

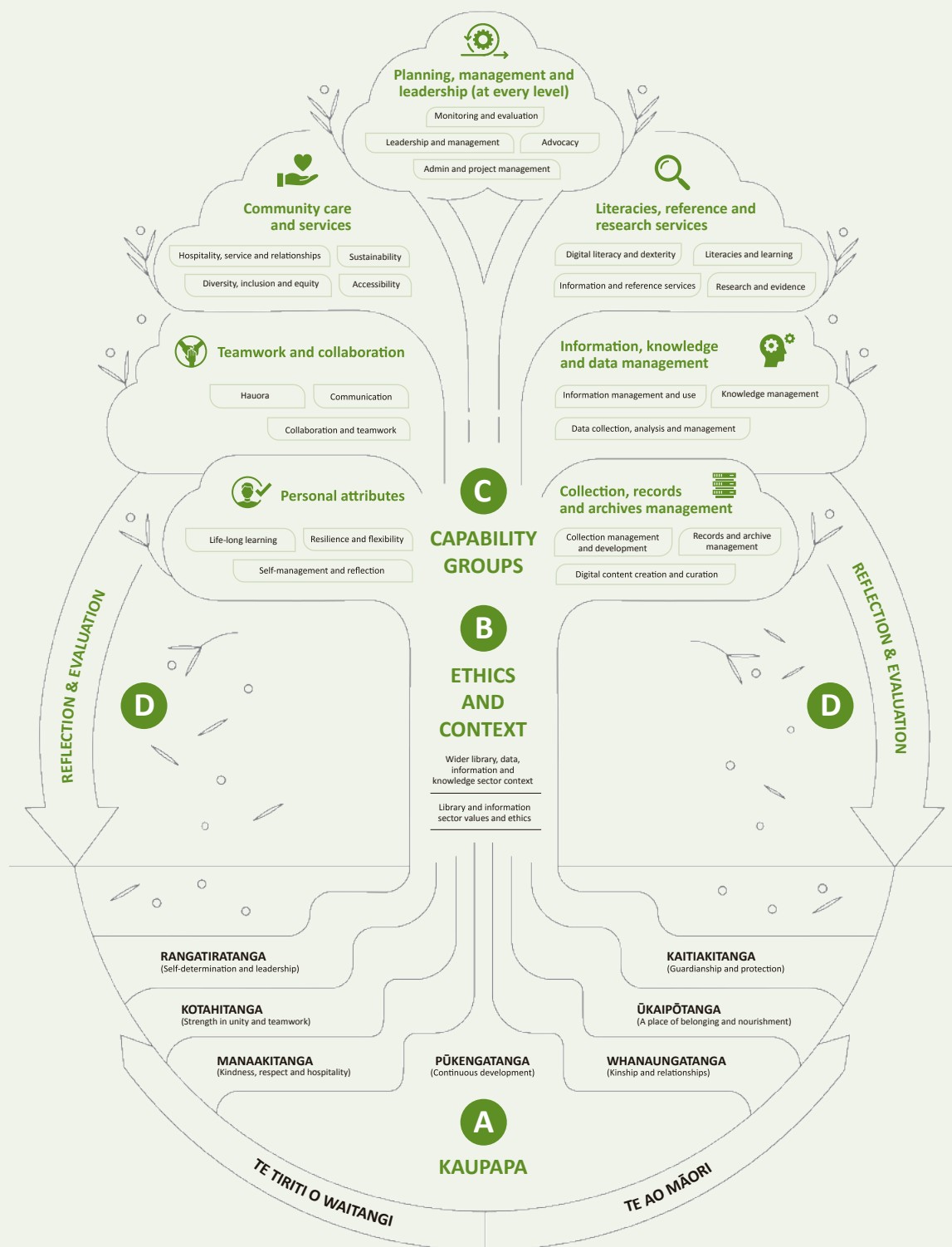


Te Rau Herenga O Aotearoa | Library and Information Association of New Zealand

TE TŌTARA WORKFORCE CAPABILITY PROJECT EVOLVES

In 2024, LIANZA assumed the role of kaitiaki of the Te Tōtara Capability Framework, a resource for the entire library and information sector that outlines the values, ethics, knowledge, skills, and attributes essential for working in the sector.

Te Tōtara Capability Framework for strengthening a diverse library and information workforce



Developed with funding from the New Zealand Library Partnership Project, this capability 'kete' is beautifully presented as a tōtara tree, representing four elements: Ngā paiaka | the roots, Te tīwai | the trunk, Ngā rūhā | the branches, and Te rau hinga | the fallen leaves.

LIANZA's role has been to support the use of the framework by the sector and the adoption of the framework by library and information individuals, teams and organisations. The outcome of the project has been to embed Te Tōtara as the foundation for the LIANZA member Continuing Professional Development Pathway.

Phase One: March 2024 – May 2024

‘Engage to explore knowledge and interest, opportunities, barriers.’

Initially, the framework was not well known outside of the NZLPP project and a few libraries, one of which was a pilot site.

