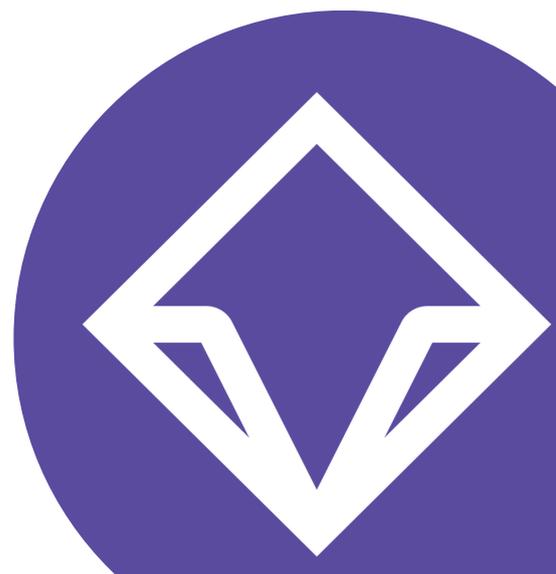




COURSE BOOK 2026

ASPIRING
NATIONAL
LEADERSHIP
PROGRAMME

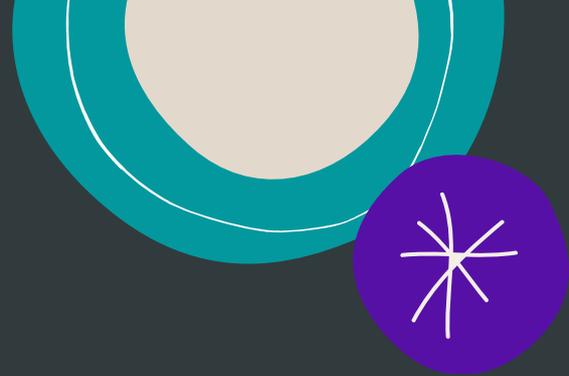


GROWTH CULTURE
EXISTS TO BREATHE
LIFE INTO LEADERS,
AND TO ENABLE THEM
TO CREATE CULTURES
WHERE EVERYONE CAN
THRIVE.



Marshall Diggs
Managing Director

Contents



Page 3	Welcome
Page 4	Programme Overview
Pages 5-6	Meet the Kaiārahi
Page 6	Required Texts
Page 7	Timeline
Page 8	Course Requirements
Page 9	Professional Learning Groups Your Coaching Sessions
Page 10	The Online Forum Leadership Capabilities Assessment
Page 11	Learning Partners
Pages 12-14	Record of Coaching Sessions
Pages 15 on	Notes from PLGs and other notes





A Personal Welcome and Introduction

Kia Ora

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you on board the National Aspiring Leadership programme for 2026. I am very much looking forward to meeting you and witnessing your growth on the path to leadership this year. Growth Culture are honoured to be a part of this journey.

By way of introduction to me, I am Emma Kingston. I oversee the leadership programmes for Growth Culture and, as such, you will hear from me throughout the year with important information, I will see you at PLGs and I will share the online content with you. You can contact me at any point in the year to ask any questions you may have about the programme.

I am passionate about education, learning and the future of schooling and believe strongly in the power of great leadership to achieve significant outcomes for the young people that schools have the responsibility and honour to serve.

I am a primary trained teacher who has worked in state and state-integrated schools, comprising single cell and open learning configurations. I have led many workshops and conference sessions on pedagogy; as well as facilitating, coaching and mentoring for a number of years across primary, intermediate and secondary schools. My most recent full time role was as a Deputy Principal where, as part of a strong team, we were tasked with transforming all aspects of a school in crisis. I subsequently transitioned to part time pedagogical and leadership coaching roles when I had my own children.

At Growth Culture, I am excited to help to grow and empower new leaders in schools to achieve positive outcomes for staff and children alike.

