

How are RTLB clusters engaging with Communities Of Learning (COL)?

Sabbatical Report

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This sabbatical has been a wonderful opportunity to reflect, relax and recharge. It has provided a wonderful time to take a break from a very busy and all-consuming role by stepping back and immersing myself in my family and the things I enjoy.

Executive Summary

This sabbatical inquiry aimed to identify the unique skills Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) possess which may enable them to effectively support partnerships with Communities Of Learning (COL). The second aim was to identify emerging RTLB practice with regard to COLs. Some RTLB Cluster Managers (CMs) are already engaging with COLs and developing new ways of managing current work alongside emerging work generated by COL engagement.

This inquiry was undertaken now as there is an expectation for RTLB clusters to engage with COLs but there has been limited guidance of how this is to be achieved. CMs are in a unique position as they have to balance current RTLB work to support all schools within their clusters as well as a number of COLs at varying levels of formation. As more COLs become ready to engage with RTLB the urgency for RTLB clusters to have clear strategic vision on engaging becomes ever more important. COLs are not required to engage with us and currently do so by choice.

The problem is that 40 RTLB clusters are responding individually to the local needs of the COL's and schools they support. Due to this there is limited consistency or familiarity with solutions, in ways of achieving engagement. This summary sought to review generic RTLB skills and relate them to needs of COLs. Following this all CMs were surveyed to identify their clusters engagement with COLs and emergent practices and challenges were identified.

The ultimate goal of this inquiry was to increase my own knowledge and understanding of the RTLB/ COL interface as well as share my findings with the other 39 CMs to assist a more consistent approach across New Zealand with regard to RTLB/ COL collaborations.

Purpose

The purpose of this sabbatical links very much to our cluster vision of 'empowering potential'. This report aims to provide knowledge regarding the generic skills of trained RTLB and how these skills may be utilised to support COLs.

A further purpose is to utilise the emerging knowledge regarding interactions between RTLB clusters and COLs. This knowledge will be shared with the 39 CM's and other stakeholders and may enable them to avoid pitfalls and embrace successful approaches.

On a personal level and for my own cluster I am hopeful that the production of this report will strengthen our own approach as we begin to engage with local COLs and enable us to position ourselves strategically to provide the most beneficial support to our COLs and their students.

Rationale and background information

This report is based upon the requirements of our clusters Funding agreement with the Ministry of Education (MOE) and our own strategic planning, specifically:

“Effective RTLB clusters ensure educationally powerful connections with and between local, national and global stakeholders and communities. It is important to build collaborative practices that enable student and community agency. It is recognised that effective connections between MOE and clusters are imperative. Implementation of all new initiatives will be strategically planned and will take into account the capacity of each cluster”.

And

“Cluster Manager will plan and implement any new national initiatives in partnership with MOE. Existing MOE national initiatives will be supported and maintained by review and development of inter-agency procedures by the Cluster Manager PB4L, IYT, COLs and Ministry Of Education/ Learning Support (MOE/ LS) collaboration”.

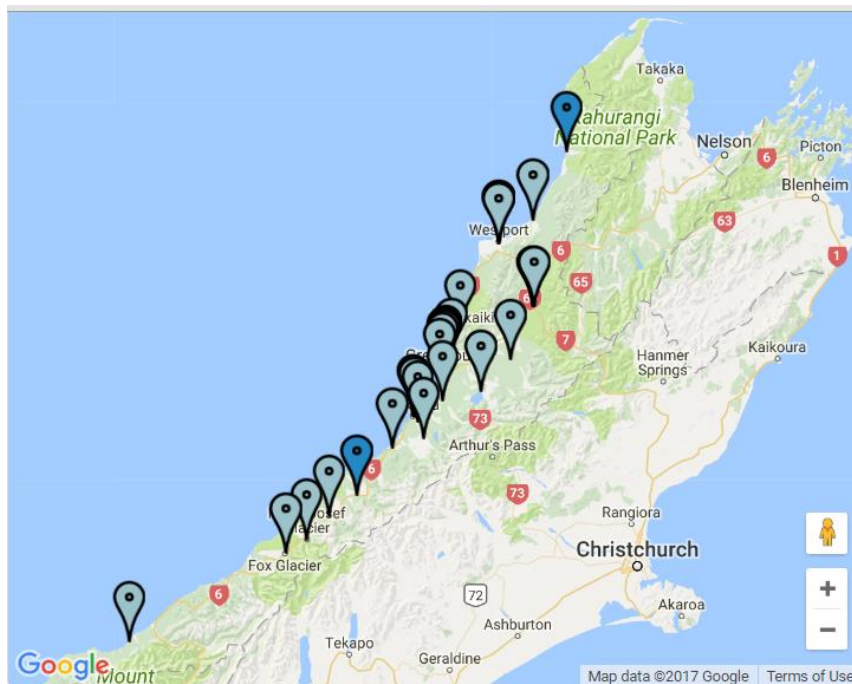
This report provided new knowledge regarding COLs and the best emerging practices from my CM colleagues. This enables the development of a strategic approach for our future interactions with COLs by balancing existing work streams whilst adjusting and adapting our cluster to meet the needs of both individual schools and COLs.

Our Cluster is on the West Coast of the South Island of New Zealand. It contains numerous rural primary schools and several small town primary and secondary schools. Area schools in isolated areas provide complete education from primary to secondary level. All schools in the region are coeducational.

The Cluster is placed along a narrow coastal strip to the West of the Southern Alps which rolls down into the Tasman Sea. The geographical features vary from mountains, hills, braided rivers, lakes, glaciers, pastures, forest and bush. We have offices in Greymouth, Westport, Hokitika and Hari Hari and are blessed with a dedicated team of 14 staff hosted by our Lead School Cobden.

RTLB provide itinerant specialist support to teachers and their students, in order to improve the educational outcomes in Year 1-10 for those with moderate learning and/or behaviour difficulties.

Our Cluster Schools:



Methodology

This section is split into 2 components:

1. Literature review:

This was completed by utilising the MOE library, RTLB guidelines, Google Scholar.

The aim of this literature review are to seek clarification on the following questions:

1. What generic skills do RTLB have via their 2 year statutory training?
2. How do the skills RTLB have relate to the ITL 21st Century collaboration and rubric (ITL research, 2012)?
3. Which RTLB skills are recognized within existing literature as strong supports for building partnership with schools?
4. What themes are emerging regarding COLs?
5. How does the partnership between RTLB and COLs link with Kaupapa Maori?

