



# Case Studies

## Tourism business advisory support and grants to implement advice

MARCH 2022



MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,  
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT  
HĪKINA WHAKATUTUKI

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa  
New Zealand Government



**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,  
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT**  
HĪKINA WHAKATUTUKI

## **Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) Hīkina Whakatutuki – Lifting to make successful**

MBIE develops and delivers policy, services, advice and regulation to support economic growth and the prosperity and wellbeing of New Zealanders.

### **MORE INFORMATION**

Information, examples and answers to your questions about the topics covered here can be found on our website: [www.mbie.govt.nz](http://www.mbie.govt.nz) or by calling us free on: **0800 20 90 20**.

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# Introduction

The tourism sector, here and globally, knows there is a big rebuild ahead.

As I write this, we are preparing to welcome back our Australian visitors, quickly followed by arrivals from our key markets in the Northern Hemisphere, in particular the USA and UK.

But our Reconnecting Strategy and tourism priorities are about even more than reuniting family and friends, they are a crucial part of our economic recovery. New Zealand is open for business and our tourism destinations are amongst the world's best.

Tourism New Zealand advice is that the initial return of visitors will be gradual. None of us underestimate the hard work ahead as we rebuild the sector. The shock of the global pandemic has been felt keenly by those South Island communities that were over-exposed to international tourism.

As a part of the \$200 million *Tourism Communities: Support, Recovery and Re-set Plan*, we gave targeted support to tourism businesses in Queenstown Lakes, Southland, Kaikōura, Mackenzie and Westland Districts. Eligible businesses can:

- › receive up to \$5,000 worth of independent, professional advice to help them adapt their business to the new circumstances, and
- › receive a further \$5,000 to implement this advice.

A snapshot of how this advice has made a difference to Kiwi businesses is included in these case studies. Applications are still open, so if you operate an eligible tourism business in one of the five communities, contact one of the following organisations to register your interest:

- › ChristchurchNZ (for Kaikōura and Mackenzie Districts)
- › Great South (for Southland District)



Minister of Tourism, Hon Stuart Nash

- › Queenstown Lakes District Council (for Queenstown Lakes District)
- › Development West Coast (for Westland District).

As international visitors begin to return, our global reputation for hospitality and friendly locals has been enhanced by the way we handled the pandemic. It has reinforced our international image as a nation that cares about people.

These case studies are offered in that context. The real-life examples of personal and business challenges are designed to show that we can reach out to each other when times are tough, and that help is on hand. Thank you to those tourism operators who have shared their stories, and I wish you a prosperous and successful year ahead.

# ChristchurchNZ

Lead Entity for Mackenzie and Kaikōura Districts



# Heliworks Mt Cook & Southern Lakes Helicopters

## MACKENZIE DISTRICT

“We have refreshed our brand and marketing strategy . . . thanks to the additional funding, we can put the advice to use and supercharge our marketing efforts to attract domestic customers.”

Marleen is the Marketing Manager for Heliworks Mt Cook and Southern Lakes Helicopters, and feels privileged to make clients’ dreams come true with flights across some of New Zealand’s most spectacular landscapes.

Heliworks Mount Cook is operated by Southern Lakes Helicopters – an established family-owned helicopter company based at Aoraki/Mt Cook airport that offers scenic flights throughout the Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park.

The business is heavily reliant on tourism, so border closures and nation-wide restrictions due to COVID-19 have meant many aspects of the business have had to be reviewed. This includes the business’ marketing strategy.

*// As we all know, these are difficult times to operate any tourism related business – it has been no different for us.”*

Marleen reached out to ChristchurchNZ for advice. As a result, Heliworks Mount Cook teamed up with Maverick Digital to refresh the business’ brand and marketing strategy and focus on visitors from across New Zealand.



*// This has allowed us to drive greater awareness, engagement and bookings from New Zealanders, and we have been able to formulate a plan for the return of international visitors.”*

The implementation grant allowed Heliworks Mount Cook to put their new marketing plan into action.

*// This leaves us excited and ready to take on the future. We can’t wait to showcase New Zealand’s beauty to guests from all around the world!”*

# Pinewood Motels

## FAIRLIE, MACKENZIE DISTRICT

“Whenever I’ve been interested in applying for the funding, I thought it was going to be too difficult and complicated, but it has been so straight forward and stress free.”

Maryjane owns Pinewood Motels together with her partner, John. Pinewood Motels is a small family-run complex of 10 motels in Fairlie, Mackenzie District.

