



TE TANGO AKATEREANGA MONI O TE IPUKAREA
MINISTRY OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT
GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS

Economic Development Strategy and Economic Recovery Roadmap Review 2022



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Acronyms

BTIB	Business Trade and Investment Board
CIIC	Cook Islands Investment Incorporation
CITTI	Cook Islands Tertiary and Training Institute
CI Tourism	Cook Islands Tourism Marketing Corporation
CRA	Competition and Regulatory Authority
EDS	Economic Development Strategy 2030
ERP	Economic Response Plan
ERR	Economic Recovery Roadmap
FMIS	Financial Management Information System
FSC	Financial Services Commission
FSDA	Financial Services Development Authority (Cook Islands Finance)
ICI	Infrastructure Cook Islands
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INTAFF	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MFAI	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
MFEM	Ministry of Finance and Economic Management
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOCD	Ministry of Cultural Development
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MOT	Ministry of Transport
MTVKTV	Mei Te Vai Ki Te Vai
NCD	Noncommunicable diseases
NES	National Environment Service
NSDA	National Sustainable Development Agenda 2020+
NIIP	National Infrastructure Investment Plan
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
OPSC	Office of the Public Service Commissioner
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability review
PPP	Public-private partnership
SBMA	Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Authority
TCI	Telecom Cook Islands
TMO	Te Marae Ora Cook Islands Ministry of Health
TTV	To Tatou Vai
USP	University of the South Pacific
VAT	Value-Added Tax

Introduction

This report presents a reprioritised set of actions for the Cook Islands Government under the Economic Development Strategy 2030 (EDS) and the Economic Recovery Roadmap (ERR). The revised actions follow 26 consultation meetings with 19 agencies between September and November 2022.

This review was needed because as agencies shifted focus to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, some EDS actions were necessarily deferred. Other actions were prioritised as part of the ERR. We needed to re-set our longer-term economic objectives in light of a tighter fiscal outlook, government agency capacity, and immediate recovery needs.

The review brings together the EDS and ERR

The EDS identifies actions that create the foundations for the Cook Islands economic development over the next decade. The EDS sets the vision of “Working together to build a dynamic, prosperous and inclusive economic future for Cook Islanders, that is in harmony with our culture and environment.”

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) developed the EDS in 2019 with extensive public consultation in both Rarotonga and the Pa Enua. Following a substantial delay due to MFEM’s necessary focus on delivering the Government’s Economic Response Plan (ERP), Cabinet approved public release of the final document on 22 January 2021.

The EDS sits under the National Sustainable Development Agenda 2020+ (NSDA). It sets out five objectives, with 101 associated actions:

- Objective 1: Improving equity and access for all
- Objective 2: Transforming our economy
- Objective 3: Developing our people and culture
- Objective 4: Investing in our islands
- Objective 5: Greening our economy.

The ERR was prepared in response to the country’s immediate needs following the pandemic and border closures. The overarching purpose of the ERR is to facilitate sustainable economic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 so the Cook Islands is on track to achieve the EDS 2030 objectives.

The ERR seeks to facilitate sustainable economic recovery through reactive continuation of ERP measures, and through the following 'growth' workstreams:

- Reducing the Cost of Borrowing
- Managing the Burden of Public Debt
- Infrastructure Investment
- Barriers to Business Performance
- Productivity growth
- Improved Public Sector efficiency
- Labour force and Population
- Foreign Investment to benefit the Cook Islands.

Figure 1 below sets out the relationship between the NSDA, the EDS and the ERR.



Objectives

This EDS/ERR Review 2022 set out to:

- Check in with agencies about their progress on the EDS actions assigned to them
- review the timing and prioritization of the EDS and ERR actions, in consultation with implementing agencies, to ensure they best support the Cook Islands' economic recovery and subsequent growth
- develop an updated EDS/ERR Implementation Plan for 2022-2026 to support agency business planning, public communications and discussions with development partners.

Scope

This review focused largely on re-considering EDS actions in terms of priority and timing. ERR actions were considered to a lesser extent, given the recent finalisation of workstream concept notes and planning documents.

Activities in scope of the review:

- assess agencies' progress towards the EDS actions assigned to them
- review of the EDS actions, including progress to date, and appropriate timing
- review of the timing of ERR actions, considering initial progress against ERR indicators
- agency consultation
- development of new phased implementation plan for the EDS and ERR.

Activities **not** in scope of the review:

- review of the EDS objectives
- review of the ERR objectives/workstreams
- public consultation
- review of ERR funding
- gap analysis of actions that could have short-term benefits and meet the EDS objectives, but were not included in the plan.
- economic response options to a COVID resurgence. This will be considered through a separate workstream.

Methodology

From September to November 2022, MFEM conducted 26 consultation meetings across 19 agencies to discuss progress towards the relevant actions, including:

- action scope and agency roles
- key milestones and next steps (e.g., does the action require legislative change)
- anticipated completion dates
- capacity to implement and dependencies with other work
- other barriers to implementation.

Following the agency interviews, MFEM conducted a further prioritisation exercise using the following criteria:

Effectiveness	Achievability	Cost impact
<p>Does this action still make sense in this new context?</p> <p>Will this action support a faster economic recovery?</p>	<p>Does the agency have the capacity to implement this action?</p> <p>Does implementing this action rely on others being completed first?</p> <p>Will this fit in the legislative programme?</p>	<p>Does the implementing agency require additional funding for this action?</p>

This exercise supported development of the updated implementation timeline, as presented in the following sections.

Progress on EDS/ERR actions so far

Table 1 below provides a summary of progress towards EDS and ERR actions, as at November 2022. The consultation meetings confirmed that of a total of 119 actions, 17 are complete, 68 actions are in progress, and 12 actions have not yet started. 22 are on hold or deferred; some of these are dependent on national budget priorities.

Table 1: Summary of EDS and ERR action progress

	Complete	In Progress	In Progress – Ongoing	Not Yet Started	Deferred / on hold	Total
EDS	12	44	17	7	21	101
ERR*	5	7	0	5	1	18
Total	17	51	17	12	22	119

*Note this refers to ERR actions that are not included as EDS actions. 14 actions are included in both the EDS and ERR; for the purposes of this report, they are counted as EDS actions.

Complete actions

The following actions are complete or progressed so far as to not need additional resourcing. They will not be included in the updated timeline.

- 1.12 Universal Access Fund
- 1.17 Review of the NIIP
- 1.23 Pa Enea package tour support
- 2.7 PEFA review
- 2.14 Seabed licencing and exploration
- 2.17 TCI shareholding review
- 3.2 Population Study
- 4.5 Te Mato Vai Project
- 4.10 Cook Islands Business Registry
- 4.11 Online 'One-stop Business Info Shop'
- 4.12 Business start-up support
- 5.10 Sanitation Masterplan
- ERR ERP continuation measures
- ERR Quarantine-Free measures update
- ERR Updated Medium-term Fiscal statement
- ERR Medium-term Debt Strategy
- ERR Population measurement – departure cards.