The first step for LIANZA was to employ a project manager, Annemarie Thomas, and engage with leaders from around the sector.

The project manager connected with more than 60 people in the first months of the project, including leaders of sector associations and those involved in the development project. These included team members at Kāpiti District Council Libraries who piloted the resources and kākaho in the Whiria te Tāngata programme.

Feedback from interviews and a survey revealed both opportunities and impediments to using this new framework:

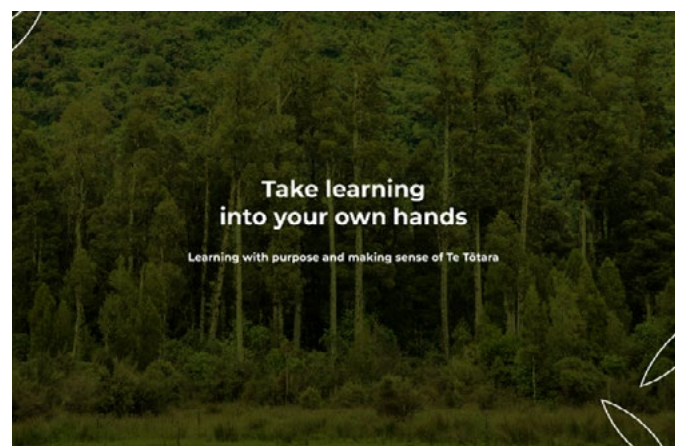
- Praise for the uniquely Aotearoa design and the tōtara analogy for sector capabilities.
- Recognition of the value in supporting individuals to reflect on and plan their capability development.
- Concern that such a comprehensive capability framework would be overwhelming and not easy to use.
- Understanding that local implementation of the framework involves partnering with iwi as the local context for bi-cultural capability development.
- Recognition that individual capability development is part of an employee's performance review cycle, which means integrating Te Tōtara with business-as-usual processes and templates for professional development, as well as cultural and policy frameworks specific to the service and its wider organisation.

“Te Tōtara gives Aotearoa a clear strengths-based framework for growth which reflects our context and our values, especially in relation to our commitment to te ao Māori and te Tiriti.”

Shiobhan Smith, Otago University Library

While acknowledging the barriers to implementation, there was recognition of the value and potential for the framework to realise its mission of strengthening a diverse library and information sector workforce.

The springboard for the project's implementation phase came from the sector itself. Leaders from around the sector came together at a hui in Wellington and unanimously endorsed Te Tōtara, signing a letter of endorsement together. A Community of Practice of early adopters was built over time to 126 members, and a monthly newsletter helps keep everyone connected.





Phase Two: June 2024 – June 2025 'when to use- how to use'

Te Tōtara is intentionally adaptable, and no two organisations will have the same approach. At the instigation of the National Library, the framework was copyrighted under a CC BY license, granting individuals the right to share, use, and build upon it.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Pages were set up on the [LIANZA website](#) to host the framework and to make the tools for personal reflection and planning accessible to everyone. These include the Taku Tōtara workbook and a simpler reflecting tool, the Pātōtara worksheet.

Also promoted was an [e-learning module](#) 'Take learning into your own hands'. The interactive module explores learning with purpose and making sense of Te Tōtara, encouraging people to consider their learning needs as well as how team leads and managers foster a learning culture.

The website features case [studies](#) that demonstrate practical examples and links to webinars where individuals share their implementation stories.

THE THREE TE TŌTARA JOURNEYS

The promotion of the framework covered three different approaches to library adoption, which can be applied singly or together as a cohesive approach to workforce development.

These are the 'three development journeys', and each journey is described, along with guidance and resources, on the LIANZA website.



Your Journey – where individuals use the [framework](#) to reflect on their capabilities within their role and plan their following capability growth areas using either the Taku Tōtara workbook or Pātōtara worksheet.



Team Journey – Te Tōtara also supports teams in collectively identifying shared professional development goals. The framework is also a point of reference for team leads to do a capability strengths and gaps analysis. Guidance and resources on the LIANZA website support this, such as a [Te Tōtara Team Map template](#).



Strategic Journey – Building on the use of Te Tōtara at a team level, Te Tōtara serves as a resource for planners and recruiters to understand the capability needs in the immediate, medium, and long term. A Te Tōtara [Capability Planner tool](#) has been developed to document priorities and alignment, as well as plan next steps.

"Using Te Tōtara sends a strong message: that we're committed to growing our capability and investing in our people. It shows that professional development is something we take seriously." (CoP member)

USE OF RESOURCES TO PLAN FOR A FUTURE WORKFORCE

Te Tōtara supports library leaders in planning for their future workforce by providing library-specific information and assists recruiters in advertising jobs with job-specific descriptors. “The individual journey informs the team picture, which in turn informs strategic decisions,” says Annemarie Thomas, LIANZA project manager.