Like many accommodation providers, Pinewood Motels continues to experience a difficult time during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*// With the help of ChristchurchNZ and MBIE, we have had the opportunity to access the business advisory support, which we are using to develop a targeted marketing strategy to attract domestic visitors and expand our online presence.”*

The grant to implement advice is being used to establish and strengthen a social media presence for Pinewood Motels, and will support the implementation of a content calendar for this.

Maryjane has been impressed by the standard of support and professionalism from ChristchurchNZ and the Growth Advisor allocated to her.



*// Thank you ChristchurchNZ and MBIE for your continued support and encouragement . . . We have seen results already from the work of our Growth Advisor.”*

Traffic on Pinewood Motels’ web page has already increased through social media and resulted in a 20% growth of booking enquiries.

# Development West Coast

Lead Entity for Westland District



# Ribbonwood Retreat B&B

## FRANZ JOSEF, WESTLAND DISTRICT

“Receiving this support has helped give us the confidence to continue developing and growing our business, despite losing our guests and not knowing how we were going to keep up our momentum.”

Julie and Jonathan own and operate Ribbonwood Retreat, a bed and breakfast accommodation near Franz Josef, Westland District. Prior to COVID-19, most of the retreat’s guests were international visitors.

*// The Covid lockdown offered us a time to reflect as well as an opportunity to review our business practices.”*

Julie and Jonathan sought advice through Development West Coast to develop new strategies and skills moving forward. They undertook a Qualmark assessment, web development, business mentoring and marketing initiatives.

*// We have been able to use this time to grow and develop our understanding of our business. We have greatly valued MBIE and Development West Coast who have supported us so we can continue business when the borders open.”*



# Queenstown Lakes District Council

Lead Entity for Queenstown Lakes District with support from Otago Regional Business Partners and Business South inc



# Escape Quest

## QUEENSTOWN, QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT

“Escape Quest is a bigger, stronger, and more diversified business today than it was pre-COVID, and the Otago Regional Business Partner support has been a critical success factor in this transformation and growth.”

Gareth and Anne-Marie are the owners and founders of Escape Quest Queenstown. Escape Quest host escape room games that take players back to Queenstown’s 1860s gold rush. Each game has its own unique storyline and puzzles based on this period.

Prior to COVID-19, the majority of Escape Quest’s revenue was generated by international visitors.

*// When borders shut and the country went into lockdown in 2020, we didn’t know what we would reopen to or how Escape Quest could survive.”*

In 2020, Gareth and Anne-Marie received advice and coaching for Escape Quest through the Otago Regional Business Partner. Their Growth Advisor helped them switch their mindset from worry and fear to action.

*// We developed scenarios and plans for how the business could navigate the new environment. Successfully implementing the survival plan led to a focus on growing and diversifying Escape Quest.”*

In 2021, they received support through the Tourism Communities Plan to develop and promote an Augmented Reality play at home game, Empire Escape. The concept is a world first.



*// The grants enabled us to innovate and build/test our capability in Augmented Reality games which is now a strategic focus for us.”*

*// Escape Quest is a bigger, stronger, and more diversified business today than it was pre-COVID. The business has gone through a significant transformation with further strategic growth opportunities ahead. Otago Regional Business Partner support has been a critical success factor in Escape Quest’s transformation and growth.”*

# High Country Horses

## GLENORCHY, QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT

“So much has changed since COVID-19. Working out where and how to reach out for help was a real challenge . . . until I found the Otago Regional Business Partner. Amazing contact with huge knowledge, resources and contacts to go forward with.”

Deana owns and operates High Country Horses, which is one of the original Horse Trekking businesses in the Wakatipu Basin, and showcases Deana’s farm.

Deana began working with the Otago Regional Business Partner Network in February 2021, with the aim to help her tell the environmental story of High Country Horses. This includes highlighting the business’ connection to the incredible location it operates within, as well as focusing on the future, and looking for smart ways to leverage the special cultural and regenerative possibilities High Country Horses’ horse treks offer.

// *We have realised the huge roll we play in educating and influencing our clients to appreciate what their journey has with us. Clients are learning about nature and asking questions about our environment. They also gain knowledge of our history and the Māori language through our experiences.”*

Deana’s Growth Advisor helped her to apply for the business advisory support and grants to implement advice to bring High Country Horses’ environmental story to life.

// *I have gained so much from this experience and being able to access some financial assistance to do this will never be forgotten! The vision I had for my company can go forward and the threat of losing everything was taken right away. The Tourism Communities funding paid for time with some amazing marketing gurus, which has helped us to focus on the values we have as a company and the environment.”*



High Country Horses now has a better understanding of how to tell the business’ environmental stories and enhance their brand by incorporating these stories into marketing.