In progress/not started actions

Table 2 below sets out EDS and ERR actions either in progress, not started or ongoing, and the updated expected completion timing. As at November 2022, 32 EDS and ERR actions are expected to be complete in 2022/23. The implementation of some actions will stretch beyond the current timeline. This will be considered in future updates. Annex 1 provides further detail on the updates and proposed changes to these actions.

2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/26 (and beyond)
1.1 Improvements to welfare system	1.11 Universal Access Plan	2.8 FMIS	2.2 Financial Technology Transformation Strategy
1.5 National Minimum Wage Policy	1.14 Pa Enea medical staff incentive scheme	3.15 Public sector lifelong learning policy	4.2 Establish Sovereign Wealth Fund
1.7 Shipping Roadmap	2.6 Review of banking sector competition	4.8 Foreign investment framework review (ERR)	1.9 Northern and Southern Group airport sealing
1.8 Pa Enea Harbour upgrades	2.15 Seabed minerals financial regime	5.15 Wetlands expansion measures	
1.18 Review of VAT application and communication	3.10 Childcare services regulation		1.4 Land tenure review
1.19 BTIB revolving loan fund expansion	3.14 Apprenticeship Scheme	2.5 Investigate Commerce Commission-type role for CRA	
1.20 Commercial support for Pa Enea businesses	3.18 Develop Tertiary Strategy as part of the new education strategy	ERR Baseline business cost research	
1.21 BTIB skills training in the Pa Enea	3.21 Disability access policy	ERR Business small claims practices	
1.24 Animal welfare bill	4.6 Water Tariff Review	ERR Building approvals processes	
2.4 Extend remit of CRA	4.13 Banking Taskforce (ERR)	ERR Policies supporting secondary jobs and the gig economy	
2.10 Agency core functions review (ERR)	5.2 Pa Enea renewable pricing & governance		
2.18 Capitalising on ICT reforms	5.6 Pa Enea water security program		
3.3 National Population Strategy	ERR E-commerce review		
3.6 NZ IRD student loan repayment mechanism	ERR National Employment Policy		
3.9 Parental leave			
3.22 Aged Care framework	1.2 Consider incentives for long-term worker accommodation		
4.15 Consumer protection	1.3 Rarotonga housing market study		
Cook Islands Tourism Business Partnership Programme	3.7 Diaspora Network		
4.17 Review of the airline underwrite	4.9 Revenue Strategy		
4.21 Review of local content in procurement policy			
5.1 Energy sector review			
5.9 MTVKTV investment decision			
5.12 Solid and Hazardous Waste Bill			
5.13 National Environment Policy			
5.14 Wetlands survey			
ERR Transport: WOF, vehicle registration and licensing processes and fees			
ERR Fees Free payments			
ERR Attraction and transit arrangements for migrant workers	1.13 Kaveinga Ora Program	3.19 Cultural education support	4.18 Commercial agricultural support
ERR Migrant labour force investigation	1.16 Supporting student wellbeing	3.20 National NCD Strategy	4.19 Promotion and marketing of international financial services
ERR Promotion of working holiday visa pathways	2.1 Develop and introduce new products/ services in the financial services industry	4.1 Implement Medium-term Fiscal Strategy	5.5 Cyclone shelter program
	3.1 Labour Market Survey	4.3 New financial management policies under the MFEM Act	5.11 Public sanitation
	3.16 Curriculum review	4.4 Airport Masterplan capital projects	5.16 Biosecurity
5.8 Economic Crisis Management Plan	3.17 Schools/ CITTI collaboration	4.7 NZ Infrastructure fund	
ERR Population measurement - statistics set			

Deferred actions

The following actions have been deferred/put on hold, pending budget availability, or because they do not meet the prioritization criteria and are more suited for consideration following the finalisation of the ERR period (2021/22 – 2025/26), when the Cook Islands economy is expected to shift from recovery to growth.

- 1.6 Pa Enea grocery price investigation
- 1.10 Pa Enea Air Discount Scheme
- 1.15 Pa Enea student accommodation
- 1.22 Tourism business support Pa Enea
- 2.3 Innovation Strategy
- 2.9 Public expenditure review
- 2.11 PPP policy
- 2.12 Vaikapuangi Redevelopment Project
- 2.13 Creative Industries Initiative
- 2.16 Ministry of Innovation, Information and Communication
- 3.4 Pa Enea scholarship scheme
- 3.5 Extend and enhance scholarship scheme
- 3.8 Diaspora Investment Marketing Strategy
- 3.11 Support for early childcare education
- 3.12 After-school care
- 3.13 Domestic student loans scheme
- 4.14 Bankruptcy laws
- 4.20 Industry trade strategy
- 5.3 Aitutaki Stage 2
- 5.4 Low carbon transport incentives
- 5.7 Pa Enea water tank programme
- ERR Retirement investment attraction

Next steps

MFEM will publish an annual EDS/ERR progress update, incorporating the changes set out above. The next update will be in the first quarter of 2024, and will include updated action timing and progress against the outcome indicators. MFEM will undertake another review and reprioritisation of the EDS in 2025, including identifying priority actions for the second half of the strategy. More information on the EDS is available at:

<https://www.mfem.gov.ck/economic-planning/economic-development-strategy>

Annex 1 – Detailed EDS/ERR action updates

This annex provides updates on progress towards each of the EDS and ERR actions. The action update highlights any significant changes.

To keep the updates short, minor changes to actions (like calendar years or secondary agencies involved) are not included.

The timing for each action is represented in table format. The **original timing** is shown as below, with a closed circle representing the initial expected end date.



Updated/extended timing is shown as below with a dashed line and open circle representing the updated expected end date.



Each action is colour-coded to represent current progress, as set out in the key below. These updates are based on the latest available information as at November 2022.

	Complete
	In Progress
	Ongoing
	Not Started
	Deferred/on hold

Objective 1: Improving equity and access for all

1.1 Improvements to welfare system – In Progress

Lead agency: INTAFF

Description: Implement recommendations of the review of the social welfare system to ensure we have an efficient and effective system that fully meets the needs of the most disadvantaged members of our community.

Update: The timing of this action has been extended through to June 2023. The priority recommendations for 2022/23 are development of the social Welfare Management Information System and mobile app, and review of social system policy. This action is being implemented with technical assistance from UNICEF and the UNDP.



1.2 Consider incentives for long-term worker accommodation – Not Started

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: As part of the Revenue Strategy, assess the merits for further incentivising tourism operators to build long-term housing for their staff.

Update: Development of the Revenue Strategy (action 4.9) was delayed due to COVID-19. This action is now expected to be completed by June 2024.



1.3 Rarotonga housing market study – Not started

Lead agency: CIIC, with support from INTAFF

Description: Housing market study to better inform possible interventions to improve access to housing in Rarotonga.

