old ways.

What we do today will make the difference for our young people now and our future children. These are our current and future leaders, workers and carers. With the strongly growing Pacific youth population, they will have a big hand in making New Zealand a more socially, culturally and financially prosperous country.

3. What is our role as Public Service leaders in the Aotearoa Pacific village?

Pacific peoples live within a village. We are strong in many ways, particularly in family and faith. In fact, most Pacific peoples – almost 75% say they are well. I will explain what I mean by this next section.

In Aotearoa, the Pacific peoples' village eco-system includes families, churches, community groups and providers, agencies and the Government.

Many Pacific families, however, have been struggling in silence, not understanding what support they could have or not asking for them.

Pacific peoples have lower incomes than most others, poorer health and education outcomes, and many live in unhealthier homes. These are issues that have affected many of our peoples for decades – this is what I call Pacific 'intergenerational unwellness'. During COVID-19, the issues that already existed became worse for more of our peoples, with 25% of Pacific peoples in hardship. The Government's efforts kept

Pacific families' wellbeing mostly stable, not worse nor better than before.

At the same time, COVID-19 was also a trigger to show again the richness of Pacific culture, our values and our strengths. It showed that we know how to support our peoples and, in spite of hardship, we will do what it takes.

We [government] heard Pacific leaders and communities when they said “We know our peoples and what they need. We have the solutions and we just need someone to enable us.”

Public Service leaders are an important part of the Pacific village in Aotearoa

What does our village need to raise a child?

To raise the child, the village needs strong relationships and trust. Each group in the village takes on different roles at different times. Sometimes it's about government responding, other times it's about enabling.

How do we enable Pacific families, churches, community groups and providers to lead?

New Zealand talks about social and cultural capital. It is included in the Living Standards Framework, our Wellbeing Budget and in our agency strategies.

How do we recognise in a system that is structured and westernised whether the cultural capital of another culture is enabled?

How do we embed and enable Pacific strengths in our systems?

To understand what we can achieve by unlocking Pacific strengths, we first need to know our Pacific peoples. Without knowing, it is very hard to make changes that last.

So, I would like to firstly ask Public Service leaders:

How well do you know Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand?

How well do you know our strengths and values, our experiences and what challenges us? Do you know how we think and act?

Do you know our leaders?

4. Who are our Pacific peoples?

Improving Pacific wellness – and wellness for any person and community – needs us to turn the hardship story on its head. It is true that many more Pacific peoples experience hardship, but most Pacific peoples do not define themselves by this because of their value system and what they believe defines wealth.

We need to flip the switch. Many of the beautiful things that we tell stories about in Pacific culture have been to our detriment in Western systems and ideologies.

The start is really understanding Pacific peoples - understanding the beauty and

richness of the Pacific way and the strengths of our Pacific peoples. Then government will be able to think and act in different ways that truly enable Pacific to lead change.

Our values ground who we are

Pacific peoples are well when we are connected to our culture, family and faith, when we have good education and health, are happy and safe.

We [government] enabled Pacific leaders and communities to show alofa as a form of social justice through the COVID-19 Pacific response.

Our sense of wealth is different to Western societies and peoples. Pacific peoples may not have much money, but we are rich in wellness and in love.

The Pacific way is beautiful and founded on many common values to many Pacific peoples. In Samoan, the common values are expressed as alofa (love), fa'aaloalo (respect), Va fealoaloa'I (collective being), tapua'iga (spirituality), 'aiga (family), felagolagoma'i (reciprocity) and soalaupule (consensus).¹

Pacific languages and cultures give us a strong foundation for our sense of wellness. They enable us to have healthy relationships among our village, with our families, churches, community groups, workplaces and other places where our people may go to support, including government. These are all part of our 'eco-system' here.

Pacific peoples play different roles in our village eco-system. The concept of service to our village is important. The collective, but specific roles and therefore responsibilities and functions, are significant in making sure everything is going well.

Many people do not talk about this and what it means in practice, because it is part of our culture, who we are and what we do.²

Love is a form of social justice, tied to kinship and tradition. Pacific peoples are generous of their time and work together to the wellbeing of their wider family, church or community group, without seeking direct financial reward.³

It is important to Pacific peoples that our identities are recognised and understood.⁴ Negative stereotypes and attitudes have lasting negative impact on our peoples, particularly our young people.⁵ These cut to the core of our values and value.

What I know is that when our Pacific peoples have access to information and are enabled by government to drive things that lift wellbeing, we get change. This change is possible because we are tapping into Pacific strengths.

