



**Public
Service
Fale**



Source: Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission

Summary Report - Final

Final Report

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**MARTIN
JENKINS**



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Preface

This report has been prepared for Te Kawa Mataaho | The Public Service Commission by Mei Lin Harley, Natalie James, and Penny Fitzpatrick from MartinJenkins (Martin, Jenkins & Associates Ltd).

For over 30 years MartinJenkins has been a trusted adviser to clients in the government, private, and non-profit sectors in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally. Our services include organisational performance, employment relations, financial and economic analysis, economic development, research and evaluation, data analytics, engagement, and public policy and regulatory systems.

We are recognised as experts in the business of government. We have worked for a wide range of public-sector organisations from both central and local government, and we also advise business and non-profit clients on engaging with government.

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Summary Report

Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission (TKM) of New Zealand commissioned MartinJenkins to undertake an independent 'end of assignment' evaluation of the Public Service Fale (the Fale), a programme funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT).

An Evaluation Steering Group consisting of the Fale management team and MFAT Activity Management team was established which provided oversight throughout the evaluation process from agreeing the key evaluation questions and scope, to ensuring breadth of coverage in stakeholder engagement, sense-making and testing of findings and recommendations, and review of the draft report.

This summary report presents the key findings and recommendations of the evaluation. A fuller presentation of the evaluation evidence and discussion is provided in an accompanying technical report.

Introduction

The Fale is a Centre of Excellence that works directly with Public Service leaders and their agencies in sixteen Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs): Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tokelau, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

The Fale is a newly established programme, delivered through TKM and funded by MFAT

The Fale was established by TKM in early 2020 following a request from the Pacific Public Service Commissioners (PPSCs) for New Zealand government support for public sector strengthening.

The Fale is a business unit of TKM with approximately 16 staff, overseen by a Deputy Commissioner. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between TKM and MFAT sets out that the Fale was initially funded for five years, then extended to six, to a maximum amount of NZD 19,840,000 for the period of 20 February 2020 – 1 March 2026.

It supports public service strengthening through regional programmes, bilateral support, and secretariat services

The Fale's overarching goal is that, over time, Pacific public services are strengthened to be more trusted by Pacific citizens, adaptable, results-driven, gender inclusive and people-centred.

To achieve this goal, the MOU sets out the two broad outputs to be delivered by the Fale:



- Pacific Public Service Fale: establish and deliver a Pacific Public Service Centre of Excellence to support public sector strengthening in Pacific Island countries and territories by facilitating sharing of knowledge and experience, brokering relationships and access to expertise, developing and testing Pacific-specific public management solutions, and providing specialist technical assistance, and
- Pacific Public Service Fono: provide secretariat support to the Pacific Public Service Commissioners' Conference including funding to support hosting of the annual conference.

Evaluation focus and approach

This evaluation addressed the following key evaluation questions (KEQs) agreed with the Fale and MFAT:

- **KEQ 1:** To what extent has the Fale taken appropriate action to address the key recommendations of the mid-term review?
- **KEQ 2:** How effectively has the Fale achieved its intended outputs and outcomes over the period?
- **KEQ 3:** What are the opportunities for the Fale to continue to deliver value in the future?

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach to gathering evidence. This included document reviews and inputs from over 60 stakeholders through a combination of online surveys, interviews and written feedback from PPSCs, Senior Leaders, MFAT staff at headquarters and Posts, and partner agencies.

KEQ 1: To what extent has the Fale taken appropriate action to address the key recommendations from the mid-term review?

The mid-term review (MTR), completed in August 2023, made several recommendations for the Fale to enhance its support to Pacific Public Service Commissions (PPSCs) and overall impact:

- strengthen the Fale's focus on PPSC's individual country needs
- enhance coordination, communication, and stakeholder engagement, and
- review the Fale's reporting requirements.

As part of this evaluation, we sought to understand the extent to which the Fale had responded to these recommendations and continued to maintain good practice.

We conclude that the Fale has made good progress in responding to the recommendations of the MTR.



