

A Hanga-Aro-Rau: Manufacturing, Engineering and Logistics
Workforce Development Council White Paper

Strengthening the Vocational Education and Training System to Improve Workforce Transitions: Seven Strategies for Better Attraction, Alignment and Retention

October 2025

“Teenagers who gain work experience at school are more likely to be
employed by age 20”

(Dee Earle, Tertiary System Performance Analysis, Ministry of Education, 2025)

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Foreword

As school-leavers prepare to step into the world of work, training or further education, they do so within a landscape marked by contradiction. On one hand, many industries are grappling with chronic skill and labour shortages and an urgent need to attract and retain talent. On the other, entire sectors are experiencing significant job losses, restructuring and uncertainty. These realities shape the choices, opportunities and futures of our rangatahi.

The world of work is constantly and rapidly changing. Technological disruption, demographic shifts and global events like the Covid-19 pandemic have accelerated transformation across sectors. For young people, this means navigating a future that is less predictable, more complex and increasingly demanding of adaptability, resilience and digital fluency.

In this context, transition services are not a “nice to have”, they are essential. Helping young people make sense of the labour market, understand their options and build the competencies to manage their career pathways is critical to both individual success and national prosperity. It is also a matter of equity: ensuring that all learners, regardless of background, have access to meaningful opportunities and support.

To meet these challenges, Hanga-Aro-Rau identified four key areas that must underpin a robust and future-focussed vocational education system:

- 1. A strong workforce pipeline** that ensures stability, enables growth, and addresses chronic skills shortages—by building and maintaining a diverse workforce, tapping into the talent of previously under-served groups, and ensuring sustainable career pathways.
- 2. A connected and responsive vocational education system** that anticipates demographic and industry shifts, and prioritises flexible, on-the-job training designed around real-world capability and capacity.
- 3. A system that understands local and regional nuances**, meeting specific employer and workforce needs while maintaining nationally consistent training and qualification outcomes—ensuring both relevance and portability of skills.
- 4. A system that delivers value for money**, aligning provision directly with the evolving needs of employers and their workforces.

This White Paper summarises our learning from four years of industry engagement and vocational education partnerships. It is a reflection and a roadmap – advocating to Government for continued support and resourcing of the workforce transition role, which we believe is one of the most essential elements in a thriving vocational education and training (VET) environment. It also provides the new Industry Skills Boards (ISBs) with a series of actionable strategies to build on what’s working well and guide the transition to a redesigned system of provision.

This Paper is a call to action: to retain what works, to build on proven models and to ensure that the new ISBs continue the vital work of connecting young people with the future of work. Because when transitions are well supported, everyone benefits – learners, employers, communities and Aotearoa New Zealand.

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Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge all those who contributed to this paper. The concepts presented have been shaped by conversations with our National Industry Advisory Groups, employers, school career development staff, career practitioners, the Career Development Association of NZ (CDANZ), Careers and Transition Education Association (CATE), Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and young people themselves. Their valuable insights cemented our views on the importance of a transitions / pathways service.

We were fortunate and grateful to have the paper reviewed by several people and organisations, taking on board their thorough and thoughtful feedback.

A special acknowledgement to Cath Fraser for shaping the ideas and thinking into a cohesive document.

1. Executive summary

This White Paper on workforce transitions summarises Hanga-Aro-Rau (H-A-R) Workforce Development Council's (WDC) legacy learnings and recommendations from five years of industry engagement and vocational education partnerships.¹ We seek to advocate to Government for continued support and resourcing of the workforce transition role carried by WDCs; arguably the most essential element in a thriving vocational education and training (VET) environment. We also hope to provide the new Industry Skills Boards (ISBs) with a series of actionable strategies to build on and extend what's currently working well and facilitate the transfer to a new system of provision.

Workforce transitions cover pathways from school to training, to work, and within work. They involve multiple stakeholders: Government, schools, career advisors, industry and employers, training providers and standards-setting agencies, learners, whānau, communities, and iwi. Their diverse perspectives are incorporated in the seven strategic propositions outlined in this Paper:

1. Effective transitions are central to vocational and education training (VET) and national success. The Government's goal of economic growth, productivity and prosperity² means having more young people entering the workforce with higher skills, making good money and identifying employment opportunities. This requires that learners are exposed to workplace options, supported to develop career management competencies, and provided programmes with relevant and industry-endorsed education pathways.

