

Taranaki Regional Skills Leadership Group

The Taranaki Regional Skills Leadership Group (RSLG) has been established to identify and support better ways of meeting future skills and workforce needs in the region. It is one of the 15 RSLGs in Aotearoa. The Group is part of a joined up approach to labour market planning which will see our workforce, education and immigration systems working together to better meet the differing skills needs across the country. The group will provide independent advice that the region, employers and government agencies can act on.

As the Taranaki RSLG works towards producing their first Regional Workforce Plan (RWP) by June 2022, their initial sectors of focus will be Energy and Food, Fibre & Whenua, with crosscutting focuses on technology, rangatahi, essential skills and wellbeing. The Health Workforce has also been identified as a high priority sector, and the RSLG will begin to explore this, reporting in June 2023, and also cover the Construction, Infrastructure & Engineering sectors. The work of the Taranaki RSLG and their RWP will build upon existing regional strategies, including Te Aranga o Taranaki, Taranaki 2050, and Tapuae Roa.



Labour Supply (Energy & Skills Data Science)

- Youth NEET (aged 15–24 not in education, employment or training) rate rising 3.7 percentage points to 15.6% (*HLFS).
- Aging workforce, with the largest cohort aged 50–65 years.
- Regional unemployment of 4.1% (HLFS).
- Seasonality remains a barrier for entry to the Food, Fibre & Whenua Sector for many, despite some employers offering more continuity of work.
- Total migrant workforce under 1200 people in the region.
- 24% of migrant workforce eligible for New 2021 Residents Pathway based on current visa held.

Energy Sector

- The sector is forecast to experience significant changes with the decarbonisation of the economy.
- Decommissioning levels of existing energy infrastructure is expected to increase over the next 15 years.
- In Taranaki alternative energy is coming online, but not at a rate that allows for a direct transition of roles from traditional 'energy' generation.
- The required skillsets for 'future' / alternate energy roles are not yet widely known.
- There is significant mismatch within the region for the supply of highly skilled personnel, with some companies needing to supply transportation options across districts.
- Currently WITT offers a Certificate in Energy Process Operations (Level 3).

Food, Fibre & Whenua

- Regulatory changes, such as the freshwater reforms and uncertainty of long term profitability, are translating to uncertainty around future skill needs in the sector, particularly within the primary industries.
- Consumer and producer demand for greater connection to the whenua is increasing the importance and reliance on technology.
- Primary processors are struggling with recruitment, despite making changes to hours, entry level roles, and minimum staffing levels.
- Historic connotations around primary processing remain despite employers doing their best to shift the narrative.
- Wage rates in primary processing have not kept pace with regulated wage increases (minimum wage).

What we've heard

The **Energy Sector** is reporting that the demand for labour will decrease due to regulatory changes. Presently many companies are struggling to recruit process operators, with this being consistent feedback across the Region. It is, however, expected that there will be an increase in jobs for those who will collectively design, build, operate and maintain our future "low emissions" sector. The new energy sector is also expected to require a proportionally new workforce, as those employed within the oil and gas industry at present are not expected to transfer to this new industry (for the most part). This is due to the availability of other roles and the age of the current workforce.

Within the **Food, Fibre & Whenua Sector**, land management, optimisation and maximising outputs from across the entire value chain are front of mind from farm gate to plate. Industry is anticipating that increased technical skills will be needed in response to the fast pace of change as automation is introduced / increased. In some industries within the sector, there will be increased demand for training and up-skilling to be able to utilise technological innovation. The Primary Sector have concerns around the financial literacy of those wanting to upskill in the industry and how gaps in their knowledge will ultimately halt their career advancement. Unless training can be delivered in a meaningful way that allows farmers to engage in practical study options, fears are that these concerns will remain.

Opportunities

The RSLG is working with **Energy Resources Aotearoa** and **Te Pūkenga** to understand the immediate and long-term skills needs within the Taranaki Energy Sector.

Exploring the sustainability of the **Jobs for Nature** funded projects in Taranaki will link into the aspirations of the RSLG within the Food, Fibre & Whenua sector.

The RSLG is seeking to engage with established groups such as **Taranaki Catchment Communities** to understand barriers to skill attainment within the primary industries.

Where we're heading

Key stakeholders and industry groups have been identified within the priority sectors. The RSLG Regional Lead will engage with them to gather information on the future and desired states of each sector.

Barriers and enablers for skill attainment and development will be explored, with initiative owners and contributors identified within the region.

Ensuring that those most disadvantaged within the labour market are prioritised remains a focus for the Taranaki RSLG as the regional workforce plan gets drafted and finalised.

Information flows and feedback loops will be established with regional and national-level decision makers; Tertiary Education Commission, Workforce Development Councils and Immigration NZ settings.