Update: This action has been shifted to 2023/24 to allow for completion of CIIC's housing policy in 2022/23, which focuses on the current government housing stock.



1.4 Land tenure review – Not Started

Lead agency: MOJ, with support from OPM and MFEM

Description: Review of the current land tenure system to ensure equitable and efficient access to land.

Update: Following further scoping, the timing for this action has been extended through to June 2026. This reflects the significant consultation required.



1.5 National minimum Wage Policy – In Progress

Lead agency: INTAFF

Description: National Minimum Wage Policy developed to guide minimum wage setting from 1 July 2021 onwards.

Update: The timing for this action has been shifted to 2022/23. This action will be implemented with technical assistance from the International Labour Organisation.



1.6 Pa Enua grocery price investigation – Deferred

Lead agency: Price Tribunal

Description: Investigation to determine the underlying cause of high pricing and provide the evidence base for further Government intervention.

Update: This action has been deferred.



1.7 Shipping Roadmap – In Progress

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Implement Shipping Roadmap actions to ensure the sustainable, safe, reliable and affordable provision of inter-island shipping.

Update: In 2022/23 the Shipping Roadmap supported subsidised shipping to both Northern and Southern Group islands. The next step for this action is to determine further options for Government intervention.



1.8 Pa Enea Harbour upgrades – In Progress

Lead agency: MOT

Description: Improve access and assess viability of installing permanent buoys to assist the safe anchoring of vessels during rough weather.

Update: Expected to be complete June 2023. The description for this action has been updated to remove reference to dredging, which sits under the NIIP and is led by CIIC (action 1.17). This action is being implemented with assistance through the Pacific Maritime Safety Programme.



1.9 Northern and Southern Group airport sealing – In Progress

Lead agency: ICI

Description: Sealing of selected Northern and Southern Group runways to permit larger aircraft operations.

Update: Preparations for Manihiki airport sealing are underway. Northern Group sealing is currently expected to continue past 2025/26. Sealing of Southern Group runways will take place after the selected Northern Group runways are complete. This action is being implemented with funding support from the New Zealand Government.



1.10 Pa Enea Air Discount Scheme – Deferred

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Assess the viability of establishing a Pa Enea Air Discount scheme to deliver lower air fares for the residents of Cook Islands remote communities (the Pa Enea other than Aitutaki).

Updates: This action has been deferred pending further work on the Pa Enea airport sealing (action 1.9 above).



1.11 Universal Access Plan – In Progress

Lead agency: CRA

Description: Develop a Universal Access Plan in consultation with Pa Enea residents.

Update: This action is required under the Telecommunications Act 2019. The Universal Access Plan will complement the upgraded telecommunications connectivity for the Pa Enea expected in 2022/23. The timing for this action has been extended to December 2023. This action is included in the ERR under the barriers to business workstream.



1.12 Universal Access Fund – Complete

Lead agency: CRA

Description: Establishment of a Universal Access Fund.

Update: This action was completed in 2021/22, with establishment funds set aside with assistance from the New Zealand Government.



1.13 Kaveinga Ora Program – Ongoing

Lead agency: TMO

Description: Implementation of Te Marae Ora’s flying doctor and dentist program

Update: There are no proposed changes to this action. This is part of TMO’s ongoing and annual workplan.



1.14 PA Enea medical staff incentive scheme – In Progress

Lead agency: TMO, supported by MFEM

Description: Assess the merits of introducing an incentives scheme to attract more doctors and dentists to live and work in the Pa Enea.

Update: Review of HR policies undertaken, which includes incentives for relocation to the Pa Enea. Policy yet to be finalised.



1.15 Pa Enea student accommodation – On Hold

Lead agency: MOE, CIIC

Description: Scoping and construction of dedicated student accommodation in Avarua for Pa Enea secondary school students.

Update: This action is on hold pending development of the Education Infrastructure Strategy and is dependent on national budget priorities.



1.16 Supporting student wellbeing – Ongoing

Lead agency: MOE

Description: Review current support services to ensure all secondary school students have access to mentorship and career guidance.

Update: The timing of this action has been amended to ongoing to reflect the services that have been implemented to support wellbeing and career guidance. Wellbeing services are needs based and reviewed as part of MOE’s engagement with students.



1.17 Review of the National Infrastructure Investment Plan (NIIP) – Complete

Lead agency: CIIC, ICI, Island Governments

Description: Review of the NIIP, including ways to improve the efficient and effective delivery of projects to the Pa Enea.

Update: The updated NIIP was launched in August 2021. A copy of the report is available at: <https://www.ciic.gov.ck/publications/infrastructure-plans/>



1.18 Review of VAT application and communication – In Progress

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: The Government will review the application of Value-Added Tax (VAT) in the Pa Enea to ensure that it is being implemented correctly.

Update: The timing for this action has been extended through to June 2023.



1.19 BTIB revolving fund loan expansion – In Progress

Lead agency: BTIB

Description: Review the effectiveness of the BTIB revolving fund loan scheme, and consider expanding it to specifically target small Pa Enea businesses

Update: This action was deferred due to COVID-19. It is now expected to be complete by June 2023.



1.20 Commercial support for Pa Enea businesses – In Progress

Lead agency: BTIB

Description: Review mechanisms, public and/or private, to connect Pa Enea businesses with commercial Rarotonga and export markets more effectively.

Update: This action was deferred due to COVID-19. It is now expected to be complete by June 2023.



1.21 BTIB skills training in the Pa Enea – In Progress

Lead agency: BTIB

Description: Review of BTIB’s current skills training programs to ensure they meet the marketing and commercialisation skills needs of Pa Enea businesses.

Update: This action was deferred due to COVID-19. It is now expected to be complete by June 2023.



1.22 Tourism business support Pa Enea – Deferred

Lead agency: CI Tourism

Description: Support new small-scale tourism business development.

Update: This action has been deferred for consideration following the finalisation of the period of the ERR, when the Cook Islands economy is expected to shift from recovery to growth.



1.23 Pa Enea package tour support – Complete

Lead agency: CI Tourism

Description: Support private sector package tours to Pa Enea destinations.

Update: This action was completed in 2021/22, through discounted package tours for over 300 customers from Rarotonga to Pa Enea destinations.



1.24 Animal welfare bill – In Progress

Lead agency: MOA, supported by CISPCA and Te Are Manu

Description: Draft and consult on new animal welfare legislation.

Update: The timing for this action has been extended through to June 2023. Rather than introducing a separate animal welfare bill, this action is being fulfilled through new regulations aligned to the 2021 Agriculture bill. The Ministry has completed an Animal Welfare Strategy that will complement the regulations once drafted.



Objective 2: Transforming our economy

2.1 Develop and introduce new products/ services and business lines in the financial services industry – Ongoing

Lead agency: FSDA (Cook Islands Finance)

Description: Source new entrants / products/ services in line with demand, competitors' offerings and advancements in technologies.

