



**Malatest**  
International

**Final report:**

**Promoting financial literacy  
and capability in Pacific  
communities**

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## Executive summary

### Purpose and background

As part of a national response to improve financial capability for hard-to-reach, low-income and culturally diverse groups through the 2021-2024 National Strategy for Financial Capability (the Strategy), there are a range of government and non-government funded programmes and services providing broad (e.g., basic numeracy, spending, budgeting, and debt management) and specialised services (e.g. home ownership or planning for retirement). However, Pacific peoples continue to encounter barriers to accessing services to improve their financial well-being.

In March 2024, the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) commissioned Malatest International to conduct qualitative research on Pacific peoples' financial literacy and broaden understandings of critical success factors that promote financial literacy in Pacific communities in Aotearoa, New Zealand (New Zealand).

This research is intended to inform the development of government and public sector policies, programmes and initiatives that are responsive to the financial capability needs, aspirations and well-being of Pacific communities.

### Research aims

This research aimed to:

- Broaden understandings of the enablers and barriers to the uptake/utilisation of financial literacy and capability programmes by Pacific peoples
- Synthesise data gathered and insights from other literature/research on financial literacy to identify and explore critical success factors needed to promote financial literacy in Pacific communities.

The research questions informed by a rapid literature review included:

- Awareness - How aware are Pacific communities of financial literacy and capability?
- Promotion – what are effective ways to promote Pacific engagement in financial literacy and capability programmes?
- Accessibility – how can financial literacy and capability services be made more accessible to Pacific communities?

- Enhancing financial capability – what else can be done to enhance the financial capability of Pacific communities?

### Research approach and methods

This qualitative research drew on various data collection sources, including a rapid literature review, an environmental scan and in-depth interviews and focus groups with various stakeholders. Given the timeframe and resources, data collection focused on Pacific communities in Auckland leveraging off existing networks with stakeholders currently delivering Pacific financial capability services.

#### Data collection methods

- **Rapid literature review** focused on academic and grey literature to summarise and synthesise existing research findings on what factors have been successful or unsuccessful in promoting financial literacy. The literature review was restricted to publications within the past decade.
- **The environmental scan** identified current programmes and work in Pacific financial capability carried out by public, private, NGO/charity sector and Pacific communities.
- **In-depth interviews and focus groups** were conducted with 10 key stakeholders and 35 community participants. Participants represented Samoan, Tongan, Niuean, Cook Island, Fijian and non-Pacific ethnicities. Interviews and focus groups were conducted in-person and online, based on participant preferences. Most sessions took place in Auckland, while others were held online with participants from the Otago, Waikato, and Bay of Plenty regions.

### Key recommendations and findings

- Financial capability programmes and services need to be framed as family-centred, contributing to building intergenerational economic well-being and inclusive of cultural practices (e.g. cultural gifting and tithing)
- Engaged and supportive Pacific community leadership and leaders (within church, sports groups and extended families) were critical success factors to respective community engagement in financial capability programmes and noted the importance of mandatory attendance. Community leaders across different groups were also enthusiastic advocates for promoting services through word of mouth to their wider networks, which further enhanced participants' trust in services and programmes.

- Financial capability programmes have the potential to support economic, cultural and general well-being for Pacific individuals, families and communities. However, there remains a need for greater understanding and awareness of their importance since participants commonly perceived that these services were for other Pacific individuals who were more in need. As such, incentives such as vouchers were noted as encouraging initial participation.
- Conventional promotional and awareness strategies such as engagement with church groups, Pacific-language radio shows, and Facebook were considered relatively effective. New social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok also appealed to most participants. Using short stories and reels to promote both the positive and negative impacts of financial capability was seen as an effective strategy for time-poor consumers.
- To enhance the financial capability of Pacific communities, participants noted a need to increase Pacific representation and inclusivity within and across all levels of the banking and finance sector to ensure the availability of culturally friendly and relevant financial products and services. Such initiatives can foster greater engagement of Pacific peoples with financial products and services, and support opportunities for economic empowerment among Pacific communities.

#### Other findings

- A holistic understanding of well-being means that financial capability and economic well-being must also include and recognise social, human, and cultural capital.
  - In alignment with holistic views of well-being, it is important that financial capability services are linked to other social services and supports to help Pacific communities and participants meet immediate needs (e.g., mental health services, food parcels, assistance with housing and the cost of living).
- Participants emphasised the importance of recognising the diversity among Pacific peoples when promoting services. However, trust in referrers, facilitators and other programme participants was universally important.
- Improving access to financial capability services needs to focus on two areas:
  - Addressing barriers to accessing financial capability programmes such as competing priorities, reluctance to discuss finances, low awareness and timing of programmes.
  - Improving support systems that empower Pacific communities to build financial capability through translation of resources and programme delivery, strong leadership and leveraging digital technology.

- Participants who had completed financial capability programmes considered the financial capability learnings gained beneficial, but more could be done to tailor programme delivery and content for varying levels of needs by Pacific communities.

## 1. Introduction

Pacific peoples have made significant contributions to Aotearoa, New Zealand (New Zealand) for more than a century—economically, socially, politically, and culturally. While the latest figures from the World Bank (2021) show that Pacific peoples have contributed 8 billion dollars to New Zealand’s GDP per annum, there are opportunities to further improve the economic development and well-being of all Pacific individuals, families and communities. A key factor identified in previous international and national research in improving and enhancing economic well-being and financial security is financial literacy.

Financial literacy can mean different things to different people. In New Zealand, it is used both as a broad, wide-ranging concept, including economic concepts and as a narrow focus on basic money management. For the purposes of this project, the following definition is most apt:

*[An] individual’s ability to acquire essential knowledge and skills in order to make decisions with an awareness of the possible financial consequences. It encompasses being able to manage personal finances in changing circumstances. (Widdowson and Hailwood, 2007)*

A related concept that is used more commonly in New Zealand is financial capability, which is defined as:

*Financial capability goes deeper than what we know about money. It’s feeling confident to make wise judgements about how we use and manage our money in ways that benefit us now and in the future, enables us to reach our goals, provide for our family and ultimately reach retirement in good financial shape. It’s about well-being. (Te Ara Ahunga Ora Retirement Commission, n.d)*

Financial capability encompasses financial literacy and most financial services and programmes currently offered in New Zealand focus on financial capability. Therefore, for the purposes of this research, financial capability will be used as it encompasses financial literacy.

As noted by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), “Pacific peoples have the ability to achieve financial well-being through financial literacy. However, the community has had a low uptake of financial literacy programmes targeted at Pacific peoples thus far. The challenge then for government agencies is their ability to effectively direct this education towards the community to enhance financial literacy.” (MBIE, 2024)

In March 2024, MBIE commissioned Malatest International to conduct qualitative research underpinned by Pacific research philosophies to identify and understand the critical success factors to promote financial capability services in Pacific communities in New Zealand.

## 1.1. Research aims and questions

This research aims to:

- Broaden understandings of the enablers and barriers to the uptake/utilisation of financial literacy and capability programmes by Pacific peoples
- Synthesise data gathered and insights from other literature/research on financial literacy to identify and explore critical success factors needed to promote financial literacy in Pacific communities.

This research is intended to help inform government policy and programmes and support the public sector to be more responsive to the financial capability needs and aspirations of Pacific communities.

The research questions, informed by a rapid literature review, provide a basis for the development of questionnaires and other data collection methods. (see Appendix 1)

- Awareness - How aware are Pacific communities of financial literacy and capability?
- Promotion – what are effective ways to promote Pacific engagement in financial literacy and capability programmes?
- Accessibility – how can financial literacy and capability services be made more accessible to Pacific communities?
- Enhancing financial capability – what else can be done to enhance the financial capability of Pacific communities?



## 2. Rapid literature review

This section presents the findings from the rapid literature review that was undertaken to:

- 1) Explore current research on promoting financial literacy programmes with Pacific communities to identify success factors in promoting financial literacy programmes.
- 2) Identify current financial literacy programmes for Pacific communities in New Zealand and what strategies were used to promote them.
- 3) Inform the development and refinement of the research data collection tools and contextualise and analyse study findings.

### 2.1. Pacific peoples in New Zealand

For this report, the term “Pacific peoples” refers to individuals from the seven largest Pacific groups in New Zealand – Samoans, Tongans, Fijians, Cook Islanders, Niueans, Tokelauans, and Tuvaluans (Stats NZ, 2018<sup>1</sup>). It is important to note that while there are commonalities among this group – such as core values including collective ways of living, harmony, respect, family, community, spirituality, and a holistic worldview of life (Macpherson, Spoonley and Anae, 2001) – Pacific peoples are linguistically, culturally and geographically diverse cultures. The term “Pacific peoples” is used here to recognise a community sharing histories from the Pacific region and New Zealand.

Pacific peoples have been an integral part of New Zealand for over a century. The Cook Islands and Niue became New Zealand territories in 1901, followed by Tokelau in 1925. After the Second World War, New Zealand’s government welcomed Pacific migrants to address labour shortages. Initial labour programmes saw many young Pacific men migrating for agriculture and forestry work and young Pacific women for domestic roles. The late 1960s and early 1970s manufacturing boom saw another influx of Pacific migrants seeking better employment, education, healthcare and new experiences (Treasury, 2023). However, they faced numerous challenges adapting to new social and economic environments.