Te Tōtara resources can be used in a ‘pick and mix’ approach, or used across all three journeys as a unified strategy to build workforce capability:

- Individuals can use Te Tōtara for enriched preparation for their organisational performance development process
- Team leads and managers gain improved knowledge of their team
- Senior managers are better informed on specific capability needs.

EXAMPLES OF TE TŌTARA IMPLEMENTATION

Examples of when to use and how to apply the Te Tōtara Framework include Matamata-Piako, Hamilton City Libraries, and the University of Otago Library.

Matamata-Piako Libraries integrated the framework into their learning and development processes. They developed collective team goals and used the framework in induction processes and professional development conversations.



Image: Matamata Piako Libraries' Melanie Brebner discusses Te Tōtara workforce capability with Fiona Rongo.

Hamilton City Libraries adapted Te Tōtara as Te Koopu Mania, using the garden as a metaphor for capabilities. In this adaptation, they combined Te Tōtara descriptors and their library position descriptions. They then integrated Te Tōtara's capability foundations with their local frameworks and training for understanding the local history of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and te ao Māori. They have operationalised Te Koopu Mania into their twelve-month performance cycle of reflection, goal setting and performance review.

Otago University library demonstrates three different approaches to using Te Tōtara. Shiobhan Smith from the customer experience team ‘cross-walked’ the core capabilities in Te Tōtara with existing customer experience principles and put these online for her team in their learning platform. Associate University Librarian Frank Edwards is implementing Te Tōtara into their performance development processes. Sela Pole-Feheko, Pacific Engagement Advisor, uses the framework to guide conversations around professional development with staff and students.



Go after growth



Prioritise continual learning and improvement



Ask for help and feedback

The graphic features a stylized illustration of a forest with various green trees and foliage. In the foreground, a dark green horizontal band contains the title 'TE TŌTARA PROJECT OUTCOMES' in white, uppercase letters. To the right of the band, there are decorative green circles and a small green arrow pointing upwards.

TE TŌTARA PROJECT OUTCOMES

Successful implementation is evidenced by the many ways team members and teams have tailored their approach.

Te Tōtara has provided a structure for those who are already invested in their professional development. As Rachel Fisher from Matamata-Piako Libraries comments, "I noticed that some of the indicators within the framework naturally aligned with the projects I was already involved in or were about to start. That realisation reinforced for me that capability development doesn't have to be treated as something "extra" or separate. It can (and should) be woven into the everyday work we're already doing."

Te Tōtara has reinforced a focus on bi-cultural capability and the importance of building partnerships with iwi through engagement and having people in the library who can make those connections.

"When I saw Te Tōtara, it immediately resonated with me because it was an opportunity to provide something that's been missing ...we've always had processes for staff development, but they've always been council-wide development system mechanisms."

Sarah Corbet, Hamilton City Libraries

The project has successfully made the Te Tōtara framework well-known across the sector. Extending the project's scope, LIANZA examined how the implementation of Te Tōtara could be sustained into the future. Concluding by assigning a role for the framework in the professional development of members.

Te Tōtara framework is now a common point of reference for the capabilities required as kaitiaki and kaupupuri of information, taonga, and public spaces in Aotearoa.

NEXT STEPS – EMBEDDING TE TŌTARA FOR THE FUTURE

Recognising that continuous professional development is essential for library and information professionals to remain relevant and capable into the future, LIANZA surveyed members to find out what support they needed in their professional and career development.

As a result, in September 2025, LIANZA launched a [Continuing Professional Development pathway](#) with Te Tōtara as the foundation.

The pathway supports members in embarking on a continuous cycle of reflection and planning using the Te Tōtara Framework, logging their activities in a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) logbook. It includes ways to gain recognition for professional development activities in the form of certificates and a new recognition scheme, CertLIANZA.

"Learning more about the CPD Pathway has made me more confident to support my team's professional development going forward. I'm currently our only team member with RLIANZA, and learning more about the CPD Pathway helped me understand what my teammates need to do to earn professional development certificates at different levels. Seeing the online journal in action has empowered me to take more of a leadership role in helping my teammates to get certified."

*Nicole Thorburn, Librarian,
Kaitiaki Pukapuka*

A newly created role, the Professional Development and Events Lead at LIANZA, with Paula Eskett, former Waimakiriri Libraries Manager, starting in this role in November, will support Te Tōtara Workforce Capability Project in the future.

Collaboration is planned with a cross-sector advisory group to support LIANZA in its kaitiaki role, nourishing the tōtara and sowing more seeds to support a stronger and more diverse future library and information workforce.



Top: LIS participants at a workshop on Te Tōtara in Wellington October 30, 2024

Bottom: Launch of the LIANZA CPD Pathway, from left Annemarie Thomas, Ian Littleworth and Laura Marshall



<http://www.lianza.org.nz>

People & communities connected and empowered by information.

Te Rau Herenga o Aotearoa LIANZA acknowledge members of the advisory group for this project:
Denise Wilson, Ian Littleworth, Amanda Bond, Cellia Joe-Olsen and project manager Annemarie Thomas.