# Nomad Safaris

## QUEENSTOWN, QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT

“The Tourism Communities Plan enabled us to access financial support for a wellbeing programme to boost morale and mental wellbeing for the whole team.”

David & Amanda own and operate Nomad Safaris, which offers personalised, small group 4WD tours into the New Zealand backcountry.

Nomad Safaris was hit hard by the border closure and domestic travel restrictions. The business lost key staff members and, with them, significant intellectual property and experience. As a result, they needed to rebuild a motivated team with their smaller, loyal group of employees.

The Otago Regional Business Partner helped David and Amanda to apply for support through the Tourism Communities Plan, which was partially used to support a wellbeing programme to boost morale and mental wellbeing among the team. The team did a workshop with Connect and Care, where participants were asked to consider the different stresses and difficulties people might be experiencing since the pandemic began, such as financial hardships, feeling lonely and being separated from loved ones.

*// The workshop provided a safe space for individuals to share their own experiences and also reflect on what others were going through. It explored the different forms of support that are available and reminded everyone that it's normal to feel down at this time. It definitely brought the team together.”*

The Otago Regional Business Partner was also able to support the development of a virtual reality campaign showcasing the Nomad Safaris experiences. This has created a product that overseas visitors can experience without travelling, helping to overcome the hurdle of border restrictions.



The versatility of the virtual reality tour means it can also be used for marketing and as a training tool for staff and agents.

*// Finding reasons to be motivated and to motivate the staff is increasingly difficult. These projects have been a fantastic boost at just the right time of year to go in to 2022 with belief that there is a future.”*

# The Rees Hotel

## QUEENSTOWN, QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT.

“The support enabled our Executive Leadership Team to receive excellent training on team behaviours, mind-set and accountability, as well as workbooks and learning skills that are essential for high performing teams. This has kept our team very motivated and ready to take on future challenges in our business.”

Roman is a Director of Operations at The Rees Hotel. The Rees Hotel is a luxury, five-star hotel located on the shores of Lake Wakatipu in Queenstown Lakes District.

COVID-19 and consequent restrictions have negatively affected The Rees Hotel, including key human capital due to the lack of business and/or visitors to the town and region, let alone New Zealand.

The Rees Hotel management staff recognised that it was very important to maintain motivation within the Executive Leadership team with ongoing professional development and leadership training. As well as this, the hotel has been able to refresh and enhance its social and media platforms. This was possible through funding via the Tourism Communities Plan.

*// We are very grateful to the Otago Regional Business Partner for their expertise in the marketplace and readily understanding our business requirements. Our Growth Advisor facilitated the process with empathy and an infinite understanding of the challenges, not only to our business and what we are going through, but to the industry and the community.”*



# Wild In White

## WANAKA, QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT

“The Tourism Communities funding has helped me develop a much stronger understanding of my business, giving me the confidence, tools, and skills to excel in 2022. Thanks to the funding, I’m going into the year with a much more organised, intentional, and effective strategy, and I can’t wait to reap the rewards.”

Scott owns and operates Wild In White, where he is a Videographer for destination weddings. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Scott targeted a completely tourist-based market, predominantly overseas with some domestic (mostly Auckland).

Scott applied for the Tourism Communities funding and the Otago Regional Business Partner helped him to identify four key areas in which he wanted additional support for his business:

1. Financial overviews and cashflow projections
2. Legal clauses to cover postponements and cancellations
3. Website and Search Engine Optimisation audit
4. Brand and marketing

Scott split the business advisory support over these four different services, and worked with four different service providers to meet his priority needs. Scott used the grant to implement advice to upgrade his website, and for digital and social media marketing. This work gave him a clear way forward to improve Wild In White’s digital marketing and online presence, to target the domestic wedding market.



“ My summer is considerably busier and more profitable compared to 2021, and I largely put this down to the advice and support I’ve received via the Tourism Communities Plan. The marketing support has allowed me to develop a more visible and desirable brand, helping me connect with more kiwi couples getting married in the Southern-Lakes.

“ I have also developed a clear cash flow forecast and a deeper understanding of my financial drivers, which has enabled me to make smarter budgeting decisions and adapt to the ongoing business challenges with more certainty and less anxiety. It’s such a great opportunity for tourism businesses, particularly when considering that many of us now have some extra time to step back and reassess our business goals.”



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