We have a fantastic programme ahead, looking at aspects of leadership, both practical and theoretical. There is lots to explore and plenty of opportunity to reflect on new learning with likeminded peers and Kaiārahi.

Ngā mihi nui

E. Kingston

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Programme Overview

The National Aspiring Leadership programme is designed for leaders within the education sector who aspire to accelerate their career through growth in their personal leadership capabilities, as well as add value to their teams and colleagues.

You will network with a nationwide community of lifelong learners and expert kaiārahi.

The National Aspiring Leadership programme is delivered over a three term period to ensure minimal disruption. We combine expert coaching and a customised leadership development plan based around your strengths, as well as adding value to your aspirations.



MĀ MUA KA KITE A MURI, MĀ MURI
KA ORA A MUA
THOSE WHO LEAD GIVE SIGHT TO
THOSE WHO FOLLOW, THOSE
WHO FOLLOW GIVE LIFE TO
THOSE WHO LEAD

COURSE COMPONENTS

- Three PLGs
- 9 modules in the interactive online forum
- Participant-generated kōrero building on the existing skills and experience within the group
- Two professional readings
- Personalised Leadership Capabilities Assessment (LCA) and Coaching Reflection Tool
- Kaiārahi bespoke coaching
- Access to our Wellbeing Kaiārahi
- Option to discuss required texts online
- Connection with Learning Partners

MEET THE Kaiārahi

The Kaiārahi are a unique and important part of the National Aspiring Leadership programme. The Kaiārahi role is to walk alongside you and guide you on your leadership journey. We are fortunate to have enormously gifted and experienced Kaiārahi to support and challenge you to be the best leader you can be.

Pauline Cowens



Pauline's experience spans thirty-six years, in a variety of kura. Her formal leadership roles include an Advisory role in Science (Waikato University), Deputy Principal (Waikato Diocesan School for Girls from 1994 to 1998), and Principal (Tauranga Girls' College from 2001 to 2018).

Pauline's skill-set includes educational leadership, mentoring, change management, community building, facilitation, HR, international marketing, financial management and governance (member and chair of several Boards outside school but education based). She is passionate about learning as a holistic activity and believes that everything is possible, we are responsible for our own outcomes and that we have a duty of stewardship and risk-taking in pursuit of success (in all its forms) for those in our care.

In 2021 Pauline developed the Aspiring Honours Programme, a second year programme which further develops specific skills and knowledge related to Principalship. Pauline also leads the growing team of Kaiārahi.

Pauline is 100% committed to building a better future for New Zealand and for her four grandsons, who will be part of that future.

Robert Mangan



Robert has recently stepped aside, after 41 years involvement in formal Education, from his role of Principal of Tauranga Boys' College which he held for 14 years. Prior to this he was the Deputy Rector of a state integrated school Lindisfarne College for 6 years. During his time as Principal of Tauranga Boys' College he championed Academic Excellence and focussed strongly on improving academic results for Māori and Pasifika students. This focus supported Māori and Pasifika boys to achieve at higher rates than their Pākehā peers over a number of years. This was achieved through building a positive and affirming school culture focused on respect and belief that all students could achieve.

Robert is passionate about the importance of education and believes strongly in the ability of every student to achieve their potential, provided teachers, schools and the environment enables this to occur. He is excited to be involved in Growth Culture as he feels strongly about the importance of growing leadership within the school sector to ensure our system is "world class".

Robert has enjoyed pursuing his interests since stepping down from his Principals role enjoying quality time with his wife Linda and their two grandchildren, along with trail biking, fishing and golf in the sunny Bay of Plenty.

Aaron Ironside
Wellness Kaiārahi iārahi



Wellness Kaiārahi Aaron Ironside draws from experience and studies to provide valuable insight into the psychology of leadership and leading a team.

With a Masters Degree in Psychology, Aaron draws from his experience as counsellor, chaplain, pastor, spokesperson and broadcaster. He also enjoys a good laugh, and was a recent grand finalist at the Auckland Comedyfest Competition.