The downturn of the New Zealand economy in the mid-1970s led to increased unemployment, and Pacific people faced hostility, exemplified by the Dawn Raids of 1974-1976. The Dawn Raids, described by Dr Melanie Anae (2020) as a blatantly

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<sup>1</sup> The 2023 census data estimate the Pacific population in New Zealand at 442,632 (8.9%). To ensure consistency and comparability across demographic categories, 2018 census data has been used, given the full 2023 census data is pending release.

racist attack, as well as the restructuring of the labour market in the late 1980s and early 1990s, have had lasting negative effects on the health and well-being of Pacific peoples in New Zealand. Despite these barriers, Pacific peoples have shown remarkable resilience, becoming a defining feature of New Zealand's society, forming the largest migrant Pacific population globally (Macpherson et al., 2001), and significantly influencing the country's identity, economy, culture and social fabric.

#### 2.1.1. A growing, youthful, urban and increasingly multi-ethnic identity population.

The Pacific peoples demographic data available from the New Zealand Census in 2018<sup>2</sup> is summarised in this section.

**8%**

Pacific peoples make up nearly 8% of the New Zealand population, or 381,642 people. By 2038, the Pacific population in New Zealand is estimated to be between 530,000 and 650,000 (Stats NZ 2018).

The seven largest Pacific groups in New Zealand are Samoan (48%), Tongan (22%), Cook Island (21%), Niuean (8%), Fijian (5%), Tokelauan (2%) and Tuvaluan (1%)<sup>3</sup>. Forty per cent of Pacific peoples identify with more than one ethnicity. This demographic shift contrasts with the demographics of the 1950s and 60s when most Pacific peoples were born in the Pacific Islands. It highlights evolving perspectives and experiences within the Pacific community in New Zealand now and in the future.

**66%**

Sixty-six per cent of Pacific peoples are born in New Zealand, and among those born overseas, over 60% have lived in New Zealand for more than a decade.

Pacific peoples in New Zealand have a notably younger age profile than the overall population. This youthful profile contrasts with the ageing trend seen on the broader population. As New Zealand's population ages, the working-age segment of the Pacific population is expected to grow significantly.

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<sup>2</sup> The 2023 census data estimate the Pacific population in New Zealand at 442,632 (8.9%). To ensure consistency and comparability across demographic categories, 2018 census data has been used, given the full 2023 census data is pending release.

<sup>3</sup> Percentages sum to more than 100% as many individuals identify with more than one Pacific identity.

Pacific		European
<b>23.4</b>	Median age	<b>41.4</b>
<b>55%</b>	Under 25 years	<b>34%</b>



Most Pacific peoples live on the North Island, with the greatest concentration in Auckland (64%), Wellington (11%) and Waikato and Canterbury (5% each). Most Pacific peoples (93%) live in an urban area, although the proportion of Pacific peoples living in rural areas is expected to increase.

### 2.1.2. A religious and bilingual population



A high proportion (71%) of Pacific peoples affiliate with at least one religion (compared to 45% of Europeans), most of whom are affiliated as Christian. The percentage of Pacific who have no religious affiliation has increased from 14% in 2006 to 23% in 2018. Cook Islanders are increasingly reporting no affiliation to religion.

**92%** Ninety-two per cent of Pacific peoples are English speakers, and 38% speak two languages.

The number of speakers of Cook Islands Māori, Niuean, and Tokelauan languages has steadily declined compared to Samoan, Tongan, Fijian and Tuvaluan languages. The Ministry for Pacific Peoples observed a strong link between church attendance and the use of Pacific languages (MPP, 2018).

### 2.1.3. A population impacted by social inequities

As demonstrated in the comparisons below, Pacific peoples in New Zealand often face socioeconomic disadvantages, marginalisation and higher rates of adverse outcomes in health, well-being, employment, education and other areas.

	Pacific	Europeans
<b>Median personal annual income</b>	<b>\$24,300</b>	<b>\$34,500</b>

Unemployment rate (June 2022)	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>
School leavers with NCEA or above	<b>76.2%</b>	<b>81.1%</b>
Individual home ownership	<b>21%</b>	<b>58%</b>
Severe housing deprivation (per 10,000)	<b>245.5</b>	<b>41.2</b>
Dwellings lack basic amenities (disabled)	<b>17.3%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>
Dwellings lack basic amenities (not disabled)	<b>9.7%</b>	<b>3.1%</b>
% children living in material hardship	<b>25.6%</b>	<b>7.6%</b>

**Note:** Adapted from *Te Mana Ola: The Pacific Health Strategy* (Ministry of Health 2023, p. 32)

A key economic feature of Pacific families is remittances. According to the World Bank, New Zealand (mostly Pacific families living in New Zealand) sent \$2.4 billion in remittances overseas in 2017, with \$65 million to Samoa, \$55 million to Tonga and \$44 million to Fiji. As of May 2021, remittances as a share of GDP were estimated at 38% for Tonga and 19% for Samoa. Remittances, economic and otherwise, are an important mechanism to keep families connected and social networks thriving as a social protection system for Pacific families both in the region and New Zealand (Ng Shiu, 2023).

As the Pacific population grows, their influence on New Zealand's well-being also increases. Pacific peoples have significant potential to contribute to the country's social and economic prosperity; therefore, challenges to their well-being will also affect the well-being of all New Zealanders.

## 2.2. Promoting financial capability and literacy services

In 2005, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published its seminal report *Improving Financial Literacy: Analysis of Policies and Issues* (OECD, 2005). Since then, international and national research and literature have built on this work. Five common critical success factors amongst most research studies were identified to promote financial literacy programmes. These were awareness, promotion, accessibility and enhancing financial literacy, as summarised below:

1. Awareness – comprehensive understanding and awareness about finances, income generation and money management are a core component of financial capability. International and national research has shown inequalities in financial education as a key driver for a limited understanding of financial literacy, leading to behaviours that negatively impact people's economic well-being (Cosnan, 2012; Xiao et al., 2022). Across all literature globally and in New Zealand, Indigenous populations, ethnic minority groups and low-income earners were all identified as priority groups where improved access to financial education can improve understanding and awareness of basic financial literacy fundamentals (Hasler et al., 2023; Sherradan 2010; Whitney et al., 2014).
2. Promotion – research has identified the need for social integration and emotional anchoring when promoting financial capability services (Gaur et al., 2022). Social integration means framing and promoting financial capability regarding general well-being rather than focusing solely on economic well-being. An example includes programmes targeting pathways to homeownership. While these programmes are technically focused on housing, a core component for Pacific communities includes financial literacy (MPP, 2023). Recent literature has highlighted the need to ensure young people are identified as a target group to improve financial literacy and capability. A key component for promotion to this group involves using social media to promote both positive and negative stories. The aim is to provide emotional attachment to promote consumer behaviours that positively impact economic well-being. Detrimental behaviours include seeking third-tier lending, participating in 'quick' money-making schemes like affiliate and multi-level marketing, and spending money on luxury items. Positive behaviours include saving, contributing to KiwiSaver where relevant and looking into investments and shares (Gaur et al., 2020).
3. Accessibility – This focuses on ensuring financial capability services are delivered to those who need them the most. Literature from the UK and the US has highlighted the inequities in financial capability service delivery and

has looked to open online services to improve access to financial education services (Nguyen-Cousin, 2019; Sherradan, 2010). Considering a life course approach, it is also important to embed services into existing institutions to provide better access for people in need – this includes delivering programmes and schools in workplaces (Hasler et al., 2023; Lusardi and Messy, 2023). One example focused on Pacific peoples in New Zealand includes the Alo Vaka initiative (MBIE, 2023), which funds financial literacy micro-credentials in the workplace. Social service delivery, such as health access for Pacific communities, has also looked at ways to improve accessibility, including geographic locations, time of day to account for working families and the cost of transport. These findings are also translatable to financial capability services.

4. Enhancing financial literacy services—there is very little research on this area in a New Zealand context. However, in international literature, the focus has been on leveraging existing opportunities to collaborate with role models to promote and act as facilitators, as well as connecting with grassroots or community organisations to enhance access and delivery for target populations (Hasler et al., 2023; Lusardi and Messi, 2023).

#### Pacific peoples and financial capability

Research since the late 1990s has noted that Pacific peoples' vulnerability to financial hardship and problem debt is more likely because of a youth population, limited or no access to financial information and limited levels of financial literacy.

Pacific peoples are more likely than other New Zealanders to experience unemployment, low employment and low income due to lower skills and qualifications, lower fluency and proficiency in English, the field of study and the industries they work in, preferences for non-wage components of the job, discrimination and inequality. Pacific peoples continue to earn lower wages than other ethnic groups (Stats NZ, 2018)

In low-income households, it has been established that if financial capability is poor, poor financial decisions have a larger impact – less likely to have a “financial cushion” (Birkenmaier, Curley & Sherraden, 2013). The cumulative effects of overrepresentation in low-income jobs, greater vulnerability to economic downturns and limited access to housing contribute to the overall poor financial capability experienced by Pacific peoples (Gamble, 2022).

Previous research on Pacific peoples and problem debt identified the lack of financial literacy, limited access to financial information and a youthful population as key factors impacting on their vulnerability to financial hardship and problem debt (Families Commission, 2012). Since these early reports, there have been a number of

government and public-private partnerships to improve financial literacy in Pacific communities and across New Zealand (Gaur et al., 2020).

