



**Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga**
Ministry of Education

Mentor an aspiring or beginning principal

**Guidance for mentor applicants
September 2025**

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Supporting the aspiring and beginning principal programmes

Experienced principals have always played a vital role in supporting and guiding others in their school communities. As part of the Aspiring and Beginning Principal Programmes, we're inviting current principals to apply to become mentors - guiding, supporting and inspiring the next generation of school leaders.

It is expected the beginning principal programme will support all new principals in their first two years of principalship and the one-year aspiring principal programme will accommodate up to 200 participants each year.

The mentor role

Mentoring allows you to reflect on your own leadership journey, share your experiences and help build a pipeline of prepared, confident, and culturally responsive leaders for our schools and kura.

As a mentor you'll provide guidance, challenge, and encouragement to aspiring and beginning principals programme participants across Aotearoa New Zealand. This is a unique opportunity to contribute to system-wide improvement while deepening your own professional practice – and a chance to make a lasting difference in the leadership journey of others.

You can apply to mentor:

- An aspiring principal | tumuaki (1-year engagement).
- A beginning principal | tumuaki (up to 2-year engagement).
- Or both.

About the aspiring and beginning principal programmes

The programmes will be designed to combine structured learning, collaboration, and personalised support to connect theory with practice. The programmes will be built around three complementary modes of learning, with a key feature of the programmes being one-to-one mentoring by an experienced principal.

Modes of learning:

Learning About	Self-directed opportunities to explore the role and responsibilities of principalship at participants' own pace, in response to emerging learning needs. Examples include online modules, podcasts, and curated resources.
Learning With	Facilitated, collaborative opportunities to work alongside other aspiring principals to build leadership capability, share experiences, and develop lasting professional networks.
Learning Alongside	One-to-one mentoring and coaching from experienced principals to support new leaders as they navigate challenges, reflect on practice, and grow in their leadership role.

Programme participant matching

Using information provided in your application and information provided by programme participants, mentor matches will be made for each aspiring and beginning principal. Matching depends on multiple factors. Examples include school setting, location, cultural needs (e.g., wāhine Māori leadership), to ensure appropriate support for the aspiring or beginning principal.

Please note, making a successful application does not guarantee you will be matched with a programme participant.

Programme success for the aspiring and beginning principals relies on having a significant and diverse pool of experienced principal mentors to draw from.

Programme expectations of mentors

As a mentor of an aspiring or beginning principal, you will build a relationship of trust with them; one that is respectful, supportive, and focused on their growth.

Mentors are expected to be generous with their time, knowledge, and networks, offering guidance that helps emerging leaders see the bigger picture and navigate their path with confidence. They will bring cultural responsiveness to their leadership, ensuring their approach is inclusive, respectful, and aligned with the principles of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*.

You'll be expected to meet regularly, whether monthly or at an agreed rhythm, to provide structured conversations that combine leadership insights, personal experiences, and practical strategies. Together, you'll explore their leadership identity, strengths, and readiness, working through challenges and decision-making moments along the way.

Mentoring sessions can take place online, by phone, or in person, whatever works best for you and the aspiring | beginning principal you are matched with. There's no expectation to travel for every session, noting where travel is required, costs are not reimbursed. Flexibility is key, and you will both agree on the most practical and accessible way to connect.

Your role also includes championing leadership practices that reflect and respect community diversity. You'll offer constructive feedback on their strategic in-school project, helping them refine their ideas and strengthen their impact.

Mentors are encouraged to reflect on their own approach, adapting to the needs of their mentee, and to connect with other mentors to share strategies and insights. Your feedback to programme facilitators will help improve and strengthen future cohorts.

Mentor recognition

Please note, mentor recognition is under negotiation in the current round of principal collective agreement bargaining. Updates will be shared once confirmed.

Making a mentor application – guide to applicants

The application process to become a mentor requires completion of an online application. The application includes a career summary and information about your leadership experience and leadership style. This information will be used to support your matching with aspiring and beginning principal programme participants.

You are also required to provide a referee to endorse your application. Your referee will need to complete the mentor endorsement form. You will also need to provide evidence that your school Board supports your application to become a mentor.

Before starting your application, we recommend:

- Reading the programme overview above so you know what's involved.
- Choosing a referee (another current or recent principal) who can attest to your suitability to become a mentor.
- Speak with your school Board and secure their formal endorsement. (You'll need to provide evidence of their support when you apply.)

You will also need to share your Ministry of Education (MoE) number with your chosen referee. They will need to include it as part of the referee endorsement process. Your MoE number will be used to link their endorsement to your application.

Eligibility check

There is an eligibility check to become a mentor. The eligibility check requires you to state that you:

- Lead a state or state-integrated school | kura as a principal | tumuaki.
- Hold a Full Practising Certificate (Category One).
- Have at least six years' recent principalship experience in New Zealand.
- Confirm your school is not under any statutory intervention.
- Be available to mentor for the next 1–2 years (no planned sabbatical, study award, or secondment).
- Be adequately endorsed by a referee (see referee endorsement guidance for details).
- Be prepared to complete provider-led onboarding and mentor training.
- Secure formal Board support and upload one of the following:
 - An excerpt of the Board motion confirming support (not full minutes).
 - A signed letter from your presiding member or their delegate.
 - An email from your presiding member.

The application form allows for some comment about eligibility if there are circumstances and situations you want us to be aware of.

A letter | email template for your presiding member to complete is available on the mentor webpage in the popular resources section.