2. You can't be what you can't see. Young people's decision-making occurs within a context of perception, misperception and influence. Exposing learners to workplace options needs to be deliberate, and early. Many young people have little understanding of the modern face of industry and the range of roles available.³

¹ Hanga-Aro-Rau 2025a; 2025b

² MBIE, 2025

³ TEC, 2020; Waihanga-Ara-Rau, 2024

3. Planning a workforce pipeline for an unknown future. Employers emphasise the need for work-readiness skills, digital aptitude and personal capability; job-specific tasks can often be taught on the job.

4. An unbroken continuum. Introducing rangatahi and young people to the world of work occurs over time, through multiple pathways and activities, progressing through work exposure, to work exploration and work experience.

5. The brokering-liaison-connection role. This role facilitates school-industry partnerships and employer-led engagement with their future workforce and should be a core component of the future ISBs' work.

6. Consolidating fragmentation and cross-sector initiatives. Industry advisors need to understand the range of supports available, their origins and criteria. For many employers, access to information can be confusing and time-consuming, meaning that they, and learners, are missing mutually advantageous opportunities.

7. Championing good practice and maintaining momentum. This White Paper outlines some of the successes and progress of the last four years under the WDC model, and the frameworks which have enabled these. Of course, we acknowledge that there remains much work to be done, however, we strongly hope that incoming ISBs will retain as much as possible of what is already in place and working well (such as the case studies in sections 4.2, 4.4 and 4.5).

The insights offered in this White Paper have been drawn from H-A-R's own research and engagement across our sectors, including:

- Talking with employers, industry associations, unions, local bodies, schools, careers advisors, iwi and community groups, school students and work-based learners, trainers and assessors
- H-A-R's own publications and public reporting documents⁴
- Key reports from Government and stakeholder groups
- Academic literature and commentary – both national and international

In line with our usual practice, we have tested the thinking offered here with several advisory bodies, including representatives from the Career Development Association of New Zealand (CDANZ) and the Association of Career and Transition Educators (CATE).

2. Introduction

The goal of our VET system is a highly skilled, engaged and capable workforce that is leading innovation, driving productivity and shaping a prosperous future.⁵ Around 250,000 learners engage with the vocational education system each year.⁶

Our view is that the transition space, the move from school to life: further education, higher education, and work, is an essential element in a thriving education and training system. Learners who are exposed to workplace options, supported to develop career management

⁴ <https://hangaarorau.nz/publications/>

⁵ MOE, 2025

⁶ Ibid

competencies and offered programmes with relevant and industry-endorsed education pathways will more easily pathway seamlessly into further training or employment.⁷ It makes sense that people who have the competencies to understand their own career pathways are more likely to move into roles that suit them and where they can be fulfilled and productive employees.

Across Manufacturing, Engineering and Logistics, Infometrics forecast 155,700 total job openings over the next 5 years (average 31,000 p/a).⁸ This means that employers need more support to grow and sustain their pipeline in a highly competitive environment and they need certainty that the training system will provide adequate and essential industry-endorsed education pathways. Learners, the community and whānau need confidence that these pathways will offer future-proofed skills and lead to a meaningful working life.

Key Workforce Forecasts



We see the primary objective of the Pathways role – to date within the WDCs’ skill leadership function and in the future, within the new ISBs – as focussed on three key challenges facing the country’s labour force: attraction, alignment and retention.

(Source: Deloitte & Hanga-Aro-Rau 2023; MBIE 2023: Workforce Skills NZ 2025: Advanced Manufacturing Aotearoa, 2025)

This White Paper is presented in the context of several persistent issues within the transition ecosystem (discussed in more detail later in this document):

1. Irregular connection between industry and education / pipeline organisations with wide variability in the guidance, time and resources available
2. Inadequate leadership and management training opportunities in hiring for diversity available to industry (narrow assumptions about ‘ideal’ employee)
3. Career practitioners don’t always have access to current information from industry
4. School services can perpetuate disparity of perceived prestige between vocational pathways and university study
5. Stereotyping of roles to specific demographics / unconscious bias leads to non-equitable outcomes for some groups (especially Māori, Pacific, women and disabled peoples).