Data reveal the strength of our values

Pacific peoples are diverse.⁶ In 2018, there were over 380,000 Pacific peoples living in New Zealand, almost 8% of the population.⁷

Alongside Māori, we have a fast-growing youth population. In 2018, our median age was 23.4, compared to 38 years for the general population.⁸ By 2038, there will be over 500,000 Pacific peoples (or 11%) in New Zealand and our young people are projected to make up almost one fifth (or 19.6%) of all New Zealand children.⁹ This means we are strong part of New Zealand's future earners, carers and volunteers. By

2026, 30% of Auckland's working population could be Pacific peoples.¹⁰

We have inherent resilience and strength. We keep our social and cultural connections alive through our family, church and community. We are less lonely than many other groups and feel strong belonging in Aotearoa.¹¹ Most Pacific peoples, including newly arrived, live in Auckland. In 2018, 64% of the Pacific population in New Zealand lived in the Auckland region.¹²

Pacific peoples are strong in our faith. In 2018, almost 80% of our peoples identify as belonging to a religion, and most people are Christian.¹³ Many Pacific churches are considered as a way to address issues faced by Pacific families.¹⁴

Our connections to our homes, language and culture are strengthened through people settling here from overseas. A third of our people (or 31.8%) were born overseas, mostly from Fiji and Samoa.¹⁵ More Pacific peoples have arrived on temporary visas since 2013. Most become residents through the family stream. Those arriving permanently come mainly from Samoa, Fiji and Tonga. Since 2013, the number of dependents who arrived permanently almost doubled to 2018.

Pacific peoples settle in places where they are already connected to others. On arrival, migrants know at least 20 people on average and feel well connected.¹⁶ This is because Pacific communities living here feel obliged to support them. Recent Pacific migrants are more likely to belong to a social group than others. More than double belong to a religious group in Aotearoa compared to others.

We speak languages well. It's our way to stay connected to our culture, our stories, our people in Aotearoa and back home, and our identities. Whether born or settled here, we are three times more likely to speak two or three languages, compared to other New Zealanders.¹⁷ However, fluent Pacific language speakers are decreasing.¹⁸

Many Pacific peoples are strong communicators, creative and social – all critical for business. We are hard-working and loyal. We want to work but mostly we are employees, earning wages. Only 31% of Pacific peoples earn income from non-wage sources, compared to 66% nationally. This means there is strong potential to unlock the prosperity of Pacific peoples and 'aiga through business and entrepreneurship.¹⁹ With our strengths, the Pacific Business Trust sees the top three opportunities for Pacific businesses being in digital, procurement and professional services.²⁰

5. Many of our values and practices are misunderstood

The reality is that Pacific wellbeing has not significantly improved for many people, relative to others or at scale. Now we are seeing intergenerational challenges emerging. Part of the issue is that many people in government still do not really understand or design systems that enable and unlock Pacific peoples' strengths and potential. Some practices, while well-intended, have the opposite effect because they are designed through a western perspective – values and practice do not align.

The misunderstanding of Pacific wealth

For Pacific peoples wealth is more than accruing money. Our unpaid contributions as carers and volunteers are part of our culture. It's how we measure our wealth. For example, we will judge how good we are as parents by how much we contribute to our

children, our community and our church. What we earn is much less important.

Often Western values, in practice, place higher worth on monetary wealth, than other aspects of wellbeing – spiritual, emotional, community, environmental. This means the Pacific economy is framed by beliefs and practices that do not fit well with western systems, where accruing personal monetary wealth sits above other things.

A key example of the difference between western and Pacific values is the Pacific practice of distributing our wealth, rather than accumulating it. Our wealth as Pacific peoples could be measured by how our income is distributed.

For Pacific peoples, our strength is in our faith and our belief that God comes first. We believe if we are good to God, we will be well. God is depicted through our Minister and the church. If we do not support our church and its Minister, God will not be good to us. If we have nothing in our bank accounts, but our family, church and community are well, then we are well. It does not matter how money is left, we will have strong spiritual, and broader wellness, if we give to the church.

These Pacific values lead to tension with Western ideals of financial security, focused on oneself or the immediate family – reflected in the financial system. Many people often ask why do we give so much money to the church.

Home ownership is an example where this tension and disadvantage arises. We have a stronger sense of responsibility to share wealth, than saving money. We may have a good standard income, but it is difficult to gain a loan because we share our wealth. Even if our income is low, we will distribute it to others who need it.

Often people have to choose between saving and supporting others. It is hard not to feel guilty when saving – often it requires us to change part of ourselves.

Many Pacific peoples are working poor and always have immediate needs. We cannot say to our ‘aiga, “I will not help you anymore because I am going to save for what I want”. I have celebrated when my friends or family tell me they have bought a home but also cry because of their sacrifice.

These misunderstandings will impact our children and youth the most. New Zealand is a good place to live if you are over 65, partnered and have your own home. Young people of all ethnicities are being impacted most by the housing boom and haven’t benefited as much from increases in household wealth since 2001, which have accrued mainly to older age groups. Also, while child poverty is declining, on a range of other wellbeing metrics, for children and younger adults it is poor or worsening.²¹

Age-related differences in wellbeing also reflect social and economic structures and choices.²² This puts many of our Pacific children and young people in greater hardship.

The misunderstandings across learning, caring and earning

In the Pacific village, there are social obligations that define our roles. They are not always defined in the way they are in western systems, such as ‘volunteering’. But western ways of thinking often take these values as detrimental, limiting our freedoms. These roles are part of living our culture and values, and are our strengths.

Pacific peoples put high value on earning and education, but responsibility to

family and community comes first. Some of our Pacific young people do not have a choice to be educated because they have family obligations.

