

### RECENT REGIONAL SKILLS LEADERSHIP GROUP MAHI

RSLGs have the opportunity to shape Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) investment through the provision of specific, regionally focused advice. All advice is supported by regional evidence and developed in consultation with key stakeholders, partners, and Workforce Development Councils (WDCs). The November 2023 Southland Murihiku submission, which informs TEC investment for 2025, included the following insights and recommendations:

- A contextual summary of the region, including key challenges and opportunities (e.g. priority sectors and demographics; the future of NZAS Tiwai Point Aluminium Smelter; emerging hydrogen and aquaculture skills and workforce needs; the future of SIT|Te Pūkenga Zero Fees post-2024; and the workforce skills assessment and potential industry growth associated with the newly founded Engineering and Manufacturing Cluster).
- Increased investment in the health workforce, including, but not limited to, the kaiāwhina health workforce, enrolled nursing, anaesthetic technicians, oral health specialists, midwives, nurse practitioners and urologists.
- Investment to support the provision of a Māori Midwifery specialisation within the current Midwifery qualification, or as a separate qualification.
- Investment to meet emerging skills needs to support the hydrogen industry (including hydrogen vehicle specialisations), with a focus on qualifications from Level 3 through to Level 7 (bachelor's degree). Also supporting information regarding roles that may require newly developed qualifications based on Australian standards examples.
- Investment in the newly developed Trade Assistant Level 2/introductory micro credentials, focused on manufacturing, engineering and construction initially, with potential to adapt to other sectors including food and fibre, meat processing, health, and tourism/hospitality.
- Specific investments into new Engineering micro-credentials in 3D CAD-CAM design, Computer Numerical Control (CNC), Fabrication and Welding, and Level 3 Meat and Meat Product Manufacturing.

### FUTURE LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

Major projects impacting future workforce, skills and tertiary education needs have been identified by the Regional Skills Leadership Group. Several key Southland Murihiku projects have been highlighted to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) in the November 2023 advice. These projects represent significant opportunity for the region (see [Beyond 2025 Southland Regional Long Term Plan](#)), with anticipated occupation and/or skills gaps that should be taken into account in tertiary education investment decisions as follows:

- Construction of a new data centre, requiring a variety of construction, data, telecommunications and other specialist roles. It is anticipated 100-200 workers will be needed to build the facility, which at full capacity, will then be operated by up to 45 employees. A detailed breakdown of the roles and qualifications likely required for construction have been supplied to TEC.
- Construction of onshore and offshore windfarms which will likely require the availability of a new, skilled workforce within the region.
- Aquaculture development includes the potential for up to 500 additional roles.
- A skilled workforce will also be required for the cessation of operations at the NZAS Tiwai Point Aluminium Smelter (regardless of timeframe).

The RSLG will ensure workforce and skills needs for Southland Murihiku are considered at a strategic, forward-thinking level. This has continued through regular engagement with key stakeholders and partners across the region including the Mayoral Forum, Great South (and the Beyond 2025 Southland Regional Long-Term Plan), SIT|Te Pūkenga and Murihiku Regeneration.

### CURRENT LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

Current workforce shortages are likely to become exacerbated in rural, community owned hospitals and primary care facilities, due to a lack of pay parity. Pay equity agreements for nursing staff employed by Te Whatu Ora have not been applied to those who work with NGOs and other organisations. This lack of pay parity has potential to significantly limit the attraction and retention of nursing staff working in rural communities, which in turn has a negative impact on the ability for rural populations to access reliable, timely, quality health care. This is likely to put greater pressure on the health system across the board (see impacts of Actions 4 and 5 in the [2023 Regional Workforce Plan \(RWP\) Update](#)).

Skills and workforce shortages continue to affect the Southland Murihiku dairy farming industry. These shortages have been observed by Dairy NZ, with the lack of skilled 2IC staff noted as the most significant shortage, limiting the ability for managers or main contractors to take a break from their work and/or focus on strategic planning and business growth. A challenging economic environment including forecast dairy pay-out levels, is driving demand for the development and provision of more cost-effective models and means of training delivery (see impacts of Actions 1 and 5 in [the 2023 RWP Update](#)).

Within the tourism and hospitality sector, the dual impact of lack of staff and the increased cost of living is affecting business viability. With discretionary income reducing for many families, there is less spending happening in the sector. This is resulting in a lack of willingness to invest in staff training and also contributing to business closures (see impacts of Actions 1 and 5 in [the 2023 RWP Update](#)). Businesses in other industries are reporting a similar trend. This has the potential to significantly impact the social infrastructure of smaller rural centres.

### REGIONAL WORKFORCE PLAN IN ACTION

#### Strategic Alignment

A key strategic priority of the [inaugural Southland Murihiku Regional Workforce Plan \(RWP\)](#) was to build on and work alongside the range of local and central government initiatives already underway (e.g. Just Transition). The Beyond 2025 Southland Plan, which emerged from the Just Transition Process, subsequently recognised that the implementation of the RWP is key to ensuring the development of a thriving regional labour market in Southland Murihiku.

#### Targeted Actions Connected to Regional Economic Development

Southland Murihiku developed a series of highly strategic and holistic actions in the first RWP. The [2023 RWP Update](#) provided an opportunity to refine and refocus, resulting in a series of more targeted actions, with specific outcomes linked to existing projects which are directly connected to the region's economic growth.

#### Emerging Industries

Southland Murihiku RSLG recognises the future of Renewable Energy and Aquaculture as emerging sectors within the region, and are now planning for how the region can meet the required skills and workforce needs. Both sectors have been researched to understand the potential shape of the workforce, and a comprehensive analysis of occupations, skills, and qualifications has been completed. This analysis formed a significant part of the RSLGs recent advice to the Tertiary Education Commission.

#### Industry Essentials

Southland Murihiku RSLG was part of a working group, led by Hanga-Aro-Rau and Waihanga Ara Rau Workforce Development Councils (WDCs), which develops a new Trades Essential micro-credential. This Level 2 micro-credential is recognised as an entry-level qualification (targeted at young people and career changers), and aligns with several RWP actions. The Southland Murihiku RSLG is also working directly with other WDCs regarding the development of stackable entry-level micro-credentials as a relatively low risk, cost effective way to career transitions in industries such as health, aquaculture and hospitality.

#### Regional Voice

RSLGs provide the opportunity for previously under-represented sectors and unheard voices to directly influence labour market planning at a regional level. The Southland Murihiku RSLG is made up of a diverse group of labour market actors, each bringing a wide variety of perspectives and stakeholder connections from across the region. The RSLG enables a regional voice to inform, shape and influence workforce and skills issues at the core of our community.

### OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT THREE MONTHS:

- Developing and publishing a six-monthly progress update on the implementation of the 2023 Regional Workforce Plan.
- Preparation for the development of the 2024 Regional Workforce Plan.
- Follow-up actions and outcomes from the advice submitted to the Tertiary Education Commission.