



TE TŌTARA CASE STUDY

KĀPITI COAST LIBRARIES



Diego Pedrioli, a hub team leader for Paraparaumu and Paekākāriki Libraries part of Kāpiti Coast District Libraries, talks about his experience introducing Te Tōtara to his team.

After this introduction, I was involved as a team lead, helping to develop the tools and to understand how these could be used in our libraries across a range of positions, skillsets and levels of experience. We have some highly qualified librarians in our collections team working alongside front-of-house staff with customer service backgrounds, some of our staff have worked in libraries for decades while others have just joined our team.

Diego's key learnings

- Versatility of Te Tōtara - works across roles, levels of experience, and work patterns
- Individual engagement - allows individuals and teams to engage in a way that is meaningful to them
- Consistency and sustainability - it can be a challenge if team leads go in different directions, and consistency needs to be built into the process to ensure long-term sustainability across the organisation.

We looked at the workbook and, following trials, we decided many of our staff would not have the time in their work pattern to cope with the demands of such a detailed document. The tool had to be adaptable, so someone working six hours a week and someone working full-time could talk the same language and share their learnings with each other, while engaging with the process in a time-frame suitable for their role.

We eventually landed on a simplified version of the workbook, a two-page worksheet that my team, who are largely front-of-house with little desk time, can fit around their work hours. I saw the metaphor of te tōtara as a circular process that could be used as both a self-reflection tool and a goal setting.

Everyone who has been involved with Te Tōtara in our libraries has interpreted it differently, and I feel that this is one of the great strengths of the framework. The tools can be understood and used in many ways, and therefore individuals and teams engage in ways that are meaningful and valuable to them.

My initial involvement, soon after I had started in my role, was in an all-staff workshop when we closed our libraries for a whole day to look at Te Tōtara as a group, beginning with ngā paiaaka | the roots.

Although we liked the idea of using a seasonal pattern for the yearly process, for practical reasons we decided to stagger professional development cycles across the year. Over 2023-2024 I worked with my direct reports to schedule regular one-on-one meetings, starting at the anniversary of first employment, followed by meetings at set intervals. I met each of my direct reports at different intervals, reflecting the number of hours per week they were employed.



After the initial meeting, each team member took time to self-assess against the 29 capabilities, giving them an opportunity to identify their strengths, areas for further development, and capabilities they thought may not be relevant for their role. This formed the basis for discussion at the following meeting, when a training and development plan was co-developed and agreed upon.

Some team members were familiar with self-reflection and goal-setting processes from other backgrounds, such as nursing and teaching, and were immediately comfortable with the tool. Others needed further support as they engaged with this type of process for the first time.

One of the strengths of Te Tōtara is its versatility. It gives opportunities to identify gaps in skillset and knowledge, or to explore in depth something that you are particularly strong or interested in and then share it with the rest of the team. As it is self-directed, it allows individuals to engage in a way that is meaningful to them, and to grow the whole team as each individual shares their learnings and insights.

As a team lead, I focused on developing individual goals with my direct reports because that's how I interpreted the metaphor, and personal self-reflection and goal setting made sense to me. It was a revelation in many of Te Tōtara meetings with colleagues across the country to hear people talking about team goals.

I'm now interested in exploring whether it's going to be more effective to develop goals as a team as opposed to a collection of individuals, or whether we can accommodate both to maximise Te Tōtara's potential as a tool for professional growth.

I'm also looking at ways to continue my personal journey and experience with Te Tōtara to align with those of other hub leads and ensure consistency across libraries, while meeting the expectations of our managers and our council in a long-term sustainable way.

A recent restructure of Kāpiti Coast District Libraries has presented a challenge for the process, and we have paused our cycles of professional development while we adjust to new ways of working. We are currently in the process of resetting Te Tōtara across our libraries, and we have an opportunity to learn from each other's experiences.