Passionate about unlocking potential and purpose, Aaron is available to work with delegates needing extra assistance to ensure you are bringing the 'best you' to your leadership environment.

Emma Kingston



Emma is passionate about education, change management, collaboration, reflective practice, and innovation. Her approach has been described as warm and gentle, with high expectations. It is also important to her that those with formal leadership titles empower and grow those around them, so that anyone in a school can lead - you can have great ideas no matter how many years into a role you are or what position you hold!

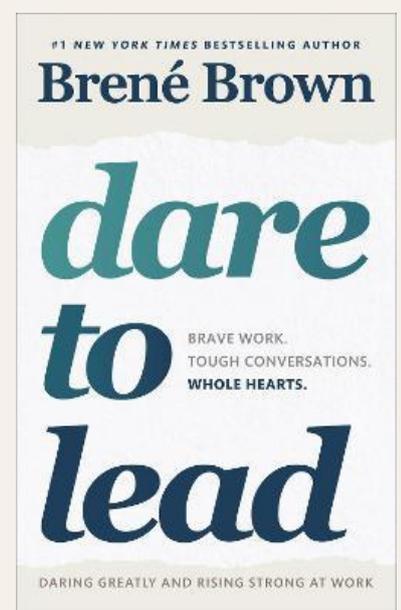
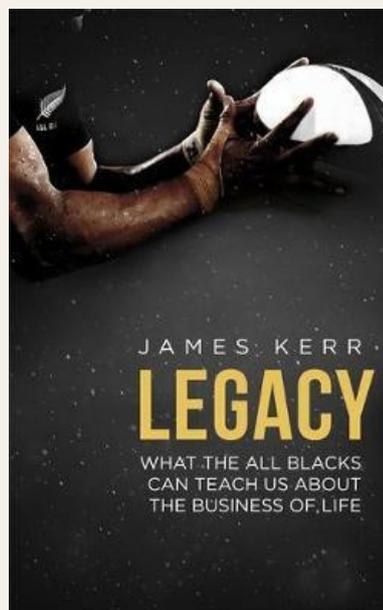
Emma is a primary trained teacher who has worked in state and state-integrated schools, comprising single cell and open learning configurations. She has led many workshops and conference sessions on pedagogy; as well as facilitating, coaching and mentoring for a number of years across primary, intermediate and secondary schools. More recently she was a Deputy Principal where, as part of a strong team, she was tasked with transforming all aspects of a school in crisis. She subsequently transitioned to part time pedagogical and leadership coaching roles when she had her own children.

Required Texts

There are two required texts for the National Aspiring Leadership programme. These are available in major book stores, online, as e-books and audiobooks. There is no particular time frame to read these in over the course of the programme.

BOOK DISCUSSION:

Delegates may choose to engage with fellow participants online to discuss their thoughts on the required texts. This is optional but a good way to connect with fellow delegates, see others' perspectives and understand how peers have implemented text ideas in their kura.



Timeline

Term 1	<p>23/02 Programme starts.</p> <p>Week of 23/02 Welcome and intros on forum. Kaiarahi makes contact to introduce self to delegates.</p> <p>2/03-18/03 First coaching session.</p> <p>2/03 Module 1 on forum. Due 48 hours before first coaching session.</p> <p>16/03 Module 2 on forum. Due 30/03.</p> <p>19/03 PLG 1 - Auckland.</p>
Term 2	<p>20/04 Module 3 on forum. Due 4/05</p> <p>4/05 Module 4 on forum. Due 18/05</p> <p>18/05 Module 5 on forum. Due 1/06</p> <p>1/06 Module 6 on forum. Due 15/06</p> <p>25/06 PLG 2: Online</p> <p>Throughout term: Coaching at a mutually agreed time.</p>
Term 3	<p>20/07 Module 7 on forum. Due 3/08</p> <p>3/08 Module 8 on forum. Due 17/08</p> <p>17/08 Module 9 on forum. Due 31/08</p> <p>20/07 - 15/09 Coaching session 3.</p> <p>10/09 All coursework and coaching completed by today.</p> <p>11/09 Final PLG: Christchurch.</p>



