

TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS



Upskilling remains a consistent focus for people across the Manawatū – Whanganui Region. Massey University has been forced to halt domestic enrolments across all programmes for Semester Two 2021 and Summer School 2021/2022, due to reaching their enrolment cap. In this academic year, distance student enrolments were 24 per cent higher than the year prior. While enrolments increased across the board, they were highest for Bachelors degrees in business, arts, design, nursing, health science, social work and animal science.

Pūkaha National Wildlife Centre has partnered with UCOL to provide conservation, forest management and ecotourism courses. These courses were developed to address current skill shortages and increase the rate of pest eradication in the region (and nationally).

Ruapehu Alpine Lifts are also looking into alternative ways of upskilling the future workforce, and learning from models being used elsewhere in the country. The reality that we need people to upskill before entering some sectors is being taken seriously by employers who want staff to be able to ‘hit the ground running’.

TRENDS AT A GLANCE



35% of all roles in Manawatū – Whanganui are considered ‘high skilled’. High skilled roles are those such as Professionals and Managers. Low skilled roles such as labourers make up 20% of all roles in the Region.
(Source: LEED, 2018)



48.9% of all school leavers in the region leave with NCEA Level 3 or above. This is below the national rate of 54%. Attainment levels also vary between Districts, with the Ruapehu District having the lowest attainment levels in 2019.
(Source: Education Counts, 2019)



780 people signed up for a Carpentry and Joinery apprenticeship in the region in 2021. There has been over a 100% increase in carpentry and joinery apprenticeships in the region since 2016.
(Source: Ngā Kete, 2021)

TOP LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

- The ‘Road to Success Programme’ in the Tararua District has been designed with employers front of mind** after a gap in the market was identified for this type of training. This programme is poised to help transport/trucking companies with elements of employee traineeship and support.
- A Conservation Work Skills Programme prioritising Matauranga Māori is to begin 20 July.** This 3-month paid programme will focus on developing local knowledge in conservation, including working alongside Kaitiaki of the Te Ahu a Turanga project. It will create strong connections with the whenua and expose participants to a range of skills.
- Employers are shifting focus to upskilling existing staff, as opposed to recruiting for higher skilled roles.** This has led to an uptake of short training courses, and more entry level jobs coming online.
- Local Councils commit to Infrastructure Spending in their long-term plans.** While the initial costs are passed onto residents through rates increases, this will provide job security to many in the public sector and supporting industries. It will also ensure that new housing and business developments will have sufficient resource to operate.

TOP LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

- Recruitment within the health sector remains difficult,** particularly with intra-sector poaching occurring. This creates longer wait times for those needing specialist care in the region, or they need to travel to access appropriate care.
- Employers are struggling to compete with international salaries for IT graduates.** There are reports of some graduates being offered \$200,000 starting wages abroad, and smaller employers in the region cannot compete with this level of personnel expenses.
- Employee churn remains a key concern in the Region.** As new employment opportunities arise, and employees chase higher wages and better employment conditions, firms are struggling to maintain a suitable workforce. This is particularly true for the Early Childhood industry.
- Smaller Districts are struggling to recruit employees,** despite looking at alternative incentives such as providing accommodation, varied work hours and the lifestyle opportunities smaller districts can offer. This is particularly true for higher skilled roles such as podiatrists, lawyers and AgriTech professionals.

THE MANAWATŪ - WHANGANUI REGION



OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT 2 MONTHS:

- Developing a Regional Coordination Action Plan
- Stakeholder engagement planning and execution
- Consolidating learnings from the interim Regional Skills Leadership Group to pass on to the permanent Group in September

People Supply

- **High Schools in North Taranaki are looking for more cooperation and support from external organisations**, to help their students get road ready and obtain their driving licences.
- **There is a shortage of lawyers across the Region** – this has been a consistent ‘message’ that local EDA have been receiving for the last 6 months.
- **Taumarunui High School students are participating in a 1-day a week internship**, with 67 students working within forestry (and all happy thus far).
- **Jobs for Nature employment is starting to come online.** There is a lot of promotion within schools for people to fill these roles, with a large emphasis on preparation for people interested in entering these roles (work readiness and fitness).
- **Australian recruiters have been seen trying to recruit construction workers to Australia.** This hasn’t been seen in the region for a few years, and is concerning when we are already hearing of employers struggling to recruit enough staff to meet BAU needs.