⁷ Johnston, 2025

⁸ Infometrics, Oct 2025. Forecasting data using ANZSIC codes included in Hanga-Aro-Rau’s Order in Council. **Total job openings** estimates overall workers required in a sector as a result of job creation and replacement demand. It is the sum of new job openings and replacement job openings in a given year.

Taken together, as concluded in a recent report by the Education Partnership and Innovation Trust, this means that “In today’s rapidly changing world, the transition from school to further education or entry into the workforce has become increasingly complex and challenging, particularly for students from low socio-economic backgrounds.”⁹ For employers, recruiting young people with the right skills, aptitudes and appropriate expectations, and building their capabilities and careers can be equally testing.

The strategies offered here represent our responses, outline some of the work we have been undertaking, and suggest future directions which the redesign of the VET system may make possible. It is about equipping young people, partnering with stakeholders, addressing inequities, and developing integrated, system-wide approaches.

3. Redesigning a system that works for young people: Who are Aotearoa New Zealand’s youth?

In the 2023 Census, there were 320,637 New Zealanders aged 15–19 (youth), and 311,953 20–24-year-olds (young adults).¹⁰ In terms of the labour market, these are the groups which BERL (Business and Economic Research Ltd) say are hit hardest by unemployment and tight economic conditions, and most vulnerable to increased competition for jobs.¹¹ While young people are eager to work, the rate for those not in education, employment, or training (NEET) has increased for both youth (11% in December 2024) and young adults (16.4%) over the last two years.¹² The areas with the highest NEET rates for both groups are Otago (33%), Ruapehu (29%), South Waikato (26%) and the Far North (24%).¹³

There is clearly a need for targeted action in the transition space, to assist youth and young adults address a challenging economy, with employment planning, training, and upskilling opportunities. But there is also a prerequisite onus on VET designers, to understand key features of this demographic.

3.1 Our population is increasingly multi-cultural

Statistics NZ 2023 census data reveals that between 2018 and 2023, our population grew by almost 300,000 people, and now has over 200 distinct ethnic communities, with more than 150 languages spoken.¹⁴ Nearly a third of people in New Zealand were born overseas; the top five overseas birthplaces are: England; People’s Republic of China; India; Australia; South Africa.¹⁵

⁹ Reid, 2023, p. 3

¹⁰ Statistics New Zealand, 2024

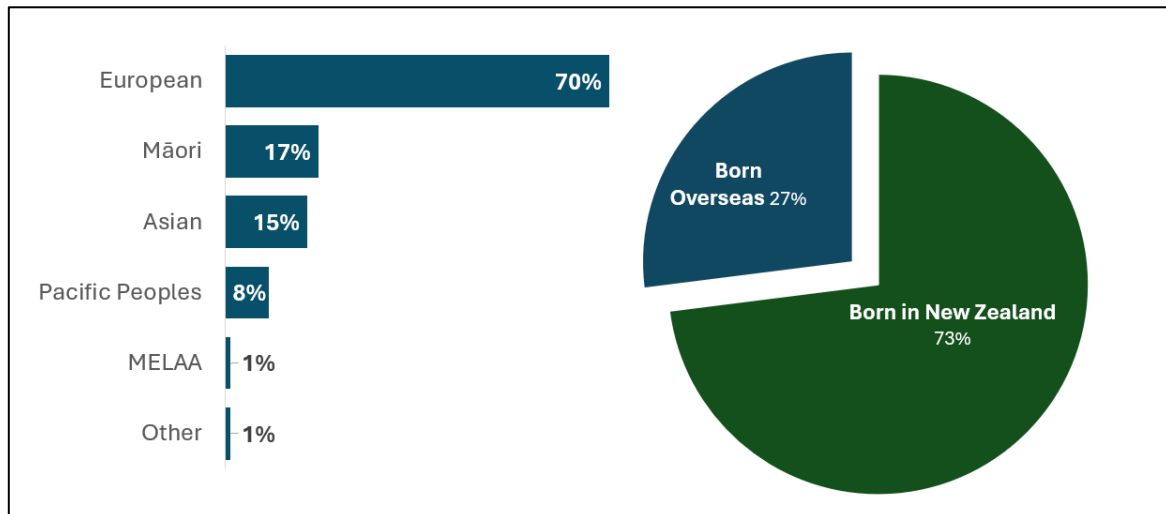
¹¹ Hunt, 2025

¹² Ibid

¹³ Mayors Taskforce for Jobs, 2025

¹⁴ Lee, 2024

¹⁵ Statistics New Zealand, 2024



(Source: Statistics New Zealand, 2024)