Course Requirements

On completion of the National Aspiring Leadership programme, you will graduate with a certificate, celebrating your successful completion of the programme. This involves:

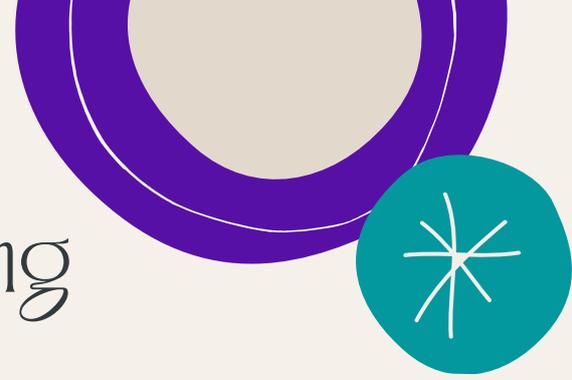
- Attendance at the three PLGs.
- Completion of 9 modules in the online forum
- Participation in the online forum (i.e. commenting on fellow delegates' posts, 'liking' posts).
- Reading the two required texts.
- Completion of the Leadership Capabilities Assessment (LCA) in Terms 1 and 3.
- Updating the Coaching Reflection Tool after each coaching session with your Kaiārahi.
- Attendance at all three scheduled Kaiārahi coaching sessions

We are teachers too and we know there are pressure points in the year. We also know that big life events happen that we cannot plan for. If you are getting behind, are unable to meet a due date or cannot attend a PLG or meeting, please get in contact with Emma Kingston to arrange an extension or alternative.

(emma@gcla.co.nz)



Professional Learning Groups



The National Aspiring Leadership Programme includes three PLGs, held throughout the year. These are important aspects of the programme for learning, networking with fellow delegates and connecting with Kaiārahi . The events are a compulsory part of the programme. Please contact Emma Kingston if you are unable to attend.

PLG 1: Culture

Auckland: Venue TBC
Thursday 19th March 9:00am - 3:00pm

PLG 3: Change Management and Graduation

Christchurch: Venue TBC
Friday 11th September 9am - 3pm

PLG 2: Transition: Empowering Leaders & Transforming Communities

Online
Available to access on Monday 22nd June
Follow-up meetings with Kaiārahi to discuss content on Thursday 25th June. Times to be communicated.

Your Coaching Sessions

You will be assigned your Kaiārahi at the start of the programme. They will be in touch with you to introduce themselves at this point and you will meet them in person at the first PLG for the year. From this point, you will have three coaching sessions with your Kaiārahi throughout the year. The Kaiārahi are all keen to support you on your leadership journey and, as such, often go above and beyond these 'official' meeting times to answer a question via email, look over a delegate's CV, support with interview preparation and so forth.

Each coaching session is 60 minutes long. The meeting will have a particular focus (e.g. meeting one will predominantly focus on your Leadership Capabilities Assessment) but there is room for you to add agenda items that are particularly pertinent for you at that moment. The purpose of the coaching sessions is to guide you through leadership challenges, celebrate successes, analyse leadership actions and traits, set and reflect on goals and support you to become the best leader you can be in your particular and unique context.

At the conclusion of each meeting, we ask that you reflect on the Coaching Reflection Tool - This can be found in this booklet.



Accessing the Online Forum

The Aspiring Online Learning Platform is a community space engineered for you. One of the great features of the Aspiring Leadership Programme is the ability to establish lifelong professional networks. With participants from across New Zealand, there are likely to be several other delegates from different contexts who are also leading, learning, growing and facing similar situations to what you will meet throughout the year. The Aspiring Online Learning Community is enriched and supported through participant-generated discussions and adaptive leadership challenges that unlock existing skills and experience within the group.