2. Cluster Manager survey of emerging RTLB practice with COLs:

During this component of the report the ‘Spiral of Inquiry’ from Timperley, Kaser and Halbert (2014) referenced within Educational Leaders (2017) was used.

Spiral of Inquiry



Since the inception of COLs I have been observing as other clusters begun engaged with them. This resulted in me forming queries which I felt needed to be explored. This inquiry aimed to engage with the 39 other RTLB CMs. This group is relevant because CMs are tasked with engaging with COLs to provide RTLB team members to assist COL goals. Currently this work is additional to regular RTLB tasks. There is a challenge for CMs to support COLs as well as meeting the individual expectations of each of their cluster schools. The questions which fuel my inquiry are:

- How are RTLB clusters beginning to engage with COLs?
- How does this current work dovetail with COL requests?
- What existing RTLB support is becoming obsolete because of COL engagement?
- Which current RTLB practices have been adapted to meet the needs of COLs?
- Are there any current RTLB practices which are surplus because of the activities of COLs?

Generally as CMs are engaged with COLs which are in the early stages of forming there seemed little point in questioning COLs. As the RTLB are guided by their CMs they are also unable to provide a full picture. In my view the group with the best lens to view emerging practice around COLs are the CMs. I contacted a small number of Cluster Managers (CMs) to review my initial thinking on the report and inquiry as well as possible questions for the survey of the 39 other CMs (appendix 1).

I chose to survey all 39 other CMs as they represent all RTLB clusters in New Zealand barring my own. By surveying all of the RTLB CM population I was reasonably confident that their answers will represent the views (Creative Research Systems, 2017). A random sample is not relevant as no other group has the specific and relevant knowledge that the 39 CMs do.

As this is a small scale anonymous survey using a short questionnaire ethically the impact upon participants will be minimal. From this inquiry new knowledge was gained which may inform the practice of all RTLB clusters as well as the COLs they are supporting providing strong justification for the inquiry (Ritche, 2006).

Survey Monkey (Survey Monkey, 2017) was the vehicle used for the questionnaire. Qualitative questions were used as they provided detailed understanding of the reasons and motivations for the CMs. The questions enabled me to gain deeper understanding and develop a rationale for next steps (Atlasti, 2017). By using Survey Monkey responses can be gained quickly, at no cost and with no geographical barriers. I shared the draft questions with 5 other CMs, 1 RTLB and 1 neutral person via email for feedback.

Following the feedback I adjusted the questions slightly and circulated the questionnaire via email to the 39 other CMs. The survey was open for 3 weeks. Following this I analysed and summarised the survey responses and shared with another CM and neutral person for feedback on my findings and interpretation.

Findings

1. Literature Review:

Scope and Context:

Within the context of RTLB as CM (RTLB, 2016) I am tasked with linking with 4 COLs (MOE, 2017) and providing RTLB assistance to help them to achieve the goals they have set. As an itinerating service RTLB have a number of existing work streams which need to be satisfied as well as emerging work via the COLs. We have a finite amount of staffing available to satisfy both work streams. This review links existing RTLB skills to the ITL 21st Century collaboration rubric (ITL research, 2012) and then identifies building blocks for collaboration when itinerating services are working with schools and communities of schools. This rubric was selected as it links with the themes identified during initial reading around this topic. The aim of the review is to identify if the generic skills RTLB develop would be of value to COLs and if so how can current RTLB work be managed so additional work from COLs can be completed.

The scope of the review focuses upon expectations from MOE regarding the RTLB service and the Tataiako cultural competencies. As well as this the Practicing Teachers Criteria relate to all teachers including those within COLs and employed as RTLB so the criteria relating to collaboration have been investigated. Additionally some general information on collaboration and the key aspects to build it are included. Emergent material from a variety of sources regarding experiences of COLs and interacting with them rounds off the areas explored in this review.

Exclusions:

Excluded from this literature review is any exploration of how RTLB are currently interacting with COLs as at this stage this area of work is in its infancy and as yet there is little information available other than personal experiences within a few RTLB clusters which has not been reported in a formal manner.

A. What generic skills do RTLB have via their 2 year statutory training?

All full time permanent RTLB are qualified experienced teachers who are required to undertake mandatory RTLB training for 2 years to attain a Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching (Massey University, 2017). This course combines with induction and on the job training within the RTLBs base office over 2 years. The RTLB guidelines (RTLB, 2016) provide practical expectations of the RTLB role which are linked to the Practising Teacher’s Criteria (Education Council, 2017).

In summary the RTLB guidelines indicate the following pertinent key skills are at the core of RTLB practice:

- Focus on student potential
- See case work as teaching and learning
- Adapt and differentiate to enhance inclusion
- Commitment to inclusion
- Work alongside others to provide practical support and advice
- Maintain trusting professional relationships with cluster schools, communities, families and agencies.

RTLB (2016) p.5-6.

RTLB utilise key principals which underpin all of their work (RTLB, 2016) p.10.



B. How do the skills RTLB have relate to the ITL 21st Century collaboration and rubric (ITL research, 2012)?

In considering generic skills of RTLB outlined in the previous section care must be taken. The implementation of the RTLB principles will vary based upon individual personality, induction processes, each clusters leadership and day to day pressures upon individual RTLB. With this in mind the ITL 21st Century rubric for collaboration can be considered.

Collaboration: Rubric

In this learning activity,

- 1
 - Students are NOT required to work together in pairs or groups.
- 2
 - Students DO **work together**
 - BUT they DO NOT have shared responsibility.
- 3
 - Students DO have **shared responsibility**
 - BUT they ARE NOT required to make substantive decisions together.
- 4
 - Students DO have **shared responsibility**
 - AND they DO make **substantive decisions** together about the content, process, or product of their work
 - BUT their work is not interdependent.
- 5
 - Students DO have **shared responsibility**
 - AND they DO make **substantive decisions** together about the content, process, or product of their work
 - AND their work is **interdependent**.