During COVID-19, we saw older people lose their jobs and young people going out to work or caring for family members. This took some young people out of school. Some need to care for younger siblings, such as siblings who are disabled, as their parents have to work. Some teachers do not understand the values driving these obligations. They respond inequitably by labeling these students as disengaged or 'bad', instead of responding flexibly so they can care and learn.

Many peoples are just surviving, in silence. Some are not accessing support they are entitled to. Some may not know they are eligible or may not trust enough to ask.

No one wants to be permanently on a benefit and most Pacific peoples want to work. Many are grateful for it and willing to accept what they are given. That's why Pacific peoples have a high employment rate. But often they are placed in the lowest paid industries, without culturally tailored support to upskill, and continue to earn less than most others. They are loyal people and will stay in the same job for years.

For some people and generations that might be okay but this thinking is starting to filter into the next generation. And Pacific peoples have the lowest average weekly income and significantly less income from non-wage sources.²³ Many children have to use their parent's house as equity and many share the same equity.

Now, we are seeing more young people leaving school early to work in lower paid jobs; partly because of high employment, partly due to COVID-19. What does this emerging trend mean for our future generations and their ability to be well?

Poor financial security is also common to many new Pacific arrivals, who often start their time here in hardship. They think of it as a place of milk and honey, and are prepared to work hard. But some policies - such as certain immigration policies - often have negative, possibly unintended consequences. They put more of our families into hardship by allowing Pacific permanent residents to enter with no savings, very low waged jobs and less skills.²⁴ Many also don't have assets on arrival. It is the Pacific way to serve and these policies put many families already here under pressure.

6. What has worked over the last two years?

COVID-19 came upon us quickly. Collectively, we had to react with tailored policies and practices as new variants emerged and evidence presented. The government responded with an early intervention and prevention focus. It didn't want to leave it to the health system to respond when people were most vulnerable and sick.

The COVID-19 Pacific response was similarly focused. We intervened to provide early and adequate support. We responded quickly to leaders and communities in ways that promoted access to information, support and services that would limit its worst impact. Like the benefits of prevention approaches generally, the Pacific response needed us to invest more upfront but the results showed this was the right approach.

Our MSD Case Mangers talked to the [Cook Island] Pa Matua in his reo, treated him with respect and reassured him he would be safe. He was overjoyed at the way support was provided. He now had a trusted person to go to for help.

Four case studies show how the COVID-19 Pacific response, enabled by practicing values through models such as the MSD Leo Tanoa Pacific Case Management team.

We were successful because we:

- enabled agencies to work in partnership with Pacific providers and groups
- used an aiga (family-centred) model, with support offered to wider family
- increased the communities' trust in MSD and to engage with agencies, and
- enabled MSD to make its existing channels and services more accessible.

Leo Tanoa: MSD Pacific Case Management team

The MSD Leo Tanoa team has been a significant driver to the success of the Pacific response. This team was pulled together using existing resources. The team has been a conduit for Pacific peoples and families, as well as community providers and partners working with Pacific peoples and families impacted by COVID. Throughout the various COVID-19 responses over the last two years, Leo Tanoa has provided agile and flexible solutions. It has been pivotal in supporting those directed to self-isolate in the community or in Managed Isolation and Quarantine facilities. Leo Tanoa offered training, employment and multilingual aiga case management services. They have been central in facilitating and delivering key MSD messages to our Pacific people, families and communities on local, regional and national communication platforms. This has been enabled by strong coordination through a centralised MSD team.

The potential significant impact on Pacific peoples in Auckland meant that we had to activate a tailored response there. Initially, food was a main concern. But as the outbreak continued, different and more complex needs arose. A survey in August 2021 of Pacific peoples and families in South Auckland showed many people (around 20%) had concerns relating to COVID-19.²⁵ However, it also showed more people experienced panic and stress about family, neighbourhood and community being protected (25%), as well as about health and wellbeing (22%).²⁶

Case study 1: Aiga approach to learning and earning

COVID-19 amplified the already strained mental and physical health of many Pacific peoples. Many experienced job loss or even lower incomes. Many grassroots groups played the unfunded middle, doing their best where they can¹.

From 24 August to 31 December 2021, Leo Tanoa received 76 employment related referrals, including those due to job losses through COVID-19. 36 were identified as ready for employment, from which seven have secured employment. The Leo Tanoa Pacific team are now starting to see an increase in opportunities to help people return to or transition into work. MSD's multilingual Managers and staff have regularly joined in-language zoom meetings with Pacific communities to provide advice about supports and services.

A Church Minister who attended a meeting heard about MSD products and sought help for his two sons. Both sons were successfully supported to get a job and transition into work. One son had been struggling to find work since lockdown, having lost his job with LSG Skychef due to COVID and wage subsidy payments ending due to being made redundant. He wanted a full-time job that was night shift to work around his family. The MSD Work Broker supported him to update his CV and forwarded it to NZ Couriers who invited the son for an interview. He was offered a full-time night shift freight sorter role and referred to an MSD Case Manager to offer Transition to Work to support his living costs. The son was excited and didn't think he would be working so soon.

In another situation, a Community Connector supported a Cook Island Pa Matua, who was struggling with their rates, to access support. The man didn't want to cause a fuss and did not trust MSD. Our MSD Case Manager talked to the Pa Matua in his reo, treated him with respect and reassured him he would be safe. He was overjoyed at the way support was provided. He now had a trusted person to go to for help.