The Fale has significantly improved responsiveness to country needs in response to the mid-term review

In the 19 months since the MTR was completed, the Fale has implemented a range of improvements through a phased approach while looking to maintain delivery of its services. It prioritised its focus on this first recommendation, that is, increasing responsiveness to country needs. This is the area where most progress has been made. The Fale's responsiveness to country-specific bilateral needs is recognised and highly valued by PPSCs. The majority of PPSCs surveyed were positive:

- 86% of respondents felt the Fale's focus on individual country needs was either much improved in recent years or already conducted to a high standard, and
- 97% agreed or strongly agreed that the Fale supports their goals and strengthening of public services in their country.

Effectively managing the increasing volume and breadth of bilateral requests will be important to ensure this responsiveness is sustainable

The Fale has established credibility and trust among PPSCs through its consistent responsiveness to requests and its reliable delivery of support. This is reflected in the high volume of requests it receives from PPSCs for country-specific support. Managing 16 country-specific work plans has resulted in bilateral support now consuming an estimated 70% of the Fale's time and effort. Moving forward, the challenge is considering how the Fale can strategically and sustainably meet the needs of PPSCs, ensuring that it continues to uphold its reputation for responsiveness while balancing resourcing constraints. Being strategic in how it identifies priorities will be important.

Plans and processes to enhance communication and collaboration with stakeholders have been developed, which will take time to bed in

The Fale has progressed several actions to improve communication and collaboration including having recently appointed country focal points, improved reporting to MFAT on country-specific activities, and established a schedule of regular meetings to enhance its engagement with MFAT headquarters and Posts. It has also recently developed its Advancing Partnerships Plan and is at the early stages of implementation with a recently appointed dedicated Senior Adviser.

Acknowledging these improvements, feedback from partners about collaboration continues to be varied, which is to be expected as the action plan and processes have recently been developed and will take time to implement and bed in.



Increasing alignment and coherence with MFAT priorities and engagement with each country is a priority going forward

MFAT is a key stakeholder of the Fale and has strong interest in how the Fale's work "on the ground" impacts its own engagement with each country, and progresses the NZ Inc agenda overall.

Engagement with MFAT happens at two levels. At the "headquarters" level, the MFAT Unit Manager overseeing the MFAT investment in the Fale attends Fale governance meetings as an observer. There are also monthly meetings and activity reporting to the MFAT Activity Manager. At the MFAT Post level, the nature of the Fale's engagement and reporting on country activities has evolved over the years.

There were varying views across MFAT Posts on the quality of current engagement. Some Posts reported that engagement was positive or has improved recently. They appreciate the updates the Fale provides (whilst maintaining confidence of PPSCs), opportunities identified for progressing shared priorities, and see the Fale as providing valuable support to the country's public service commission. Other Posts felt there was lack of engagement and visibility of the Fale's work in-country, and some had concerns about lack of coordination with other partners, and risk of duplication in some areas. There is a strong desire for better sharing and collaboration to ensure coherence with wider MFAT priorities and investments, particularly in contexts with higher risks or volatility. The trusted relationships that the Fale has developed with PPSCs have the potential to be an important part of NZ Inc's total engagement with the country.

Partner coordination and collaboration has progressed; with further improvements planned from 2025

There are specific examples of effective collaboration with several New Zealand agencies in recent years (such as the New Zealand Pacific Maritime Safety Programme and the Public Policy Institute at Auckland University). There are also significant collaborations planned for 2025 including training workshops for PPSCs that will be funded by the Australian and Singaporean PSCs. These are good examples of partners sharing their expertise and resources to increase PPSCs' access to support. There is a strong desire from some partners for greater collaboration with the Fale and the new Advancing Partnerships Plan identifies clear actions including potential areas to explore with specific partners. With a clear plan and dedicated resource in place, the Fale expects to make significant progress in enhancing collaboration.

Meaningful measurement of outcomes remains a work in progress; this is a common challenge for development programmes

The Fale has a strong customer-focused culture that values ongoing reflection and continuous improvement. It has established processes to regularly seek feedback from PPSCs who participate in training, attend meetings, and receive tailored bilateral support.