People in Workforce

- **Digital literacy is cited as a key difficulty for many people in the Ruapehu District.** This is particularly problematic for those currently in the workforce looking to upskill or shift careers.
- **Construction firms are reporting poaching of staff as an issue.** While this is not a new issue, and is part of the industry churn, the heightened level of this happening now is concerning employers due to the shortage of staff, particularly in the Manawatū District.
- **The Aged Care Industry is reporting poaching of existing staff to other parts of the Health Sector.** The Aged Care Industry has long struggled with recruitment into this field, so the poaching of existing staff is particularly difficult.
- **The demand for people with Passenger Endorsements on their drivers licence remains high in the Ruapehu District.**

Jobs

- **Introduction of public transport servicing the Milson Business Park would enable more workers to take jobs in this area.** It has been identified that this is currently a significant barrier to employment in this area.
- **Ruapehu Alpine Lifts (RAL) continues to struggle to recruit ski industry specific roles** – including instructors, avalanche control, snow groomers etc.
- **The Countdown Distribution Centre in Palmerston North is recruiting for 70 new jobs**, and is making steady progress towards achieving this.
- **Palmerston North City and the wider Manawatū District are struggling to recruit podiatrists of any skill level.** Studying podiatry isn’t possible in the region, and it is believed this may be one reason why there are no graduates applying for roles in the Region. Research shows that of the new podiatry graduates in 2019, 49% were based in either Auckland or Hamilton, and an additional 30% were based in the South Island.

Skills Development

- **There is a huge focus in the Taranaki District on making the drivers licence process more streamlined** (for those that need support), with organisations involved in the process encouraged to share information and outline their processes and procedures.
- Ruapehu Alpine Lifts are currently in communication with a South Island ski industry rep who is looking at upskilling students in Terms 1 and 2, and then linking them to employment. This would largely be for part-time roles, or for those leaving school. **After the ski season they would be actively linked with summer seasonal businesses to provide year-round employment.**
- **Te Ahu a Turanga has launched a “Conservation Work Skills Initiative”, which will upskill selected work-ready participants.** Training will focus on conservation, prioritising Matauranga Māori to increase the kaitiakitanga a rohe.

Employers

- **Increased employee churn is adding pressure to the Early Childcare industry** as new Early Childhood Centres are popping up in the Manawatū District. Some Centres are advertising for new staff and report only getting a couple, or no, applicants.
- **The Road to Success Programme is poised to help more transport/trucking companies in the Taranaki District** with their traineeship and Employer Support Programme.
- **King Country Petfood in Taumarunui is struggling to find candidates with the right skills.** They are focusing on how they can develop the skills of people already within the District, as it is proving difficult to entice people to relocate into the Ruapehu District.
- **Some Employers in Manawatū are looking to automation to solve capacity issues** due to their ongoing difficulties hiring employees.

Demand Drivers

- **A \$4.6 million education and accommodation centre is under construction at the Pūkaha Mt Bruce Reserve near Eketāhuna.** It is expected to draw millions of dollars to Taranaki from tourists and school trips. This will have the flow on impact of more jobs in the District, and will also increase training opportunities for locals.
- **King Country Petfood is near completion of the four year build process on their new factory.** They are now looking at employment and training opportunities.
- **The Water Bottling Plant in National Park is expanding** – they are currently needing to recruit forklift drivers.
- **The new gondola at Whakapapa has increased employment from 80 to 120 staff.** These are predominantly beverage and hospitality roles, and the employment is largely (but not entirely), year-round.

KEY

People Supply (School Leavers, Work Transition, People not in the Workforce, Migration)

People in Workforce (Environment, Intentions, Responses, Challenges, Trends)

Employers (Environment, Intentions, Responses, Challenges, Trends)

Skills Development (Tertiary, Apprenticeships, Work Ready, Other Education and Training)

Jobs (Conditions, Standards, Recruitment, Vacancies, Trends)

Demand Drivers (Economic Trends and Development, Project Stimulus, Sector Trends)