Accessing the forum is easy. On Monday 23rd February you will be sent a welcome email with a link to re-set your password. Click on the link, reset your password, and you will be in!

On the forum, you will find a welcome and introduction section, information on PLGs, a place to discuss the required texts, any extra information and resources, and all the online learning modules. Each module has a comments section for you to add your reflections on the module. Here, we also encourage you to comment on other people's posts and build connections, as well as deepening the learning for all.

Leadership Capabilities Assessment

The LCA is an important document to help you and your Kaiārahi develop an understanding together of where you feel you sit in relation to your leadership strengths and next steps. It is where your coaching will begin. It will also form the basis of your final coaching conversation, allowing you to reflect on your leadership growth and development throughout the year.

Note: This document will be shared with you via Google Docs, for you to reflect on and share with your Kaiārahi.

You will be asked to reflect on the following questions pertaining to your leadership development:

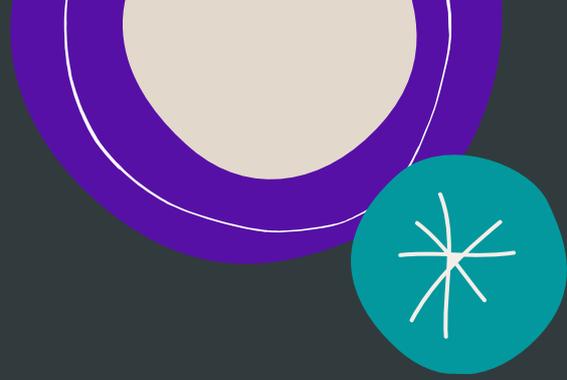
- As I consider my next leadership sphere, which of these capabilities need further development?
- What are the incidents, conversations, decisions, or desired change that I am working towards that has challenged me?
- Which of these capabilities do I need to develop/strengthen?
- Where do I see my strengths and how can I leverage these?
- Who or what could help me develop my skills and knowledge in this capability, or who has knowledge that could help me identify good sources of professional learning, reading, discussion, or opportunities to try things out?

You will also be asked to reflect on 11 leadership qualities, giving yourself a 'score' on a scale and writing reflections to explain where you have placed yourself on the scale.

Term 1: Please complete the LCA and notify your Kaiārahi at least 48 hours before your first coaching session. This will help frame your initial conversation with your Kaiārahi.

Term 3: Please complete and email to your Kaiārahi at least 48 hours before your final coaching session.

Learning Partnerships



All delegates enrolled in the National Aspiring Leadership programme are matched with one or two other people who we feel have similar contexts/roles/responsibilities/educational interests. The purpose of this is to recognise the importance of relationships in leadership. We will bring you together as learning partners to connect, support and challenge each other throughout the course of this year through korero and some shared module content.

You will meet your learning partner(s) at the first PLG of the year. Following this, there will be opportunities to connect with your learning partner(s) through modules and PLGs throughout the year. You may, of course, also choose to connect in a more organic manner to collectively problem solve, share successes, discuss course learnings etc.

We know you will enjoy building these relationships and the value added that your shared experience and knowledge will bring to your ongoing growth.



EHARA TAKU TOA I TE TOA TAKITAHU, HE TOA
TAKITINI
MY STRENGTH IS NOT AS AN INDIVIDUAL, BUT
AS A COLLECTIVE

Record of Coaching Sessions

How to use this tool:

At the end of any coaching session, delegates are asked to reflect on and summarise the meeting, on the Aspiring Coaching Reflection Tool (below) and notify their Kaiārahi, with two to three 'in progress' goals.

Recording and reflecting on the content of visits is an essential part of the learning process between Kaiārahi and delegate.

SESSION 1: TERM 1

Big focus of today's coaching session:

E.g. For Visit One: 'The focus of this visit will be building relationships and reflecting on your school context and your completed Leadership Capabilities Assessment'

Kickstart

Establishing the context. What's on your current school agenda? And what else?