COVID-19 was a trigger for the Government to trust and enable more

I believe the way we worked during COVID-19 was successful because Pacific value systems became our system of working. There was strong alignment between Pacific values and government values ([Appendix 1](#)). While our statements uphold many common values, we do not consistently integrate them into our systems and practices.

As government, we clearly understood the problems we needed to address leading into the COVID outbreak. Because of the speed, diversity and localisation of issues and risk, we knew we did not have all the answers or levers to address the crisis properly.

We had to prioritise our relationships. We heard Pacific leaders and communities when they said "We know our peoples and what they need. We have the solutions and we just need someone to enable us." We backed Pacific peoples and their strengths.

We enabled Pacific leaders and communities to show alofa as a form of social justice through the COVID-19 Pacific response. We trusted leaders who knew what the solutions needed to be and who were trusted by our Pacific families and communities.

We also listened to what our people said and supported them in ways they wanted. In South Auckland, the government reached out to local leaders and providers, who we had not worked with consistently in the past. We gave them access to more information and resources, changed our approaches based on Pacific advice, and co-delivered or enabled Pacific-led solutions.

Case study 2: Leaders mobilising vaccinations

Pacific young people were being influenced by misinformation and conspiracy theories on social media. This led to mistrust towards the vaccine. Pacific peoples may have tested and vaccinated less, putting peoples with vulnerable health at more risk.¹

During the 2021 lockdown, Pacific communities supported by Pacific providers responded early and quickly to the needs of their communities. Initially, it was most urgent to ensure families were getting tested for the Delta Variant, self-isolating or transitioning into Managed Isolation Quarantine if they were close contacts, and/or receiving assistance for essential needs, particularly food.

Pacific providers maximised the delivery of ethnic-specific responses by holding vaccination drives at accessible and trusted locations for people and families. Community Connectors hosted by Pacific providers assisted the broader support network, acting as a virtual team to contact Pacific peoples and families identified as having complex needs through testing and vaccination site engagement.

The Pacific response was effective because these efforts were also supported by local Pacific individual and collective strengths to connect and support others. Church and community group leaders, who are well connected and trusted, sent clear and accurate messages to young people to help make informed choices. Because they had already strong connections, community providers reached people who may not have otherwise accessed support directly from agencies. Instead, government agencies focused on strengthening their partnerships with providers to offer extra support avenues for most affected communities. This included the Assembly of God Church cluster where MSD embedded two MSD Case Managers with South Seas to provide on-site support.

We succeeded because we practiced our values and what we said we'd do

Our COVID-19 Pacific response confirmed that for Pacific peoples, in any situation – crisis or not – a whole of community approach works because values align.

The Pacific response was a true partnership between Pacific peoples and government. It was locally led, tapped into strengths of government, Pacific peoples within government and Pacific communities.

The key changes we made to our operating models, which used our existing funding and unlocked the capabilities of our people, are outlined below.

1. We worked jointly across agencies

We worked collaboratively with key agencies (e.g. Te Puni Kōkiri) and were joined up and succinct with our communication to providers.

2. We unlocked the skills of our Pacific staff

We unlocked their potential and enabled them to work in the ways they knew were best. We respond to whole communities needs' with no more money.

3. We contracted differently

We contracted different providers we went straight to local leaders and organisations, not the ones we had always contracted.

4. We equitably allocated funding

We were deliberate about how funding would be allocated. We used a formulation of 50% to Māori populations, 25% to Pacific populations, 15% to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse populations and 10% to other populations.

5. We built trusted partnerships

We worked in partnership with mutual risk and benefit. We trusted that providers would work effectively. In the past we were overly prescriptive, to the point of micro managing everything, and we did not get outcomes.

6. We focused on enabling outcomes

We allowed the use of funding to achieve outcomes, rather than prescriptive outputs or activities that did not necessarily respond to all needs.

7. We wanted to know what worked

We changed our reporting. With stakes so high, we wanted reports that told us the impact for families, rather than measuring things that did not matter.

Case study 3: Local, culturally tailored hardship support

Church ministers said some health services gave different instructions and access was inconsistent. There were delays in getting food and other necessities, which were becoming unaffordable because of less work. This pushed families into more hardship.¹

MSD received many reports of higher demand for food and other services. Before the move to Alert Level 4 in August 2021, food demand was already high. During the shift to Alert Level 4, demand for food help rose again. It was both an access and affordability issue. Demand for food was particularly high around those churches and communities with more positive cases and families self-isolating. Pacific food hubs were established in Auckland to reduce any duplication in distribution food, and to maximise the funding and resources across the food system network. Three Pacific providers - South Seas Health Care, The Fono, and Affirming Works - provided support to other Pacific providers. Also, SIAOLA was also added to help service the Tongan communities. Included in the parcels were culturally appropriate food items, activities for children and information on MSD products and services in various languages. MSD also widened its service offering by allowing direct referrals through to Pacific providers for people who needed financial support to meet longer term needs. Phone support was provided by a team of language proficient (Samoan, Tongan and Cook Islands Māori) MSD Case Managers who were connected to the Leo Tanoa Auckland Pacific network. This was provided on top of specific support such as to the Assembly of God Church.