Efforts to improve the financial capability of New Zealanders are built on the He Rautaki-ā-motu mō te Āheitanga Ahumoni –The National Strategy for Financial Capability 2021 - 2024 (the National Strategy) (Retirement Commission, 2021a). The National Strategy aims to unite the financial capability community around three goals: creating consistent content, working together, and demystifying money. These goals focus on three priority audiences: women, Māori, and Pacific Peoples.

A recent summary of Pacific peoples' financial capability based on a small non-generalisable sample of 187 participants who completed the 2021 New Zealand Financial Capability Survey (Retirement Commission, 2021b) found that:

- Pacific participants contribute to KiwiSaver in similar numbers as non-Pacific; however, for non-contributors, 48% of Pacific women, who do not contribute, say they are stay-at-home parents.
- Pacific participants are 50% less likely to have general insurance than non-Pacific, making Pacific peoples financially vulnerable to health issues and car accidents.
- Fifty-eight percent of Pacific participants are more likely to run short of money for food or other regular expenses (in comparison to 36% of non-Pacific). The impact of this is reflected in an increase in Pacific peoples borrowing money to pay off debt.
- Pacific ethnicity is strongly associated with gifting and generosity, with 46% agreeing that they are generous when it comes to koha. However, this does have an impact, with 32% agreeing with the statement that they give money to others when they cannot afford to.
- Pacific ethnicity is positively associated with higher scores on questions around preparedness for retirement. This positive attitude, independent of other socio-economic factors, suggests that Pacific peoples may view both financial comfort and preparedness for retirement differently from non-Pacific peoples based on a collective and holistic world view. This aligns with the research into the importance of giving and remittances as a social protective factor (Ng Shiu, 2023).

### 2.3. Current financial capability services for Pacific communities

The New Zealand government has recognised the need to improve financial capability for hard-to-reach, low-income and culturally diverse groups through the National Strategy (Retirement Commission, 2021a). The aim of improving the financial capability of Pacific communities is a shared goal across multiple

government departments, focusing on enhancing the Pacific peoples' economic well-being (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2018). Improving Pacific peoples' financial capability encompasses:

- Building intergenerational Pacific wealth through facilitating home ownership
- Fostering better preparedness for retirement among Pacific communities
- Alleviating financial hardship.

Some financial capability services and support have a broad audience, while others are specific to Pacific peoples in financial hardship. Services include a wide range of topics (e.g. basic numeracy, spending, budgeting, and debt management) and specialised topics (e.g. home ownership or planning for retirement).

In response, stakeholders have set aside funds for financial capability services, including:

- **The Pacific Financial Capability Development Programme (PFC) funded by MPP.** Fale mo Aiga: Building intergenerational wealth and well-being through home ownership. As part of this work, supporting Pacific families' ability to establish homeownership plans through financial literacy and financial management of their resources. The first component of Fale mo aiga is well underway; in the two years leading up to 30 June 2023, 2708 people enrolled in financial literacy programmes and 99 families purchased new homes.
- **Sorted Pacific Peoples Pathways to Home Ownership programme funded by the Retirement Commission.** This free online programme provides Pacific peoples with the tools to build financial capability no matter what stage of their financial journey they are on.
- **Building Financial Capability Services funded by MSD.** The government delivered a \$3 million funding boost for Building Financial Capability Services in 2023, which includes services for general populations such as Money Talks (free financial helpline), financial mentors, money mates (peer-led support group that encourages people to learn from each other), building financial capability plus (intensive support for people with complex needs), the generator (community action initiative to support income generating activities by providing seed funding for micro-enterprise), microfinance and debt solution (affordable credit for people on low to medium incomes).

Financial capability support services are provided to a range of stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and private organisations. Services are delivered in different ways across the sector and funded by several different sources.



#### 2.4. Summary: Opportunities to improve access to financial capability programmes

In New Zealand, people have a range of options for accessing financial capability support, including through trained and certified professionals, volunteers and peers. However, recent research suggests that hard-to-reach communities prefer to use informal sources of financial support (McFarlane et al., 2017). From the literature, the following key themes were identified to improve access to financial capability programmes for Pacific communities:

- Provide financial capability programmes that are grounded in a cultural context.
  - MoneyMates programme run by the church community, using familiar Pacific concepts.
  - Participants are able to communicate in their own language.
  - Supporting intergenerational sharing and learning (young and old together) – participants attended with family members as demonstrated in Alo Vaka micro-credential programmes.
- Introduce other forms of resources, e.g., using Pacific radio stations to access information in a language that is easy for Pacific communities to grasp.
- Judgement and shame are barriers to support. People don't often use support because they don't think about it or don't think that it's for them. Negative experiences with services can cause harm. Full transparency is required for people to feel that formal services are working with them rather than for them.
- In two small studies, Māori whānau and Pacific families, despite having limited incomes and facing difficulties meeting basic needs, seldom labelled themselves as poor. They often leaned on extensive cultural resources and support systems, focusing on positives like having a stable home, strong parenting, and love rather than on uncontrollable external factors (Torrie & Bailey, 2017).

The limited available research has shown that building the financial capability of Pacific communities will assist in supporting themselves and their families in the long term. There is an emerging body of evidence of what content should be included in financial capability and how these should be delivered. Overall, financial capability programmes for Pacific peoples need to be accessible, culturally appropriate, and timely to address people's immediate and longer-term financial well-being goals. However, what is missing is a clear picture of how many Pacific individuals, families, and communities are engaged in these programmes overall and the best ways to promote services to benefit all Pacific families.

### 3. The research approach

This section describes the research methods used to gather and analyse data collected for this study. It also highlights the strengths and limitations of the research approach

#### 3.1. Research methods summary

The research drew on various data collection sources, including a literature review, an environmental scan, and in-depth interviews and focus groups with various stakeholders. Interviews and focus groups were conducted between April and May 2024.

Method	Detailed description
<b>Literature review</b>	<p>The literature review focused on academic and grey literature to summarise and synthesise existing research findings on what factors have been successful or unsuccessful in promoting Pacific financial literacy in New Zealand.</p> <p>A description of how the literature review was conducted, including databases searched, search terms and inclusion criteria can be found below in Appendix 2.</p>
<b>Environmental scan</b>	<p>The environmental scan focused on identifying current Pacific capability programmes in New Zealand, encompassing initiatives by the public, private, NGO/charity sectors and the Pacific community. These programmes ranged from financial literacy workshops and online resources to various community outreach initiatives. This scan helped to identify key stakeholders to engage with for the research and recruitment of participants.</p>
<b>Interviews and focus groups</b>	<p>In-depth interviews were carried out with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Key stakeholders (n=10)</b>            The key stakeholders represented Samoan, Tongan, Fijian and non-Pacific ethnicities and various personnel from MBIE, financial capability providers and the Retirement Commission.         </li> <li> <b>Community participants (n=35)</b>            Ethnic-specific focus groups were conducted with individuals who had engaged with a Pacific financial capability service         </li> </ul>

(n=25) and those who had not (n=10). The participants identified as the following ethnicities:

- Samoan (n=15)
- Tongan (n=10)
- Niuean (n=6)
- Cook Islands (n=4)

Interviews and focus groups were conducted in-person and online based on participant preferences. Most sessions took place in Auckland, while others were held online with participants from the Otago, Waikato, and Bay of Plenty regions

### 3.2. Ethnic-specific focus groups

Conducting ethnic-specific focus groups allowed for exploring differences in perspectives and experiences across ethnic groups. While these perspectives provide a depth of understanding for those who participated in the focus group, they are not intended to be generalisable across different population groups.

	Ethnicity						Total
	Samoan	Tongan	Niuean	Cook Island	Fijian	Non-Pacific	
Stakeholders	3	4	-	-	2	1	10
Participants	15	10	6	4	-	-	35

### 3.3. Analysis

A general inductive approach was used to analyse the data. Key themes and sub-themes aligned with the key evaluation questions were identified, as were common themes within and across different groups.

- Identify key themes: Thematic analysis highlights where similar evidence appears across groups of individuals. It helps identify common or similar views, experiences, or perceived results.
- Thick descriptions complement thematic analysis. It highlights all evidence pertaining to a particular issue. For example, it may be helpful to describe all of the different perceptions of access and promotion for different

stakeholder groups. It may be that some perceptions, even if not common enough to be themes, provide useful information.

The codes used in this report include:

- Government representatives and community providers: coded and referred to as *Key stakeholders*
- Community participants: coded as '*Participant, [ethnicity]*'.

### 3.4. Strengths and limitations

#### Strengths:

- The thematic analysis was led by Pacific researchers, utilising interpretative analytical frameworks and reflective positioning. This approach ensured that the interpretation of findings was contextualised within Pacific cultures wherever possible and that findings were framed accordingly.
- A key strength of the research was the inclusion of diverse perspectives in the data collection. This encompassed providers, facilitators, and participants of Pacific capability programmes, as well as non-participants and representatives from key agencies.

