



TE TANGO
AKARANGATIRA
ORA'ANGA



INTERNAL
AFFAIRS

GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS
MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS
SOCIAL IMPACT FUND

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Social Impact Fund Reporting Template

Summary

Activity information

Name of Organisation	MURI ENVIRONMENT CARE SOCIETY INC
Goal	To advance the development of the ecological-restoration specific plant nursery as it constitutes the crucial foundation for our riparian restoration initiatives, supplying a broad spectrum of resilient, locally adapted plants. Furthermore, it fosters community engagement and education, creating a vibrant space where volunteers can learn about native species propagation, ecological restoration, and the intricate relationships between plants and their surrounding environments.

Agreement or Contract information

Start and end dates	4 NOVEMBER 2022 - 4 NOVEMBER 2023
Total cost	\$10,200.00
Reporting period	Final Report due 15 th DECEMBER 2023

■ Report preparation

Prepared by	Brennan Panzarella
Others involved or consulted	Mii Kauvai, MEC President John Tierney, MEC Treasurer Kas Silk, MEC Anne Tierney, MEC
Date of report	15 DECEMBER 2023

1. Key Conclusions and Necessary Actions (Bullet points)

Briefly describe the overall result / outcome of your action. Then briefly describe any actions that are still needed to complete the activity or if this activity will continue despite this contract having finished.

Key Conclusions:

- The establishment of the Takitumu Nursery has successfully created a platform for ecological preservation, community engagement, and cultural preservation.
- The Society & its nursery has been strengthened through its help from the SIF fund and will continue to experiment with new native plants, serving as a laboratory to delve deeper into understanding them and exploring how these natives can be tools to offer nature-based solutions to contemporary environmental challenges.
- This project provides a centre for the community to exchange ideas and collaboratively learn about the natural world, endeavouring to meld traditional ecological knowledge with scientific inquiry.
- The project has effectively attracted and involved our Takitumu & Muri Communities, NGO's, Civil Society & community members, strengthening communal bonds and fostering environmental stewardship.
- The SIF Fund has generously provided the essential grant needed for building and enhancing nursery infrastructure, as well as supplying tools and safety equipment vital for our community & school groups, plus volunteer planting days.
- The Community centre building is being built around a container that has been acquired, and Mann Short of Complete Construction has expertly crafted high-quality foundations for us.
- Our vision for the build has evolved to become more ambitious, as we seek to create a truly enchanting community centre and multi purpose facility for our visitors, reflecting the quality and thoughtful planning invested into the project.
- Our design has been influenced by our CI Gov. new Regeneration Tourism policy resulting in the upgrade in design. MEC is now submitting a second phase application to SIF, as there is still a lot of work to do to create a comfortable and modern community centre and visitor reception.
- Educational experiences, both on-site at the Takitumu nursery and through excursions originating from it, have demonstrated substantial potential in enhancing mental well-being, furthering education, and fostering a profound connection with nature.
- Participants during our nursery days, field trips, and planting days consistently depart with discernible joy and ample material for reflection, indicating the impactful nature of hands-on experiences in environmental education and emotional wellness.
- The project has generated positive feedback and widespread community support, affirming its relevance and impact.

Next Actions:

We have also determined that the best way for continued SIF support, which will be putlined in greater detail for our project is through the following Transform the container into a Community Centre, educational & training place, seed lab and workshop, complete with library, video & visuals, a volunteer-operated kitchen and essential utilities like water, internet, audio-visual equipment and power.

- Include a climate-controlled shadehouse equipment room and enhance accessibility by adding wooden decking around two sides of the Centre, along with access steps.
- Add a roof over both the container and the deck.
- Build adjoining shade houses and upgrade standing areas
- In collaboration with Paul Maoate from ICI, we have initiated the second iteration of the design process using AutoCAD as well as extensive consultations. Our initial designs are attached.
- As always, we will continue to improve the nursery and gathering areas to enhance visitor experiences

2. Challenges Experienced (Bullet points)

Briefly describe challenges relating to the achievement of your 1) output(s) 2) outcome(s) 3) any unexpected negative outcomes

1. Output Challenges:

- Earlier in 2023, we were facing challenges with steady involvement from volunteers and education groups due to changing priorities brought on by community & economic shifts.
- As of October, we have started to gain momentum in recruiting help and on the 18th of October we had a daily record (other than school groups) 12 people show up to help out and learn.
- We have been working on this part and this is forecasted to become less of a limiting factor. We'll keep moving forward, ensuring our team communicates well to create clear priorities and maintain efficient, healthy workspaces. .
- We continue to do our utmost to cultivate rewarding experiences for our dedicated volunteers.
- The project is complex and multifaceted, reflecting the intricate nature of our ecological restoration efforts.