When looking at the collaboration rubric above if we exchange students for RTLB/ COL the rubric becomes relevant for interactions between them. The key aspects of collaboration are shown above in bold. Sharing decisions, partnership and reliance upon each party is key to success. Given that RTLB are work in many schools within their cluster and are expected to partner with student, class, whole school and now COLs the importance of partnerships can be seen. For instance whilst an RTLB has a set of specialist skills they cannot implement them into a classroom successfully without the teachers partnership, subject specific knowledge, student relationships and school procedural knowledge for instance.

As RTLB are itinerant the teacher must implement any intervention following a collaborative intervention plan being formatted. So the shared reliance between the RTLB and the teacher can be seen as highly important for a successful student outcome. Extending this thought further to include COLs we can see that the hinge of any benefit from RTLB interaction with COL members is reliant upon strong collaboration.

Such partnership with 1 school can be a challenge so adding a COL we can see how it might become more complex. For instance one of the COLs within our cluster has 9 schools working towards shared goals for student outcomes (Mawhera, 2017). Within these 9 schools working upon the same goals with their students they will by human nature and varied school culture approach them in a different way. This then means one of the challenges for the RTLB service is this emerging question: Should RTLB work with individual teachers, schools or at a whole COL level? Each of these is reliant upon collaboration but requires a very different level of interaction and support. For instance within a primary setting it is easier for an RTLB to work with a class as generally they are managed by the same teacher.

Compare this to a secondary school the same RTLB supporting a class might be dealing with up to 10 teachers as the class moves from subject to subject. So multiple teacher personalities, communication styles, beliefs all add to the complexities for the RTLB to manage to deliver the same support.

From this section and the previous one we can draw a conclusion that RTLB in general have the skill set to be good collaborators. They are used to working with people to solve problems. They share knowledge and responsibility with those they partner with. They utilise data to develop goals and then implement a plan to resolve the presenting situation. Partnerships are key throughout and there is interdependency. RTLB are used to working in varied situations. RTLB have a good skill set which will enable them to add value to COLs.

C. Which RTLB skills are recognized within existing literature as strong supports for building partnership with schools?

When looking at the skills which underpin RTLB practice (RTLB, 2016) we can select several which link to building partnership. RTLB aim to be inclusive, culturally aware, collaborative, strengths based, data driven, reflective and professional. Reference will be made below to literature linking how COLs and agencies may collaborate more strongly.

Wright (2016) indicates that inter school partnerships can increase student achievement outcomes if context and conditions are conducive. Conducive conditions identified include high social capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), positive leadership and a common focus by schools. Non conducive conditions are seen as conflicting interests and competition between schools in our case for instance that could involve capture of RTLB as a resource by and individual school for instance.

From Wright (2016) we can identify that high social capital (good will/ positive relationships) is a key ingredient for collaboration. Schools need positive relationships between teachers before they can contribute to other schools via such models as COLs. We can see that the generic skills RTLB are taught during their training lend themselves towards building collaboration. From the lens of external partners RTLB need to have established or take time to form positive relationships with the staff within each school to build social capital for further and wider collaborations. This is more difficult in schools with low social capital or challenges. If RTLB are to support all schools within the COL, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) highlight time as a key issue when attempting to develop collaborative cultures. This will be a pressure point for RTLB to justify against current work as well as to the COL leaders who will be expecting them to deliver on such projects.

As RTLB visit and support a number of schools during their daily work they are used to meeting listening and partnering with a variety of people and recognizing and providing a response to local conditions. McLaughlin et al (2017) note that collaboration is essential for the best educational planning. Multidimensional information from all stakeholders is required for success. With this in mind RTLB are used to utilizing existing information from schools and investigating further to fill knowledge gaps. Barriers to this occurring are time, lack of tools or expertise. As RTLB are used to utilizing ecological and triangulated data many of them have strong skills in data analysis both qualitative and quantitative and this may be an area of expertise which may be useful to COLs.

McLaughlin et al (2017) share that collaboration is challenging as team members will hold diverse perspectives and this is almost certainly could be the case within a COLs. RTLB experience this challenge regularly as they engage with a school at individual student/ teacher, group of teachers and whole school level to enhance outcomes or provide professional

development to teachers and teacher aides. RTLB are used to planning, modelling and implementing data based projects with defined time frames for delivery and review. Such skills could be valuable for COLs as they develop their shared goals and gather data and work out how to fill knowledge gaps for staff.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) share factors which enable professional capability to develop including frameworks for teacher learning that are open and challenging and have a reason for entering into. Data is a key to enabling teachers to reflect and adjust, celebrate their approaches. Opportunity to observe best practice with colleagues involving reflection. On this last point there is an opportunity for RTLB to model best practice or feedback to COL teachers, this is regular work for RTLB.

Further factors which increase collaboration are setting clear goals, defining roles but having shared responsibility, using a problem solving approach, establishing a mutual trust for one another's ideas and expertise, willingness to learn from others, aiming for group consensus, giving and receiving open feedback, developing procedures for conflict resolution (MOE, 2011). These skills are daily work for RTLB. When looking at the tasks COLs may undertake to improve student outcomes we can again see the facilitation skills RTLB have as being key to not only assisting COL members but also facilitating and enhancing COL projects. If RTLB are included within COL activities for sufficient time to develop high social capital and interact effectively with the members we can postulate that positive collaboration will grow.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) add that educational systems improve the most when peers are utilised to develop innovations. This is all about how teachers work together transparently, take responsibility and continue to develop their teaching knowledge. This professional capital is built into the daily culture of how the school operates. In the same way time needs to be taken for COLs to develop their own culture so professional capital can be shared between all members including the RTLB supporting them. It might be suggested that adding RTLB into the COL group could enhance innovations because of their training, differing world view and differing culture when compared to members coming from schools. We could imagine that the culture of the COL could develop differently with RTLB perspectives represented.

D. What themes are emerging regarding COLs?

White (2017) studied COLs and found some of the innovative approaches described by COL leaders were transition into and between schools, sharing information, strong shared pathways. Certainly RTLB already have procedures which support these areas. They could be adapted or utilized at COL level to increase connectedness between COL schools and smooth transitions for instance. A further area of innovation was that of shared repositories of teacher inquiries within the COL. Our cluster is in the process of developing this and it could be shared with COLs freely. With the correct repository this could be a great way to grow shared culture by enabling COL teachers to access and comment and vice versa.