In response to the mid-term review, the Fale has updated its MERL framework and processes to focus more on outcomes monitoring. However, it still needs to address internal capacity to undertake these functions effectively; and further work is needed to ensure outcomes and evidence sources are both tailored to the journey of each country, and sufficiently consistent and credible for Fale stakeholders. There also needs to be further clarity on which tasks should be conducted internally and externally for a more comprehensive and independent assessment of outcomes. This issue is recognised by the Fale leadership and management team as a priority for future focus.

Going forward, the country work planning process that the Fale undertakes with each PPSC is an important opportunity to enable self-assessment of the current state for each country's public sector, including their specific strengths and needs. This will enable goals and timeframes to be developed jointly with the PPSCs, so they are context appropriate and meaningful. It will also set a baseline from which the Fale can assess outcomes and gauge the value of its contribution.

KEQ 2: How effectively has the Fale achieved its intended outputs and outcomes?

The Fale has pursued an ambitious agenda of outputs and outcomes based on the requirements of the TKM-MFAT MOU. The first broad output area is to provide a range of bilateral and regional capability building supports to PPSCs in the areas of digital transformation, leadership and organisational development, and strengthening governance. The second output area is to provide comprehensive secretariat services to the annual conference of PPSCs and subregional meetings. Together these outputs are intended to contribute to public sector strengthening through the following outcomes in the short-term:

- strengthened collaboration and connection among PPSCs
- PPSC have increased access to well-coordinated and contextualised capability building opportunities
- participants of Fale programmes have increased knowledge, skills and confidence to plan and execute change and improvements in public sector management
- participants of Fale programmes promote and implement management practices that improve integrity, ethical behaviour, fairness, equity and inclusiveness, and
- public service leaders design and apply appropriate public sector management and governance solutions.

As part of this evaluation, we sought to understand the extent to which the Fale had achieved its intended output and outcomes; and we drew on multiple data sources to triangulate our findings.



We conclude that the Fale has been productive and purposeful in delivering its intended outputs, despite being a new programme and operating in a challenging context during its early years (COVID-19). We find high levels of satisfaction among the Fale's key customers – PPSCs – and indications of emerging outcomes, which is promising for such a young programme and for a programme with such a broad scope.

The Fale has delivered high quality outputs despite contextual challenges

The Pacific region is both diverse and dynamic and public sector strengthening is a complex, long-term, non-linear process. Supporting 16 countries, the Fale must navigate distinct cultural contexts, varying capacities, unique government structures, and self-determined aspirations for public service strengthening. Additionally, frequent changes in leadership and shifting priorities across Pacific governments can disrupt the consistency of partnerships and projects. This requires adaptability and perseverance, and an operating model that is responsive and resilient to change.

The Fale was established as a new programme only five years ago. Compared to many development programmes, it is a relatively young programme based on a new relationship between the PSC and the MFAT Pacific Development programme. It has spent most of the past five years establishing the key foundations necessary for success and sustainability. This included building a credible and capable team, establishing systems and processes, and developing trusted relationships that could result in tailored bilateral programmes with 16 PPSCs. The Fale has demonstrated the ongoing importance of agility and adaptability in how it supports PPSCs.

The Fale moved rapidly into delivery mode, despite the disruption that was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is evidence of substantive activity in relation to both output areas, both in terms of the quantum of activities and the scale and breadth of people that activities reached.

Feedback from PPSCs about the relevance and value of Fale activities is positive. Going forward, the country work planning process that the Fale undertakes with each PPSC is an important opportunity to support each country to self-assess the current state of its public sector, including their specific strengths and needs. This will enable goals and timeframes to be developed jointly with the PPSC so they are context-appropriate and meaningful. It will also provide a baseline from which the Fale can gauge the value of its contribution to country strengthening.