Update: There are no proposed changes to this ongoing action. In December 2021, the FSDA launched the International Relationship Property Trust, a new product designed to provide couples with more certainty as to how their property will be managed in the event that they separate. More information is available at: <https://www.cookislandsfinance.com/>.



2.2 Financial Technology Transformation Strategy – In Progress

Lead agency: FSC

Description: Identify areas within (or missing from) the current regulatory framework that need reform to better capture fintech developments.

Update: The timing for this action has been extended through 2025/26 to reflect FSC’s 5-year Strategic Roadmap 2021-2025, available at:

<https://www.fsc.gov.ck/cookIslandsFscApp/content/regulatory-framework/report/roadmap>.



2.3 Innovation strategy – Deferred

Lead agency: MFEM/ new Ministry of Innovation, Information & Communication (if established)

Description: Develop an Innovation Strategy, focusing on capacity building, research and development partnerships and growth opportunities to meet business and industry needs.

Update: This action has been deferred for consideration following the finalisation of the period of the ERR and the agency core functions review (action 2.10 below).



2.4 Extend remit of the Competition and Regulatory Authority – In Progress

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Regulation policy and legislation to extend the CRA’s remit to the electricity, water and sewerage utility sectors.

Update: The timing of this action has been extended through to June 2023. This is included under the ERR barriers to business workstream.



2.5 Investigate Commerce Commission-type role for CRA – Not Started

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Commission expert report.

Update: The timing for this action has been shifted to 2024/25, to allow for the finalisation of action 2.4.



2.6 Review of banking sector competition – In Progress

Lead agency: FSC

Description: Competition review and recommendations to Government

Update: The timing for this action has been extended through to June 2024. It is included in the ERR under the cost of borrowing workstream. As part of this action, the Reserve Bank of New Zealand commissioned an external review of the Cook Islands banking sector and drivers of the cost of borrowing in the Cook Islands, including potential policy responses. The report is available at: <https://www.mfem.gov.ck/economic-planning/covid-19-err>



2.7 Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) review – Complete

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability review by the IMF.

Update: The IMF conducted an agile PEFA assessment of the Cook Islands in 2021. The final report was released in August 2021 and is available at: <https://www.pefa.org/node/4957>. The next review is estimated to take place in 2023/24.



2.8 FMIS – In Progress

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Continue rollout of FMIS to all Government agencies.

Update: Half of Cook Islands Government agencies are operating in the new system. Following further project scoping, the timing for this action has been extended through to June 2025. FMIS news bulletins are available at: <https://www.mfem.gov.ck/treasury/fmis-news-bulletin>.



2.9 Public expenditure review – Deferred

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Review the performance and expenditure of all agencies every four years.

Update: This action has been deferred pending the finalisation of the agency core functions review (action 2.10 below).



2.10 Agency core functions review – In Progress

Lead agency: OPSC

Description: Review the Cook Islands Public Sector core functions to improve efficiency.

Update: Following the procurement of an external consultant, the review under this action is expected to be delivered by June 2023. This action is included under the ERR public sector efficiency workstream. It is expected that implementation of the review's recommendations will be phased over several years.



2.11 PPP policy – On Hold

Lead agency: MFEM, CIIC

Description: Consult on and finalise PPP policy.

Update: This action is on hold. Until a policy can be more thoroughly developed, it is the view of MFEM (and PIMA) that the Cook Islands market is not deep enough for PPPs, and therefore the government is not advised to enter into any such arrangements.



2.12 Vaikapuangi Redevelopment Project – On Hold

Lead agency: CIIC

Description: Government investment decision on the consolidated Government building project

Update: This project is on hold pending Government funding decisions.



2.13 Creative Industries Initiative – Deferred

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Design and implement a new grant funding initiative to support creative industry development.

Update: This action has been deferred for consideration following the finalisation of the period of the ERR, when the Cook Islands economy is expected to shift from recovery to growth.



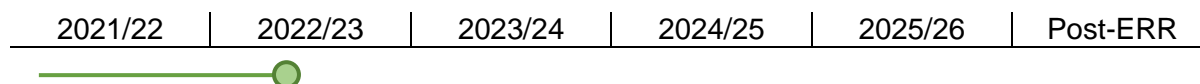
2.14 Seabed licensing and exploration – Complete

Lead agency: SBMA

Description: Complete exploration licensing tender process.

Update: In February 2022 the seabed minerals exploration licence granting ceremony saw the signing of three exploration licences. The press release is available at:

<https://www.sbma.gov.ck/news-3/article-88>



2.15 Seabed minerals financial regime – In Progress

Lead agency: SBMA, MFEM

Description: Review of current royalty and taxation regime to ensure we maximise the financial benefits for Cook Islanders from mineral harvesting.

Update: The timing for this action has been extended through to June 2024.



2.16 Ministry of Innovation, Information & Communication – On Hold

Lead agency: OPM, MFEM

Description: Assess the cost, benefits and required administrative arrangements to establish a new government agency to enable more effective and efficient strategic policy leadership and implementation for the ICT sector.

Update: This action is on hold pending the outcome of the agency core functions review (action 2.10).

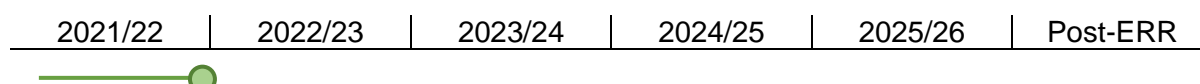


2.17 TCI shareholding review – Complete

Lead agency: CIIC, MFEM

Description: Conduct strategic review of Government shareholding in TCI.

Update: This action was completed in December 2021. A further review will be reconsidered in the future as the telecommunications sector opens up to competition.



2.18 Capitalising on ICT reforms – In Progress

Lead agency: MFEM, OPM, Chamber of Commerce

Description: Develop action plan to maximise benefits of the cable and market reforms.

Update: The timing of this action has been extended through to June 2023. There are several workstreams underway, including: national ICT policy development, e-commerce policy and legislative review, Universal Access Plan, Government ICT network roll-out in Rarotonga and the Pa Enua, e-government digitisation projects. The Cook Islands Chamber of Commerce Inc delivers services through the Business Link Pacific programme that drives digital transformation.



Objective 3: Developing our people and culture

3.1 Labour market survey – Ongoing

Lead agency: Chamber of Commerce

Description: Comprehensive survey of the Cook Islands labour market to identify gaps and opportunities.

Update: The timing for this action has been updated to ongoing, as the survey will now be run annually. This action is included under the ERR labour force and population workstream.



3.2 Population study – Complete

Lead agency: OPM

Description: Study to increase the understanding of the drivers behind population movements.

Update: This action was completed in 2022/23. It is included under the ERR labour force and population workstream.



3.3 National Population Strategy – In progress

Lead agency: OPM

Description: Research and development of a national population strategy for the Cook Islands.

