



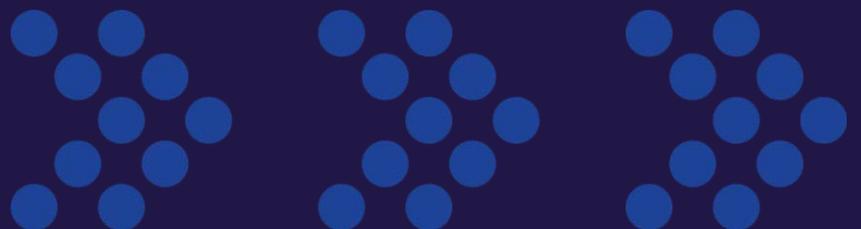
Manawatū-Whanganui  
**REGIONAL  
SKILLS  
LEADERSHIP  
GROUP.**

# Local Insights Report

Manawatū-Whanganui interim Regional Skills Leadership Group  
**Young people and transitions**  
October 2020



Photo credit: ManawatuNZ.co.nz



## Introduction

The iRSLG chose the focus of our second Local Insights Report be on young people and ‘transitions’ – that is, the transition from school to work, from school to tertiary study, or from tertiary study to work.

Good transitions have a positive impact on young people.

Insights for this report are drawn from discussions with 14 members of the iRSLG. A questionnaire supported the interview process and covered a range of labour market and skills system challenges and opportunities for young people aged 15-24 years in Manawatū-Whanganui. The iRSLG then reviewed the key findings.

We welcome comments on this report. Please email feedback to [ManawatuWhanganuiRSLG@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:ManawatuWhanganuiRSLG@mbie.govt.nz).

For more information about the interim Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Skills Leadership Group, visit [www.mbie.govt.nz/Manawatu-Whanganui-RSLG](http://www.mbie.govt.nz/Manawatu-Whanganui-RSLG).

### Purpose of the RSLGs

The Regional Skills Leadership Groups were formed in June 2020 to identify and support better ways of meeting future skills and workforce needs in our regions. They are 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.

Functioning independently, the groups are regionally based and regionally led, and supported by a team of data analysts, advisors and workforce specialists at the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment.

## Ways of working

### **Ensure ongoing regional coordination of Central Government-funded skills initiatives aimed at young people.**

Local stakeholders shared that there is a confusing array of central and regional initiatives, but also opportunities to improve coordination. Among the most commonly cited were the Ministry of Social Development's (MSD) Youth Service; the Gateway programme; 'Te Ara Mahi'; 'Māori and Pasifika Trades Training'; The Mayors' Taskforce for Jobs; Talent Central; and 'My Mahi'. The Central Economic Development Agency (CEDA) is leading a stocktake of programmes running in the region. Whanganui & Partners, the economic development arm of the Whanganui District Council, is piloting a shared Client Relationship Management (CRM) system approach. Collating and assessing these initiatives will provide the iRSLG with a baseline of gaps and/or duplication, and a steer regarding where investment could be better directed.

### **Encourage and support young people into new regional job opportunities.**

The region has been supported by Provincial Growth Fund (PGF) job-creation and infrastructure investment, among others. Local stakeholders drew attention to several regional opportunities, such as the upgrade of Whanganui Port, and the Central Region Major Projects Skills Hub which is supporting skills development / pipelines for projects such as Te Ahu A Turanga: Manawatū-Tararua highway. Members also discussed the Alliance Group, a regional initiative which consists of the contractors involved in the roading project, and is engaged in workforce planning. This initiative involves CEDA, Talent Central, Skills Hub and UCOL, and others. Creating and supporting pipeline opportunities for local young people will ensure local skills development and will go towards meeting regional skills and labour shortages.

### **Involve iwi from the outset.**

Central Government initiatives designed for young people wanting to enter – or are in the process of entering – the labour market should ensure iwi are involved at all design stages of the programmes and initiatives. For example, from the point of procurement design, to participation in panels, programme evaluation, and in the design of targeted training and apprenticeship programmes. This will enable more appropriate and impactful programmes.

## Careers Guidance and Work-readiness

### **Update and improve New Zealand's careers education and guidance model.**

Members felt that careers education is based on a decades-old model and a generational shift is needed. Evidence<sup>1</sup> suggests that multiple *genuine* engagements with employers by age 16 ensures young people are better equipped to transition to tertiary study and employment. Schools should have an overall career services plan (for years 7 to 13) which connects teachers and career advisors to the world of work and embeds a career service ethos into their practice. Many members also felt that increased flexibility during the school year – permitting more young people to experience the world of work – would be a useful way to help young people gain meaningful work experience. Shifting the orientation of guidance services from a focus on academic performance to broader opportunities would benefit a wider range of young people. Finally, improving school leaver data/establishing tracer studies will build an evidence base for improved career guidance services (among other outcomes).

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<sup>1</sup> International evidence as cited by one stakeholder.