#### Limitations:

- Time and budget constraints limited the national reach of data collection. To mitigate this, the research was based mostly in Auckland, where two-thirds of the population lives.
- There were limited opportunities to collect data from more recent Pacific migrant groups from Tuvalu due to cancellations of scheduled focus groups, which could not be rescheduled within the timeframe given participants' personal circumstances.
- The findings in this report are based on a small and non-representative number of interviews and focus groups. While key themes were identified, these findings should be considered indicative only and caution should be exercised when generalising from them.

## 4. Research Findings

This section highlights key insights into Pacific peoples' awareness and understanding of financial capability. Broadening understandings about how Pacific worldviews and aspects of culture influence and inform their understanding and awareness of financial capability services, can better inform strategies to improve Pacific engagement with financial capability programmes.

### 4.1. Awareness and understanding of financial capability

#### 4.1.1. What is financial capability

Participants' understanding of financial literacy, financial capability and money management were diverse, as reflected in Figure 1. The responses from those who took part in financial capability courses can be categorised within three key sub-themes:

- Spending responsibly: Participants were more aware of how they were spending their money and prioritising needs over wants.
- Knowledge and use of financial literacy tools: Participants spoke about using the knowledge and tools gained from the courses to make informed money management decisions and achieve their financial goals.
- Earning money to improve their current financial position: Participants highlighted the importance of maximising incomes and minimising debt to enhance intergenerational financial wealth.

Participants who have yet to engage in any financial literacy courses defined and understood the concept of financial capability as money management and budgeting (see Figure 2). It is important to note that most of these participants had not received any prior financial education; some basic financial education could have the potential to improve earlier understandings of money (Hasler et al., 2023).

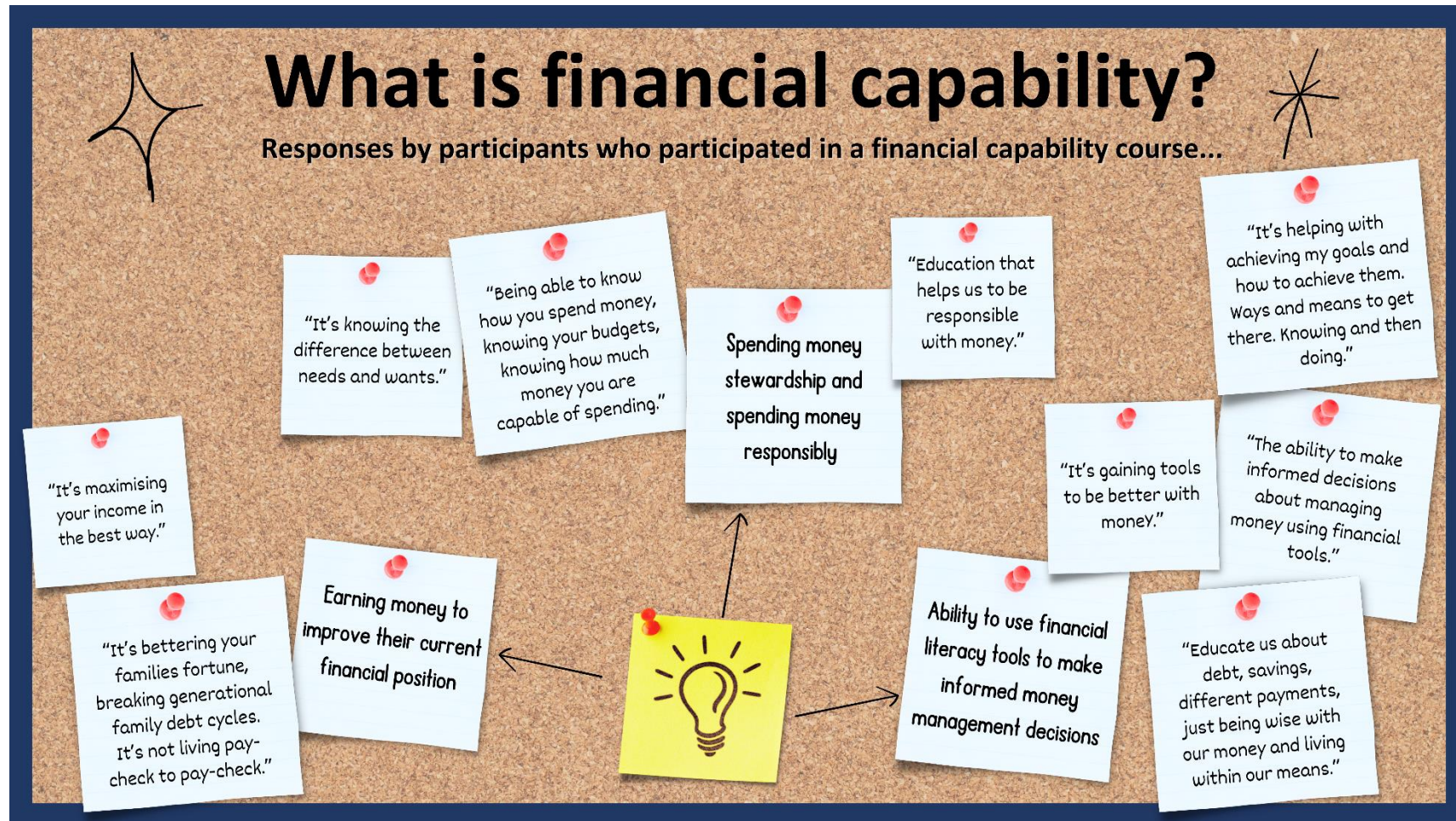


Figure 1: 'What is financial capability?' responses from participants of financial capability programmes

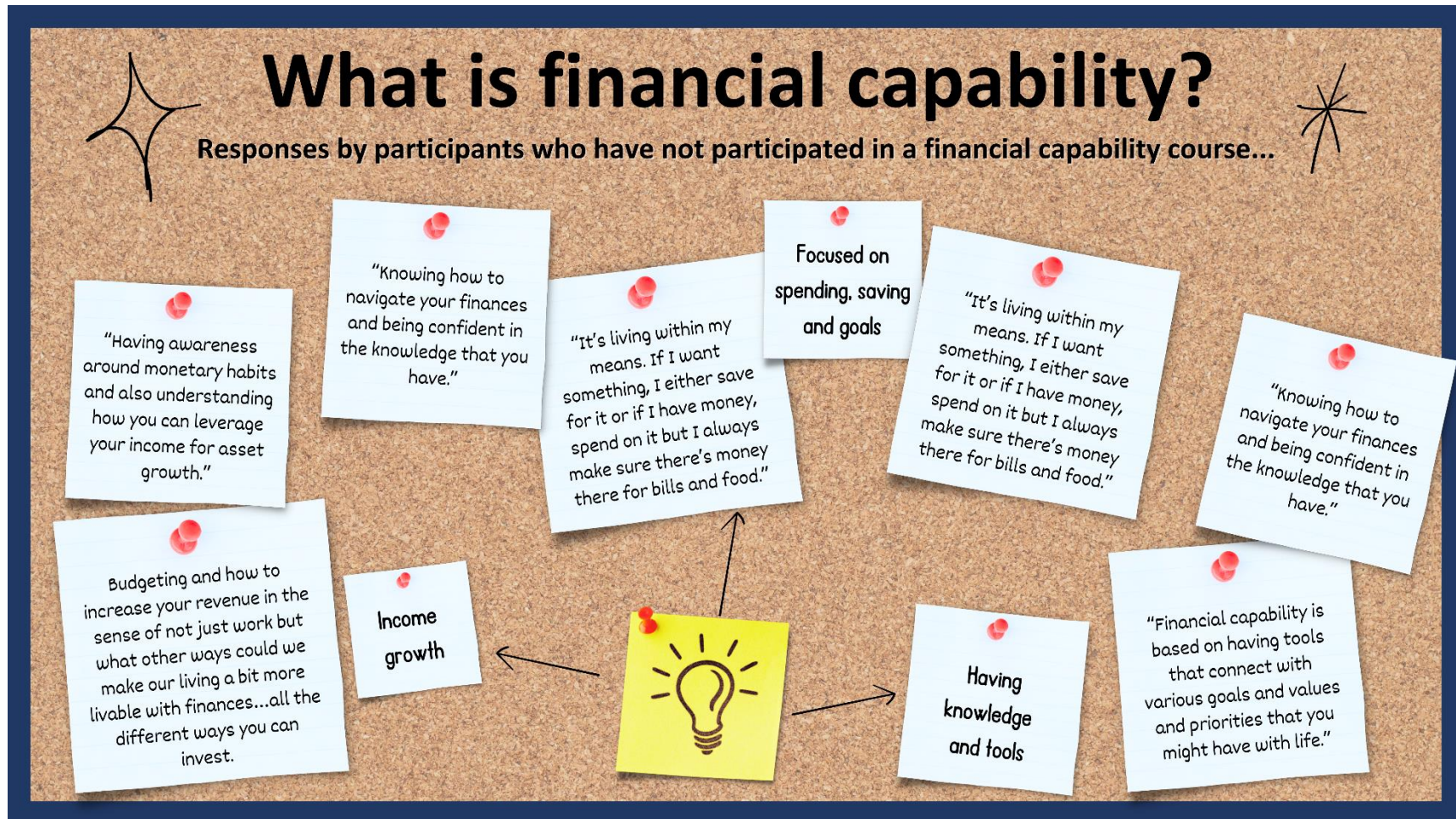


Figure 2: 'What is financial capability?' responses from non-participants of financial capability programmes

The findings above also support a life-course approach where a few participants noted that understandings of financial capability are likely to change over time, such as when they start earning money, have children or approach retirement. The quote below exemplifies one participant's evolving perceptions around financial capability as they matured and started earning more money:

”

I think I'm starting to look at money as an asset. Prior to that, I would have seen money more as a one-sided, 2D tool ... to service my bills or roles or responsibilities. But I think my idea of being good with money is evolving and becoming a bit more complex and multifaceted ... I'm trying to think what does money look like in terms of a tool or an asset now to be well and healthy in 10 years time? (Participant, Niuean).