Update: Te Kaveinga Tupu'anga iti Tangata- the Cook Islands Population Policy 2022-2032 was endorsed in late 2022 and will be available at: <https://www.pmooffice.gov.ck/>. This action is included under the ERR labour force and population workstream.



3.4 Pa Enea scholarship scheme – On Hold

Lead agency: MFEM, MOE

Description: Increase the size of the scholarship from \$5,000 to \$10,000 for those students who return to the Pa Enea.

Update: The timing for this action is dependent on national budget priorities.



3.5 Extend & enhance scholarship scheme – On Hold

Lead agency: MFEM, MOE

Description: Expand the current scholarship system, including establishing a matched repayment scheme.

Update: The timing for this action is dependent on national budget priorities.



3.6 NZ IRD student loan repayment mechanism – In Progress

Lead agency: OPM, supported by MFEM, MOE

Description: Establish a payments system, to process repayments to the New Zealand Inland Revenue Department.

Update: The timing for this action has been extended through 2022/23.



3.7 Diaspora network – Not Started

Lead agency: MFAI

Description: Establish a formal diaspora network for communication, including promotion of activities, available jobs and procurement in the Cook Islands.

Update: This action has been extended through to 2023/24. It is included under the ERR labour force and population workstream.



3.8 Diaspora Investment Marketing Strategy – Deferred

Lead agency: BTIB/CI Tourism

Description: Develop a marketing strategy with the aim of attracting Cook Islanders abroad to invest in the Cook Islands.

Update: This action has been deferred pending the outcome of the foreign investment framework review (action 4.8). In the meantime, BTIB has started advertising investment opportunities through the New Zealand and Australian Cook Islands diaspora networks.



3.9 Parental leave – In Progress

Lead agency: INTAFF

Description: Review the current parental leave provisions, with a view to increasing it to 12 weeks or more.

Update: The policy work for this action is being implemented with technical assistance from the International Labour Organisation.



3.10 Childcare services regulation – In Progress

Lead agency: INTAFF, MOE

Description: Introduce regulation of childcare services to those operating for children under 3.

Update: This item was brought forward to start in 2022/23, with a situational report developed through technical assistance from the Asian Development Bank. Regulations are expected to be developed by October 2023.

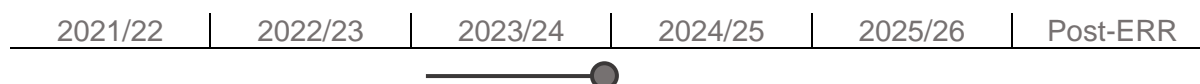


3.11 Support for early childcare education – On Hold

Lead agency: MOE, INTAFF

Description: Expand Government support for early childcare education to children between the ages of 0 and 3.

Update: The timing for this action is dependent on national budget priorities.

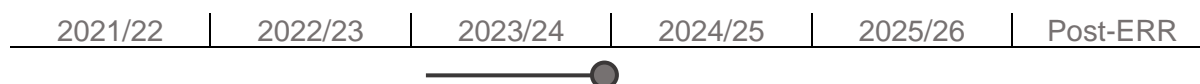


3.12 After-school care – On Hold

Lead agency: MOE, supported by INTAFF, MFEM

Description: Establish and resource after-school care options at all early childhood education providers and primary schools.

Update: The timing for this action is dependent on national budget priorities.

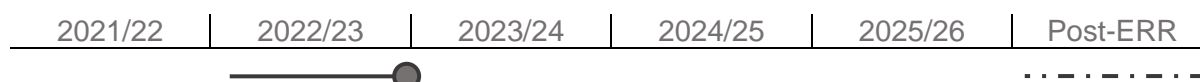


3.13 Domestic student loans scheme – Deferred

Lead agency: MFEM, MOE

Description: Establish a domestic student loan scheme for studies in-country.

Update: This action has been deferred for consideration following the finalisation of the period of the ERR, when the Cook Islands economy is expected to shift from recovery to growth.



3.14 Apprenticeship Scheme – In Progress

Lead agency: CITTI, MOE, MFEM

Description: Develop a pilot apprenticeship scheme in the Cook Islands.

Update: This action has been extended through 2023/24. It is being implemented in partnership with the New Zealand Eastern Institute of Technology (EIT).



3.15 Public sector lifelong learning policy – In Progress

Lead agency: OPSC

Description: Review existing Training & Development and Performance Management policies and as required identify and develop new policies around learning and development. Deliver training to Managers, HR and Policy Practitioners to promote Public-Sector lifelong learning policies.

Update: The description for this action has been updated to better reflect the scope of work. This action has been extended through to June 2025.



3.16 Curriculum review – Ongoing

Lead agency: MOE

Description: Strengthen and enhance curriculum as necessary to meet future job requirements.

Update: The timing of this action has been amended to reflect the ongoing nature of this work.



3.17 Schools/CITTI collaboration – Ongoing

Lead agency: MOE, CITTI

Description: Strengthen collaboration between schools and CITTI, through the Dual Pathways Programme.

Update: The timing of this action has been amended to reflect the ongoing nature of this work.



3.18 Develop Tertiary Strategy as part of the new education strategy – In Progress

Lead agency: MOE, CITTI, USP

Description: Develop a strategy to ensure the tertiary education system is responsive to demands of the labour market, structured efficiently and maximises student outcomes.

Update: The title of this action has been updated to clarify the tertiary strategy will form part of the new education strategy. The description for this action has been amended to remove specific mention of teacher training.



3.19 Cultural education support – Ongoing

Lead agency: MOE, MOCD

Description: Expand partnerships with local NGOs to work with schools to foster continuity of traditional knowledge.

Update: The first phase of the project is closing in 2023 and the second phase of data preservation, promotion and access will continue for the next three years. In 2022/23, MOCD received support from UNESCO and the Estate Fund to support the traditional knowledge inventory collection of Intangible Cultural Heritage for Rarotonga and Pa Enua Communities.



3.20 National NCD Strategy – Ongoing

Lead agency: TMO

Description: Revise and implement the national NCD Strategy.

Update: There are no changes to this action. The Cook Islands Strategic Action plan to prevent and control non-communicable diseases 2021-2025 is available at: <https://www.health.gov.ck/tmo-non-communicable-disease-plan/>. The STEPS survey was carried out in July 2022. Finalised results will be available in 2023 and will inform the need to review the Strategy.



3.21 Disability access policy – In progress

Lead agency: INTAFF

Description: Develop a policy and actions to improve disability access to employment opportunities.

Update: the timing for this action has been extended through to June 2024. This action is being implemented with support from the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (April 2022 – December 2023) to advance the rights of persons with disability including access to employment by building capacity of persons with disability as well as preparing employers to become inclusive in the workplace.