### **Anticipate ‘future skills’ and meet the aspirations of young people.**

Good career guidance takes account of future demand for skills and labour, and young peoples’ aspirations. The career guidance system has to know what these are. For example, in the Manawatū-Whanganui region, the iRSLG notes that many young people are seeking meaningful work with an environmental orientation – from conservation jobs, to carbon farming, to alternative horticulture. This raises the question as to whether the region is meeting these needs on the supply side – i.e. training. Additionally, demand for more work-based apprenticeships in non-traditional skills in traditional industries such as agriculture (e.g. agronomy and spatial technology) is desirable. Digital and other technological skills are increasingly required in the manufacturing sector, but young people may not be aware of these opportunities. Forecasting skills demand in the key sectors, and awareness-raising of these, is critical.

### **Support vulnerable youth, and other young people, to be ‘work-ready’.**

A need to invest more in wrap-around pastoral care support for the most vulnerable young people was identified by a number of members. Drug and alcohol services, where available, were also identified as insufficient. Greater availability of culturally appropriate pastoral care, coupled with skills development, are the key interventions. Basic skills such as literacy, numeracy, computing, life skills, first aid training, communication and interviewing skills were noted. Particular attention needs to be paid to improving access to driver licencing for young people – a significant barrier. Other stakeholders pointed out the positive outcomes of the six-week *Limited Services Volunteer Programme* (run by MSD/NZDF), and felt expanding this programme to Linton or Waiouru Military Bases<sup>2</sup> could be explored. Finally, to improve school students’ exposure to opportunities in the primary industries, one stakeholder noted Tararua College has 25 acres of land which could be considered for agriculture/horticulture training.

### **Find ways to bring together differing perspectives and expectations – between employers and young people - about work.**

The members provided differing perspectives about the workplace and young people’s attitudes, capabilities, and expectations. There was a general sense that employers should be realistic about a young person’s ability to become immediately productive and to be willing to accept generalist qualifications. It was also noted that young people appreciate flexible hours to accommodate commitments like evening sport, and are likely to have higher expectations (than earlier generations) about work responsibilities. Some young people need extra support to become well-equipped with ‘soft-skills’ to succeed in the labour market. Overall, though, there was consensus that the young person who comes with a positive and proactive attitude is the key to being hired for entry-level jobs, more so than qualifications.

## **Education to Employment**

### **Better promote workplace learning initiatives for young people, and support employers to engage.**

There was a sense that businesses sometimes struggle to navigate the plethora of workplace learning/exposure schemes available to them – thus, there are opportunities for improved coordination and expanded brokerage support. Having young people in the workplace created operational health and safety concerns for some, although several members felt these risks were overstated, but acknowledge the need to “de-risk” where possible. More generally

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<sup>2</sup> Currently offered in three locations – Trentham, Auckland, and Christchurch.

though, the benefits to employers of hosting work-based learning opportunities could be better communicated. For example, participation will create opportunities for staff to develop their supervisory skills, or firms can provide openings for tertiary students work on business problems. Overall, employers can become more “youth-ready” in the sense of having experience of greater direct engagement. Sharing “good stories” of work placement success - such as those offered in creative media at UCOL (photo, video, web design) and through Massey’s Business School or in the Exercise and Sport Science programme – will be helpful.

### **Extend connections between Tertiary Education Organisations (TEOs) and Employers.**

Among those local stakeholders with the most exposure to TEOs and training providers, several observations were made. TEOs tend to collaborate with the same local employers/businesses, however TEOs are encouraged to “branch out”. Employers want to engage, but would find it a simpler exercise if there was a centralised port of call at the TEOs. With regard to transitional arrangements, success is sometimes reliant on the efforts and willingness of an individual Industry Training Organisation (ITO) staff member. Stakeholders cited concerns that the poor quality of supervision and assessment processes, and apprentice-development plans, and thus compromising learning in the workplace. This is particularly so with the construction boom underway in the region.

### **Recognise that firms are experiencing genuine barriers to employing or hosting young people – particularly SMEs.**

Employers expressed a willingness to host more young people in the workplace (eg exposure visits or apprenticeships). The main concerns were, however, impacts on capacity and productivity - particularly that of key supervisory staff. Smaller or medium-sized businesses tend to face more constraints than larger firms that have Human Resources units. Stakeholders also raised the issue that some local manufacturing businesses are pre-occupied with competition (overseas and domestic) and in just surviving.

### **Assess if the right tertiary programmes and qualifications are available, in the right place.**

Several stakeholders felt local young people are not so well served by the tertiary options available within a reasonable commuting distance. It was also noted that a few drawcard programmes have been “rationalised out” (fewer distinguishing features), such as UCOL’s digital design and glass blowing. In Horowhenua, qualifications are mostly offered at levels 1-4, and young people must travel to Palmerston North for higher qualifications. Whanganui is well-resourced in agricultural programmes and Information Technology at levels 2-5, but much less so at levels 6-9. An assessment of whether the supply of qualifications in the Manawatu-Whanganui sufficiently meets demand would be a valuable exercise.

## **Next Steps**

- 1) Complete a stocktake of Manawatu-Whanganui region Central Government-funded skills initiatives aimed at young people.
- 2) Complete the pilot of a shared Client Relationship Management (CRM) system approach