This means that New Zealand is now one of a small handful of culturally and linguistically 'superdiverse' countries. Amongst OECD countries, New Zealand is the fifth most ethnically diverse, and this trend is forecast to continue: "Auckland, already recognised as one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the world, continues to be New Zealand's most ethnically diverse region – with nearly one in three Aucklanders having an Asian ethnicity".¹⁶

The VET system needs to embrace this superdiversity, creating inclusive contexts where all people are open and engaged with each other moving from school to work-based learning and employment.

3.2 Māori and Pacific Peoples will be a growing proportion of our workforce

As above, New Zealand's demographics are changing. Māori and Pasifika are the fastest growth populations in Aotearoa and make up the largest demographic of young people under the age of 25. Between 2013 and 2018, the number of Māori and Pacific in employment grew by 47% and 57%, respectively, nearly triple the rate of New Zealand Europeans.¹⁷ By 2043, 21% of Aotearoa New Zealand's employment base will be Māori, and 11% will be Pacific, indicating a significant shift in the composition of the workforce.¹⁸

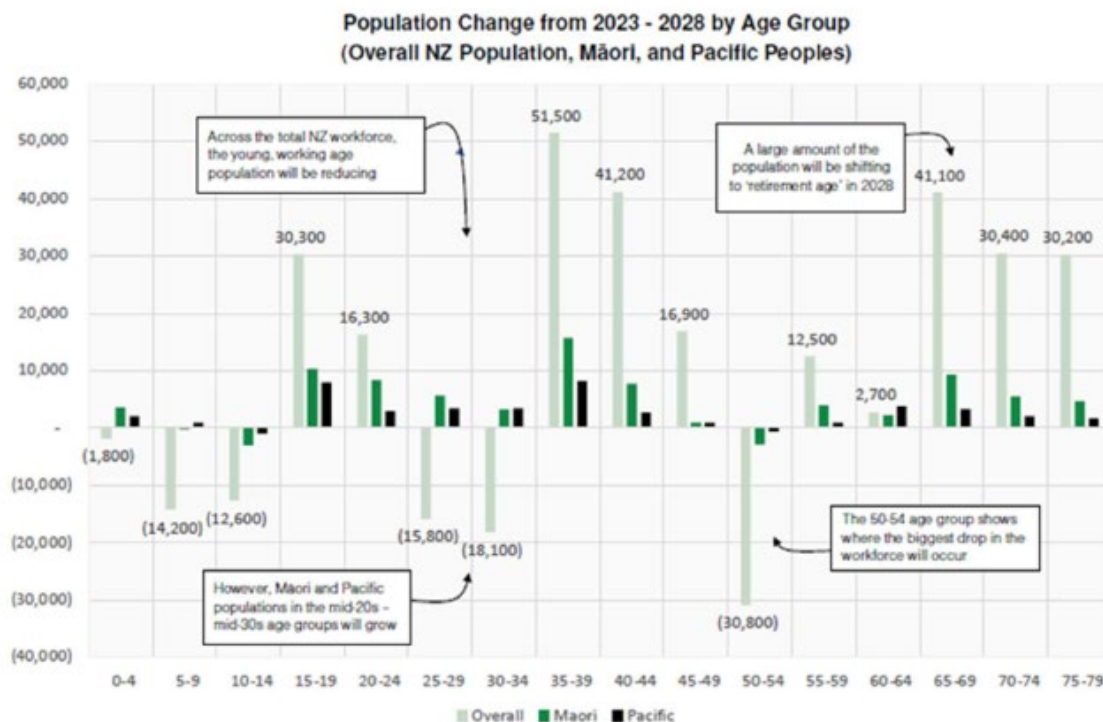
This shift in the working age representation of Māori and Pacific is exacerbated, as overall our population growth is slowing and our workforce is ageing: we have among the highest rates of employees aged over 55 years in the OECD, expected to rise further in the coming years. At Census 2018, over a quarter (27%) of the national workforce were in the 50 to 64-year age groups. By 2030, 25% of the workforce will be over 55. Clearly Māori and Pacific youth will be a critical part of the new workforce coming in to replace those retiring. These trends are shown in the figure below: Population Change from 2023 – 2028 by Age Group.¹⁹

