



A Companion Guide for adult and community education providers

A practical guide to using He Mara Mahi Tahī to show what matters.

The core idea

Start small. Use what you already have. Add one thing only if it helps.

This guide helps providers move from purpose to evidence to learning to a clearer story.

This guide is about provider-level impact practice. It focuses on how providers might notice and describe change for learners, whānau and communities.

Provider evidence can help build a wider adult and community education sector story. It is not the same as ACE Aotearoa's own evidence of contribution as a peak body. Keep those two layers separate, or the measurement weeds will take over the garden.

Name what matters

Start with the change that is meaningful for learners, whānau and communities.

Define what good looks like

Describe the signs you would expect to see if the mahi is working.

Notice and gather lightly

Use simple counts, learner voice, tutor observations and examples of work.

Learn and adapt

Use what you notice to improve practice, not just satisfy reporting.

How this guide can help you

Adult and community education providers make a real difference in people's lives. The difficulty is that the most important changes are not always easy to describe in simple, credible ways, especially when time, staff and resources are tight.

Not this

A heavy reporting system, a one-size-fits-all template, or a demand to prove everything at once.

This instead

- a small shared backbone
- local flexibility
- evidence that is useful to providers
- one manageable next step

Provider-friendly rule

Choose one change, one simple method and one next step. A small, honest signal is stronger than a large, wobbly claim.

The Tūhono Impact approach

He Mara Mahi Tahi - a shared garden architecture

The overlay gives providers a simple sequence. It starts with why the mahi exists, then moves through what good looks like, how change is noticed, how learning is used and how the story is shared.

Element	Purpose	Provider question	What you leave with
Ngā Kākano Seedlings Purpose 	Clarifies why the mahi exists and who it is for. This is the starting point from which everything else grows.	What change do we hope happens because this mahi exists?	A clear purpose statement
Ngā Pakiaka Roots What your good looks like 	Defines success in your own context. This is where you name what meaningful change would look like.	What would tell us our mahi is working?	A shared sense of what good looks like.
Rā Putiputi Sunflowers How we notice and measure change. 	Identifies signs of change you can see, hear, count or show.	What might we see, hear, count or show if change is happening?	A small set of signs of change and possible evidence.
Te Puoto Watering can Learning and adapting 	Uses evidence to reflect, learn and improve. This keeps the mahi responsive and alive.	What are we noticing, and what might need to change?	A simple rhythm for reflection and adaptation.
Te Kete Hauhake Harvest basket Impact and sharing 	Brings the evidence together so you can share the difference the mahi makes.	What can we tell with both measurement and meaning?	A simple rhythm for reflection and adaptation.

The shift

Do not start with forms. Start with what matters. Then ask what you already notice and what one simple piece of evidence would make the story clearer.

The five-step practice cycle

Use this cycle in a planning meeting, tutor debrief, team reflection, board conversation or after a learning activity. It can be completed quickly. The point is not perfection. The point is a useful rhythm.

<p>1. Purpose</p> <p>Name the learner or community change that sits at the heart of the mahi. Ask what matters most?</p>
<p>2. Good</p> <p>Describe what success would look like in plain language. Ask what change are we hoping to see?</p>
<p>3. Evidence</p> <p>Choose what you can count, notice, hear or show without creating unnecessary work. Ask what do we already notice? What evidence do we already have?</p>
<p>4. Learning</p> <p>Look for patterns. What is working? What is not? What needs adapting? Ask how could we use this learning?</p>
<p>5. Sharing</p> <p>Turn the evidence and learning into a short, credible story for the right audience. Ask how do we want to communicate and share with our learners and our communities?</p>

Shared signs of change to test

Provider feedback points to a practical starting point: connection, confidence and participation. These are not compulsory indicators. Treat them as shared language that can be adapted to local mahi.