Application acceptance

Applications will be reviewed by the Ministry to confirm eligibility and completeness, and that a referee has endorsed you.

Once principal programme participants are accepted, programme providers take the lead in matching mentor with participants, ensuring alignment between the programme participant's development needs and the mentor's strengths.

Mentor recruitment will be ongoing to maintain a strong, diverse pool of mentors to meet the needs of future programme participants.

Completing the online application

You will be asked some initial identification questions and asked to complete an eligibility check. As part of the eligibility check you will be asked to upload evidence of your Board support. This can be a scanned letter of support or Board minute signed by your school Board presiding member or copy of an email sent evidencing support.

You will then be asked three long form questions. The information provided in the long form questions will be used to make the best match possible with principal programme participants. It will not be used to assess your inclusion on the mentor register.

Principal and leadership career summary

Please provide a summary of your career as it relates to your leadership experience. This could include experience outside of education if appropriate.

(250 words maximum)

Consider including:

- Timeline of roles: duration of each role, and school context (e.g. primary, secondary, composite, rural/urban).
- Leadership scope: school size, governance partnerships, attached units (e.g. teen parent/RTLBB).
- Sector contributions: positions on sector boards, national working groups, research collaborations.
- Impact and focus areas: e.g. student achievement gains, cultural responsiveness, community engagement.

Leadership domains

You will then be asked to focus your responses as follows:

1. Areas of expertise in the principal role.
2. Mentoring and coaching experience and development, and formal qualifications.

Areas of expertise in the principal role

Identify two to four specific leadership domains where you bring deep expertise. For each, briefly describe the context, your role, and the outcomes you achieved. Describe your leadership strengths.

Choose areas where you've led change or delivered results. Please provide clear, focused examples of your strongest leadership domains and the difference you've made in those areas.

(250 words maximum)

Examples of what you could include:

- Strategic leadership functions you've driven.
- Operational domains you've managed: e.g. budgeting and financial oversight, property planning, technology integration.
- Community and cultural engagement you've led: e.g. whānau partnerships, iwi collaboration, equity initiatives.
- Staff development expertise: e.g. mentoring teachers, designing PLD, building leadership capacity.
- Evidence of impact: e.g. qualitative or quantitative outcomes, shifts in practice, stakeholder feedback.

Mentoring and coaching experience and development

Describe your formal and informal experiences of mentoring or coaching school leaders, aspiring principals or current principals. Outline the professional learning you've undertaken to build your mentoring/coaching capability.

Focus on both practice and preparation, including how you've upskilled to support others.

(250 words maximum)

Examples of what you could include:

- Who you've mentored or coached: e.g. in-school leaders, early-career teachers.
- The type of support provided: one-to-one coaching, group facilitation, critical friend conversations.
- The impact you've made: examples of growth, confidence, or practice change.
- Your professional learning: workshops, accredited coaching courses, peer-learning networks, self-directed study.
- Alignment between PLD and practice: how specific learning informed your mentoring approach and enhanced outcomes.

Mentoring preferences

Please indicate the geographic catchment area that you would be willing to cover for in-person mentoring. This could be your city or as large as your region. Let us know if there are other considerations you would like us to take into account when matches are made.

Attestation: privacy, additional disclosure and declaration

To complete your application, you will be required to complete an attestation covering privacy, disclosure of information that may impact the aspiring and beginning principal programmes, and a declaration confirming that:

- The information supplied is accurate
- That you have met the eligibility criteria, including the support of your Board to be a mentor, and
- That you understand how the data collected will be used.

You will be asked to provide your electronic signature to complete this process.

Mentor application process checklist

Before completing your mentor application, you can use the following checklist to ensure all actions are covered.

Steps	Who	Actions
1. Review eligibility	Applicant	☐ Confirm you meet all mentor eligibility criteria, including current principal status and experience. ☐ Ensure you have Board endorsement for your participation in the programme and have evidence that you can upload as part of your application.
2. Identify a referee	Applicant	☐ Identify an experienced current or recent principal who knows you and who can act as a referee. ☐ Talk to your nominated referee about your plans and whether they consider you are ready to join the programme and act as a mentor for an aspiring or beginning principal.
3. Prepare your application	Applicant	☐ Gather the required details (MoE number, registration, school information, career history and achievements). ☐ Draft written responses of no more than 250 words to the three long form questions on principal and mentoring experience.
4. Submit Mentor application online	Applicant	☐ Complete the mentor application form, check the eligibility criteria and ensure you agree to the attestation and declaration sections. ☐ Provide MoE number to referee. They will need this to complete the referee endorsement form and enable the Ministry to link it to your application.
5. Submit endorsement online	Referee	☐ Complete and submit the mentor referee endorsement form.
6. Follow up (if needed)	Applicant	☐ Follow up with the referee to ensure the endorsement is submitted.
7. Eligibility/referee check	Ministry	☐ Review application for eligibility and referee endorsement.

8. Application acceptance	Ministry	☐ Notify the mentor that their application is accepted. or ☐ Follow up for missing/incomplete information. ☐ Pass mentor information to the programme provider for inclusion on the mentor register once complete.
9. Provider onboarding	Programme Provider	☐ Add the eligible mentor to the mentor register and sends details to the mentor on onboarding and next steps for the programme.

Application form link, webpage and contact us

Go to mentor application form:

[Mentor Application form](#)

Go to the become a mentor webpage:

[Mentor an aspiring or beginning principal | Education Workforce](#)

Contact us if you have questions, we're here to help:

principal.pathway@education.govt.nz