A few participants and stakeholders noted that financial capability programmes need to be offered at the right time during the life course, and this right time may be different for everyone. Additionally, individuals are unlikely to participate in a programme if they feel they are barely surviving or *'treading water'*.

”

That stage approach is pretty important because unless a person is at a point where they feel like they can breathe and you lower that stress level, [if] they're just treading water and you're like, "Hey, how about we think about this, this could be an avenue for you to pursue". [Their response will be] "I'm barely making things meet at the moment; don't give me any more stress," and it will be an immediate no. (Participant, Cook Island).

Another participant also noted the importance of improving understanding of the ways in which individuals can diversify their income streams beyond employment to generate more income:

”

[Financial literacy is] ... budgeting and also how to increase your revenue in the sense of not just with work but what other ways could we make our living a bit more liveable with finances. For example, if people knew more about stocks, shareholding bonds, all the different ways you can invest because I don't think people know much about that. (Participant, Cook Island).

Participants of all ethnicities acknowledged that many people are reluctant to openly discuss financial matters and consider it a taboo subject, which can be a barrier to enhancing financial capability (see section 4.2. for a detailed description).



## Key insights

To effectively promote financial capability programmes, it is essential to:

- **Create supportive environments for open financial conversations:** Individuals need environments where they feel comfortable discussing financial issues openly in a strengths-based manner rather than adding to feelings of shame, stigma and embarrassment.
  - Promotions and campaigns should highlight the benefits to those who may feel they are barely surviving to encourage participation.
- **Offer programmes across life stages:** Financial capability programmes should be accessible to a wide audience at any time and across different life stages. This involves:
  - Delivering programmes to schools, community spaces like sports clubs and church and workplaces so that there are multiple opportunities at any one time.
  - Offering financial capability programmes to individuals at multiple life stages to ensure they are effective when participants are most receptive. It is important to acknowledge that learning is ongoing. Just because someone has learned about financial capability at school, for example, does not mean there is not more to learn later in life or that those learnings will stay with them indefinitely.

### 4.1.2. Economic well-being and social, cultural and human capital

Participants commonly understood money, finances and economic well-being as components of wider well-being, encompassing social, human, and cultural capital. As such, wealth for Pacific peoples is sometimes understood in broad terms and not solely defined by finance. This is exemplified in the following quote:



For me and my personal experiences and cultural ties, I think [being good with money means] having enough money or [the] means to make people happy. You may be cashed out, but as long as you have enough to make everyone happy and healthy, that's my definition of being financially okay. (Participant, Niuean).

Further, participants illustrated a broad perspective of financial well-being, viewing it as more than just individual wealth accumulation. Values such as generosity, fulfilling cultural and societal roles, making others happy and serving the community were highlighted. Definitions of financial success often included the collective well-being of family and community, with financial well-being involving using resources to uplift communities, contribute to collective well-being, and ensure the betterment of future generations.

”

I think some of the binds might come from this idea that the way we live our lives often is very different to our non-Pacific counterparts, and our responsibilities to collectivism are incredibly important. Yes, there are some challenges financially and time and everything else, but obviously on the other end, it fills our cup, and then socially relationally, obviously, our wealth lies there. (Participant, Niuean)

Participants highlighted a number of implications or *'binds'* that a broadened view of wealth has on promoting and engaging Pacific communities in financial capability services. Some of the challenges refer to cultural and familial giving and tithing as noted openly by one stakeholder. Often previous budgeting services frame tithing and cultural giving solely as financially detrimental without consideration of the cultural and social wealth that is tied to giving.

Another implication is the perception that financial capability programmes were not seen as relevant or prioritised compared to other areas of their well-being. At the same time, some participants understood they could benefit from financial capability programmes but considered these services should prioritise others they knew in their community who were in more need of financial capability support.

”

It's the whole community thing, isn't it? It's like, "We're okay for now; someone else might not be, so we're not gonna take away from someone else. (Participant, Cook Island).

Acknowledging these differing financial worldviews is crucial for the development and delivery of financial capability programmes and content, as they guide and influence financial decisions and behaviours. As one participant articulates below, Pacific peoples have different worldviews and priorities. Therefore, effective programme design and delivery must align with these worldviews, lifestyles and priorities.

”

I think packaging, presenting courses based on our worldviews, based on how we live our lives and the priorities ... the idea of moving forward, [getting] a deposit together and still service your responsibility so that there are solutions based on how we are trying to navigate our versions of wealth, for me, parts of our community would resonate with that ... Obviously, not everyone has the same sort of collective responsibility. So what are [the] tools that could come out of XYZ courses [to help us]? (Participant, Niuean).

The strong emphasis on collectivism highlighted above leads to financial actions prioritising community responsibilities that often supersede individual financial well-being goals. Participants highlighted that their lives, which frequently involve holding multiple jobs, being primary caregivers for children and the elderly, and supporting family through remittances, make it challenging to prioritise individual financial well-being. However, in line with Pacific literature on the importance of remittances and flows for Pacific families (Ng Shiu, 2023), participants also pointed out that cultural and collective responsibilities, while presenting financial and time challenges, provide significant social and cultural wealth through social and familial connection and cohesion.

Participants also noted that the benefits of social networks nurtured through remittances and other forms of connection are reciprocated, often during family gatherings and funerals:

”

... [during] my Mother's recent passing, I've experienced other's generosity and it works. The system works. You may not necessarily feel that until you're the one that's receiving help [but] I'm definitely more grateful post this experience now that I've seen [the system] actualised. I've seen our culture and our understanding of money and sharing [the burden] work ... to experience it was very real and I am more grateful about it now (Participant, Niuean).

## Key insights

Giftng and remittance plays an important role in reinforcing social cohesion and family ties within New Zealand and overseas. These cultural responsibilities are economically vital for recipient countries. However, they also reduce the financial wealth of Pacific peoples in New Zealand. This can create tensions between generations within Pacific communities. Insights from Pacific commentators and community leaders underscore a growing generational gap in cultural and familial traditions, especially regarding gifting and remittances and broader family obligations beyond immediate relatives (Treasury, 2023).

Financial capability programmes should be tailored to reflect Pacific worldviews and priorities, while acknowledging the potential differing views between generations within Pacific communities. Such programmes should enable individuals to meet both their collective responsibilities and financial goals, ensuring that participants do not feel they must abandon their cultural responsibilities for financial well-being. Although aspirations like home ownership, debt repayment and building KiwiSaver balances are common across ethnic groups, Pacific people face unique challenges due to their collective responsibilities. Therefore, programmes should offer culturally relevant solutions that address these.

### 4.1.3. Financial success

Some participants were sceptical about their ability to achieve financial success and generational wealth, with one stakeholder noting *“They think it’s a pipedream”*. A small number of participants also talked about the potential negative impact of money on relationships, e.g. frequent causes of arguments and stress, and the importance of maintaining family unity. Participants had strong feelings about sharing wealth within families and supporting collective well-being across communities and generations.



I think you’re much more comfortable if you and your neighbour are comfortable. You would hate it if you were shooting miles ahead and you didn’t help them out. You’d want to help them out, too. That’s just how it is. (Participant, Cook Island).

Interviewed stakeholders noted how some participants were amazed at the improvements made with their financial positions after their initial courses, which strengthened their self-belief that home ownership involving multiple family members is now possible and can provide housing, financial security and intergenerational wealth for their wider family. These perspectives show the interplay between financial aspirations and cultural values within Pacific

communities. These values shape how people think about and handle money, including how wealth is saved or shared within the community.

## Key insights

To address these insights and enhance financial capability, programmes should include elements that:

- **Build confidence:** Financial capability programmes should build participants' confidence in managing finances effectively.
- **Enhance relationship management:** Programmes should include information on effective communication about finances within families. This could help participants navigate potential conflicts and foster supportive family environments.
- **Promote long-term planning:** Emphasising the importance of long-term financial planning and setting achievable goals can help participants view and attain financial success and intergenerational wealth while maintaining family unity.

### 4.1.4. Acknowledge and address varying levels of financial capability and engagement

Key stakeholders noted that Pacific peoples had varying levels of financial capability. While many recognised having some gaps in their understanding of key financial concepts, others had grown up learning about financial concepts, married into financially knowledgeable families, or proactively increased their financial capability.

Participants who had taken part in financial literacy programmes also had differing levels of financial capability, with some attending to enhance their financial skills further. Those who were receiving finance education for the first time and learning about basic financial concepts highlighted that they are now interested in more advanced learning about how to grow and protect their finances.

Engagement with financial capability also varied among individuals. While some people did not find financial capability an interesting topic, others become highly engaged, especially when they realised their ability to identify and work towards personal goals depended on improving their financial capability.