¹⁶ Lee, 2024

¹⁷ Statistics New Zealand, 2018 cited in Good Employer Matrix, 2024

¹⁸ Statistics New Zealand, 2024

¹⁹ Derived from multiple data sets, Statistics New Zealand, 2022



Māori and Pacific youth are therefore the largest population groups of potential workers in the labour force supply chain, meaning that successful transition programmes must embrace cultural responsiveness and understand cultural aspirations. As described in our White Paper on Māori, *Unlocking the potential of Māori and the Māori economy*,²⁰ Māori and Pacific youth are filling a national lead, but they are also serving their tino rangatiratanga, and mana Motuhake, based on the needs of their communities, whānau, hapu and iwi.

3.3 Digital literacy – needed but can't be assumed

Today's youth are often referred to as digital natives, born into a tech world – but this is not always true for everyone. We can often take for granted the centrality and ubiquity of digital devices in contemporary life, but not all learners have internet access or a computer or can always afford data. When they can't learn, they can't progress, and in 2022, BNZ's survey found 20% of the population (800,000 adults) have below essential skills. Lower socio-economic groups, rural communities and crowded households are the most disadvantaged, with Pacific Peoples, disabled people, and Māori more likely to experience digital disadvantage than the total population.²¹

Digital literacy and access to the internet are crucial for full participation in society, starting with successful education outcomes, leading to employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. "Generally speaking, digital skills are those needed to safely use digital devices and online tools to communicate, transact, create, and problem-solve".²² Digital skill requirements include basic skills for everyday life; skills for the general workforce; and

