



Know your Whenua

MODULE 1 – KNOW YOUR WHENUA

Purpose: Establish factual clarity

Core principle: You cannot make decisions on land you do not clearly understand.

This module replaces assumptions, hearsay, and whānau myths with verifiable facts.



What this module does (in plain language)

Most delays on Māori land don't come from councils or banks.

They come from not actually knowing:

- what land we're talking about
- who legally owns it
- what structure governs it
- who (if anyone) has authority to act

This module answers those questions **once and properly**.

STEP 1 – Identify the correct block name(s)

Why this matters:

One whenua can have multiple blocks, suffixes, or historic partitions. Using the wrong name leads to rejected applications and wasted time.

Action:

- Confirm the **full legal block name**, including:
 - Block number
 - Suffixes (e.g. A, B, 2B, 4C etc)

Where to check:

- Māori Land Court online search
- Previous court orders
- Trust deeds or AGM papers

Output you need:

- A written list of **all related blocks** (not just the one people talk about)

STEP 2 – Confirm the land status

Why this matters:

Land status determines what legal pathways are available.

Common land statuses:

- Māori Freehold Land
- General Land (owned by Māori)
- General Land
- Crown or Reserve Land (less common but critical to identify)

Action:

- Check the current land status against court records
- Do not rely on memory or whānau kōrero

Output you need:

- One confirmed land status per block

STEP 3 – Identify the ownership structure

Why this matters:

Ownership structure controls **how decisions are made**.

Possible structures include:

- No trust (individual or multiple owners)
- Whānau Trust
- Ahu Whenua Trust
- Māori Incorporation
- Multiple layered structures

Action:

- Identify:
 - Whether a trust or incorporation exists
 - The **exact legal name** of that entity

Output you need:

- A clear statement:
- “This land is held under [structure name], established on [date].”

STEP 4 – Confirm existing trusts or incorporations

Why this matters:

Many whānau believe a trust exists – but it may be inactive, expired, or never properly constituted.

Action:

- Locate:
 - Trust deed or incorporation constitution
 - Court order establishing the entity
- Check:
 - Is it still active?
 - Has it been replaced or varied?

Red flag to note:

- “We’ve always had a trust” is not evidence.

Output you need:

- Confirmation of:
 - Active / inactive
 - Date established
 - Governing document exists (yes/no)

STEP 5 – Identify who currently holds decision power

Why this matters:

Development cannot proceed without lawful authority.

Decision power may sit with:

- Trustees
- Committee of management
- Incorporation directors
- The owners themselves (if no structure exists)

Action:

- Identify:
 - Names of current trustees or officers
 - How they were appointed
 - Whether their authority is still valid

Important distinction:

Being vocal ≠ having authority

Being respected ≠ having authority

Authority comes from **court orders and governance documents**, not personality or seniority.

Output you need:

- A simple authority statement:
- “Decision-making authority currently sits with: _____”



MODULE 1 – FINAL OUTCOME CHECK

By the end of this module, you should have:

- ☐ Confirmed block name(s)
- ☐ Confirmed land status
- ☐ Confirmed ownership structure
- ☐ Confirmed whether a trust/incorporation exists
- ☐ Confirmed who currently has legal authority

If **any box is unclear**, stop here.

Do not move to development, funding, or housing discussions yet.



Why this module matters for the rest of the pack

Every next step depends on this module:

- Succession
- Trust setup
- Licences to Occupy
- Occupation Orders
- Papakāinga consents
- Funding conversations

Getting this wrong costs **years**.

Getting this right unlocks everything else.