

TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS



Image: ManawatuNZ.co.nz

Fulton Hogan has announced that their next infrastructure skills centre pilot will be based in the Manawatū, starting on 1 November 2021. This is a six-week training and development pilot programme to upskill those who are unemployed, underemployed or displaced within the community. All participants will be in paid work from the start of the course, and direct placement opportunities have been offered to local iwi.

CEDA (Central Economic Development Agency) are working with the New Zealand Defence Force to help businesses find out more about hiring ex-NZDF staff and the associated benefits. According to NZDF, some businesses have perceptions about hiring ex-NZDF staff, and they could be ‘missing out’ on great talent to be part of their workforce.

There is overwhelming sentiment that what is causing businesses the most stress is not the COVID-19 restrictions, but the effects it has had on the supply chain. Business outgoings and projects have become more costly after the last lockdown, which is putting them in vulnerable positions. This is an issue that is being reported by the Whanganui & Partners (EDA), but also felt in many other parts of the Region.

TRENDS AT A GLANCE



18% of unique jobs in Manawatū-Whanganui were supported by the Wage Subsidy in August 2021, statistics now show. A unique job is a unique employer and employee pair.
(Source: The Ministry of Social Development, September 2021)



64.1% of businesses in Manawatū-Whanganui are owner-operated and have zero employees.
(Source: Stats NZ business demography, as at February 2020)



36% of the migrant workforce in Manawatū-Whanganui are on visa types that are eligible for consideration for the new 2021 Resident Visa pathway. Those that meet one of the other criteria will be able to apply (time in country, wages, scarcity role). This means a large number of work visa holders will be able to remain in New Zealand permanently.
(Source: MBIE, Migrant Employment Data, July 2021)

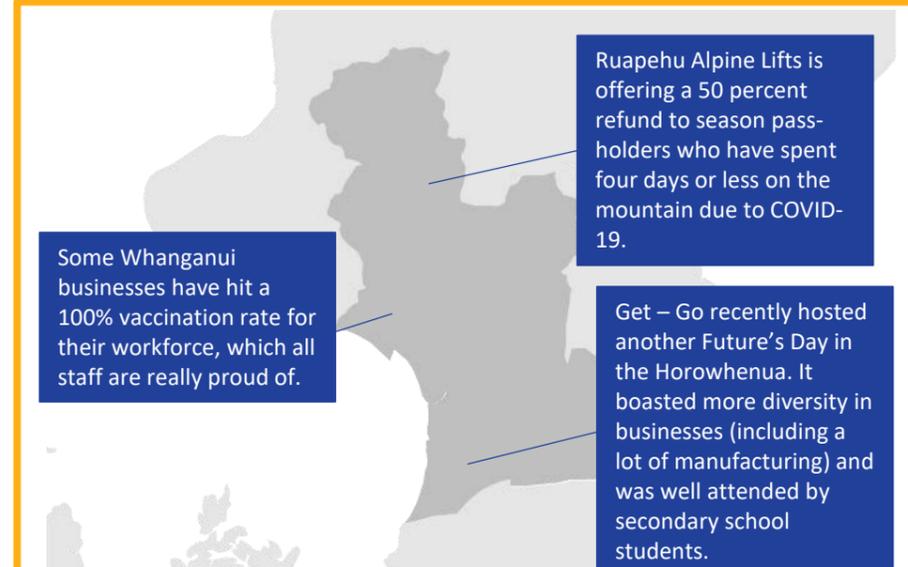
TOP LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

- Multiple positions are currently being advertised for the Te Ahu a Turanga: Manawatū Tararua Highway project.** These positions include Lab and Field Technicians, and five Civil Infrastructure Apprenticeship opportunities have also opened up.
- North Ruapehu are working with Waitomo and Otorohanga Districts on a Te Kuiti Meat Campaign, as there are 50 jobs available.** The campaign will stretch over the course of October and include multi-channel marketing and a roadshow.
- AXIOM Training and Tararua REAP (Rural Education Activities Programme) have started a 28-week NZ Certificate in Civil Infrastructure Level 3 course in Dannevirke.** Participants gain a Class 2 License; Wheels, Tracks and Rollers Endorsements; First Aid training; and over 100 hours of on-site practical excavator experience. The course contains 14-weeks of theory, mixed with 14-weeks of on-site work experience alongside local contractors and larger infrastructure projects.

TOP LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

- Businesses are struggling to attract talent from outside of the Region.** District Councils and Local Economic Development Agencies have reconfirmed the lack of housing is directly affecting these businesses. The dearth of houses encompasses both renting or buying in the Region, as this scarcity is also affecting the growing unaffordability.
- Some employers in the Manawatū District are no longer taking on new apprentices.** They reason that their business and their team do not have the capacity to support on-job supervision and learning. This will limit future employment opportunities for locals interested in entering these roles.
- The Auckland/Waikato lockdowns are affecting Ruapehu retailers.** Visitor traffic is less than would otherwise be expected, particularly over the school holiday period, and several retailers are reporting that turnover is down. They are looking forward to the easing of restrictions, in the hopes it will return visitor traffic to pre-lockdown levels.