2. Outcome Challenges:

- Managing the inherent diversity of the project requires a combination of engineering expertise, the ability to tap into local knowledge, creativity, scientific inquiry, and effective public relations. Surprisingly, we possess these attributes, presenting a welcome and delightful challenge for the Society.
- The transformation of the Takitumu Nursery into a prominent educational, recreational, and meeting centre for the community entails accommodating numerous interest groups and a variety of needs.

- Convincing individuals of the importance of native plants and the need for ecological restoration projects can demand time and foundational knowledge. However, once these concepts ‘take root,’ they often endure and resonate with people.
3. Unexpected Negative Outcomes:
- While the project has had moments that seemed overwhelming, such instances have not lessened our unwavering determination to seize the opportunities presented by this SIF program.

3.Successes (Bullet points)

Briefly describe success relating to the achievement of your 1) output(s) 2) outcome(s) 3) any unexpected positive outcomes.

1. Output Successes:

- The creation of the Takitumu Nursery stands as a pivotal accomplishment, offering a dedicated space for environmental conservation efforts.
- This nursery has become a central location for the cultivation and spread of indigenous tree and plant varieties, fruits, flowers, and species introduced by Polynesian vaka, mirroring our principal goals for preserving biodiversity.
- With an expanding range of species in our repertoire, the nursery consistently enhances our seed germination processes and optimises the nurturing and development of the nursery's flora
- Our endeavours have heightened awareness regarding the significance of our streams, sparking critical conversations about their impact on the lagoons and the promising possibility of revitalising the streams' own ecosystems.
- This SIF project has dynamically involved our MEC members, diverse community individuals, schools, and volunteers.
- This engagement has strengthened community ties and promoted a sense of responsibility for the environment.
- The participation of school groups, leading to effective plantings and significant contributions to the nursery, demonstrating the project's potential to motivate and mobilise the youth.
- Additionally, we deeply appreciate the partnerships and collaborations formed with you and various individuals and entities, enriching our initiative.

2. Outcome Successes:

- By enhancing the nursery's habitability and comfort, and by instituting systems that present gratifying volunteer opportunities, we foresee a sustained increase in both engagement and visitation.
- It's not uncommon to witness locals' delight, often exclaiming, "We had no idea this was here!" as they discover this hidden gem.

- Horticultural therapy, a fundamental element of our endeavour, has proven to be a remarkable success. This therapeutic angle not only maintains participant involvement but also instils a sense of purpose, offering a platform for self-expression and interpersonal connection.
 - Through immersive experiences in plant science and practical horticulture skills, we foster mental wellness, educational growth, and a profound bond with nature among our participants.
3. Unexpected Positive Outcomes:
- One unanticipated yet positive development arising from our project is the generation of an extensive array of educational media content.
 - Content highlighting school groups, volunteers, and restoration principles, has greatly expanded our outreach and heightened engagement with our message.
 - The level of positive feedback and community backing we've encountered has surpassed our initial projections.
 - Community response affirms the importance and influence of our work, further energising us to persist and broaden the scope of our initiatives.

4. Key Lessons Learnt (Bullet points)

If you were to do this project again, are there any key lessons that you learnt that you think would improve outcomes – would you do things differently?

1. **Ambition in Project Scope and Execution:**
 - Our experience has underscored the importance of visionary thinking in the planning and execution of construction efforts.
 - To actualise our ideal space, we recognized the need to expand our aspirations and resources — not limiting ourselves to initial constraints
 - To be bold in our pursuit of broader, more impactful objectives.
2. **Necessity of Engaging Vaka Committees:**
 - A critical lesson we've assimilated is the essential need to engage more deeply with 'Vaka Committees', a strategy advised to us and one we are eager to pursue in future endeavours.
 - Their involvement is expected to be transformative, offering unique insights and a sense of communal participation that we hadn't fully leveraged previously.
 - While our engagement with landowners and Society members has been incredibly beneficial, we recognize that a more comprehensive approach involving Vaka Committees will further align our projects with community needs and aspirations.
 - This realisation marks a significant shift in our strategy, emphasising inclusivity and broader community integration in our upcoming initiatives.
3. **Balancing Volunteer and Professional Labor:**
 - Our journey has underscored the critical role of volunteer work in propelling MEC's mission forward;
 - It also illuminated the necessity for professional, contracted labour to achieve high-quality, consistent results.