Table 1: Overview of Fale outputs

Centre of Public Service Excellence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilateral support in response to country requests: Over 160 requests received over past 18 months, ranging in complexity from a relatively quick email response, to complex projects that span several months and include in-country visits and training. 93% of PPSCs surveyed satisfied/very satisfied with the Fale's in-person support and technical assistance organised from subject matter experts. • FaleOnline platform: This digital platform provides online access to useful resources, tools and learning content on Pacific-focused public service management practices. Since its launch in 2022, over 3000 Pacific public servants have registered as users. The platform also hosts training materials for some partners and PPSCs (for example, Solomon Islands Institute of Public Administration and Management, New Zealand Customs, Pacific Maritime Safety programme, and Ministry for Primary Industries under development). 81% of PPSCs surveyed are satisfied/very satisfied with FaleOnline. • Virtual Communities of Practice: Human Resources with 34 members and Digital with 28 members facilitates learning and sharing among practitioners across the Pacific countries. • Fale Mentoring programme: There have been six cohorts since 2021, each with 10-14 participants at Tier one or two level across the Pacific who are paired with mentors (mostly Tier one and two leaders from New Zealand public service agencies). In the latest participant survey, 100% of mentees said the programme was useful and relevant and they would recommend it to other Pacific public servants and 87.5% agreed or strongly agreed the programme increased their confidence and ability to lead others and improved their skills in developing future leaders and ability to communicate effectively. • Integrity and ethics programme: There have been three cohorts since 2021 with participant numbers having grown from 15 to 43 participants per cohort. • Governance essentials training conducted at the end of Fono in 2023 in partnership with the Institute of Directors and attended by 14 participants across four countries. • Pacific Women in Leadership programme conducted as bi-monthly sessions in 2023/24 with a total of 118 participants across 12 countries.
Secretariat support to annual PPSC Fono, subregional Fono, and governance board meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Fono: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 2023: New Zealand PSC hosted the first PPSC Fono with 44 delegates across 16 countries as well as New Zealand and Australia, including New Zealand Public Service Commissioner (NZPSC). – 2024: The Fale supported Samoa to host the second Fono with 53 delegates, including NZPSC. – For 2025: The Fale is supporting Fiji to host the next Fono in November. – 100% of PPSCs surveyed are satisfied/very satisfied with the Fale's secretariat advice or support. Some also highlighted that having PPSCs host the Fono is important for shared ownership. • Sub-regional Fono: The Fale convenes preparatory face-to-face sub-regional meetings during the year to support PPSCs to engage fully in the annual Fono and strengthen peer-to-peer connections. • Governance Board meetings: The Fale provides secretariat services to the Fale Governance Board which meets quarterly. It is a representative board of the Pacific Public Service Leaders' Group Members and provides high-level strategic oversight and direction to the Public Service Fale, accountable to the Pacific Public Service Leaders' Group.



The Fale's support is highly valued by PPSCs and there are signs of progress towards outcomes

Public sector strengthening is a complex area. While the refreshed programme logic for the Fale (2024) provides a clearer articulation of the outcomes it is seeking to achieve, it would benefit from greater clarity about how soon many of these outcomes can be expected to materialise. Some outcomes may be realised more immediately, while others take longer, and this would vary across countries depending on the maturity of their public sector institutions and the self-determined goals of each country.

At the end of this five-year establishment phase, we see that the Fale has built strong foundations for future success, and we see examples of outcomes and value beginning to emerge.

- The Fale has built a credible team with strong, trusted relationships with PPSCs (illustrated in Figure 1). These relationships with individuals have diplomatic value. This is a significant achievement given it had to build relationships through remote engagement under COVID-19 travel restrictions.