These insights demonstrate the importance of increasing awareness of financial literacy as early as possible but also support other research which shows that participants realise the benefits and opportunities once they are fully engaged in programmes. For this reason, compulsory financial literacy programmes within schools are an effective strategy (Lusardi and Messy, 2023).

## Key insights

The design of financial capability programmes must address differing levels of Pacific peoples financial capability and engagement to optimise uptake. Areas of focus could include:

- **Programme teaser:** For those with low interest, providers could focus on offering short introductory sessions that highlight immediate, practical benefits.
- **Progressive learning:** For more motivated individuals, offering advanced modules, such as moving from basic budgeting to more complex topics like investing, can help sustain engagement.
- **Personalising goals:** Tailoring programmes to address individual goals and circumstances and explicitly promoting them to segments of the population could enhance motivation by increasing relevance.
- **Demystifying financial jargon:** Breaking down complex financial concepts into plain language can help bridge the gap between different levels of financial capability. Using real-life examples and scenarios makes these scenarios more relatable and memorable. Visual aids like videos and infographics can enhance understanding, and interactive programmes allow participants to ask questions, ensuring clarity and engagement.

### 4.1.5. Overview

Pacific attitudes towards financial capability are shaped by cultural understandings of wealth that include financial, social, cultural and human capital. The qualitative data gathered in this study aligns with previous research that highlights the importance of collective wealth and responsibilities (MPP 2023). Generosity, gift-giving and remittances are key features of Pacific financial well-being, which often means giving beyond financial means (Retirement Commission, 2001). While this negatively impacts individual economic well-being, it improves other aspects of social and cultural well-being, which are just as important to Pacific peoples. What is important is to provide understanding and tools to help Pacific individuals contribute to collective responsibilities without negatively impacting individual economic well-being. Most financial products and services are targeted at an individual approach; however, a more effective strategy to target programmes aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of finances and financial capability should be aimed at promoting collective financial well-being, which leads to improved individual financial well-being. This will be explored in more detail in the following section.

The qualitative data also supports a social integration approach where financial services are embedded within general well-being and targeted towards other areas of social improvement, such as home ownership.

The realities of Pacific living and understandings of finance and economic well-being, therefore, need to become the basis for any targeted financial capability service if

they are to make a difference and improve the economic well-being of Pacific communities. This can be implementable in a number of different ways:

- **Culturally relevant.** Financial capability courses should be tailored to Pacific worldviews and priorities, allowing for the fulfilment of responsibilities and financial goals without abandoning cultural values.
- **Recognising strengths and rewards of Pacific worldviews.** Financial and time challenges exist, but fulfilling collective responsibilities provides social and relational wealth, which are just as important as economic wealth.
- **Family-centred and intergenerational.** Programmes should contribute to building intergenerational economic well-being and be inclusive of cultural practices (e.g. cultural gifting and tithing).

## 4.2. Effective promotion of financial capability services

This section explores the most effective methods identified by participants and literature for promoting financial capability services to Pacific communities.

### 4.2.1. Targeted promotion at family level

Many participants noted that family members shaped their financial attitudes and behaviours early on, with spousal attitudes also influential. Some participants who had completed a financial capability course cited breaking the cycle of poor financial behaviour within their families and ensuring a better future for their children as a significant motivation for their participation. Shame and embarrassment about money issues was an area which was often discussed in Pacific contexts due to a perceived stigma about not being able to maintain family relationships and social status. This inevitably means financial problems are often hidden from wider families and provides a barrier to meaningful conversations to improve family wealth. Participants identified the need to talk more openly about money with family, some noting this would require a need to develop skills on how to talk about money in a constructive way.

## Key insights

Promoting open conversations about financial capability can:

- **Help increase participation in programmes:** Discussing financial matters openly within families and communities builds trust among members and strengthens support networks. It can also promote active participation in financial capability programmes.
- **Promote long-term financial stability:** Addressing financial topics openly helps families develop collective strategies for long-term financial stability, such as setting financial goals, creating savings plans and preparing for unexpected expenses or emergencies.
- **Clarify misconceptions and provide positive financial role modelling within families.**

### 4.2.2. Diversity of Pacific people and trust in engagement

Participants emphasised the importance of recognising the diversity among Pacific peoples, including various cultures, languages, levels of English proficiency, migrant histories, and life experiences. To effectively engage Pacific communities, participants suggested programmes should target different demographics beyond ethnic-specific ones. In particular, programmes should be tailored to accommodate language preferences and in-person or online delivery preferences.

Despite this diversity, there was a universal emphasis on the role of trust. Whether they had participated in a financial capability programme or not, participants underscored the importance of trusting those who refer them to programmes, the facilitators who lead them, and the other participants involved.

”

If I were to do a financial literacy course, it'd have to have somebody that I really trust or that I know. I find it quite personal the things that I spend my money on and the expectation, the fear of judgement around what you're earning and what you're spending, that affects a lot of my decisions [about participating]. (Niuean participant).

Shame and fear of judgement around what money is being used for are other concerns that add to the stigma surrounding talking about money. This participant further explains the fear of judgement around expenses and what are considered acceptable expenses compared to other expenses.

Trust building begins prior to participation through the experiences and stories of others who have successfully completed a financial capability programme. Participants expressed a strong preference for hearing testimonials, personal stories and experiences, as well as seeing cultural and life-stage representation. Recommendations from peers and family members were considered more



trustworthy than those from authority figures recognised for their expertise in financial matters, such as government officials, highlighting the need for promotional campaigns to include real-life success stories and relevant examples to enhance engagement and trust.

”

I wouldn't care about what an influencer had to say [about financial capability]. It would [have to be] an influencer that's a mother. A young mum, Samoan, [who is] learning about how to manage their money and the difference between having a full-time job and living on WINZ. (Participant, Samoan).

Participants also commonly noted that conventional sources of information, such as radio and television, are becoming less effective, necessitating a shift to other methods of communication. Word of mouth emerged as a crucial channel for disseminating information. Participants highlighted that receiving an invitation or hearing positive experiences from others in their community significantly influenced their decision to engage with financial capability programmes. Some had limited knowledge about the programme details but attended because they trusted the person who recommended it. This underscores the importance of leveraging community networks and encouraging past participants to share their success stories.

”

Radio now, for this generation, is more for listening to music. You're only listening to it for music. But you're not even going there for music because there's other apps for that now. (Participant, Samoan).

”

It was word of mouth actually. We [heard] through, we know [name], so it [financial capability programme] was something put towards us, if it was something that we would be interested in. We'd heard of a few people that have done something similar. So that was really what brought us in to it and we thought it would be beneficial to us because I guess none of us had really done any kind of course or had any education around money management. (Participant, Tongan).

The sports community holds significant influence within Pacific communities. One stakeholder observed that while mainstream communities may be moving away from contact sports, engagement within the Pacific community remains strong. Promotional campaigns can capitalise on this by partnering with sports clubs and sporting events as platforms to promote financial capability. This approach taps into

a well-respected and influential sector of the community and provides opportunities to reach a wider audience.

### Key insights

Trusting relationships is a critical success factor.

- Programme delivery and facilitators must build trusting relationships with participants, which includes being nonjudgmental and inclusive.
- Trust is important for creating an environment where participants can openly discuss financial matters without judgment and fully benefit from the programme.
- Trust in other participants in the programmes is important as people are sharing vulnerable information.

#### 4.2.3. The benefit of incentives

Participants noted that low awareness of the benefits of financial capability programmes and competing demands on their time and resources can result in low interest and participation in programmes.



We live in a generation where time is money and yes, we are here to learn and it's great, but when you've got lots of things that are pulling you, you have to think like, not "what's in it for me" but "is it going to be worth it"... (Participant, Samoan)

Participants frequently noted that incentives such as food or petrol vouchers could attract initial interest and encourage participation aligning with Pacific principles of reciprocity for time. Incentives can serve as a tangible benefit that attracts the attention of potential participants and motivates them to invest their time. The use of incentives for sustained engagement was not discussed extensively. Participants often said they initially joined the programme without specific expectations or financial goals. However, as they gained a better understanding of financial capability, they realised the practical benefits and value of the programme. This realisation shifted their motivation from external incentives to a deeper intrinsic drive to improve their financial well-being and set both ambitious and realistic financial goals and a pathway to achieve these.

#### 4.2.4. Family involvement and group learning

Providers of financial capability programmes and participants said involving families and groups already known to each other in financial capability programmes is a great way to promote and maintain engagement.

”

It's a lot more better if you come in pairs like twos or threes. Especially when you are talking about something sensitive like money. You don't want to put it all out there, like how much you're earning, in front of a whole lot of people that you don't really know. (Participants, Tongan).

The benefits include:

- **Enhanced shared understanding:** Family participation creates a shared understanding and support system that reinforces the lessons learnt.
- **Increased motivation:** Participants feel more motivated by each other's encouragement and support. The communal learning environment fosters a shared purpose, making it easier for individuals to stay committed to their financial goals.
- **Building a supportive community:** A network is created where participants can share experiences, advice and resources.
- **Creating a comfortable learning environment:** Group settings with familiar faces make it easier for participants to open up about their financial situations. Trust and camaraderie among group members can alleviate the stigma and embarrassment often associated with financial conversations. When participants feel safe and supported, they are more likely to engage.
- **Cross-generational learning:** Younger generations teach older generations about the use and benefits of modern digital tools for managing finances, such as smartphones, apps, online banking and safety measures to identify scams. In exchange, younger generations gain from their elders' financial experience and wisdom.