- The addition of Kas Silk to our team in August, for instance, significantly boosted our productivity.
- Looking ahead, engaging paid professionals can free up valuable time for our core team, allowing them to concentrate more on specialised tasks such as scientific monitoring, educational program development, and biodiversity initiatives.
- This balance between dedicated volunteers and skilled professionals is pivotal for sustaining the depth and efficiency of our work.

4. Amplifying Impact through Community Involvement:

- The enthusiastic involvement from our Takitumu Vaka, community members, educational institutions, and volunteers has vividly demonstrated the transformative power of robust community engagement.
- Our strategy going forward includes expanding this engagement through diverse initiatives: educational programs, interactive nursery sessions, volunteer planting events, and consistent community gardening meetups at the nursery.
- These efforts not only deepen the project's impact but also cultivate a more profound communal responsibility for the environment.
- The ripple effect of heightened interest, increased media coverage, and a vibrant buzz within the community serves to exponentially magnify our efforts, creating a self-sustaining momentum.
- Our experience has highlighted the instrumental role of comprehensive media content in extending our reach and drawing engagement.
- Moving forward, we're committed to channelling more resources into public communication strategies, including a diverse range of regular activities at the Takitumu Nursery.
- A key part of this strategy involves producing and disseminating educational content, especially during our hands-on growing sessions.
- This approach facilitates knowledge sharing and active participation, and serves to elevate public consciousness about our cause, thereby fostering a deeper sense of community and encouraging more hands-on involvement.

5. Maximising Impact through Strategic Alliances:

- Our collaboration with government entities has underscored the substantial benefits of strategic partnerships in amplifying the effectiveness of our initiatives.
- These alliances not only offer access to additional resources and specialised expertise but also facilitate policy support, significantly broadening the horizons of our projects.
- In our ongoing journey, we will persist in identifying and nurturing these vital relationships, strategically utilising them to bolster the success of our endeavours and secure the long-term sustainability of our nursery.
- These partnerships are a conduit for our contribution to broader national agendas, particularly in the spheres of environmental conservation and social welfare.

5.Social Impacts (Bullet points)

What are some of the changes that are happening to the individual, their home and families, communities as a result of your work with them.

1. **Raising Environmental Consciousness:**

- The project has been instrumental in heightening community awareness of the environment's delicate balance, especially concerning local streams.
- Through hands-on involvement, participants have cultivated a nuanced appreciation of their impact on ecological sustainability, potentially influencing greener practices in their daily routines.

2. **Cultivating Empowerment Through Participation:**

- Our planting days and nursery activities serve as more than educational opportunities; they're a call to action.
- Participants become agents of change, a role that instils a sense of empowerment and enthusiasm, spurring ongoing commitment and advocacy for environmental stewardship.

3. **Extending Ecological Knowledge:**

- Our perspective is holistic; environmental education extends beyond the confines of specific projects, weaving through all facets of life.
- Gaining insights into ecological dynamics and human interaction informs a broader worldview, potentially guiding more conscious lifestyle and societal choices.

4. **Strengthening Community Ties:**

- Collaborative environmental efforts provide a unique avenue for community engagement, transcending typical academic or professional boundaries.
- This collaboration breeds communal solidarity, encourages teamwork, and fortifies interpersonal connections, addressing a void often felt in contemporary society.

5. **Catalyzing Positive Social Transformation:**

- Beyond ecological preservation, the project stands as a beacon for societal enrichment.
- By championing principles of unity, empathy, and collective accountability, we're knitting a stronger community tapestry, underpinned by shared goals and reciprocal understanding.

6.Economic Impacts (Bullet points)

What are some of the Financial help these funds have provided to clients/stakeholders/organisations.

1. **Fostering Strategic Collaborations via Enhanced Visibility:**

- Financial backing from SIF has heightened our profile, paving the way for strategic alliances, such as our noteworthy partnership with Cook Islands Tourism through their Regenerative Travel Experiences Programme.
- Such collaborations underscore our mutual commitment to sustainable economic growth and conscientious tourism initiatives.