Shared sign	Plain meaning	What you might notice	What you might hear
Connection	Learners feel more connected and less isolated.	They feel welcomed, build relationships, support each other or stay after the session to connect.	"I do not feel so alone."
Confidence	Learners feel more able to speak, ask, try and take a next step.	They ask questions, join in, try something new or say they can do something they avoided before.	"I can do this now."
Participation	Learners take part and keep coming.	They attend, stay involved and continue participating in the current learning opportunity as much as they can.	"What helped me keep coming was..."

Good shared signs should be

Meaningful to learners and providers; realistic to notice; clear enough to explain; flexible enough to fit different contexts.

Low-burden evidence

Evidence does not have to mean a long survey. It can be a small set of useful signals gathered through things providers already do.

Counted Attendance, enrolments, participation patterns, repeat engagement, completion within a course.	Noticed Tutor observations, peer support, confidence shifts, group participation, examples of learners helping each other.
Heard Learner quotes, one check-out question, informal comments, short reflections, follow-up phone or text prompts.	Shown Photos with consent, learner work, creative outputs, practical demonstrations, group reflection walls.

Simple method menu

Method	Helps show	Why it is low burden
Attendance pattern	Participation and keeping coming	Most providers already collect this.
One check-out question	Connection, confidence, usefulness or next step	Fast, flexible and easy to repeat.
Tutor observation prompt	Participation, confidence and peer support	Builds on what tutors already see.
Learner quote	What changed and why it mattered	One sentence can carry meaning.
Before and after card	Confidence, skills or goal progress	Simple comparison at the start and end.
Photo or work sample	Skills, pride, creativity and progress	Useful when written feedback is not ideal.
Follow-up text or call	Next steps after the learning	One question after the learning has landed.

The test

Keep a method only if it helps you learn, improve or tell the story better. If it creates work without insight, compost it.

Tūhono Impact worksheet

Start where you are

Use this on your own or with your team. Choose one real learning activity. The goal is not to finish a perfect measurement plan. The goal is to leave with one sensible next step.

Tūhono element	Question	Notes / response
Ngā Kākano Purpose	What learning activity are we thinking about, and why does it matter?	Example: ESOL conversation group, digital skills class, driver licensing support, community art course. <hr/>
Ngā Pakiaka What good looks like	What change matters most in this setting?	Connection, confidence, participation, skills, personal goal, meaningful next step, whānau or community benefit. <hr/>
Rā Putiputi Notice and measure	What would we see, hear, count or show if that change was happening?	What might learners say? What might tutors notice? What might change in participation? <hr/>
Existing evidence	What do we already have?	Attendance records, feedback forms, tutor observations, learner comments, photos, learner work, follow-up calls. <hr/>
Te Puoto Learning and adapting	What is one simple method we could try, and how will we use what we learn?	One check-out question, one learner quote, one tutor prompt, one before and after card, one follow-up text. <hr/>
Te Kete Hauhake Impact and sharing	How could we share the learning clearly and proportionately?	One paragraph, one-page snapshot, short story, board update, funder conversation, staff reflection. <hr/>

Finish with this sentence: Our next small step is _____.

One-page impact snapshot

The harvest does not need to be a long report. A short impact snapshot can hold measurement and meaning together.

Snapshot section	Prompt
1. The mahi	What activity, group or programme are we describing?
2. Purpose	What change does this mahi exist to support?
3. What good looked like	What signs of change were we looking for?
4. What we noticed or measured	What did we count, notice, hear or show?
5. Learner voice	What short quote, example or story shows why it mattered?
6. What we learned	What pattern, surprise, barrier or improvement did we notice?
7. What happens next	What will we keep, change, stop or test next?

A light learning rhythm

- After a session or course: ask one useful question.
- Monthly or termly: hold a short tutor or team debrief.
- Quarterly: look for patterns across a few activities.
- Annually: share a concise story of what changed, what was learned and what will happen next.

Final line

Start small. Use what you already have. Make it useful. Show what matters in ways that fit the reality of your work.