Within White's (2017) study the use of external agency expertise to drive specific systemic change was mentioned and as suggested within the previous section. RTLB have areas of expertise training which the COLs could benefit from. He also mentions organizational scaffolds which support COLs and identified that the RTLB CM attended management meetings and identified RTLB who would act as a cross school teacher and attend their

meetings within his COL. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between COL and other agencies were also suggested as beneficial.

Solan and Holly-Boen (2017) engaged in a study based upon RTLB experiences working within a Community Of Practice (COP). COPs are defined as groups who have a shared goal to improve practice and thus student outcomes. The teachers involved are active learners. This is a similar arrangement to COLs. A number of benefits of these communities were identified such as supporting and developing new teachers, development of a community culture and beliefs, collegial support, positive change in teacher practice.

Barriers to group success were identified as a lack of open mindedness and that show and tell during meetings did not result in much change in practice. The article indicates several factors which can boost effectiveness. Shared vision in which group members are personally connected and committed to the group's goal. A key factor for success is that all members must develop the vision together. Voluntary membership is a critical factor and must be self-selected although caution is added regarding this and encourages adding people with varied levels of participation and experience to increase dynamic discussion. Distributed leadership within COPs is recommended to encourage interdependence. A facilitator is seen as a real positive. Group dynamics are important. Such things as commitment, trust, and openness are key. Dialogue is the basis of any community and successful groups utilizing a shared frame of reference are more successful. Conflict in conversations is necessary for any group to grow knowledge as ideas are challenged. If group dynamics are successfully established conflicting ideas can be reframed and the group will benefit.

The feedback from RTLB involved in the study (Solan & Holly-Boen, 2017) mirrored much of that mentioned above. Some of the beneficial approaches they identified were that all stakeholders had a clear understanding and function of the COP. In short a shared vision of the future coupled with knowing the reason for meeting now. This enabled RTLB to choose to attend or spend their time on other work. Attendance at COP meetings created challenge for RTLB as it was not recorded as work with direct outcomes, it is often visioning and growing knowledge. This created tension for the RTLB as this kind of interaction is not formalized within their regular RTLB workload. RTLB indicated the ability to manage their own workload and decide on their attendance was key. This requires shared understanding between RTLB and their management teams. Wenger and Snyder (2000) cited within Solan and Holly-Boen (2017) suggest that allocation of time and resource to this would reduce tension.

MOE (2011) indicates that group size is a key element regarding effective collaboration. A large group may prevent effective collaboration whilst a small group may result in a narrow vision. Initially it may be beneficial for only RTLB CM to attend COL meetings and once areas of work are identified RTLB move into support the COL rather than take time out of their regular work to attend the many meetings with the COL.

E. How does the partnership between RTLB and COLs link with Kaupapa Maori?

Within Tataiako which outlines cultural competencies for teachers (MOE, 2016) support for RTLB and COL engagement can be identified. Given that COLs aim to improve outcomes for all students we can see the Tataiako competencies directly relate to the work of COLs and the involvement of RTLB. The RTLB guidelines for practice (RTLB, 2016) also link directly into

the Tataiako competencies. The competencies within Tataiako are: Wananga (participating with communities); Whanoungatanga (engaging in respectful working relationships); Manaakitanga (showing integrity, sincerity and respect); Ako (take responsibility for own learning).

The competencies above link well with the qualities identified as beneficial for successful collaborative partnerships within earlier sections. Whilst the focus of Tataiako is on Maori achievement and inclusion, it is hard to argue that the competencies mentioned above would be detrimental to a collaborative relationship between RTLB and COLs. If such qualities were incorporated within the culture of the COL as it is within the RTLB service in general, there would be a good basis for a collaborative relationship to flourish.

Within the Practising Teacher Criteria (PTC) (Educational Council, 2017) and moving forward with the standards for the teaching profession (Education Council, 2018) we can also see that such qualities are expected from every teacher within New Zealand. Things such as commitment to professional relationships, ongoing learning and promotion of collaboration, inclusion, support, utilizing assessment information and critical inquiry. All these criteria not only support a linkage between RTLB and the educators within the COLs but they also link with the competencies outlined within Tataiako. All teachers in New Zealand are required to hold current teacher registration. The standards and appraisal process the Education Act requires Boards of Trustees to carry out assure that certain levels of collaboration and cooperation are to be expected within the profession which points towards benefits for learners and teachers.

Rather than a link my interpretation would be, that partnership between RTLB and other educators is an expectation backed by the PTC/standards for the teaching profession. Whilst Tataiako and the RTLB toolkit are guidelines there is a clear mandate partnership between COLs and their teachers as such collaborations may strengthen student outcomes.

2. RTLB Cluster interactions with COLs: Cluster Manager Survey findings:

Scope and context:

This survey sought to gather information from the 39 other CMs spread throughout New Zealand as they are tasked with developing and implementing successful ways of supporting COLs within each of their clusters as well as continuing regular and existing levels of RTLB service to all schools within their clusters.

No other groups were surveyed as only the CMs have the unique knowledge of the current situation within their clusters relating to COLs.

The questions within the survey were:

1. How many COLs are there operating within your RTLB cluster?
2. How many of those COLs is your RTLB cluster actively engaged with?
3. Please summarize below the format of engagement with COLs:
4. What existing systems has your cluster been able to adapt to support COLs?
5. What new systems have been developed to support the work your cluster is doing with COLs?

6. Have any previous RTLB work streams become obsolete since your cluster has engaged with COL (s)?
7. How many of the COLs are involved with your cluster as well as another cluster (cross several cluster boundaries) ?
8. If your cluster is engaged with COL (s) which is working with other RTLB clusters. Please describe the arrangements you have with other RTLB clusters:
9. From your perspective as CM what is your perception of your clusters workload with the additional work generated by engaging with COL (s)? Please indicate the affect engagement has had on your clusters workload.
10. Please add any additional thoughts relating to COLs

The raw results are contained within appendix 2.

Summary of findings:

The average number of COLs operating within RTLB clusters was 6. This number is likely to grow as new COLs form. Currently the average number of COLs RTLB clusters are active with is 2. This disparity indicates that a majority of COLs are still in the formation phase and not ready to engage with their local RTLB clusters.

