

TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS

The region is home to a rapidly growing eco-system of innovative digital businesses that are exporting services and products from Wellington to the world. Companies such as Sharesies, Xero, Hnry, Mobi2Go, Marsello, A44, Dino Polo Club, Raygun, Montoux, Datatorque, Res'n, Farm IQ, Arlo, Volpara Health, Datacom, FNZ, Pik Pok, Weta Digital and numerous others were born here. The sector is a "huge economic development opportunity" for the region. The size of the international market means there is "virtually unlimited" potential for growth.

Digital businesses are a significant potential source of skilled employment in the region. Local businesses need people with strong digital skills and good people skills to service a large local and vast international market. The public sector is also a major employer of people with digital skills in the region. Current demand by government means people are leaving permanent jobs in favour of highly paid short term contracts.

Demand is currently high and growing for people with digital skills and other digital-related skills. There are opportunities for technical people, such as software engineers and developers, security specialists, and solutions architects. There are also opportunities for people with excellent communication, thinking, and creative skills such as programme managers, project managers, senior consultants, and customer service specialists who deliver the digital offering.

Competition for people with digital skills is intensifying regionally and globally as the ease of remote working grows. Local businesses can hire outside the region, while offshore companies can offer high salaries to attract skilled Wellington-based workers. The region's employers can expect competition for its workforce to increase.

There is a significant gap in the skills pipeline between junior and experienced staff. Historically, the region's employers have largely used immigration to fill mid to senior level roles in preference to training and development of graduates. Now the border closure is being felt as access to these offshore workers is severely restricted, and employers do not have the training infrastructure in place to develop sufficient numbers of graduates to fill their vacancies quickly.

TRENDS AT A GLANCE: DIGITAL WORKFORCE



15,000 ICT professionals work in Wellington region - nearly 6% of all occupations in the region.



685 residence visas were issued to skilled migrants working as ICT professionals between 2017-2021. This includes developers and programmers, software engineers, ICT analysts, multi-media specialists and software testers. A further 70 residence visas were issued for ICT customer officers and technicians.



From 2015-2019, the number of students taking NCEA technology standards has been declining. More males than females enrolled in these standards. Only 5.9% of students enrolled in IT degrees nationally in 2020 were Māori, and 4.5% were Pasifika.



In 2019, 750 students enrolled in ICT programmes at Whitireia and Weltec. Fewer than 200 enrolled at Victoria and Massey universities.

TOP LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

- There is potential for better regional coordination.** By collectivising, employers could create programmes for development, coordinate attraction and recruitment efforts, lift visibility of the opportunities, and encourage diversity.
- The public sector is the biggest employer of people with advanced digital skills in the region.** It has the potential to play a strategic role in the development of the region's skills pipeline, and strengthening the region's digital economy.
- Faced with skills shortages, businesses are starting to invest more in staff attraction and development.** Approaches include fast tracking high performing service desk staff into more skilled roles; hiring and training graduates; and attracting and developing staff from other disciplines.
- The establishment of work hubs around the region would support remote working that is not home-based.** Some employers are considering this option as a way of attracting staff who live outside the metropolitan area.
- Employers have the opportunity to grow new staff with support from the Wellington-based 'Summer of Tech' programme.** This programme introduces employers to students with well-supported internships, yet every year it has many more IT student enrolments than offers of placements. More employer support is needed to maximise this pipeline to talent.

TOP LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

- Local businesses have hundreds of roles they can't fill at the moment,** especially for mid to senior experience level roles. Large firms are going outside the region to fill high-skill vacancies as new hires could work remotely from Hawkes Bay, Wanaka or Melbourne.
- The sector is struggling to attract people, even though the salaries are very high** and the opportunities are good. Some reasons provided are a perception of "nerdy" work or a "hard work" culture built on US corporate models. Others believe recruitment practice is "sterile" and a "warmer walk-up" is needed to attract diversity and better connect candidates and employers. Wellington's advanced digital sector recognises it needs to do more to get people interested.
- Pathways into this work are very difficult to navigate.** There are many points of entry, but no one clear route or vocational pathway, and graduates often struggle to get their first job. There is a need for oversight and co-ordination to better support access to opportunities in the region's growing digital economy.
- A lot of exciting local businesses are not very visible,** and neither are the job opportunities that are available. Students, families and schools careers advisors often have "no idea" of the great IT careers possible right here in the Wellington
- There is a significant lack of diversity in Wellington's advanced digital workforce.** There are low numbers of women, and very low numbers of Māori and Pasifika in the workforce.



OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT 2 MONTHS:

- Preparing the foundations of the draft Regional Workforce Plan
- Skills development, pathways and transition to employment in the Wellington region
- Vulnerable communities, including Pacific peoples and people with disabilities
- Welcoming and inducting our new co-Chair and members, and sharing our work to date