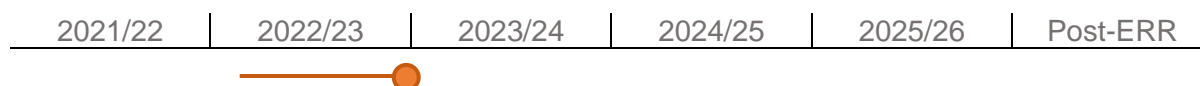


3.22 Aged Care framework – In progress

Lead agency: INTAFF

Description: Develop a framework, in partnership with the community, to deliver an aged-care support service.

Update: In August 2021 Government officials, leaders of Civil Society Organisations and community members attended co-design workshops on what Aged Care Services could look like in the future for the Cook Islands. This action is being implemented with support from the Asian Development Bank and the Republic of Korea e-Asia and Knowledge Partnership Fund.



Objective 4: Investing in our islands

4.1 Implement Medium-term Fiscal Strategy – Ongoing

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Continue implementation and refinement of the strategy.

Update: There are no changes to this action. It is included under the ERR managing public debt workstream

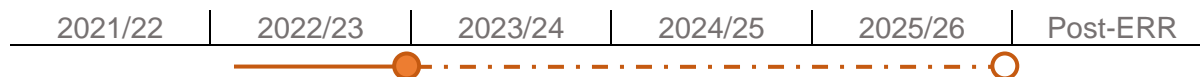


4.2 Establish Sovereign Wealth Fund – In Progress

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Scoping, design, consultation and legislative drafting of the Fund. The fund is intended to manage future revenues expected from seabed minerals harvesting, for use by future generations.

Update: The timing for this action has been extended through to June 2026.



4.3 New financial management policies under the MFEM Act – Ongoing

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Develop new financial management policies to further strengthen the management of public finances.

Update: The timing of this action has been amended to reflect the ongoing nature of this work. Development of a Trading Revenue Policy is expected to commence in 2022/23.



4.4 Airport Masterplan capital projects – Ongoing

Lead agency: Airport Authority, MFEM

Description: Review and prioritise identified airport capital projects.

Update: This action is ongoing. In 2022/23, projects focusing on compliance and critical maintenance have been prioritized. This includes the Runway Slab Project, which began implementation in December 2020, and the Runway End Safety Compliance Area (RESA).



4.5 Te Mato Vai Project – Complete

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Completion of the water network upgrade and handover to To Tatou Vai.

Update: This action is considered complete with the establishment of To Tatou Vai as a Statutory Agency.



4.6 Water tariff review – In Progress

Lead agency: TTV

Description: Review of water tariff structures and price levels.

Update: This action has been extended through to June 2024 to align with To Tatou Vai's Statement of Corporate Intent 2022 – 2026.



4.7 NZ Infrastructure fund – Ongoing

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Implement the Fund.

Update: There are no changes to this action. This item is included in the ERR under the infrastructure investment workstream.



4.8 Foreign investment framework review – In Progress

Lead agency: MFEM, BTIB

Description: Comprehensive review of the current foreign investment framework to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

Update: This item is included in the ERR under the foreign investment workstream. The timing for this action has been extended through to June 2025 now that more is known about the scope of the work. This includes development and implementation of review recommendations, including public consultation.



4.9 Revenue Strategy – Not Started

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Develop and implement a new Revenue Strategy.

Update: This action was delayed due to COVID-19. It is now expected to be completed by June 2024.



4.10 Cook Islands Business Registry – Complete

Lead agency: MOJ

Description: Scope, develop policy and legislation and implement a new business registry.

Update: The registry is available at: <https://registry.justice.gov.ck/corp/clienthome.aspx>.



4.11 Online ‘One-Stop Business Info Shop’ – Complete

Lead agency: BTIB

Description: Develop and publish guides that identify and describe requirements to comply with key business regulatory processes.

Update: *The One Stop Shop was completed in December 2021. It is available at: <https://btib.gov.ck/business-one-stop-shop/> and promoted through BTIB’s newsletter and gazette.*



4.12 Business start-up support – Complete

Lead agency: Chamber of Commerce

Description: Establish a mentoring and assistance mechanism for business start-ups.

Update: *More information is available at: <https://commerce.co.ck/business-support-helpdesk/>*



4.13 Banking Taskforce – In Progress

Lead agency: FSC, MFEM

Description: Explore the future direction of the domestic banking sector, including sustainable options to reduce the cost of credit.

Update: *This action is included in the ERR under the cost of borrowing workstream. The timing for this action has been extended through 2023/24.*

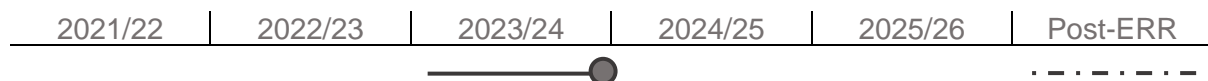


4.14 Bankruptcy laws – Deferred

Lead agency: MFEM, MOJ, FSC

Description: Assess options to introduce a bankruptcy law framework

Update: *This action has been deferred to post-ERR.*



4.15 Consumer protection – In Progress

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Assess options to improve consumer protection for holiday prepayments.

Update: This action is included as part of the E-Commerce project under the ERR barriers to business workstream.



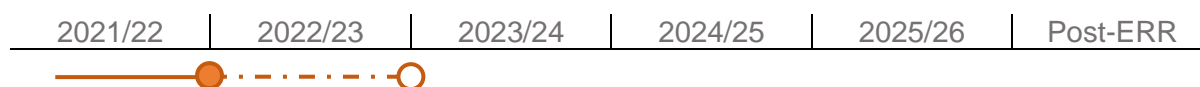
4.16 Cook Islands Tourism Business Partnership Programme – In Progress

Lead agency: CI Tourism

Description: A newly restructured tourism accreditation scheme aimed at improving the quality of Cook Islands tourism products and services

Update: This action has been extended through to January 2023. The Cook Islands Quality Assured accreditation program ensures that minimum standards are being met by industry members to provide visitors confidence when choosing where to stay and what to do on island. Industry members are further encouraged to be Mana Tiaki Eco Certified demonstrating their part as a guardian in the preservation and conservation of our natural environment and cultural values. More information can be found at:

<https://cookislands.travel/corporate/quality-assurance>.

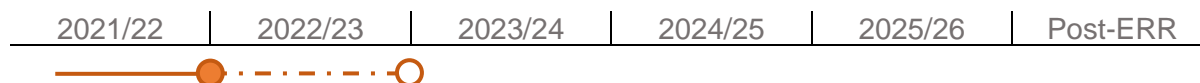


4.17 Review of the airline underwrite – In Progress

Lead agency: MFEM, CI Tourism

Description: Commission expert review of the net benefits of the underwrite to inform a decision on its future.

Update: This action was delayed due to COVID-19. It is now expected to be conducted internally and completed by June 2023.



4.18 Commercial agricultural support – Ongoing

Lead agency: MOA

Description: Support to local commercial agricultural suppliers to meet local tourism demand by implementing the Agriculture Sector Action Plan 2020-2025.

Update: There are no changes to this action.