Positives/successes

Let's celebrate!

Challenges/struggles

What is the real challenge currently for YOU?

Problem solving

Where do YOU want to go? What support do you need from ME?

Goals for next meeting

What actions are you taking straight away - saying YES to? What are you letting go of - saying NO to?

SESSION 2: TERM 2

Big focus of today's coaching session:
E.g. For Visit Two - Reflection on Assignment 1

Kickstart
What's on your mind? And what else?

Positives/successes
Let's celebrate!

Challenges/struggles
What is the real challenge currently for YOU?

Problem solving
Where do YOU want to go? What support do you need from ME?

Goals for next meeting
What actions are you taking straight away
- saying YES to? What are you letting go of
- saying NO to?

Reflection on leadership goal(s)

SESSION 3: TERM 3

Big focus of today's coaching session:
E.g. Reflecting on the LCA.

Kickstart
What's on your mind? And what else?

Positives/successes
Let's celebrate!

Challenges/struggles
What is the real challenge currently for YOU?

Problem solving
Where do YOU want to go? What support do you need from ME?

Goals for next meeting
What actions are you taking straight away
- saying YES to? What are you letting go of
- saying NO to?

Reflection on leadership goal(s)

PLG 1: Culture

In the first PLG, we will explore the vital aspect of culture in the kura. How do you create a great culture? Why is culture so important anyway? How might you understand yourself better, in order to know your effect on your school culture? What characteristics do you need to lead a school with a great culture? You will also meet your Kaiārahi and your learning partner, as well as other colleagues enrolled in the programme.

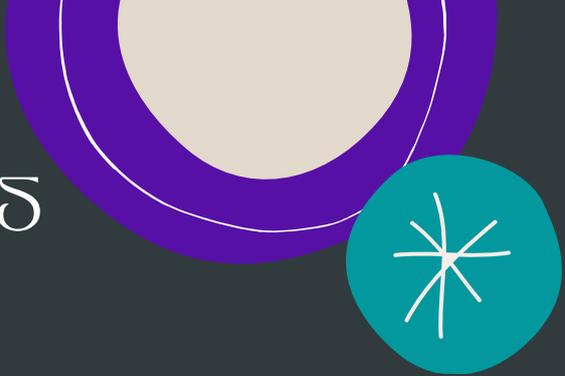
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REFLECTIONS / TAKEAWAYS / ACTIONS

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PLG 2: Courageous Conversations



In this online PLG we will provide you with the tools to have those conversations that we all need to have from time to time with parents and colleagues. Material will be provided prior to the PLG day in a 'flipped' model, allowing for plenty of dialogue and collective reflection on the day.

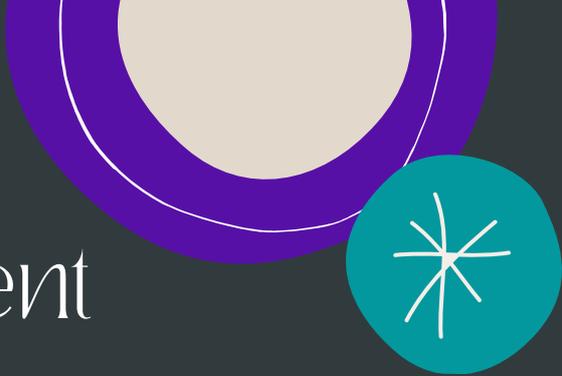
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REFLECTIONS / TAKEAWAYS / ACTIONS

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PLG 3: Change Management



In this final PLG for the year we will extend on the second assignment, deeply exploring how we can make meaningful change in our kura, to positively impact on learners and communities. This is also a chance to celebrate your successful completion of the programme.