These changes strengthened agencies' relationships with providers. They focused support on the whole of family and improved cultural elements of existing services.

These models achieved clear results during COVID-19. For MSD, we:

- generated a 22% increase in new referrals, 78% who were current MSD recipients
- enabled language support to 1,067 people, of a total 2,964 referrals²⁷
- streamlined processes through a centralised team working with Pacific partners, and
- reduced inflow to MSD Service Centres and Contact Centres.

While COVID-19 required significant funding, it was low risk because it saved people's lives and stopped existing hardship from becoming worse. While prevention often needs more upfront funding, it offsets response costs that often arise later.

Case study 4: Supporting young people to care and learn

Young Pacific peoples were trying to balance education with supporting their parents and families who were essential workers, who had lost jobs or who have reduced hours. Other young people support by caring for siblings when parents need to work.

As part of the wider Pacific Response, agencies worked well together to ensure young people would stay learning but also could earn money to support their families. This is a great example of a family centric and culturally appropriate way of managing core business. In August 2021, an Employment Liaison Adviser from the Government's Connected team reached out to local high schools in Māngere to see if they needed any support. A careers advisor got in touch who was worried about some students leaving school to support their families because of the lockdown. The local MSD office was asked if it could help. An Employment Case Manager started supporting 34 families (64 children) and carried out full and correct entitlement checks to see if there was a way to increase income in the homes and keep the children in school.

Thirty-one families were supported through financial assistance like supplementary assistance, help with rent arrears or reducing debt recovery rates. Many parents had not realised they qualified for Disability Allowances. For the three families already receiving what they could, they were linked to local groups who could provide extra help. Some students were still keen to work to help out their families, so the Employment Case Manager worked with the school careers advisor who brought in the Tertiary Education Commission. TEC took the lead, contacting essential employers like Courier Post who offered the students part-time work sorting and delivering packages. The part-time work meant the young people could earn money and stay in school. Because the students were so good, the employer reached out to other schools offering work for students over the school holidays and Christmas period.

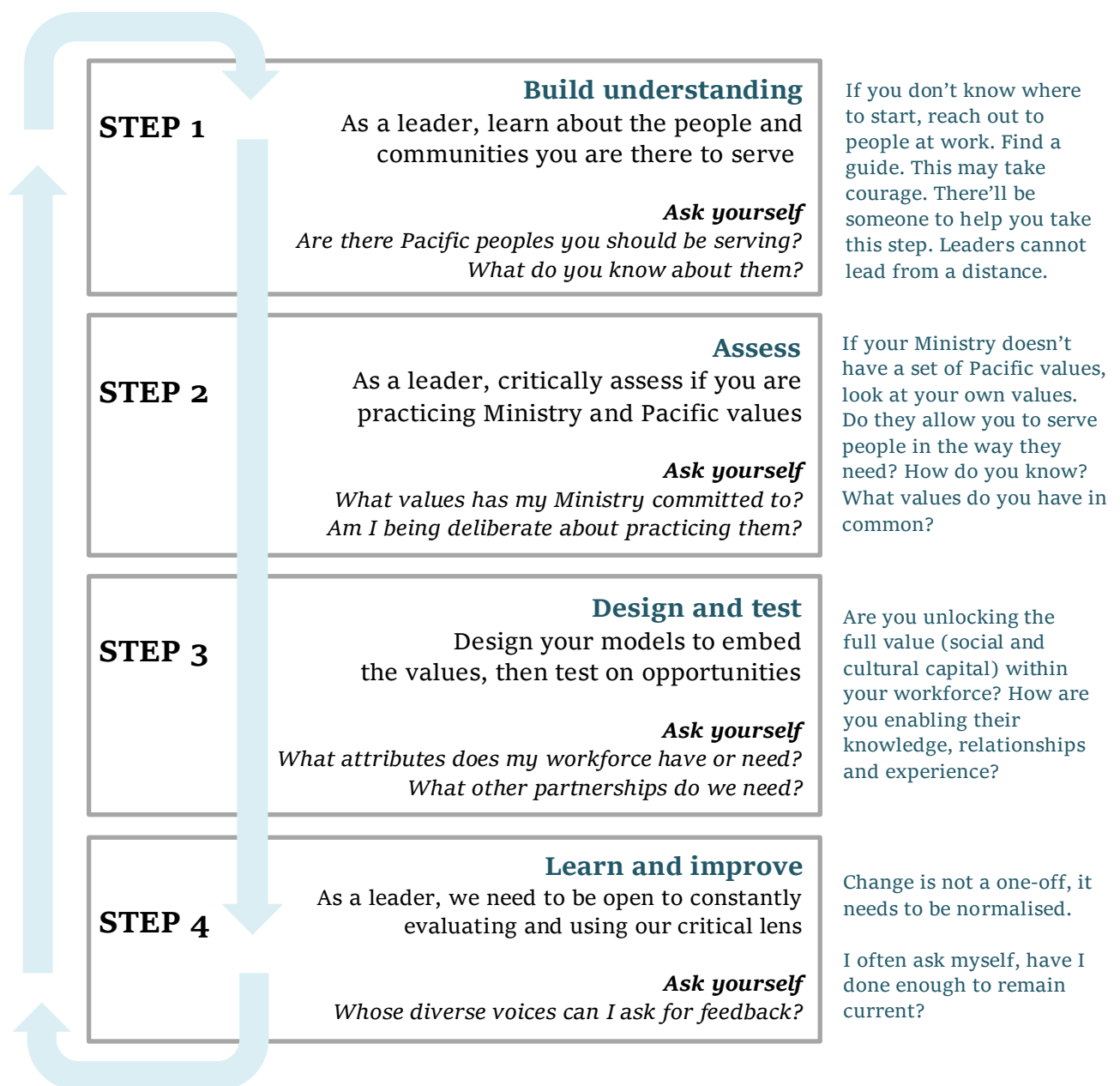
7. What can Public Service leaders do practically now?