”

It's really good to see the young people educate the old people, but as well the older people leaning in and going, "Okay, so I don't have to go into the back bank for every transaction; I can do online banking. It's like they discover in their own little groups because there's a space for them to engage in a safe space. (Key stakeholder).

It is important to note that 'family' can include children, parents, grandparents and other household members. While involving the family in financial capability programmes can be beneficial, preferences varied among participants. Some individuals prefer programmes with participants outside their immediate family or community group, often citing concerns about confidentiality.

#### 4.2.5. Enablers and barriers to accessing financial capability programmes

**Participants identified several common enablers** that can enhance access to financial capability programmes:

- **Translation of resources and delivery:** Some participants highlighted the need for language translation to access financial capability programmes. However, one stakeholder noted a potential drawback. While translations can help bridge communication gaps, Pacific communities also need to navigate Western financial contexts confidently. Providing English translations for financial jargon alongside other Pacific languages is important for building the necessary skills to participate in financial conversations and access financial services.
- **Strong leadership through existing collectives:** Stakeholders and participants recognised the effectiveness of leveraging established community collectives such as churches, workplaces and family groups to promote and deliver financial capability programmes. As previously noted, sports clubs represent another avenue. Other established groups that are potentially underutilised but could be productive include parent groups. It is important to note that not all Pacific communities are affiliated with sports or faith groups, and those that may have connections to mainstream rather than Pacific-specific organisations.

”

I don't go to church. You can maybe work alongside schools to send out information [about programmes] in the newsletters and emails to the parents. That is a way to target Pacific Island people who don't go to church (Participant, Cook Island).

One participant aptly summed it up:

”

At the end of it, after all the talk of whether it's in a church or whether it's in a school, or whether it's in the playground, or wherever it happens to be, you just have to be where the people are. And you have to have advocates within those communities. (Participant, Cook Island).

- **Strong leadership:** Participants discussed how strong leadership within their respective collectives was also a critical factor in promoting financial capability programmes. Community leaders like church ministers and sports managers were responsible for signing up their team or congregation to participate in programmes. Stakeholders and participants acknowledge that sustained participation in financial programmes was due to these

community leaders who mandated participation for their team or congregation. This was notable amongst different Pacific church communities whose church ministers organised for the programmes to be delivered on church premises, sometimes after church services, and participation was mandatory. This meant the programmes were very accessible for church parishioners and parishioners turned up every week. While many participants initially thought the programmes would not be of much benefit, many of them continued attending because of the learnings and outcomes they were benefiting from.

”

I remember a deacon of a particular church got up at the graduation, and he goes, “I didn’t agree to this programme, I didn’t want to come to this programme. But the faifeau (minister) said we need to [attend]”. And then he turned around and said how much benefit it was to him and he was sooo complimentary of it because he was pleasantly surprised by the learnings. (Key stakeholder).

Stakeholders noted that these church leaders also had connections with other church and community leaders and would actively connect programmes to wider networks, encouraging similar mandatory participation approaches. One stakeholder noted that most referrals and programme uptake were a direct result of word-of-mouth through church networks.

- **Leveraging digital technology:** A few participants mentioned digital technology, primarily in the context of social media promotion. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok appealed to most participants for their ability to convey information quickly through short stories and reels, which resonated with time-poor consumers.

Digital technology, in terms of financial capability, also has the potential to improve accessibility, engagement, and programme effectiveness. Mobile apps, podcasts and YouTube channels, for example, offer convenient access to educational resources anytime and anywhere, breaking down geographical barriers and reaching individuals who may not otherwise be engaged via more conventional avenues. Despite this potential, only a small number of participants mentioned learning about financial capability in this way, highlighting a potential area for growth.

Digital technology also supports ongoing engagement outside of programmes, offering updates, reminders and personalised recommendations based on a participant’s goals and progress. While many participants prefer in-person interactions, digital technology offers the

benefit of virtual communities and online forums for peer support and sharing of experiences.

However, it is important to acknowledge varying levels of digital literacy and access to devices and reliable internet connectivity among Pacific people.

**Participants identified several common barriers** that hinder access to financial capability programmes:

- **Competing priorities:** Many individuals prioritise immediate needs, making it challenging to allocate time and resources to engage in financial education beyond living paycheck to paycheck.
- **Reluctance to discuss finances:** Cultural norms and personal discomfort can prevent open discussions about financial matters, deterring individuals from seeking help or participating in programmes.
- **Lack of awareness:** Many Pacific community members are unaware of available financial capability programmes or their potential benefits, limiting their engagement.
- **Timing of programme delivery:** Programme schedules that conflict with work hours or childcare responsibilities can be a significant barrier to participation. **Additionally**, seasonal factors such as colder and darker winter months can further discourage individuals from leaving their homes and attending programmes.

#### 4.2.6. Overview

Awareness and promotional campaigns about financial capability should begin by fostering open conversations within families and communities that resonate with the collective imperatives within Pacific cultures. Programmes that include skills to talk about money in constructive ways that align with Pacific thinking would have wide benefits and can address the stigma and embarrassment of over-sharing and talking about money. Initiating these conversations lays the groundwork for successful campaigns, creating a supportive environment where individuals can comfortably develop personal skills for long-term financial well-being.

It is also important to note that diversity within Pacific communities matters, so tailoring services to accommodate the varying migration histories, English competencies, religious engagement and age are just as important as ethnic-specific delivery. While some people believe they may not need the services, including financial literacy programmes, within other social programmes, they have seen positive benefits (e.g., Pathways to Homeownership), which aligns with existing literature (Das et al., 2023). Role models and testimonies were also seen as useful

promotional tools identified by participants – further research on who these role models are would be beneficial.

For those not connected to existing collectives such as schools, workplaces, churches or clubs – incentives have the capacity to generate initial interest for programmes as a token of reciprocity. While incentives like food and petrol vouchers were effective in attracting initial interest, participants’ engagement often evolved beyond external rewards as they realised and experienced the practical benefits of financial capability programmes first-hand.

Social media for all participants was identified as a useful platform to promote programmes. The key factor is ensuring that any promotional material is short and able to attract attention quickly, especially for Pacific communities, which are often time-poor and have extra-familial and community commitments. These sentiments align with recent research on emotional anchoring, where short reels promoting financial services to young people are seen as effective (Gaur et al., 2020).

At the same time, a few participants noted the rise of Pacific affiliate marketing and multi-level marketing schemes aimed and targeted at Pacific peoples, which can be seen as ‘quick rich schemes’ but are often scams or further add to financial issues for Pacific families. More research is required in this area particularly as there have been a number of financial scams specifically targeting Pacific communities who are seen as most vulnerable.

Improving access to financial capability programmes can be approached by replicating or scaling up enablers, addressing barriers and improving support systems to empower Pacific communities to build financial capability.

Awareness and promotional campaigns about financial capability should begin by fostering open conversations within communities. Initiating these conversations lays the groundwork for successful campaigns, creating a supportive environment where individuals can comfortably develop personal skills for long-term financial well-being.

While incentives like food and vouchers are effective in attracting initial interest, participants’ engagement often evolves beyond external rewards as they realise and experience the practical benefits of financial capability programmes first-hand.

#### **4.3. Enhancing the financial capability of Pacific communities**

Participants who completed a financial capability programme were overwhelmingly positive about its benefits. Key stakeholders and participants also agreed that more could be done to enhance Pacific financial capability.

##### **4.3.1. Integrated service approaches**

Key stakeholders noted that financial challenges are often intertwined with housing instability, food insecurity and employment issues. A holistic approach to well-being is important because addressing these interconnected areas enables individuals to focus more effectively on improving their financial situation. By creating a stable environment that supports learning, participants are more likely to absorb and apply the information and tools provided when other stressors have been addressed.

### Key insights

Providers should be prepared to support Pacific people throughout their financial journey by offering comprehensive assistance or referrals to additional support services. This may include food banks, housing, employment, social and health services. Programmes incorporating coaching and pastoral care can also address the emotional and spiritual aspects of financial stress. For Pacific people, this respects and integrates cultural values, practices and community structures that make programmes more relevant, effective and attractive.

Furthermore, an integrated service approach can boost referrals and engagement by making individuals aware of financial capability programmes as they seek help for other needs. Once trust is established through these services, individuals are more likely to be more open to financial capability referrals.

#### 4.3.2. Programme evaluation and impact

A small number of key stakeholders highlighted the importance of programme evaluation to understand the effectiveness of financial capability programmes within Pacific communities and to have clear success metrics to ensure that objectives are measurable and achievable. Demonstrating the impact of investments in ethnic-specific Pacific financial capability programmes was also crucial to the sustainability of funding in the current socio-political climate.

#### 4.3.3. Engagement with diverse Pacific populations

To enhance the financial capability of all Pacific peoples, it is important to consider and address the unique needs and potential barriers faced by diverse groups, including those with disabilities, elderly populations, those struggling with mental health and the Rainbow+ community when accessing financial capability programmes.