2. **Preservation of Environmental Treasures:**
 - Our endeavours are rooted in a sustainable ethos that prioritises the protection of the Cook Islands' natural allure, an invaluable asset that captivates international tourists and propels the economy forward.
3. **Economic Injection into Local Enterprises:**
 - Our policy of procuring supplies and equipment from local vendors directly infuses capital into the local business sector.
 - This approach not only sustains these enterprises but also ensures the financial circulation remains within the community.
4. **Enhancing Skills and Prospects:**
 - The project stands as a hub for educational enrichment, offering community members avenues to bolster their skill sets, potentially improving their job prospects.
 - Acquired competencies, such as in horticulture and environmental conservation, may unveil new vocational pathways.
5. **Anticipated Long-term Economic Advantages:**
 - Although not immediately quantifiable, our conservation-centric agenda is poised to yield substantial economic dividends in the future.
 - An invigorated environment can catalyse tourism, amplify agricultural output, and curtail expenses associated with environmental remediation and imports.
6. **Optimised Resource Utilisation:**
 - The allocation of funds has enabled judicious management of resources and consumables, essential for the seamless progression and fruition of our objectives.
 - Astute fiscal stewardship has anchored the project's longevity, propelling sustained ecological and communal transformation.
7. **Consolidating MEC's Financial Footing:**
 - The project's triumphs and palpable impact are enhancing Muri Environment Care Group's (MEC) reputation, potentially drawing additional endorsements and investments.
 - This fortifies MEC's financial stability, empowering continued ecological initiatives and community projects.

Authorisation

I declare that the information contained in this report is true and correct and confirm:

- MOIA Funds were received and used only for the agreed purpose(s); and
- All conditions attached to MOIA's Funding have been met; and
- MOIA Funds have been fully utilised for the intended purpose, OR

- There are unspent Funds and I understand that MEC will complete this project and expend all the MOIA funding provided.

Brennan Panzarella

Ecologist

Full Name (in block capitals)

Title / Position (e.g. CEO)



9/12/2023

Signature

Date

Appendices

This report includes the following Appendices and Attachment:

1. **Appendix A:** Progress Against Agreed Budget (table);
 - Attachment 1: Provided all Financial Records, Bank Statement, Invoices & Receipts;
2. **Appendix B:** Progress against Results Framework & Table; and
 - Attachment 2: Provide list of successful events/activities, media release (website link, video clips etc) photos of events, figures, percentage & data (graphs)

Appendix A: Progress Against the Agreed Budget

Please add or remove new rows / outputs as necessary.

Input	Planned Revenue	Actual Revenue	Variance	Reason for Variance
Funds received	\$10,200.00	10,200.00	nil	
Outputs	Planned Expenditures	Actual Expenditure		
Community Meeting Place	\$ 5,500	\$ 5,140.00	(360.00)	
Propagation Lab	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,628.95	628.95	
Community Tools/Clothes	\$ 1,700	\$ 1,431.05	(268.95)	
	\$10,200	\$10,200.00	0.00	
TOTALS	\$10,200.00			

Appendix B:

NEWSPAPER

Reviving Rarotonga's native flora

<https://www.cookislandsnews.com/internal/features/weekend/reviving-rarotongas-native-flora/>

Te Ipukarea Society : Nurture nature for our future

<https://www.cookislandsnews.com/uncategorised/internal/national/environment/te-ipukarea-society-nurture-nature-for-our-future/?fbclid=IwAR3EM0Did5L6SVxeJgebtjmOypP-PtDY6eBXUCYSSvbpnwL-CgWKAWZ1ZRg>

Muri restoration efforts backed by United Nations

<https://www.cookislandsnews.com/internal/national/local/environment/muri-restoration-efforts-backed-by-united-nations/>

Using nature to hold it all together

<https://www.cookislandsnews.com/internal/national/local/environment/using-nature-to-hold-it-all-together/>

Muri Beach Cleanup – protecting our oceans to protect our future

<https://www.cookislandsnews.com/national/environment/muri-beach-cleanup-protecting-our-oceans-to-protect-our-future/>

Ridge to Reef expedition a celebration of Earth Day

<https://www.cookislandsnews.com/internal/opinion/ridge-to-reef-expedition-a-celebration-of-earth-day/>

Cooks toasts World Tourism Day 2023

<https://www.cookislandsnews.com/internal/national/economy/cooks-toasts-world-tourism-day-2023/>