COVID-19 solutions can be applied equally in our day to day, as in crisis.

I encourage you to take courageous next steps to move forward from where you are. There are many practical actions that leaders can commit to. These actions can take place within yourself, your organization, as well as in your external work.

We have a choice to be part of the solution or be part of the problem.

As Public Service leaders, the way we work – in service to others, often the most disadvantaged – should embed *their* values into our system and processes. We will need to make tough decisions and big steps, sometimes without a complete picture.



Step 1: Build understanding

As a leader, building a real understanding of who you are there to serve will help you understand how to unlock and practice the values that are important to them.

Being part of the Aotearoa Pacific village, we all have a role to serve. The Pacific peoples you are there to serve may not be your ‘clients’, communities or Pacific leaders. They could be your staff, your peers or bosses – and the families of those people. If you look after your staff, you are looking after their families too.

More questions you could ask:

- Who are you serving?
- What you know about them?
- What is important to them? How do they live and make choices?
- What do they need to be well?

Step 2: Assess

Critically assessing current models against ministry and Pacific values helps you recommend or direct changes to models that embed the values. I find it helpful to:

- Write out the values in the relevant strategy/ies
- Assess how you are delivering on them in practice
- Consider how you could more deliberately make them an action or a direction.

If you look at the value of Cultural Acceptance and Family in MSD’s Pacific Prosperity strategy, you can apply them in your way of engaging a ‘client’, or knowing how to develop a policy or design a program that intends to engage that person.

Example: Applying the value of ‘Cultural Acceptance’

We will recognise Pacific as a cluster of independent Island countries with their own distinct identities sharing similar values. It acknowledges the importance of their languages, culture and protocols and will ensure these are incorporated into the Ministry’s services and functions.²⁸

- A lens of cultural acceptance could be asking a client or designing into your model questions like ‘Is English your first language?’, ‘What language would you prefer to speak in?’ ‘Who is the right person to lead this?’

Example: Applying the value of ‘Family’

We will recognise and acknowledge Pacific peoples live in extended families. The family is the centre of the community and the way of life. Every person belongs to a family, aiga, kāinga and every family belongs to a person. This brings identity and belonging. Ancestry and sense of place involves a kinship with what and who has gone before us.²⁹

- Practicing this value could lead to you engaging the ‘client’ and asking about their needs and aspirations. You could also ask ‘Who else is living with you and what’s important to them?’ This helps you build a collective picture.

Step 3: Design and test

Once you have built your understanding and assessed your model against the values, you can start designing changes to embed them deliberately and visibly.

Like the COVID-19 Pacific welfare response, the changes to your model may be about unlocking attributes and assets already within your workforce, or providing permission to try and embed new things. This does not always need more money.

You could consider and ask:

- Workforce – What attributes does your workforce need to deliver your model (and the peoples you serve)? Are you unlocking their ideas and value?
- Partnerships - What partnerships do you need? How well do you know your partners? What commissioning will build the relationship and outcomes?
- Funding – How have you structured and prioritized your funding for this group and your partners? Is it contestable or enabling?
- Enablers – What other commissioning or activation tools do you need to make things happen? Are you providing access to information and resources that supports Pacific peoples, communities and partners to lead?

Be deliberate about the decisions and the risks. As leaders, we often do not have a complete picture, but we can be confident about making calls aligned to values.

Step 4: Learn and improve

As a leader, we need to have a critical lens to see how we can evolve. We can create permissive environments to learn, starting with our own self-reflection. Our decisions are not always going to be best – we are not the be all and end all.

Seek out feedback from trusted people, guides through the process, but also Pacific peoples who we work with and support. This makes sure what we do is fit for purpose. Solutions live within the people we're working with and we know people and our environment changes. What we do in one year, let alone five, may no longer work.

We know we are practicing our Ministry and our Pacific values when we have developed relationships and trust with Pacific leaders, communities and peoples.

This means what we are doing is not a one-off, but we have shown it consistently.

Recommendations to lift Pacific intergenerational wellbeing

Pacific intergenerational wellbeing is an urgent issue and opportunity that we can improve if we work together, applying what we learned during COVID-19.

After seeing the benefits of those approaches, it is worrying that some organisations and people want to put the old systems and processes back. Have we thought about why? What are the benefits, when we have seen such good outcomes?

Also, despite good intentions and effort, we as agencies largely work separately. But often we are serving the same households – this is why partnership is needed.