4.19 Promotion and marketing of international financial services – Ongoing

Lead agency: FSDA (Cook Islands Finance)

Description: Implement 'Positioning' strategy goals to promote positive reputation through marketing initiatives.

Update: There are no changes to this action. This action is included in the ERR under the productivity growth workstream.



4.20 Industry trade strategy – Deferred

Lead agency: MFEM, BTIB, MOA, supported by the Chamber of Commerce

Description: Develop strategy to boost service and merchandise exports by local businesses.

Update: This action has been deferred for consideration following the finalisation of the ERR, when the Cook Islands economy is expected to shift from recovery to growth.



4.21 Review of local content in procurement policy – In Progress

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Develop strategy to boost service and merchandise exports by local businesses.

Update: There are no changes to this action.



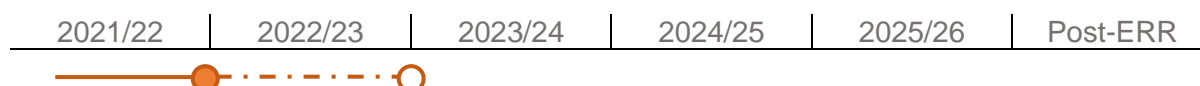
Objective 5: Greening our economy

5.1 Energy Sector review – In Progress

Lead agency: OPM, MFEM

Description: This will include a review of the renewable energy target to ensure that it remains an achievable, economically efficient outcome.

Update:



5.2 Pa Enea renewable pricing and governance – In Progress

Lead agency: MFEM, OPM, CIIC

Description: New governance and pricing arrangements that will ensure the sustainable provision of affordable renewable electricity across the Pa Enea.

Update: The timing for this action has been extended through to June 2024.

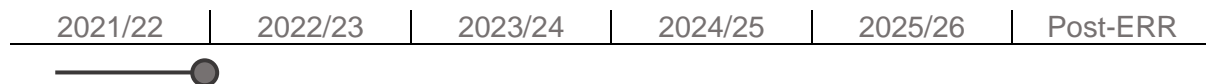


5.3 Aitutaki Stage 2 – On Hold

Lead agency: CIIC, TMU

Description: Completion of installation of solar battery systems for stage 2 of the Aitutaki Renewable Energy project to increase renewable energy contribution on Aitutaki to approximately 50%. At the completion of Stage 1, the renewable energy contribution was estimated at approximately 24%.

Update: The timing for this action is dependent on national budget priorities.

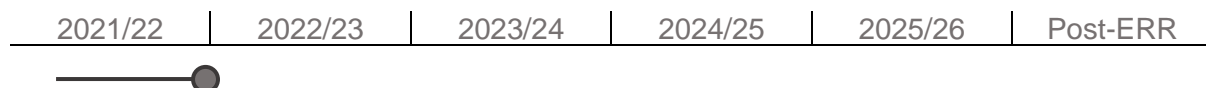


5.4 Low carbon transport incentives – On Hold

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Consider options to support the importation and use of low carbon transport.

Update: In 2018 the Cook Islands introduced a tax incentive for imported electric vehicles that are less than 10 years old. The description for this action has been updated to reflect the potential range of policy options that could be considered to further incentivise low carbon transport. This action is on hold pending confirmation of appropriate policy lead.



5.5 Cyclone shelter program – Ongoing

Lead agency: CIIC, with technical support from ICI

Description: Infrastructure Cook Islands will continue its cyclone shelter program to ensure that all inhabited islands have access to safe refuge

Update: The cyclone shelter program includes planned centres for Rakahanga and Nassau, as well as other Pa Enea centre improvements and the Rarotonga cyclone shelter programme rollout.



5.6 Pa Enea water security program – In Progress

Lead agency: ICI

Description: Continue water security investment to ensure that each island is better prepared to withstand future dry periods.

Update: This action is expected to be complete by December 2023.



5.7 Pa Enea water tank program – Deferred

Lead agency: ICI

Description: Consider the merits of introducing a water tank subsidy program for Pa Enea residents to improve household water security

Update: The timing for this action has been deferred to post-ERR, to allow for a baseline.



5.8 Economic Crisis Management Plan – Not Started

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Develop a comprehensive Economic Crisis Management Plan.

Update: This action was delayed due to MFEM's focus on the COVID-19 response. It is now expected to be completed by June 2023.

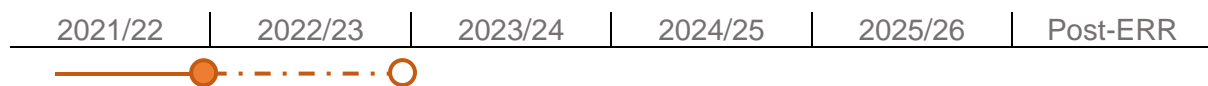


5.9 MTVKTV investment decision – In Progress

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Government to decide on whether to proceed to the construction phase

Update: This action has been extended through to June 2023.



5.10 Sanitation Masterplan – Complete

Lead agency: MFEM/PMU

Description: Finalise the draft Masterplan.

Update: The Sanitation Masterplan was finalised in March 2021.



5.11 Public sanitation – Ongoing

Lead agency: CIIC, ICI, CI Tourism

Description: Improve public sanitation services.

Update: The timing for this action has been updated to reflect the ongoing nature of this work.

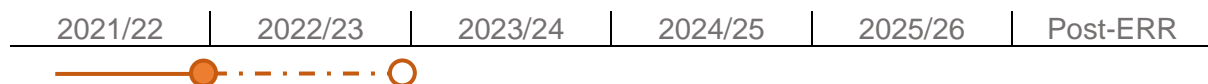


5.12 Solid and Hazardous Wastes Bill – In Progress

Lead agency: ICI

Description: Finalise and promulgate the Bill; Investigate the establishment of a local diversified recycling centre to develop products from recyclable material; Improve the rate of recycling through the investment in plant and equipment.

Update: The timing for this action has been extended through 2022/23.

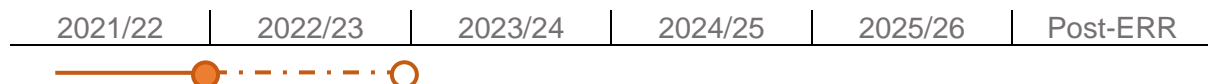


5.13 National Environment Policy (NEP) – In Progress

Lead agency: NES

Description: Consult on and finalise the NEP 2022-32.

Update: The policy is expected to be finalised by June 2023.

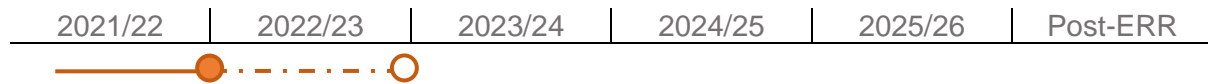


5.14 Wetlands survey – In Progress

Lead agency: NES

Description: Comprehensive survey of wetlands to better understand development impacts and to develop a more refined and measurable objective to track progress.