Volunteers celebrate World Wetlands Day

<https://www.cookislandsnews.com/national/environment/volunteers-celebrate-world-wetlands-day-with-establishment-of-nursery/>

Youth Media Team learns the ropes with Muri Environment Care Group

<https://www.cookislandsnews.com/national/environment/youth-media-team-learns-the-ropes-with-muri-environment-care-group/>

Tereora students help Muri project before holidays

<https://www.cookislandsnews.com/national/environment/tereora-students-help-muri-project-before-holidays/>

Tourism celebrate 20th Vaka Pride Awards

<https://www.cookislandsnews.com/national/economy/11000-handed-to-winners-of-20th-vaka-pride-awards/>

Native nursery plan to protect Muri's lagoon

<https://www.cookislandsnews.com/national/environment/native-nursery-plan-to-protect-muris-lagoon/>

'Muddy buddies' eco stream walk

<https://www.cookislandsnews.com/internal/opinion/muddy-buddies-eco-stream-walk/>

OPINION: Caring for Muri Lagoon means caring for our streams

<https://www.cookislandsnews.com/internal/opinion/editorials/opinion-caring-for-muri-lagoon-means-caring-for-our-streams/>

COOK ISLANDS TV SEGMENTS

Muri Environment Care Group had a very successful [planting effort](#) with the volunteers from Tereora College up the Parengaru Stream. With the guidance of Jo Holley, the young ones presented and shot their own coverage of the event.

The United Nations Resident Coordinator for the Cook Islands, Samoa, Niue and Tokelau has been visiting and getting updates on the various projects around Rarotonga that

received grant funding. One of the sites visited was the Muri Environment Care Nursery.
[Link to TV segment](#)

FACEBOOK

Facebook is very popular in the Cook Islands as a medium for important communication. We created a Facebook page in addition to our long-term Facebook group. This Facebook post reached nearly 9,000 people

<https://www.facebook.com/murienvironment/posts/222497370822089>.

We have created a website with the aim of enlightening 'deep divers' while also dynamically engaging potential volunteers and donors in a substantial and inspiring way.

<https://mec.org.ck/>



Regular Volunteer Ned, MEC's Kas Silk and Volunteer Jonathan make improvements on the shadehouse.



Inano creating a raised bed to start growing herbs



Meeting with Coral Restoration NGO, Te Ara o te Akau to discuss a collaboration.



Students from Apii Takitumu plant native sedges at the nursery as a eco-drain during a World Wetlands Day event



Brennan (MEC) introduces the power of scientific taxonomy to Te Uki Ou's Year 9 class on a seed-collecting outing into the Turangi valley forest.



Students from Apii Takitumu and Te Uki Ou had a great time planting coastal reinforcement alongside Te Ipukarea Society and Muri Environment Care.



MEC members share a light moment in this snapshot from our weekly Wednesday Nursery open days



National Environment Service staff and Apii Takitumu at the nursery.