I believe that by taking the personal steps and designing changes to practice Ministry and Pacific values deliberately and consistently, Public Service leaders will work better through collaborative models at bigger, more complex scales.

We have a great opportunity working together in these four areas to lift Pacific intergenerational wellbeing, and reverse concerning trends for our young people.

I have made suggestions for improvement that build on what we learned during COVID-19, and what I have seen through my lived and professional experience.

1. Pacific peoples' wellness

What common things are Pacific peoples asking of us that we all can contribute to? How can we align our systems to what Pacific peoples value?

- Support Pacific mental, physical, spiritual wellbeing and overall wealth by:
 - increasing access to information in ways that connect with people
 - increasing access to services, including entitlements, in ways that are culturally tailored using Pacific staff and providers, and
 - promoting options to improve financial security that draws on Pacific strengths.

2. Pacific community providers

How can we work as a village, with greater understanding and clearer roles?

- Consistently partner and enable Pacific community providers by:
 - collaboratively investing in community capability
 - giving access to information
 - funding and procurement that enables access/equity (not competitive)
 - normalising high trust and working toward outcomes, and
 - enabling to deliver services that draw on Pacific values and strengths.

3. Education and jobs

How can we unlock Pacific strengths and get more young people in high skill jobs?

- Get to know young people and their families, and how to support them to learn.
- Ask Pacific peoples what they aspire to do and encourage them to enter a career that is sustainable and suitable for themselves and their families.
- Identify and support Pacific people, particularly young people, to enter into training that moves more people into higher paid jobs or businesses.
- Promote role models and champions within Pacific communities.

4. New Pacific arrivals, particularly permanent residents

How can we set up new Pacific arrivals in our Aotearoa village to succeed? Do they need earlier and more adequate support? What is the cost of not doing this?

- Review current policies with Pacific community partners and leaders to ensure they do not create hardship on arrival.
- Consider providing early, adequate support for new Pacific permanent residents.

Appendix 1 – Practicing shared values in COVID-19

Pacific welfare response approach	Examples of Ministry values and focus areas (MSD [^] , MoE ^{**} , MBIE [*])	Relevant Pacific values
Worked through collective principles and partnership	<p>Mahi Tahi-collaborate, connect and partner with our communities; puāwai-enable partnerships between business, community and industry*</p> <p>Work reciprocally with Pacific communities to respond to unmet needs; partner with families to design education opportunities; enable every teacher, leader and education professional to become culturally competent**</p> <p>Mahi tahi-we work together, making a difference for communities; understand that Pacific peoples know what works best for Pacific and build partnerships that support Pacific to be confidence, innovative and self-determining[^]</p>	<p>Felagalogoma'i – acts of kindness, love and support must be returned</p> <p>Soalaupule – inclusive decision-making; decisions on consensus</p> <p>Va fealoaloa'i – working together co-operatively to benefit every person; mutual interests and goals</p>

Example: MSD created the Auckland Pacific Community Response Group, including Auckland Council and key central government agencies, for Pacific providers to twice weekly share key insights and be responsively supported to address urgent needs of their families.

Case study: Aiga approach to learning and earning

Offered culturally appropriate services, including access to information	<p>People are at the centre of design and delivery of our services Pae Kahurangi-listen to lead the way; Pono me te tika-embrace the differences of others, always*</p> <p>Pacific leaders and their families feel accepted and included**</p> <p>Manaaki-we care about the wellbeing and success of people; Staff are culturally appropriate and equipped to provide clear and empowering information to Pacific peoples, families and communities[^]</p>	<p>Fa'aalaolo – respectful relationships regardless of age, gender, beliefs, sexuality</p> <p>Soalaupule – inclusive decision-making</p> <p>Aiga – family; identity and sense of belonging</p>
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Example: The Pacific All of Government group ensured information and communications were available in up to nine Pacific languages across different agencies. This has enabled our Pacific populations to know how to respond to COVID-19 and access essential items.

Case study: Leaders mobilising vaccinations

Table (continued)

Pacific welfare response approach	Examples of Ministry values and focus areas (MSD [^] , MoE ^{**} , MBIE [*])	Relevant Pacific values
Enabled support through trusted, existing relationships (e.g., Pacific providers and community groups)	Puāwai; create an enabling environment for Aotearoa New Zealand’s businesses and communities to succeed* Pacific workforce is grown, valued and supported** Tika me te pono-sense of responsibility to be honest, do the right thing with integrity; Providers are respected, trusted and valued for their experience; MSD leaders recognise Pacific staff can be key contributors to building greater partnerships^	Alofa – sense of responsibility and duty to others; compassion Fa’aalalo – appreciate and honor self and others

Case study: Local, culturally tailored hardship support

Offered holistic wellbeing services, including income, material goods, cultural and emotional support	Leaders of thinking and delivery for economic wellbeing of New Zealanders; Pae Kahurangi-learn from past to shape future, protect what’s precious; Māia-curious, explore new ideas* Pacific leaders’ cultures, faith and beliefs are valued in education** Whānau-we are inclusive and build belonging; commit to relationships and investments that support Pacific aspirations to achieve prosperity...^	Tapua’iga – spirituality as a core part of wellbeing; connects past, present and future Aiga – family, identity, sense of belonging Felagalogoma’i – maintaining balance between peoples and the environment
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Example: A partnership between MSD, Auckland City Council, Northern Regional Health Coordination Centre and Auckland Regional Public Health Service directly helped Aucklanders who were unable to leave their homes and need support.