Figure 1: Examples of feedback on the Fale's good reputation with PPSCs

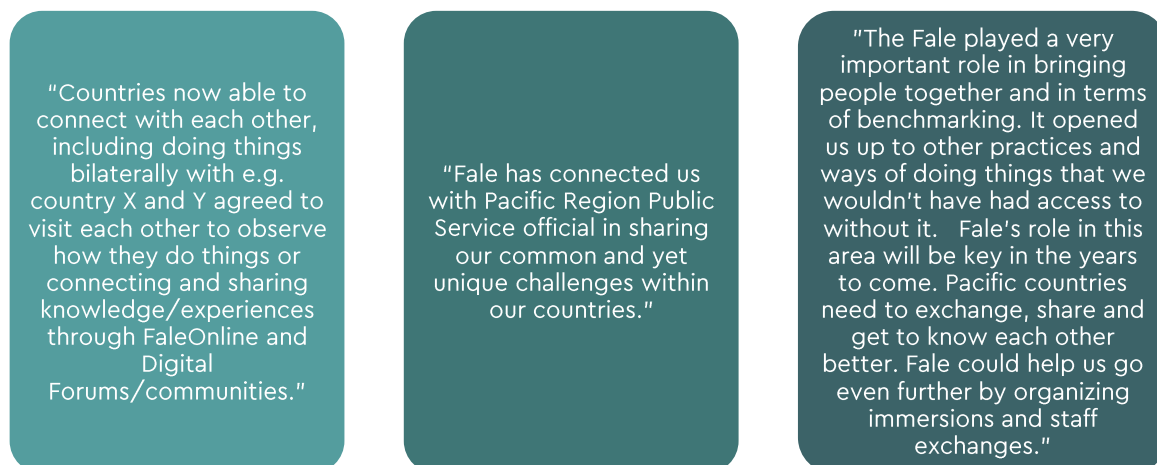


Source: MartinJenkins PPSC survey and feedback from MFAT Posts

- The Fale programme has built systems and a good reputation for facilitating relationships, learning and sharing among PPSCs and with New Zealand agencies, through its convening role, training programmes, online platform, and bilateral country-specific technical support (illustrated in Figure 2).



Figure 2: Examples of feedback on the Fale's role in facilitating relationships between PPSCs

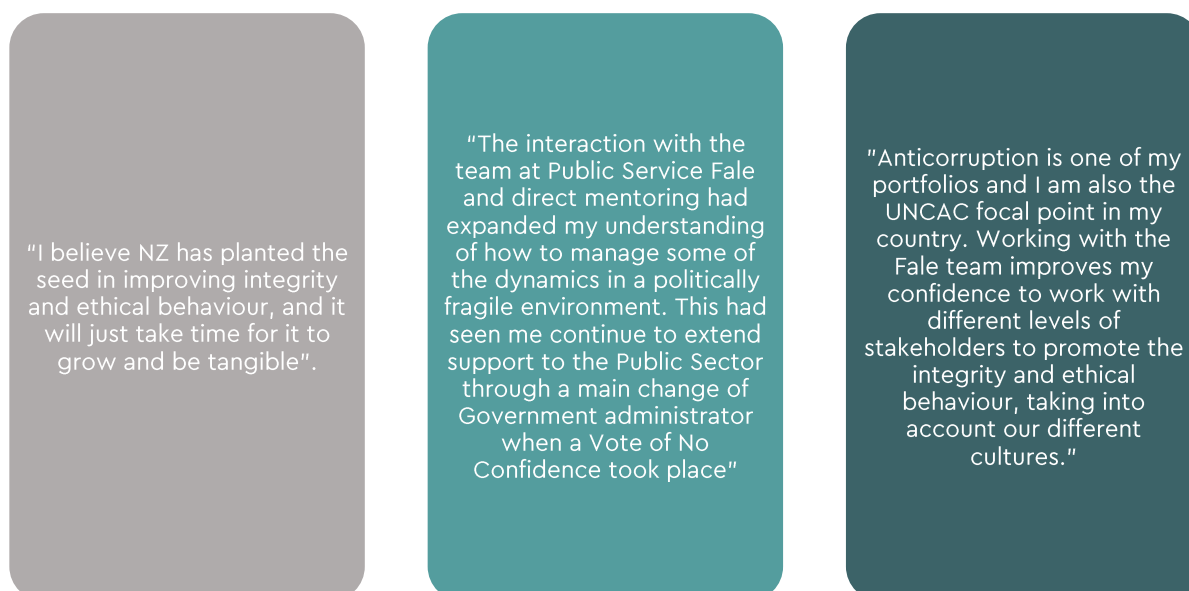


Source: MartinJenkins PPSC survey and interviews (2025)

- Between 86-96% of PPSCs surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that support from the Fale has led to improvements in each of the short-term outcome areas listed in the Fale programme logic.