Only 11% of survey respondents had no engagement with Cols. The remainder had varying contacts from the CM or liaison RTLB attending COL meetings to RTLB and COL staff working together on projects. Clusters had also adapted their existing systems to support COLs and this included:

- Sharing of RTLB Schoolgate data

- Memorandums of understanding between RTLB clusters and COLs- negotiating roles and specifics of engagement

- Aligning the RTLB toolkit with COL achievement challenges

- Aligning COL achievement goal with COL request for service data from Schoolgate

- A single entry point for COL request for service to RTLB

- RTLB attend COL PD

- CM/ liaison attend COL meetings

- List RTLB areas of expertise shared with COL

- Transition work- SENCO network

- Collaboration with MOE colleagues

- Developed COL profiles

- Change of cluster structure into geographical hubs to facilitate support for COLs and individual schools

Implications

1. Literature Review:

RTLB skills have been summarized and found to link well to the collaboration rubric. As an external agency to COLs, RTLB are well placed to add value by partnering with them. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) identify that the strongest collaboration occurs when teachers work jointly together teaching, planning and inquiring together (as RTLB normally do). To this end it is key for RTLB to be included within all aspects of COL activity. Collaborative cultures must be informal and rely upon trust and relationships to develop a shared culture. Planned activities to develop this must be invested in by COLs to increase effectiveness.

There is no doubt that what Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) suggest above will grow teacher capability and enhance COLs as well as RTLB skills but we have identified a major hurdle to be overcome by RTLB management. Currently there is great pressure upon the RTLB service due to the changing responsibilities of the service. To provide time for developing collaborative cultures takes RTLB away from their regular work. RTLB CMs will need to plan carefully to ensure RTLB have time to get to know members of each COL group and allow cultural capital to form. Solan and Holly-Boen (2017) suggest that allocation of time and resource to this would reduce tension. Potentially within my cluster liaison RTLB could be the vehicle for this work.

Currently some CMs are attending COL meetings to gain overview and find out what work COLs are requiring from RTLB and having the option to choose to meet or not is certainly a value identified earlier. RTLB must be able to pick and choose when and how they are involved with COLs. This should be achievable as each cluster is managed by a lead school rather than a COL. For clusters with more than one COL even greater care will be required to balance existing work with new expectations from the COLs.

2. *RTLB Cluster interactions with COLs: Cluster Manager Survey:*

The implication of the various adaptations made by RTLB clusters is that there is no clear way of working with COLs. Each of the respondents has shared their local interpretation of what this work looks like based upon local need. A number of new systems have been developed to meet the needs of COLs. The common themes appear to be adjusting RTLB clusters physically to provide better support for COLs, sharing of COL achievement goals, partnering between RTLB, MOE/ LS and COLs to ensure an aligned response, development of a service delivery model. Much of this is currently systems level so we may assume that CM workload has increased whilst these are developed and implemented.

CM comment

“The RTLB/ CoL relationship in the Cluster is still being negotiated. Most of our CoL's are not yet at a point where they know what they want from RTLB. About half of our schools are not yet formally in a CoL...”

Survey respondents strongly indicated that no previous RTLB work had become obsolete due to engagement COLs. It could be implied that classical RTLB work continues whilst any innovation with COLs continues alongside. This in turn means that RTLB clusters now have a further work stream sitting alongside their regular work. An emerging goal for clusters could

be to move classical work into the work streams generated by COLs. For instance all requests for service from RTLB come from 1 designated person within the COL who has an oversight on individual, group, school requests for all those within the COL and ensures that any requests cannot be supported by COL initiatives or personnel prior to making the request.

CM comment

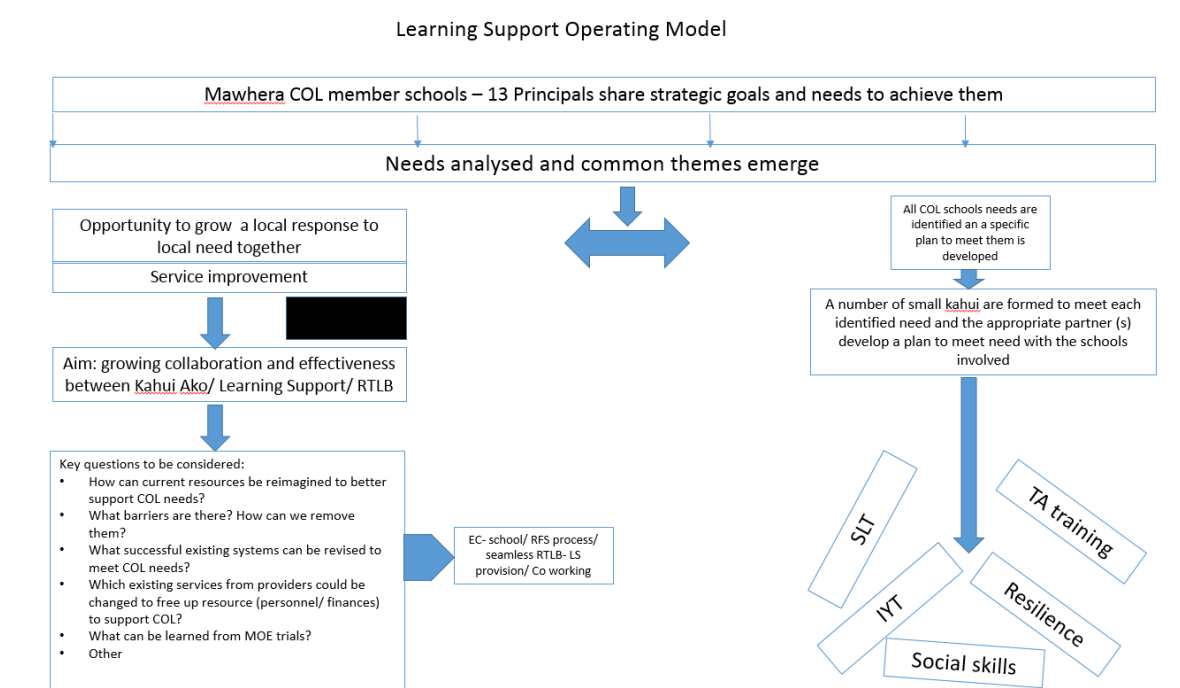
“If handled strategically this could well reduce workload and the repetitive nature of Requests for service. I welcome this systemic work”.

