**Te Tiriti o Waitangi: Help Sheet for Boards in New Zealand Not-for-Profits**

**Why Te Tiriti Matters**

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the founding document of a foundational document for Aotearoa New Zealand, shaping the nation’s identity and aspirations. Te Tiriti, represents an agreement between Māori and the Crown, intended to nurture a mutually beneficial relationship.

By actively engaging with Te Tiriti, boards contribute to the ongoing process of building a bicultural nation where both Māori and non-Maori can thrive. This involves not only recognising the unique cultural heritage of Māori but also celebrating contributions to society and working towards a future where all New Zealanders can experience equity and justice.

For boards, giving effect to Te Tiriti is not a one-off task, it’s an ongoing commitment to uphold its principles in governance, strategy, and operations.

**Core Principles to Guide Your Board**

Government agencies and tribunals have distilled Te Tiriti into actionable principles that boards can adopt:

* **Partnership**: Engage meaningfully with Māori communities, iwi, hapū, and mana whenua. This includes co-designing services and policies
* **Participation**: Ensure Māori have equitable opportunities to participate in decision-making and leadership roles
* **Protection**: Safeguard Māori interests, including cultural practices, language, and taonga
* **Rangatiratanga**: Respect Māori autonomy and leadership over their resources and tikanga
* **Equity**: Actively address disparities between Māori and non-Māori in your sector

**Practical Steps for Boards**

**Undertake a Cultural Audit for Responsiveness and Capacity to Grow**

Identify internal support (board members, staff, friends/allies), to provide an inside view of the organisation's capability to culturally connect and respond to Māori

**Develop a Te Tiriti Policy**  
Use the Good Governance Code as a template (Te Ao Māori principles) to create a policy tailored to your organisation’s kaupapa.

**Connect with Mana Whenua Māori**  
Build relationships with local Māori leaders at grassroots as well as iwi and/or mana whenua.

**Include Māori Representation**  
Consider creating a permanent board seat for Māori representation to ensure lived experience and cultural insight are embedded in governance

**Review Policies Annually**  
Treat your Te Tiriti policy as a living document. Regular reviews ensure it remains relevant and effective

**Invest in Cultural Capability**  
Recognise that engaging Māori expertise may come with costs, just as legal or technical advice would.

**Key Resources**

[Good Governance Code – Te Ao Māori Principles](https://communitygovernance.org.nz/board-resources/good-governance-code/)

[Te Ao Māori Board Evaluation](https://communitygovernance.org.nz/resource-hub/good-governance-code-board-evaluation-tools/)

[Governance Videos Te Tumu Paeroa](https://communitygovernance.org.nz/board-resources/maori-governance/)