## Key insights

Methods for reaching these communities are similar to those already described, but accuracy from the outset is crucial. Utilising community champions or trusted leaders within these communities becomes particularly important for effective outreach. Collaborating with existing organisations and support networks that already have trust and established relationships can facilitate engagement and ongoing support.

One participant hesitated to join a programme because they worried people from outside their community would judge their spending choices. While fear of judgement is not uncommon, diverse communities are particularly susceptible. Sensitivity and empathy from facilitators and programme designers to the realities of these populations, including providing accessible formats and language translations, are important. Involving representatives from these communities in programme design and evaluation promotes inclusivity and responsiveness to their needs and preferences. Similarly, including examples and case studies from within their communities can help ensure that the content resonates.

### 4.3.4. Pacific inclusion and representation in the financial sector

Increasing Pacific representation in the banking sector was identified by a few key stakeholders and participants as important for fostering trust and relatability between Pacific communities and the financial sector. Establishing a diverse and inclusive banking sector that harnesses the unique perspective of Pacific peoples was perceived to enhance the sector's ability to serve Pacific communities effectively and equitably.

”

What we found was [that] our people can only relate and feel comfortable talking about money with our own people. Because it's relatable. They feel intimidated talking to Europeans ... What we saw was that we didn't have any of our Pacific families or individuals come through [the bank]; they just had no idea or didn't want to deal with it [banks]. Once we started having Pacific bankers [employed], we started seeing more of our people come in. (Key stakeholder).

## Key insights

Specific strategies to achieve Pacific inclusion and representation in the financial sector could include:

- **Recruitment:** Actively headhunting Pacific people to join the banking sector and addressing barriers such as poor credit history that might prevent them from being considered. This proactive approach could help ensure a more diverse pool of candidates; as one key stakeholder noted, ‘they don’t apply’.
- **Development:** Coaching and developing Pacific employees once they are within the sector is important. Providing ongoing support and professional development opportunities can help them once they are working in the sector.

### 4.3.5. Overview

Identifying ways to enhance financial literacy programmes yielded a variety of interesting responses, particularly from different interview groups and stakeholders. Responses included undertaking an integrated service approach, increasing Pacific representation within the finance and banking sector in general, and specific approaches for the Rainbow community and other marginalised groups.

The integrated service approach aligns with the social integration findings. In this case, the suggestion is to ensure linkages to other social supports, particularly mental health services. For some participants, discussing and dealing with financial issues also highlights other areas of need that require attention, such as housing, food insecurity, and anxiety. Additional pathways to other social supports would also be useful in enhancing current financial capability programmes.

Pacific inclusion and representation in the finance and banking sector was an area in which financial capability services could be enhanced. Stakeholders, in particular, highlighted the importance of having familiar faces who can help Pacific customers better understand financial services can promote services to current customers would be a benefit.

## 5. Summary and implications

### Overview of findings

- There is still a lack of understanding and awareness of the importance of financial capability services for economic and general well-being among Pacific peoples. Participants commonly perceived that such services were for other Pacific individuals who were more in need. As such, incentives such as vouchers encouraged participation in financial capability programmes.
- Increased financial capability and awareness can assist Pacific communities to better identify scams and financial products, which often target Pacific communities.
- Framing economic well-being as a key component of overall well-being is more likely to attract Pacific communities as it aligns with Pacific world views. At the same time, financial capability programmes provide linkages to access other social services such as mental health.
- Programmes and services need to be framed as family-centred and contributing to building intergenerational economic well-being and culturally inclusive of cultural practices (e.g. cultural gifting and tithing)
- A critical success factor was having strong leadership where a community leader (church, sports groups and extended families) required mandatory attendance. Strong community leaders in these different groups were also strong advocates in promoting services through word of mouth to their wider network. This further enhanced trust in services and programmes.
- Conventional promotional and awareness strategies such as utilising church groups, Pacific-language radio shows, and Facebook were considered effective. New social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok also appealed to most participants. In particular, using short stories and reels to promote both the positive and negative impacts of financial capability was seen as an effective strategy for time-poor consumers.
- To enhance the financial capability of Pacific communities, there needs to be increased Pacific representation and inclusivity within the banking and finance sector.

### Implications for policy/strategic thinking:

- Current financial services and products are targeted towards individuals. Targeting financial services and products towards families is likely to have a greater impact given the strong association to collective and family economic well-being compared to financial well-being.

- Strong Pacific leadership is effective in ensuring participation of groups and collectives in financial capability programmes. Working with church, community and sports leaders who mandate participation in programmes would help to increase Pacific community engagement in current programmes.
- A life-stage approach to financial capability is strongly recommended and should be an underpinning approach to any national and/or Pacific strategy to improve the economic well-being of Pacific people.
- The findings demonstrate the diversity of Pacific communities and highlight the need for a broad understanding of inclusion. While church groups are still strong, there is a growing number of Pacific people who do not attend a Pacific church, as well as a growing Pacific Rainbow + community.

Implications for future research:

- Further research into the financial impacts of Pacific participation in affiliate marketing and multi-level marketing schemes as a new area of concern.
- It would be beneficial to conduct further research into effective ways of talking about money with Pacific families and communities.
- Role modelling was considered an important aspect of promoting financial services. Research to understand who these role models and influencers are would help with targeted campaigns.
- Research into the barriers and enablers to Pacific diversity in the banking and finance sectors would be of benefit to enhance current financial capability strategies.

## Appendix 1: Key research questions

**Table 1: Research questions**

Research questions	Probes	Research methods
<b>Awareness - How aware are Pacific communities of financial literacy and capability?</b>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How aware are Pacific communities of the importance of financial literacy?</li> <li>How clearly are complex financial literacy concepts communicated to participants?</li> <li>What are current perceptions of financial capability programmes?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore Pacific communities' understandings and perceptions regarding financial literacy and capability.</li> <li>Are there any differences between financial literacy and Pacific financial literacy?</li> <li>Do Pacific communities think financial literacy training is needed?</li> <li>Explore the relevance of financial capability to people's day-to-day lives.</li> </ul>	Interviews and focus groups, stakeholders, providers, community members
<b>Promotion – what are effective ways to promote Pacific engagement in financial literacy and capability programmes?</b>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What incentives or motivations would encourage Pacific communities to participate in financial literacy programmes?</li> <li>Is the language used in communication materials easily understandable for diverse Pacific communities with limited financial knowledge?</li> <li>Which platforms and mediums do Pacific communities prefer to receive information about financial capability programmes (e.g. social media, community events, radio, television)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there specific online platforms or offline mediums that are particularly effective in reaching Pacific communities?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What financial literacy and capability programmes are currently provided for Pacific communities?</li> <li>Explore what are some of the best ways to promote services to Pacific communities.</li> <li>Are there any good examples of promotion they can think of?</li> <li>How did they come to know about the current service they are engaged in?</li> </ul>	Desktop study, interviews and focus groups

7. Are there potential partners or collaborators that could help promote financial literacy programmes?		
<b>Accessibility – how can financial literacy and capability services be made more accessible to Pacific communities?</b>		
8. What barriers exist that prevent certain groups from accessing financial literacy resources (e.g. geographic, economic, cultural)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can these be addressed?</li> </ul> 9. How do socioeconomic factors influence participation in financial capability services? (e.g. income level, education, employment). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can these be addressed?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is it about this current service that makes it easier for them to access?</li> <li>• In what ways could accessibility be improved?</li> <li>• What factors may stop people from accessing financial services?</li> <li>• How might services address these factors?</li> </ul>	Desktop study, interviews and focus groups
<b>Enhancing financial capability – what else can be done to enhance the financial capability of Pacific communities?</b>		
10. What factors need to be considered that will best enhance Pacific financial literacy? 11. What factors have not been successful in promoting Pacific financial literacy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore other factors not yet discussed that should be considered for targeted promotion of financial literacy programmes, such as digital literacy.</li> <li>• What other things could be done to help improve comprehension of financial literacy services for Pacific communities</li> </ul>	Desktop study, interviews and focus groups.

## Appendix 2: Literature review method

The literature review was undertaken in two steps. An initial search using neutral terms was used to search Google Scholar and Elsevier databases to understand how best to promote financial literacy programmes to ethnic (minority) communities. The key search terms were:

- Promoting financial literacy programmes
- Success factors in promoting financial literacy programmes
- Financial literacy programmes for ethnic minority communities

The second step involved searching specifically for Pacific financial literacy using the key domains found during the initial search. Multiple government agencies in New Zealand, including Te Ara Ahunga Ora Retirement Commission (Retirement Commission), Ministry of Social Development (MSD), Ministry of Pacific Peoples (MPP), Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) are involved in promoting financial capability. Their databases and Google Scholar were searched using the following key search terms:

- (Pacific) financial literacy/capability
- (Pacific) financial literacy/capability awareness
- (Pacific) financial literacy/capability engagement
- (Pacific) financial literacy/capability promotion
- (Pacific) financial literacy/capability access
- (Pacific) financial literacy/capability barriers/challenges

Various financial literacy-related organisations have websites with links to publications and reports. These websites were searched for relevant literature. Any material that appeared to be relevant was downloaded and reviewed. In addition, literature relating to previous research and evaluations conducted by the research team on financial literacy projects was reviewed.

The literature review was restricted to publications within the past decade.

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