A small number of RTLB clusters were engaged with COLs which crossed into other RTLB clusters. The common way of managing this was communication between CMs/ COL leaders and MOE. CMs indicated that engagement with COLs had either no effect on workload or that workload had increased but they were managing. An explanation of this based on other survey results could be that as many clusters and COLs are not engaged yet approximately half of the respondents have had little contact with COLs. Those that are currently partnering with COLs are managing the increase as we saw earlier that only an average of 2 COLs are currently engaged with RTLB clusters compared to the average number of COLs within each cluster of 6. A fair conclusion may be that as the remainder of COLs build momentum, the perception of additional workload will change for CMs.

CM comment:

“We are currently managing but then only 3 of the 6 CoLs are fully up and running. There will need to be a considerable shift in work-streaming when all 6 are fully active and with RTLB engagement”.

Within my own cluster we have recently met with Learning Support colleagues and members of our local COL to begin sharing data and developing an approach. Following the meeting I reflected and developed the draft model below:



Approach

Benefits:

- Individual school needs can be met via small [kahui](#) groups
- Wider COL needs may be met within service improvement
- Tailored flexible and dedicated support
- Improve access and service levels
- Locally responsive
- Ability to develop together and develop a culture of transparency and collaboration
- Open forum to develop new and exciting approaches

Considerations:

- Time
- Service expectations for partners- scope of practice
- Provision of existing service levels for partners
- Support within and outside classroom
- Recognition of wider regional and West Coast service expectations
- Opportunity for smaller [kahui](#) groups to feedback to wider [Kahui Ako](#) group

I can see an exciting opportunity to work strategically with our local COL to redefine how we support our schools. Using shared data to position MOE/ LS/ RTLB staff alongside COL staff to provide regular RTLB service but also tailored individual school support based upon shared data. A further part of this work enables a strong partnership between these groups to utilise our shared resources and reinvent how we work to provide a strong shared locally responsive approach. These ideas link well with the new Learning Support delivery model being launched by MOE (Education Gazette, 2017)

CM comment

“Developing a shared vision with stakeholders is important- the Thinktank is working well”.

Conclusions

The potential impacts of this inquiry may be broad. From my own clusters perspective the CM has gained a clear insight into national RTLB practice regarding COLs. This will enable preparations and adjustments to procedures to occur in a timelier manner for cluster RTLB via PD and consultation. The CM will also be in a better position to negotiate with COL leaders, as a clear view of the likely engagement with COLs and best practice around them has been obtained.

By sharing with the 39 CMs similar knowledge will be gained enabling them to review their own situation in light of what the RTLB service is engaged with nationally regarding COLs. If the outcomes were also shared with COL leaders they may gain insight into RTLB capabilities and how RTLB could support COLs in a realistic manner, whilst maintaining the delicate balance with regular RTLB roles.

For the MOE similar insight may be gained and clarity regarding the tension between new COL work and existing RTLB workload. This may enable extra staffing to be considered for RTLB clusters as well as parity of salaries between RTLB and COL staff. Our cluster has already started to plan a shared approach to the new MOE/ LS delivery model and this exciting collaboration at both regional and local level should enable good engagement with our COLs.

Whilst this is a small scale inquiry the literature review did pick up on emergent inquiries around COLs and RTLB. In due course further research may emerge which takes the COLs perspectives as to the value RTLB add as well as the current work RTLB do. Aspects of this

work may no longer be required by cluster schools once COLs are fully fledged and have systems in place to support current RTLB clientele.

We also must recognize that there will be variation in requirements of COLs dependent upon their focus, if they cross a number of RTLB clusters and the personalities involved. The RTLB service must also have capacity to continue supporting schools who are not members of COLs.

CM comments:

“The RTLB transformation was founded on the necessity for increased consistency, interpretation, quality and accountability of RTLB service. Three core RTLB documents define RTLB work - F&S Agreement, Governing and Managing RTLB Clusters and the RTLB Professional practice Toolkit. "RTLB are responsible for providing the RTLB service in cluster schools in accordance with the RTLB Professional Practice Toolkit" Pg 5.- this includes the RTLB Practice sequence. It is through adherence to these core documents that the RTLB service maintains its consistency, credibility and stakeholder confidence. RTLB should not be bullied, intimidated or incentivised to work outside of the remits generated through the core documents defining RTLB work”.

“It is disappointing that we are this far down the CoL / RTLB track of engagement and service provision without direction and guidance from MOE.”

“As COLs become fully established workload for RTLB will increase. In our geographic area there will potentially be 6-8 COLs all now in their formative stages developing very different expectations around how RTLB will fit within their individual COL”.

RTLB CMs and clusters are governed by the documents mentioned in the first quote. CMs must be mindful of these documents as they continue to work with LS and COL staff to develop new systems. Since the transformation the RTLB service has gained an improved reputation around management and implementation. Education Review Office (ERO) (2018) overview of findings identifies:

“...positive improvements to the quality and consistency of the RTLB service, especially in overall governance and management. This is largely attributed to the new structure that brings cluster managers, lead school boards of trustees and lead school principals together within clearly defined roles and responsibilities to lead, govern and manage the service. Cluster leadership is also a key factor in the transformation of the service” (p.7).

“The RTLB service is making a valued contribution to the wider provision of learning support in our education system. The service is also taking a pro-active approach to engaging with Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako (Kāhui Ako)” (p.7).

“Almost all clusters were found to be well governed and managed” (p.7).

“most clusters were providing a highly responsive service and this was largely attributed to good leadership, the highly valued RTLB liaison role, well-known referral processes and effective monitoring of case work” (p.8).

“Most clusters were proactive in their approach to working with Ministry and other external agencies” (p.8).

Earlier it was established that COLs are not required to engage with RTLB and in some situations this may leave RTLB clusters in limbo. At the same time MOE/ LS is driving towards a one service approach with RTLB in regard to COLs.

“plans for updating Learning Support provision focus on a single point of access It is not yet clear where the RTLB service will fit into the new approach. The capability and capacity required for a seamless, single point access to services is substantial” (p.32.) (Education Review Office, 2018).