Case study: Supporting young people to care and learn

* MBIE, Strategic Intentions 2021-2025; similar themes to MBIE Pacific Economic Strategy 2015-2021

^ Ministry of Social Development, Statement of Intent 2021-2025 and Pacific Prosperity

** Ministry of Education Action Plan for Pacific Education 2030 Vision and MoE Statement of Intent 2018-23

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- ¹ See also appendix five, Ministry for Pacific Peoples Pacific Wellbeing Strategy.
- ² Ministry for Pacific Peoples, *Pacific Aotearoa Lalanga Fou*, 2018, pp. 25, <https://www.mpp.govt.nz/assets/Reports/Pacific-Aotearoa-Lalanga-Fou-Report.pdf>
- ³ At pp. 25.
- ⁴ At pp. 17.
- ⁵ At pp. 17. See also *The Treasury Trends in Wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand: 2000-2020* pp. 11-12, Trends in Wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand, 2000-2020 ([treasury.govt.nz](https://www.treasury.govt.nz)).
- ⁶ There are over 15 Pacific ethnic groups in New Zealand. The eight main groups are Samoan, Cook Island Māori, Tongan, Niuean, Fijian, Tokelauan, Tuvaluan and Kiribati.
- ⁷ Stats NZ *2018 Census*, <https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-ethnic-group-summaries/pacific-peoples>.
- ⁸ Stats NZ *2018 Census*.
- ⁹ Pasefika Proud, *The Profile of Pacific Peoples in New Zealand*, 2016 at pp. 3, Pacific peoples in New Zealand ([pasefikaproud.co.nz](https://www.pasefikaproud.co.nz)).
- ¹⁰ Ministry of Social Development, A Snapshot of Pacific peoples (internal product)
- ¹¹ The Treasury, *Trends in Wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand: 2000-2020*, pp. 12.
- ¹² Stats NZ, 'Population, by regional council' *2018 Census*.
- ¹³ Stats NZ, *2018 Census*.
- ¹⁴ MPP, *Pacific Aotearoa Lalanga Fou*, pp. 18.
- ¹⁵ Stats NZ, *2018 Census*.
- ¹⁶ In 2016, 94% of Pacific migrants felt New Zealand was their home, greater than all other migrants. See MBIE, *Pacific Migrant Trends and Settlement Outcomes Report*, pp. 39.
- ¹⁷ Stats NZ, 2013 Census. See also 2018 Census. In 2018, 99.4% of Pacific peoples spoke at least one language other than English. The remaining 0.6% were mostly under 15 year olds. In 2016, 95% Pacific migrants arriving said they spoke English well or very well, higher than others. See Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, *Pacific Migrant Trends and Settlement Outcomes Report*, 2018, pp. 38.
- ¹⁸ Pasefika Proud, *The Profile of Pacific Peoples in New Zealand*.
- ¹⁹ MPP, *Pacific Aotearoa Lalanga Fou*, pp. 25.
- ²⁰ Ministry of Women and Ministry for Pacific Peoples *Pacific women and men in business*, 2021, pp. 11, *Pacific-Women-and-Men-in-Business.pdf* ([mpp.govt.nz](https://www.mpp.govt.nz))
- ²¹ The Treasury *Trends in Wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand: 2000-2020*, pp. 10.
- ²² The Treasury, pp. 10.
- ²³ Stats NZ, *Income by sex, region, ethnic groups and income source* (1998 to August 2022) Income by sex, region, ethnic groups and income source ([stats.govt.nz](https://www.stats.govt.nz)).
- ²⁴ From 2013-18, over 12,000 Pacific peoples arrived on a Family stream visa, with 60% coming from Samoa and 23% from Fiji, then Tonga. The number arriving on a Dependent Child visa almost doubled in these five years, 87% being Samoans. Around 7,500 Pacific Peoples arrived permanently through the Samoan Quota and Pacific Access Category. From 2013-2018, 69,014 Pacific peoples arrived on a temporary work visa. This grew by 48% over the five years, driven by an increase of 36,899 workers arriving under the Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme. Most people on a temporary visa came from Fiji (32%), Vanuatu (25%), Tonga (19%) and Samoa (16%).
- ²⁵ Pasefika Proud, *Prepare Pacific: Community Support and Insights Report* (September 2021), pp. 5.
- ²⁶ At pp. 5.
- ²⁷ From 24 August and 31 December 2021; MSD product "Supporting Pacific Peoples: Delivery in Partnership".
- ²⁸ Ministry of Social Development, *Pacific Prosperity: Our People, Our Solutions, Our Future*, <https://msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/about-msd/strategies/pacific-strategy/pacific-prosperity-our-people-our-solutions-our-future-english-version.pdf>, pp. 20.
- ²⁹ Ministry of Social Development, *Pacific Prosperity: Our People, Our Solutions, Our Future*, pp. 20.