Update: The timing for this action has been extended through to June 2023.



5.15 Wetlands expansion measures – In Progress

Lead agency: NES

Description: Explore potential for new direct measures to encourage the management of wetland areas.

Update: NES has published a factsheet on wetlands, available at:

<https://environment.gov.ck/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/NES-Factsheet-12-Wetlands.pdf>

The timing of this action has been updated to 2022/23 to 2024/25. This action will include developing recommendations to guide the management of wetlands.



5.16 Biosecurity – Ongoing

Lead agency: MOA

Description: Maintain proactive and strategic biosecurity measures.

Update: There are no changes to this action.



Economic Recovery Roadmap actions

The below actions are included in the ERR and do not come under any of the EDS actions. More information on the ERR is available at: <https://www.mfem.gov.ck/economic-planning/covid-19-err>.

ERP Continuation Measures – Complete

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Reactive implementation of continued ERP measures to support the Cook Islands private sector as appropriate in the event of a further border closure.

Update: Wage Subsidy and Sole Trader Grants continued to 15 April 2022, and applications for the final payments closed on 31 May 2022. This action was completed in early 2022/23, once final payments were processed.



Quarantine-Free measures update – Complete

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Supporting the implementation of a comprehensive set of measures to establish and continue Quarantine-free travel with New Zealand.

Update: This action was implemented as part of the ADB Policy-Based Loan agreement, under the Managing Public Debt workstream. The Cook Islands reopened its borders to travelers from New Zealand on 13 January 2022.



Updated Medium-term Fiscal Framework – Complete

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Approval and implementation of an updated Medium-term Fiscal Framework (MTFF) for 2022-2026.

Update: This action was implemented as part of the ADB Policy-Based Loan agreement, under the Managing Public Debt workstream. The MTFF was introduced through the 2022/23 Medium-term Fiscal Strategy, which was published in the 2021/22 Half year Economic and Fiscal Update (HYEFU), available at: [https://www.mfem.gov.ck/images/MFEM_Documents/Budget_Books/2021-22/2021-22_HYEFU v.2.pdf](https://www.mfem.gov.ck/images/MFEM_Documents/Budget_Books/2021-22/2021-22_HYEFU_v.2.pdf)



Medium-term Debt Strategy – Complete

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Development and publication of the Cook Islands Medium-Term Debt Management Strategy 2022 – 2026 (MTDS).

Update: This action was implemented under the Managing Public Debt workstream. The MTDS is available at: https://www.mfem.gov.ck/images/ECON/Budget_docs/MTDS_-_CIG_final_final_June22.pdf.



E-Commerce Review – In Progress

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Policy and regulatory exploration of the Cook Islands e-commerce settings.

Update: This action is included under the barriers to business workstream. It is being progressed ahead of schedule, with support from PACER Plus.



Baseline business cost research – Not Started

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Establish metrics for monitoring and evaluation the cost of doing business in the Cook Islands.

Update: This action is included under the barriers to business workstream.



Business small claims practices – Not Started

Lead agency: MFEM, MOJ

Description: Review the processes for businesses making small claims.

Update: This action is included under the barriers to business workstream.



Transport: WOF, vehicle registration and licensing processes and fees – In progress

Lead agency: MOT

Description: Review of the Transport Licensing Act, registration and transport licensing processes.

Update: This action is included under the barriers to business workstream. In 2021/22, vehicle registration processes improved with the introduction of online payments.

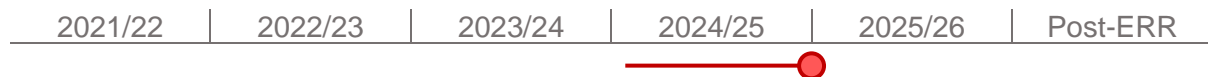


Building approvals processes – Not Started

Lead agency: MFEM, NES

Description: Review the building permitting process with a particular emphasis on ways to improve certainty, independence and fairness.

Update: This action is included under the barriers to business workstream.



Fees Free Payments – In Progress

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Continued tuition fee payments under the Fees Free extension.

Update: This action is included under the Productivity Growth workstream. Fees Free has been extended for continuing students through Semester 2, 2022.



Attraction and transit arrangements for migrant workers – In Progress

Lead agency: MFEM, MFAI, TMO, INTAFF

Description: Reduced barriers to entry to replace our lost migrant labour force and address workforce needs.

Update: This action is included under the labour force and population workstream. Several projects were completed in 2021/22, including:

- *transit visa waiver*
- *fee waiver for migrant health checks*
- *establishment of a combined job-listing website hosted by INTAFF.*
- *a tripartite committee to oversee and support the transfer of migrant workers in country, facilitating and monitoring this process where abuse and unlawful treatment occurs.*

Projects under this action supported MFAI approval of 506 work permits between March and August 2022. Ongoing participation in the Private Sector Taskforce regarding labour issues, and work to facilitate migrant job investigations is expected to continue through 2022/23.



Population measurement – departure cards – Complete

Lead agency: MFEM, MFAI, Customs

Description: Investigate reinstating departure cards.

Update: New departure cards were procured and implemented in 2021/22. This action is included under the labour force and population workstream. MFEM intends to evaluate the departure card system by June 2023.



Population measurement – statistics set – Not Started

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Study to identify possible improvements to border statistics.

Update: This action is included under the labour force and population workstream.



National Employment Policy – In Progress

Lead agency: INTAFF

Description: National Employment Policy to be published and implemented.

Update: This action is included under the labour force and population workstream. The title and description for this action have been amended from “Labour Strategy” to better reflect the scope of the work, as set out in the Cook Islands Decent Work Country Programme. The timing for this action has been extended through 2023/24, to allow for stakeholder consultation. This action is being implemented with technical assistance from the International Labour Organisation.



Migrant labour force investigation – In Progress

Lead agency: INTAFF

Description: Additional INTAFF staff member to assist with migrant worker investigations, complaints and transfer process.

Update: This action is included under the labour force and population workstream.



Promotion of working holiday visa pathways – In Progress

Lead agency: MFEM, Tourism, INTAFF

Description: A promotional campaign based on longer-term stays and working holidays for digital nomads.

Update: This action is included under the labour force and population workstream.



Policies supporting secondary jobs and the gig economy – Not Started

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: Research on ‘the Gig Economy’ and the e-commerce laws that are needed to enable this kind of working for Cook Islanders living in the Cook Islands.

Update: This action is complementary to the e-commerce review and the National Employment Policy. It is included under the labour force and population workstream.



Retirement investment attraction – Deferred

Lead agency: MFEM

Description: A collection of activities designed to make it easier for people to understand the advantages of returning to the Cook Islands for retirement.

Update: This action is included under the labour force and population workstream. It has been deferred for consideration following the finalisation of the period of the ERR, when the Cook Islands economy is expected to shift from recovery to growth.

