

TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS



Changes in recruitment practices are creating both opportunities and challenges for the seasonal workforce. The regions seafood employers are reporting high satisfaction at having a reliable seasonal workforce thanks to the Seafood Sector Agreement enabling them to bring in *more* migrant workers. However, a reported side effect of these policy changes are that many of the seasonal jobs usually filled by local workers weren't apparent this winter. Employment support agencies reported that many positions related to the hoki season that they would usually fill were not available, and subsequently there has been a rise in job seeker numbers rather than the usual drop. Another side effect was that employers had significant challenges finding accommodation for those migrant workers, given the housing shortage in the region.

Possible shifts away from innovative employment models are generating concern. The extremely tight labour market, exacerbated during COVID border restrictions, saw many regional employers change their practices to attract and/or retain their workforce. Examples include job sharing; on the job training/upskilling; changing employment hours to match school hours; flexible working etc. However, there is growing commentary around a perceived reduction in these 'new' behaviours as access to labour eases, and some expressed concern that potential productivity gains achieved through those innovative employment practices may be lost as they are problematic for employers from an administration perspective. For example, it is easier for two employers to each hire the worker part-time, than to job share.

Recent business survey has provided a deeper understanding of the regional business environment. The annual Insights Business Survey is a partnership between the Nelson Regional Development Agency, Nelson Tasman Chamber of Commerce, and Nelson Building Society (NBS). It collected information from over 400 local businesses, big and small, on current and emerging issues. One of the key findings is that businesses feel more confident about our regional economy than they do about the national economy, with 21% of respondents expecting the regional economy to improve in the next 12 months compared to only 15% for the nation. Nearly half of businesses said they were actively working on research and development or innovation projects, which we know are the key to improving productivity. Rising input costs was the biggest issue for local businesses in the last 12 months and continues to be their most pressing concern going forward.

Demographic changes are impacting our current and future workforce. Nelson Tasman currently has the fifth highest population growth rate in the country (6.1%) between 2018-2022, exceeding the national growth rate (4.6%) over the same time period. However, a breakdown of the age groups shows that the region has an aging population with 69,600 people between the ages of 15-64 years, and only 18,500 people under the age of 15 years, meaning we have both an aging population and a declining workforce to support their increasing needs (such as healthcare).

PROGRESS WITH IMPLEMENTING REGIONAL ACTIONS FOR 2023/24

Visitor Sector



This sector was raised in our 2023 Regional Workforce Plan, as it is a significant contributor to our regional economy and is now rapidly rebuilding post COVID. Following the release of the RWP we invited a range of key people from across the region to an initial meeting to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the Visitor Sector, and to hear from Tourism Teachers Aotearoa about the new NCEA Tourism Achievement Standards levels 3 and 3 being offered in our regions secondary schools.

We have now established two working groups, one focusing on plans to deliver specific recruitment actions, and the other on retention of the visitor sector workforce. Each group is made up of three clusters of people - local accommodation, hospitality and tourism operators; industry trainers/educators; and industry organisations (unions, chamber of commerce, Destination Management team). These working groups are now refining plans for two events to be held at the end of the summer season.

We have begun discussions with an existing cluster of people representing the regional Events Sector. We are also working with Business Events Industry Aotearoa (BEIA) and Ringa Hora WDC to re-establish industry training and qualifications and develop a skills pipeline to meet the workforce demand for planned events.

Aquaculture Sector



We are continuing our partnership with Aquaculture NZ in implementing the National Aquaculture Workforce Plan announced in October 2022. With the establishment of a part time workforce co-ordinator this work is now progressing at pace, with progress presented at the national aquaculture conference on 11/12 October 2023. Industry have participated in a national census of the current workforce across salmon, mussel and oyster farming. This census data on key current employment metrics was provided to the Workforce Steering Group as part of the Pathways and Promotion workstream to understand and meet current workforce needs. The aquaculture data has also been provided to MPI and NZIER to feed into their work on future workforce scenario development for NZ's primary industries.

We have established a regular National RSLG Aquaculture Forum which has now met four times, to share information and collaborate on advice to TEC for 2025 vocational training delivery for the sector.

Construction Sector



The two years funding announced at the launch of our 2023 RWP to support the region's critical skills pipeline has progressed, with a contract signed between MSD and NRDA. The position of Critical Skills Pipeline Project Manager will be hosted by the NRDA and a contract for services is expected to be in place by December 2023.

TOP LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

The inaugural Strong Community Symposium brought together not for profit and social enterprises to maximise their contribution to the regional economy. This sector creates jobs and builds skills in both paid employment and volunteer roles. It also addresses social needs, stimulates economic activity, fosters community development, and drives social innovation. The Symposium, held 6 October, was organised by the Chamber of Commerce and partners. It was attended by more than 175 people, from the CEO and Board members of large employers in the health and education sectors (including the [Nelson Hospice](#) and [Whenua Iti Outdoors](#)) to small one or two person start-ups and supporters. The speakers showed that entrepreneurship and business acumen is alive and kicking in the social sector, and based on feedback the Chamber of Commerce expect that this will become an annual fixture in Nelson Tasman.

Upcoming Kapa haka / Te Matatini events are providing opportunities to develop the Visitor Sector in Nelson Tasman. Te Mana Kura Tahi national primary schools' competition will be held at the end of October in Nelson, with around 5,000 visitors expected. In June 2024, the region will go on to host the Nga Kapa Haka Kura Tuarua Secondary schools' competition, with the goal of hosting Te Matatini – Kapa Haka National Championships in February 2027. The event in October is the first time that Te Taihu will host, with much work being done to co-ordinate and show manaakitanga as a community. As part of our focus on the Visitor Sector the RSLG has been looking at the skills and opportunities for workforce development in events management. Our goal is to ensure suitable qualifications and training are able to be accessed in the region, to develop our regional workforce to meet the forecast demand for suitably qualified staff for these and other upcoming events.

TOP LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

Access to foundation skills development is inequitable across the region, especially in areas north of Nelson such as Motueka and Golden Bay. While these foundation programmes do exist, they are mainly delivered in Nelson and receive very few enrolments from rangatahi living more than a 30km radius outside Nelson. Communities such as Motueka and Takaka have to travel extended distances to access current provision (84km round trip from Motueka and just under 200km round trip from Takaka). There is a clear need for these programmes - in 2022, 176 students of the approx. 1,500 school leavers in Nelson Tasman left without NCEA level 1. This was an increase of 13% from 2020, mostly early school leavers and many with an Early Leaving Exemption (so under 16 years old). This trend has highlighted the need to improve regional access to programmes that support disengaged young learners to develop numeracy and literacy skills, identify a support system, build up their skills and develop a plan for next steps. Locally delivered training programmes would remove a barrier for young people to explore local skills and employment pathways.

There are multiple work streams supporting children and youth, however there is a lack of coordination across providers. The Regional Public Service recently highlighted this challenge in an environmental scan of programmes in the child and youth space throughout Nelson Tasman, Marlborough, and West Coast. The scan identified multiple work streams and interventions being delivered by a wide range of agencies and organisations; and across various themes, including health, housing, education, and employment. Many of these interventions are/were designed and delivered in isolation, often with no clear understanding of the broader picture or the desired longer-term outcomes. The findings of the report reinforce the importance of the role of the RSLG to look over the wider employment landscape, understand the future workforce requirements over a longer period, increase regional awareness of career opportunities, and support collective action in enabling our rangatahi to engage in meaningful learning.