

EVALUATION BRIEF

REVIEW OF THE NEW ZEALAND IN-COUNTRY AWARDS: TONGA

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE REVIEW

Between 2014 and 2016, the In-Country Awards (ICA) scheme provided cost-effective tertiary education to 643 young people and employees.

The ICA scheme provided effective support to students of merit without financial means, to pursue accredited training.

Limited data meant the review could not determine if the ICA scheme made an impact on improving skills development and responding to industry and labour markets needs

Selection was not informed by a skills gap or workforce needs assessment.

MFAT needs to balance the distribution of awards across academic versus technical and vocational training, and to improve access to study for people in the outer islands and for people with disabilities



ABOUT THE ACTIVITY AND EVALUATION

The In-Country Awards (ICA) scheme is funded by the New Zealand Government through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT). It is managed by the New Zealand High Commission in Tonga.

The review looked at the performance of the ICA scheme, in its latest phase, 2014-2016. It assessed the impact, efficiency and effectiveness of the ICA scheme and whether it was relevant to New Zealand's strategic objectives for Tonga.

The review also considered whether the ICA scheme demonstrated value for money and was cost effective in return for the investment made by the New Zealand Government.

WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS WERE MADE?

The review recommended that the ICA scheme realign with critical needs and priorities of the governments of Tonga and New Zealand.

It suggested widening the ICA scheme's scope to include different modalities and provide resource assistance and learning support for students through the scheme.

The establishment of an advisory selection panel of key stakeholders was recommended. It would advise on planning and prioritisation of the awards, and review recommendations on awards distribution across priority areas.

The report proposed outsourcing the administration of the ICA scheme, leaving the NZHC Scholarships Officer to focus on coordination, monitoring and oversight.

Monitoring of students and evaluation of the scheme should be clearly linked to a results framework. A risk mitigation strategy should be designed and implemented.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

MFAT acknowledges the report and findings. We are using the report to inform discussion about future support to Tonga's workforce gaps.

DETAILS ABOUT THE EVALUATION

Completed by: TUFU Policy and Strategic Management Consultancy Services for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Year published: July 2017

[Read the full report by clicking on this link](#)

FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION

WHAT HAS WORKED WELL?

The ICA scheme is a cost-effective scholarship programme providing Tongan nationals with recognised qualifications and improved training opportunities. Given the benefits it has generated, and demonstration of value for money, the ICA scheme has resulted in a fair return on the investment. During the period under review, 643 awardees had their study funded, at a total cost of approximately NZD\$600,000.

The ICA scheme was very effective in generating benefits for students, employers and training institutions. A survey of ICA students shows that:

- 20% continued to undertake further studies overseas
- 19% were given higher level responsibilities
- another 18% were promoted, after their training and
- A further 28% were given special awards to reward good performance.

Students without financial means were awarded an ICA and 54% of ICA students continuously received them during 2014 to 2016. There is evidence that ICA graduates transferred skills and knowledge to their workplace, raising their performance and positively impacting the quality of organisational outputs.

The ICA scheme lifted the profile of training institutions, encouraging interaction with stakeholders on maintaining the appropriate quality standards and monitoring of students. The scheme could, however, increase visibility to attract a wider range of students.

WHAT IMPROVEMENTS COULD BE MADE?

ICA alignment to New Zealand and Tongan priorities could be strengthened, although the scheme supported the delivery of quality training. Due to a lack of post-award data, the review could not demonstrate whether the ICA scheme made an impact on improving overall skills development and responding to the needs of the industry and labour markets.

The ICA scheme did not wholly support an inclusive approach in access to training opportunities and facilitating effective learning through appropriate student support. This undermined, to some extent, its effectiveness. The ICA scheme has not sufficiently supported the training needs of those not physically able to attend training institutions (for example, those who are disadvantaged geographically or those with disabilities). The ICA has potential to complement and supplement other initiatives by redesigning its scope and encouraging collaboration among the key stakeholders in management of the scheme.

According to the review, the ICA was not directly aligned to MFAT's key priority areas lessening its relevance to MFAT's strategic objectives. ICA selection and assessment processes were not informed by needs assessment in priority sectors for Tonga's workforce.

Efficiency in the administration was affected by limited capacity within the New Zealand High Commission.

EVALUATION INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE FROM THE MFAT WEBSITE: WWW.MFAT.GOV.TZ

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