There has been limited guidance and support provided to RTLB clusters in regard to this by MOE. Guidance around engagement with COLs from MOE is in development and hopefully will provide clarity on what is expected of RTLB clusters with regards to COLs. Perhaps once this is received the RTLB services position within the COL/ MOE/ LS models of practice will become clearer and our workforce will increase or our role will change so that we manage the new work generated by the COLs. CMs in the meantime may choose to continue sharing ideas and forming their own framework of best practice within the various Regional and National forums.

Possible future investigations:

- Types of support RTLB provide to COLs

- Differences within COLs based on a specific school type such as primary or area and their ability to partner with RTLB

- COLs which span a number of different RTLB clusters and how collaboration could be affected by the differing procedures in place in each cluster. A complicating factor in such arrangements may be how RTLB from each cluster could be allocated to work with such a COL

Areas our cluster may explore:

- Use existing RTLB procedures to adapt for COLs to increase connectedness between COL schools and enhance transitions across all sectors. Refine existing RTLB procedures and share connections

- Investigate a shared digital PD repository

Assist COLs with specific learnings about topics of local significance such as how digital technology support effective learning for groups of students, Autism support, SPEC (South Pacific Educational Courses for instance

Complete and area of expertise survey between RTLB and COL staff and share it

Develop a memorandum of understanding between each COL and our service

Dovetail current RTLB work with newly emerging COL work

Complete reviews on each piece of work undertaken between RTLB and COLs

Streamline current work streams to provide capacity for emerging COL work

Work with MOE learning support colleagues to develop the 'one service approach'

Allocation of liaison RTLB to each COL to grow new horizons where RTLB and COLs are growing capacity together

In our cluster we are committed to empowering the potential of not only the students but also the schools we work with. This is a double edged sword in regard to the COLs. We are already overstretched with our regular and contracted work struggling to juggle the many expectations required of us. My concern is that it will be easy for us to leap in to support COLs to the detriment of our other highly respected classical RTLB work (as evidenced by the ERO on page 23).

By learning more about what each COL expect CMs can enable their RTLB to move seamlessly in and out of assisting COLs confident of what their role is in the short term. As the one service approach with MOE/ LS develops we can move from our current provision to assigning RTLB/ LS staff more quickly and appropriately so they provide the right support at the right time in a coordinated collaborative fashion to students and schools inside and outside COLs.

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Appendices

Appendix 1:

My initial thoughts regarding the survey questions and the inquiry in general.

Brainstorming with my RTLB with regard to how we could grow our capability with our 4 emerging COLs, specifically:

Review what we are already doing
Identify opportunities and challenges
What systems do we need to develop
What existing RTLB work could be adapted to fit within the COL model

Survey of 40 RTLB clusters based around:

How they are interacting with COLs,
What systems they have developed to work with COLs,
How they have integrated the new workstreams with existing RTLB work
What RTLB work is no longer required due to COL interaction

Discuss COL's with local and regional Learning Support managers to gain an understanding of how they are working with the 4 COLs and where RTLB fit.

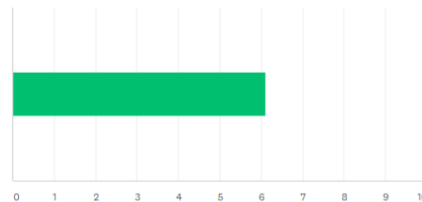
From the results of the above develop an action plan for our cluster which is based upon best practice. This will link with my appraisal inquiry as well as the clusters strategic and annual plan goals.

Appendix 2:

Raw data from CM survey.

How many COLs/ Kahui Ako are there operating within your cluster?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 0

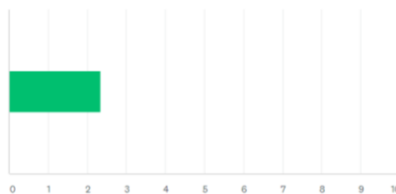


ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
Responses	6	165	27

Total Respondents: 27

How many of those COLs/ Kahui Ako is your RTLB cluster actively engaged with?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 0

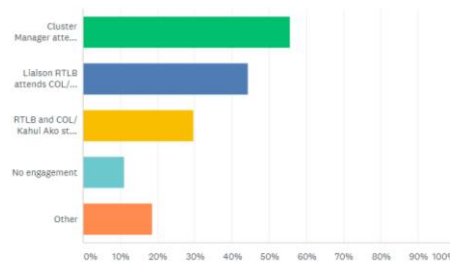


ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
Responses	2	63	27

Total Respondents: 27

Please summarize below the format of engagement between the COLs/ Kahui Ako:

Answered: 27 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Cluster Manager attends COL/ Kahui Ako meetings	55.56% 15
Liaison RTLB attends COL/ Kahui Ako meetings	44.44% 12
RTLB and COL/ Kahui Ako staff are engaged in projects	29.63% 8
No engagement	11.11% 3
Other	18.52% 5

What existing systems has your cluster been able to adapt to support COL/ Kahui Ako? Please explain below:

CM has provided collated data from School Gate to COLs/ KA

Memorandum of Understanding between COL and RTLB

Aligning Toolkit and COL achievement challenges document and developing an inquiry from this basis

Analysis of Requests For Service (RFS) and aligning achievement challenge with this to develop an inquiry

Trial with single entry point from COL for RFS to RTLB

Attend COL PD sessions with schools

RTLB involved in open days when schools visit each other within their COL

CM meets with COL lead principals to discuss RTLB liaison role and ways of working together

Each CoL has been given a list of areas of RTLB expertise/projects.

PLD for transition to school in line with transition pathways that are aligned with our COLs.

Transition work- SENCO network

Work closely with our MOE colleagues

Developed Kahui Ako profiles for each of the Kahui Ako forming within our cluster. These show links to the Kahui Ako toolkit and data analysis from Schoolgate and from the schools own data.

Changing the structure of our cluster into geographical hubs to enable us to be responsive to all schools, those in Kahui Ako and those not.

Part of a RTLB case loading consideration. CM has had to adapt to work with CoL leadership and negotiate role and specifics.

The existing database has had a feature added to it where we are able to collate/filter data related to each COL

LSF System

What new systems have been developed to support the work your cluster is doing with COL/ Kahui Ako? Please explain below:

Kahui Ako new practice model trial beginning ECE transition to school project.

The identified goals set by CoLs have been communicated to our service and RTLB given PD so that when required the RTLB service is ready to assist as requested.