Examples reported by PPSCs illustrate how support from the Fale has improved their connection, learning and sharing with peers across the Pacific, increased their skill and confidence, and organisational capacity in areas of leadership, governance, anti-corruption, HR management, integrity and ethics, merit-based recruitment, and digitisation of services (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Examples of short-term outcomes reported by PPSCs



Source: MartinJenkins PPSC survey (2025) and The Fale PPSC Senior Leader Survey (2024).



The majority of PPSCs surveyed agreed or strongly agreed support from the Fale has contributed to the medium-term outcomes listed in the Fale programme logic. There are also some positive indications that the support has the potential to contribute to wider improvements in the public sector. Following participation in regional Fale courses, some countries have requested the Fale to deliver adapted workshops in-country for wider groups in their public service. Notable examples of the Fale's reach across the wider public service are provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Examples of Fale support reaching beyond PPSCs (medium-term outcomes)

Examples of Fale support reaching beyond PPSCs to engage (and benefit) the wider public sector
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of Pacific-wide integrity and ethics guidance valued and used by countries to adapt to their local context, for example, developing their own anti-corruption policy.• In-country leadership programme for Tier two leaders across the public sector, train the trainers for local facilitators ensures sustainability.• Developed a specific portal on FaleOnline to provide an online learning management system for a country's public sector training institute.• Partnered with the New Zealand Serious Fraud Office to deliver in-country training on improving customer service (25 participants from 15 agencies) and anti-corruption training (20 participants across four agencies).• Recruitment practices shared by Fale and other countries helped one country ensure they have inclusive open merit-based recruitment principles and policies.• Technical support for a few countries with functional and structural review of public sector including to more effectively and strategically prioritise, justify and right-size positions for agencies.

KEQ 3: What are the opportunities for the Fale to continue to deliver value in the future?

The development agenda and ecosystem of partners in the Pacific is continuously evolving. Since its inception, there have been multiple changes that have impacted the operating context of the Fale:

- COVID-19 pandemic and resulting restrictions on travel and in-person meetings
- changes in government in many Pacific countries affecting priorities of PPSCs, and
- changes in focal points at PPSCs and at MFAT Posts.

Through the evaluation, we considered the changing context and sought views from stakeholders about the ongoing relevance of the Fale and future opportunities for increased impact.



We find:

- the overarching objective of the Fale for more trusted, transparent, capable, accountable and outcomes-focused Pacific public sectors remains relevant
- PPSCs continue to be a group that is underserved by development partners, and
- the Fale has built strong foundations – trusted relationships, skilled team, reputation with New Zealand central agencies, a good combination of bilateral and regional programmes, a culture of learning and continuous improvement – that make it well-positioned to continue to be the delivery agency for supporting PPSCs.

The Fale programme remains relevant and valuable to PPSCs, the Pacific region, and New Zealand's wider foreign policy and development programme

The work of the Fale is valued by PPSCs. There is strong appetite and demand by PPSCs for continued support from the Fale based on feedback from PPSCs and eight out of 12 MFAT Posts. This is an area not usually covered by development partner support. PPSCs play a leading role in public sector strengthening, which contributes to the wider goal of a safer and more resilient Pacific.

The work of the Fale supports an important priority in the Pacific region. The Fale supports PPSCs to improve integrity and ethical behaviour and implement merit-based, inclusive management practices. This is essential for strong, transparent, effective public services and contributes to the 2050 Strategy for Blue Pacific Continent goals for regional peace, security, and good governance.

The Fale programme is an important part of New Zealand's foreign policy and development programme. The programme enables New Zealand to develop strategic relationships with PPSCs. These central agencies are the backbone of the public sector in Pacific Island countries, responsible for the recruitment and performance management of heads of public sector agencies and setting agency performance standards. In many countries, they are also directly responsible for human resource policy setting and payroll across the entire public sector workforce. The programme leverages and strengthens New Zealand's reputation in public sector governance expertise.

There are opportunities for the Fale to increase its impact through strengthening its partnership with MFAT and its collaboration with other agencies in New Zealand and the Pacific. These are outlined in the recommendations in the next section.