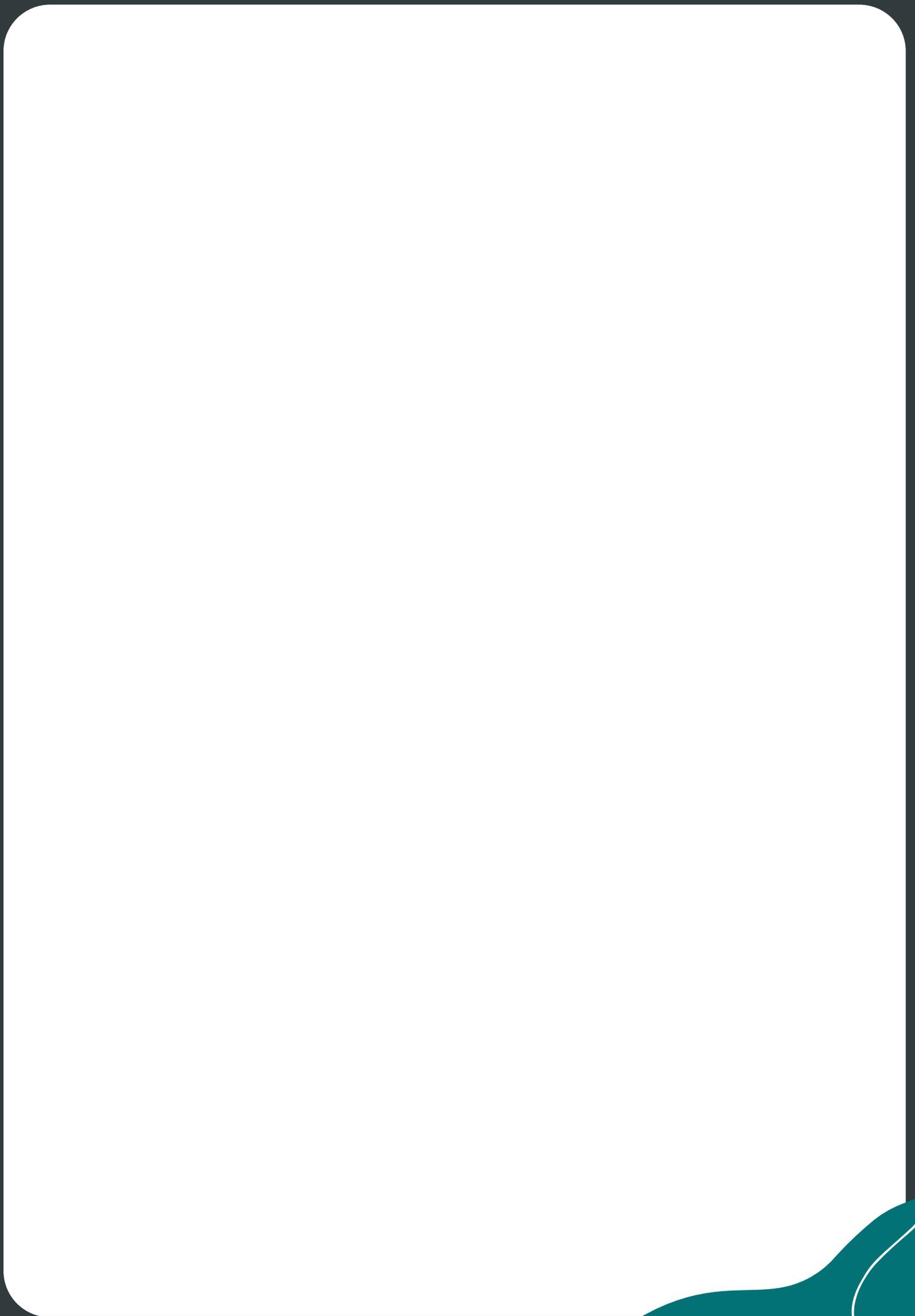
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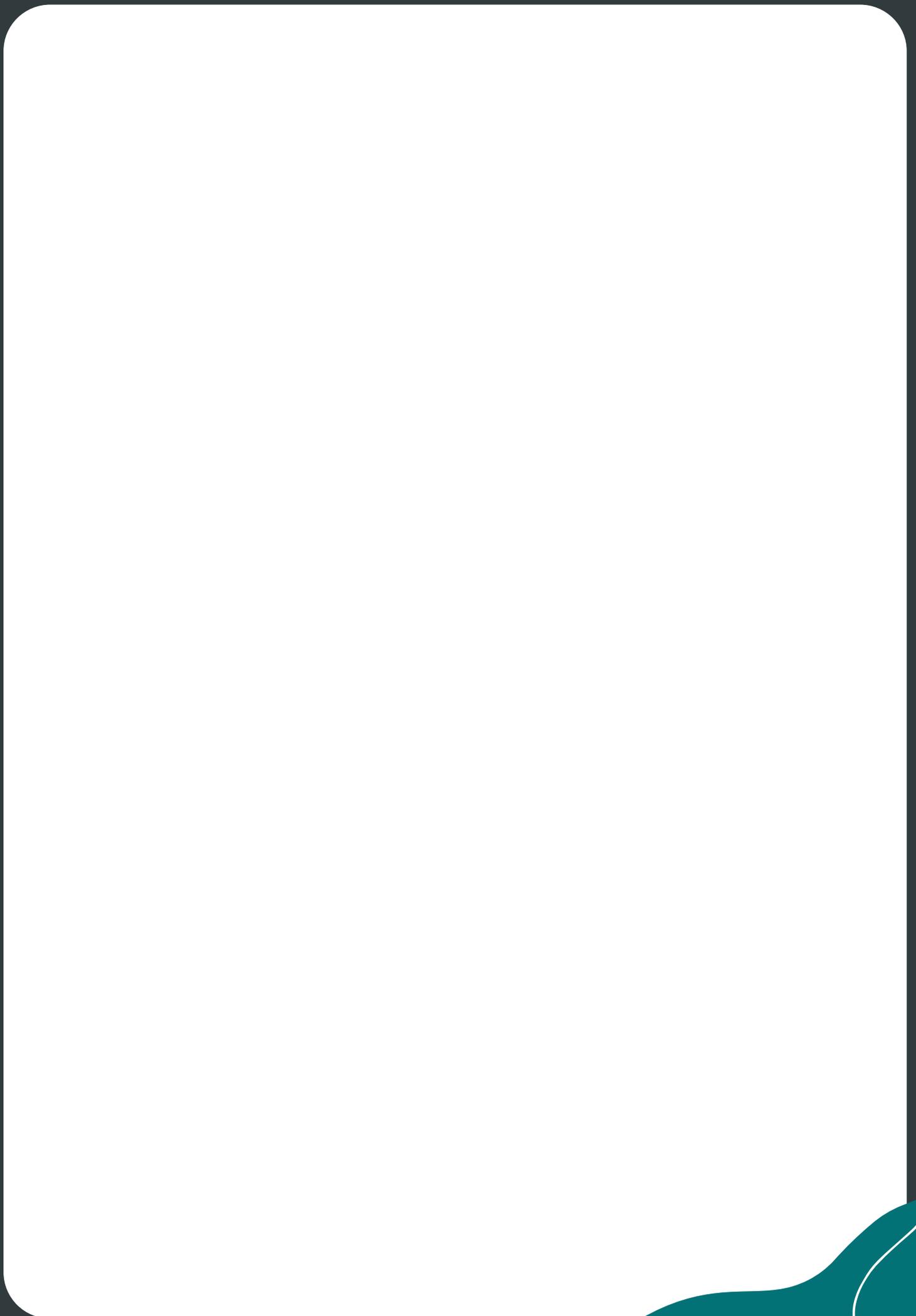
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NOTES FROM OTHER ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAMME:







KEI ŌU RINGARINGA TE AO
THE WORLD IS YOURS.