Working upon increasing our understanding of the new service delivery model so that we can be more aligned with Learning Support in our response

We have organised our teams loosely into COL geographical areas

Able to identify and Group schools into COL's on Schoolgate

One RTLB has been placed on secondment to the Ministry which we see as being an opportunity for on-going dialogue about refining our systems and practice in response to changing need

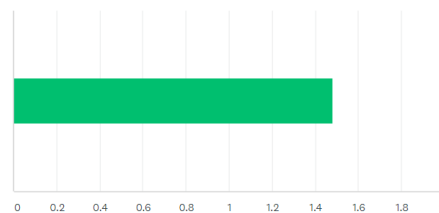
The development of the Service delivery model. To ensure an equitable and efficient service across all learning Support services. And to ensure schools know what is happening

Have any previous RTLB work streams become obsolete since your cluster has engaged with COL/ Kahui Ako? Please explain below:

Answered: 26- no

How many of the COL/ Kahui Ako are involved with your cluster as well as another cluster (cross several cluster boundaries)?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
Responses	1	40	27
Total Respondents: 27			

If your cluster is engaged with a COL/ Kahui Ako which is working with other RTLB clusters please describe the arrangements you have with the other RTLB clusters:

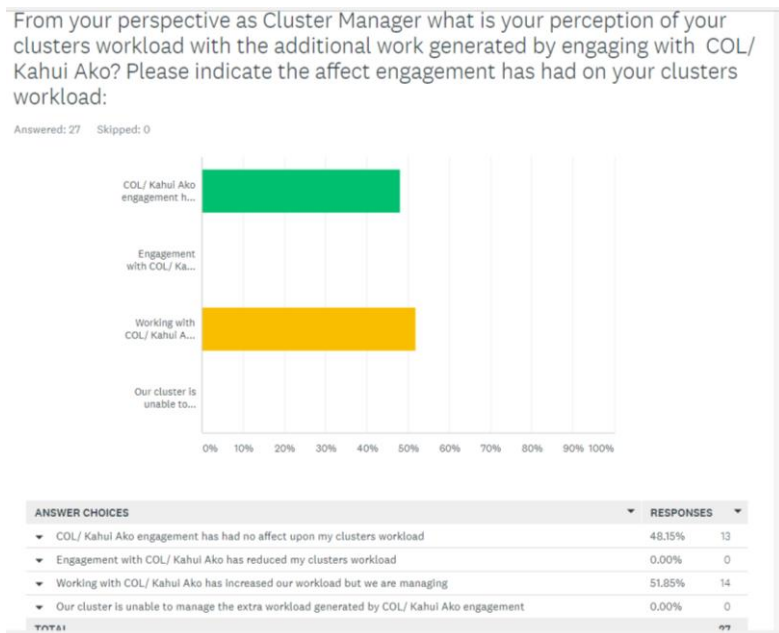
MOE staff from the two areas are leading this work

CMs communicate if my RTLB are visiting other schools not within our cluster boundaries. If the RTLB are providing PD for a CoL they may facilitate if the PD is held in a school in our Cluster. If PD at another Cluster school RTLB can attend but not facilitate

CMs have talked with Lead Principals of CoLs then CMs met together and negotiated an agreement re service

We have a document with one cluster that outlines procedures for working together

We are making contact with the lead principals of these Kahui Ako, as well as making contact with cluster managers of the clusters into which most of the Kahui Ako member schools fall.



Please add any additional thoughts relating to COLs/ Kahui Ako:

Feels very much like we are all learning together how this will work. The Kahui Ako are still setting achievement challenges. Having more input through Learning Support.

Positive progress. A promising start to community collaboration, shared practices and learning and impact.

We really like the BIG picture, systems level engagement within the inquiries. The ongoing impact of the work in terms of cases is yet to be established. The sustainability without RTLB driving the process is also yet to be determined.

Developing a shared vision with stakeholders is important- the Thinktank is working well

As a Cluster Manager engaging with CoLs my workload has increases somewhat and has the capacity to increase it more once the new service delivery model is underway

If handled strategically this could well reduce workload and the repetitive nature of Requests for service. I welcome this systemic work

The RTLB/ CoL relationship in the Cluster is still being negotiated. Most of our CoL's are not yet at a point where they know what they want from RTLB. About half of our schools are not yet formally in a CoL....

We are currently managing but then only 3 of the 6 CoLs are fully up and running. There will need to be a considerable shift in work-streaming when all 6 are fully active and with RTLB engagement. This will impact across a number of current core business streams. I see this as another MOE 'stab into the darkness and lets hope they all work it out so we can then say it is successful' - furthermore local MOE have said publicly that they simply 'do not know what they are doing regarding CoL.' Again, the work and developments alongside our schools falls heavily to the RTLB and CM to support and 'guide' directions.

It is disappointing that we are this far down the CoL / RTLB track of engagement and service provision without direction and guidance from MoE. "Guidelines for engagement between Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako and RTLB • A guide to support the engagement of Kāhui Ako and RTLB has been drafted. • The guide was shared with Ministry colleagues working on the

development of Kāhui Ako. They felt that the guide needed further contextual information to be useful from a Kāhui Ako perspective. • The multiple relationships/communication avenues require further explanation. • The Executive thought the draft had some very useful information in its current form. The inclusion of a flowchart to explain the broad statements of working together would be helpful along with examples of protocols that some clusters have developed.” ”Work has begun on a guide for engagement between COL and Kāhui Ako however, it was decided that what we developed would not meet the needs of COL, so it’s been temporarily put to one side. The whole LS new service delivery model is a shambles. There is no consistency, no boundaries, utter confusion, intimidation, RTLB service provision outside of the core RTLB documents, little regard for the practice sequence. It appears that this current approach reflects the very reason for the RTLB transformation in the first place. MoE survey monkey satisfaction survey and I believe ERO evaluation will reflect RTLB functioning well, largely due to the increased consistency.

It seems that a growing trend is for the COL to focus on 'learning needs', so I wonder if we/RTLB may end up focusing more on providing a behaviour service to our COLs.

As COLs become fully established workload for RTLB will increase. In our geographic area there will potentially be 6-8 COLs all now in their formative stages developing very different expectations around how RTLB will fit within their individual COL.

. Thought it was interesting at our last CM Forum that when the chief advisor for Kahui Ako was asked where he thought RTLBs fitted in he couldn't give a definitive answer.