THE MANAWATŪ - WHANGANUI REGION



OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT 2 MONTHS:

- Confirmation of the first two sectors to be included in the Regional Workforce Plan, with sectors for the following years identified.
- Beginning stakeholder engagement about priority sectors and aspirations.
- Understanding and appreciation for existing regional strategies and plans in identified sectors.

People Supply

- **CEDA recently presented a region specific Infrastructure and Construction Talent Attraction Marketing Campaign** to over 30 attendees from the sector. The industry representatives in attendance were supportive of this work and highlighted their ongoing concerns with attracting talent.
- **Across the region there are ongoing concerns of skill shortages in a number of sectors** including Civil Engineering, Project Management, Hospitality, Health, Tech, Infrastructure and Construction, and Food and Fibre.
- **The Central Region Skills Hub currently have 40 vacancies across the Region in all areas.** Candidates are readily being placed with engineering businesses and logistics companies, however, the Skills Hub is unable to source people for more than half the current vacancies. Businesses are needing to upskill new people if they want staff.

People in Workforce

- **New Zealand Defence Force personnel are being relocated from Whenuapai to Ohakea.** Work is being done by Local Councils and Economic Development agencies to support them and their whānau to make this transition.
- **A recent survey of local employers in the Horowhenua found that they are interested in closing the gap between businesses and schools** as a way of addressing labour shortages.
- **The vaccinated versus non-vaccinated workforce is becoming an increasing concern for employers and employees.** Managing this will be an employment relations issue of concern for sectors that have a mixed workforce, rather than one that operates under a mandated vaccination order (such as the education and health sectors).

Jobs

- **As we come into summer many Tararua employers are starting their recruitment drives.** For example, Silver Fern Farms and Alliance Farm Produce (Freezing Works) are looking for around 200 people between them. Numerous shearing contractors are also starting to recruit their main shearing teams.
- **Drivers Licences as well as other transport and vehicle ‘road fitness’ issues continue to be barriers for attaining available work across the whole Central North Island Region.** In Ruapehu King Country REAP and the Mayors Taskforce For Jobs are working on this as part of their core business.
- **There is anecdotal evidence that employers are not advertising positions that are available.** They have ‘given up’ after repeatedly trying to find staff, and being unable to under the current skills shortages.

Skills Development

- **Rangitāne o Tamaki nui a Rua, in conjunction with the Te Tihi Alliance and Tararua REAP, completed their 10-week FUSION 2021 course.** The course included activities such as hunting; fishing; meat preparation and butchery; and hāngi preparation. It culminated in meeting with Whanau Ora Navigators at the end of ten weeks to set aspirational goals including employment and training.
- **Most of Talent Central’s industry visits were cancelled over lockdown, leading to over 200 students missing out on this opportunity.** However, businesses and schools were immediately back on board when the Alert Levels dropped. Talent Central has reinstated their driving lesson programme, work experience opportunities, and bespoke industry visits.
- **CEDA is working with NZ Careers Expo to bring back the traditional large format Expo on 17 June 2022.** Secondary schools in Districts surrounding the Manawatū will be included as target audiences.

Employers

- **Hospitality and retail employers continue to be affected by Delta Level 2 restrictions,** such as balancing maximising customer numbers and the ratio of staff required to offer table service.
- **Accommodation providers in Ruapehu are currently noting low occupancy rates.** However, before Auckland went into lockdown they were experiencing high occupancy rates, which was helpful for sustainability.
- **Some employers in the Horowhenua have collaborative initiatives with local high schools.** Horowhenua College’s horticulture class is working with Woodhaven Farms, who have donated two hectares of land. Waiopahu College’s trades class is working with major fabrication company Thermosash on new construction at Ohakea, and the new BNZ building in Wellington. Gateway Programme students from Manawatū College are working with major local employer Turks.

Demand Drivers

- **The Tararua Alliance are expected to start hiring soon for the Huarahi Tūhono - Weber to Wimbledon project.** This roading project will upgrade a 26km stretch of Route 52. It is made possible by funding administered by Kānoa: Regional Economic Development and Investment Unit.
- **There is a need for 150 people to work on the Te Ahu a Turanga: Manawatū Tararua Highway project this year.** Recruitment is starting to happen now.
- **Surveying has begun for the Marton Rail Hub, with surveyors working on Makirikiri Road and Wings Line.** The Marton Rail Hub will provide employment opportunities both during construction and once operational. It will also diversify the district’s business landscape and benefit local forestry owners with a reduction in road transportation costs.

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)