Recommendations to increase impact

Through its focus on learning and continuous improvement, the Fale can build upon the strong foundations established so far to support PPSCs to achieve outcomes that are Pacific-led, Pacific-owned and therefore more enduring.

Our recommendations are organised into two groups: improvements to continue strengthening the Fale's achievement of outcomes, and extension opportunities for further investigation.

Improvements to strengthen the Fale programme

1. Clarify expectations for mutual benefit with MFAT

As part of deepening engagement with MFAT, it will be important to co-design and clearly set out shared understanding on the following:

- a. the programme logic, with greater clarity on what success looks like in terms of direct and indirect outcomes, and realistic timeframes for outcomes to be demonstrated, and
- b. the purpose, intent, frequency and nature of reporting, and of engagement with Posts that is fit for purpose for the context and needs of MFAT and NZ Inc's wider engagement with the country.

2. Harness opportunities presented by the country planning process

Building on the strong relationships and collaboration with PPSCs, and the culture of continuous improvement, continue to develop the tailored country planning process to:

- a. enable clearer assessment of outcomes and impact that is appropriate to the needs and context of each country: the Fale should develop with each PPSC an assessment of where the public sector is currently at (a baseline against which the outcomes they are wanting to achieve can be understood), what they are aiming for (targets) and how progress will be measured. This will enable the Fale to gauge the value of its contribution to country strengthening
- b. further enhance the PPSC's access to timely and quality support: country workplans to include clarity on how the Fale will coordinate and collaborate with relevant partners in responding to the country's priorities (including ensuring direct alignment with MFAT's country plans in relation to strengthening governance – when these are made available to the Fale)
- c. ensure requests from PPSCs are prioritised according to alignment to the agreed country plan, and other partners are leveraged to respond to requests that are out of scope for the Fale/not well aligned to the agreed plan
- d. identify (and where possible maximise) alignment with MFAT's wider NZ Inc country plans and regularly seek input of Posts to maximise opportunities for ongoing alignment, and



- e. identify potential partners who could respond to other requests.

3. **Strengthen monitoring and evaluation capacity**

Strengthen the Fale's internal monitoring and evaluation capacity to support ongoing demonstration and communication of impact. The country plans could be a valuable vehicle for improved monitoring and evaluation if they are enhanced to include a current state assessment, goals, and progress indicators.

With the next business case, plan for and resource an outcomes evaluation at an appropriate timeframe, with in-country data collection from a range of key stakeholders to assess progress towards outcomes.

Extension opportunities for further investigation

Evaluation participants suggested other opportunities for the Fale, that require further consideration to ensure they are aligned to and represent the best potential use of Fale resources to achieve maximum impact:

4. continue to explore opportunities for greater collaboration with partners on use of FaleOnline, including the feasibility of serving as a platform for NZ Inc partners to share resources more effectively with PPSCs:
 - many stakeholders that participated in the evaluation were complimentary about FaleOnline, and noted it is a valuable resource that could be further leveraged as a cost-effective tool for NZ Inc (and other partners) to share information and training resources with PPSCs. We agree; however, we also observe the Fale should be cautious about how much it takes on in terms of extending the functions and customers of FaleOnline and potential overreliance on this technology (for example, maintaining a lively and engaged online community of practice is a resource intensive endeavour that requires dedicated facilitation)
5. continue to support more peer learning exchanges between Pacific countries for PPSC leaders, senior as well as emerging leaders
6. continue to explore opportunities to strengthen and expand collaboration with Pacific public service training institutes (such as the current partnership with the Solomon Islands Institute of Public Administration as well as potential collaborations with the newly established Fiji Learning Institute for Public Service, the Somare Institute of Leadership and Governance in PNG, and the University of South Pacific), and
7. in exploring opportunities to collaborate with Pacific regional agencies and development partners, continue to ensure there is clear value-add to PPSCs, that it is in line with the Fale's mandate, and supports MFAT's engagement with the agency within the context of a regional architecture that is over-stretched, crowded, and currently under review.



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