A recent photo showing how much the nursery has grown and changed 22/9/23

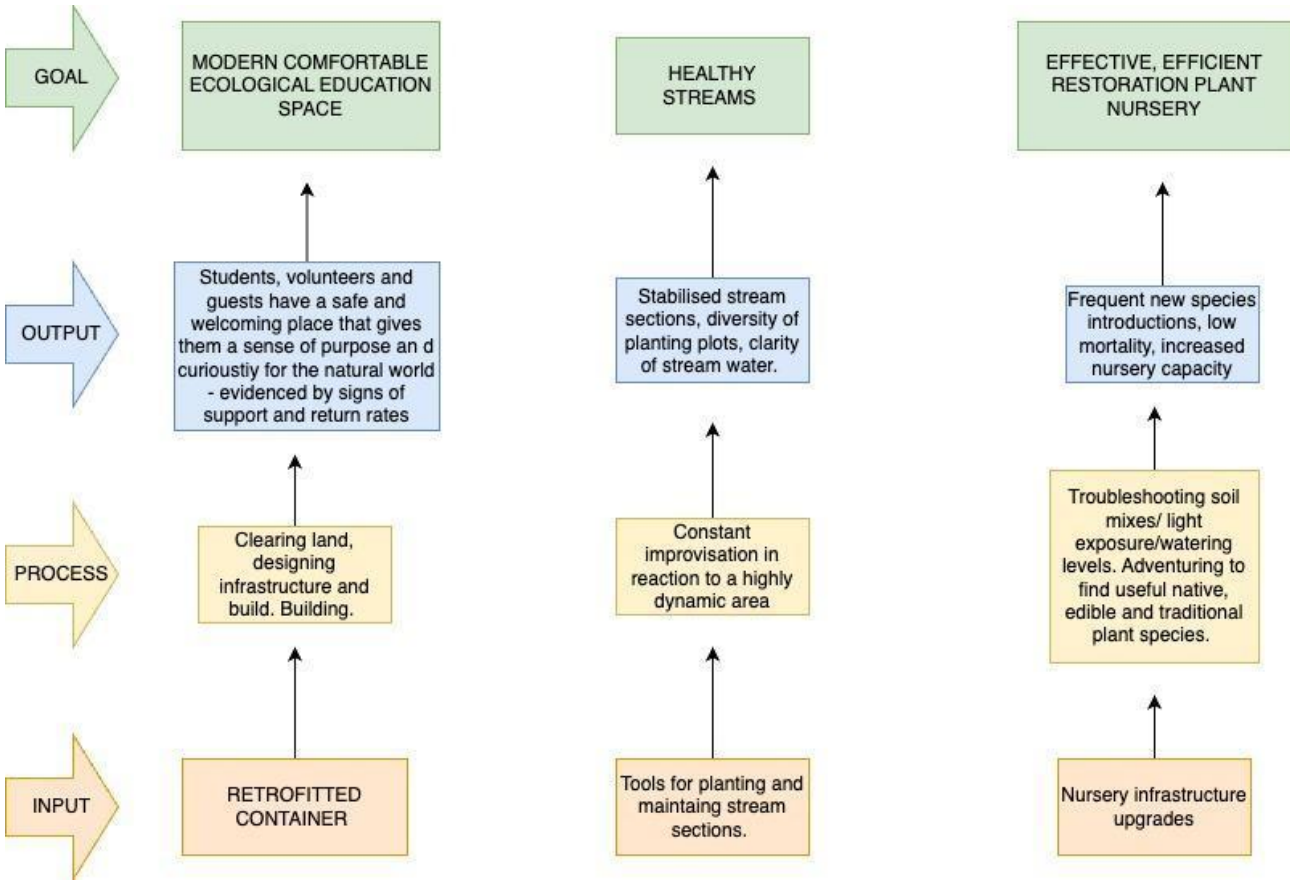


Photo from mid 2022 showing Te Uki Ou Year 9 students focussed on bagging Jackfruits.



Apii Takitumu Year 6 students led by the National Environment Service celebrating World Wetlands day by doing a wetland survey and planting an ecodrain that flows into our nursery rain garden/ constructed wetland. Brennan Panzarella (MEC Ecologist) discusses the filtering power and other benefits of native sedges in Wetland ecology.

Progress Against Results Framework and Table



Results Measurement Table

Outcomes				
	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Data source
Engagement	Number of Guests/Volunteers	2 per week	10 per week	Brennan Panzarella, MEC Ecologist; Mii Kauvai, MEC President
Upgrades	Progress on nursery infrastructure	Core team doing what they can with limited labor and resources	Complete shadehouse construction, upgrade standing areas, construct a village marae meeting center	Brennan Panzarella, MEC Ecologist; Mii Kauvai, MEC President
Outputs				
	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Data source
Cleaner Stream Water	Decrease in pollutant levels in stream water	To be determined based on mid-project stream water quality assessments	Significant reduction in pollutants, to be quantified based on post-project water quality tests	Stream water quality tests conducted by MMR
Infrastructure Improvements	Completion of infrastructure projects	Existing nursery infrastructure	Construct additional shadehouse, upgrade standing areas, build village marae meeting center	Project progress reports from MEC
Community Support	Level of community support and involvement	Initial difficulty in communicating project importance and objectives to a broader audience	Increased community involvement, widespread community support, positive feedback	Feedback from community both in person and social media

Cultural Preservation	Integration of traditional Islands knowledge practices of Cook Maori &	Balance traditional knowledge and modern techniques	Effective integration of traditional knowledge into nursery project and riparian restoration	Feedback from elders, youth, and schools
Media Outreach	Production of informative media content	Initial content production	Production of a substantial amount of informative media content featuring school groups, volunteers, and restoration concepts	Social media statistics, website traffic, other media metrics
Government Partnerships	Establishment of government partnerships	Initial establishment of government partnerships	Expanded government partnerships leading to additional resources, expertise, and policy support	Partnership agreements, reports from MEC