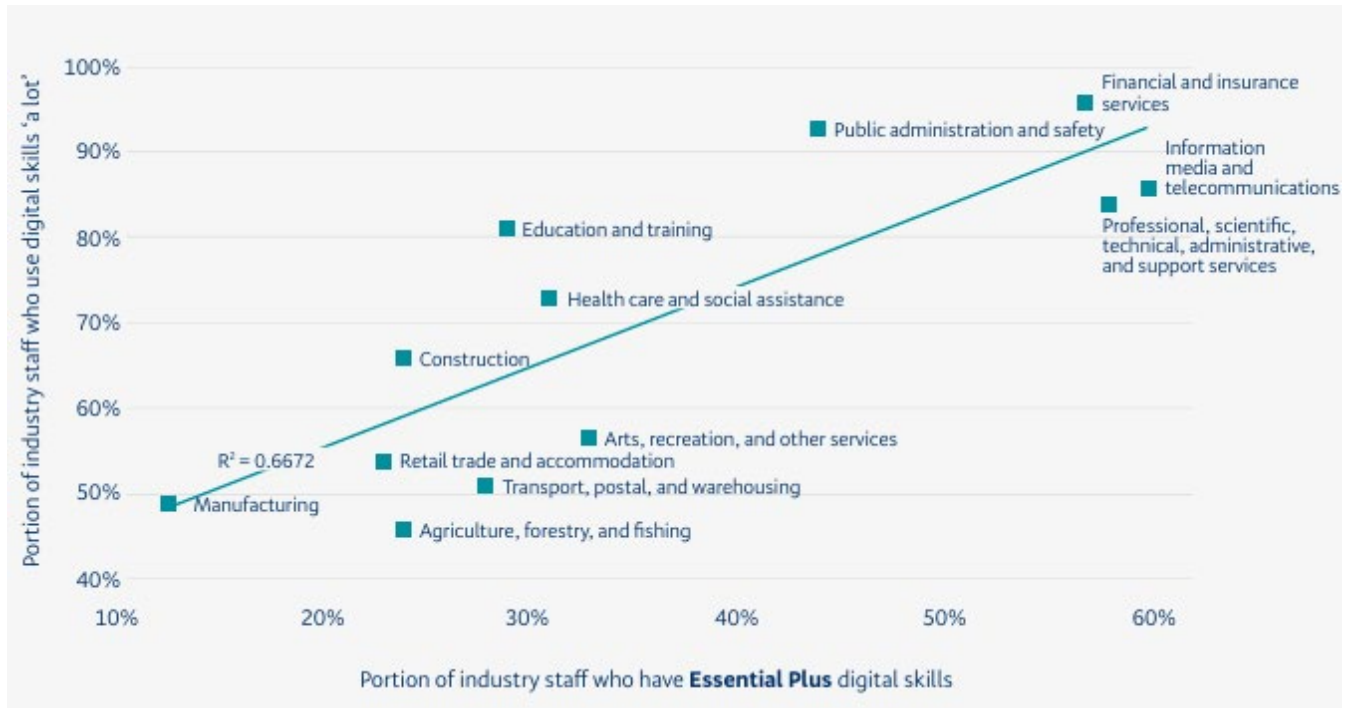
²⁰ Hanga-Aro-Rau, 2024a

²¹ BNZ, 2022

²² Alkema, 2023, p. 6

specialised skills for professionals. Using the UK's Essential Digital Skills Framework modified for the Aotearoa New Zealand context, BNZ's 2022 research developed the following figure to show skills use and associated skills levels.

Digital skills and use by industry



(Source: BNZ, 2022, p. 11)

The VET sector has a key role to play in increasing the digital literacy skills of New Zealanders and coordinating the approaches of education agencies and industry organisations, in both private and public sectors. The suggestion of a national *Digital Skills Framework*²³ that traverses secondary schools to work-based learning – similar to those developed in the UK, USA, Australia and elsewhere – is one area a strengthened VET sector could lead.²⁴

3.4 The Covid generation

“The Covid Generation is entering the labour market at what is widely seen to be the worst moment in modern industrial history”²⁵

Covid-19 has caused significant educational and business disruption. Our economy has been shaken, unemployment has risen, with young people disproportionately affected, and many lower-level entry positions have disappeared.²⁶ Studies of the ‘Covid generation’, that is, students who have had to adapt almost overnight to lockdowns and online learning, are reporting that the pandemic has negatively impacted young people’s mental wellbeing.²⁷ In VET, for example, education institutions and employers have observed increased learner

²³ Alkema, 2023

²⁴ See, for example, <https://futuresdotnow.uk/about-us/the-essential-digital-skills-framework/>

²⁵ Mann, 2020, p. 2

²⁶ Deloitte & Hanga-Aro-Rau, 2022; 2023

²⁷ TEC, 2022

stress, with resulting behaviours and disengagement, and the need for additional pastoral support.²⁸

Industry have had to change their operating models in the face of both supply chain and workforce disruption. Closed borders meant fewer migrants, who have historically been a key source for all industries, and particularly the manufacturing, engineering and logistics sectors.²⁹ While employers focussed on survival, formal training and support for transitional pathways and work-based experience was deprioritised, and the economy has been slow to recover. Staff and business owners focussing on managing labour shortages have fewer resources or capacity for on-the-job training or mentoring for career progression.

Alongside an urgent need for workers, and a concern about the work-readiness and resilience of secondary school leavers, is the exacerbating effect that Covid-19 has transformed the industry's future skills set requirements and digital mindset. Teamwork and problem solving were rated as the most important skills in a recent national Skills Survey; cultural competency and language skills were rated the lowest.³⁰ Employers also emphasised more digital as well as non-technical skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity and communication – and were concerned that education providers could be slow to adapt offerings to build these capabilities.

Further, recent research in South Auckland shows a slower recovery from lockdowns than most parts of the country and ongoing impact to households, resulting in greater social costs. Māori and Pasifika were most disadvantaged – in unemployment, job losses due to current economic conditions, and disengagement from education and learning.³¹

There is an urgent need for a liaison role in the redesigned VET framework, to assume the connections currently managed by the Workforce Development Councils. These include facilitating and strengthening the relationship between providers and industry and advocating for support for learners and whanau. Strong and trusted connections with all stakeholders, including interagency, will be necessary to redress the disadvantages exacerbated by Covid-19, with fit-for-purpose training that meets industry needs.

3.5 Inequities in the workforce

There is ample evidence of age, gender, ethnicity and pay inequity in the current workforce³² as shown in the figure below, based on research by the Human Rights Commission, AUT and the New Zealand policy Research Institute³³. The discrepancies in income, concludes their report, are due to both explained differences (occupation, industry and education) and unexplained differences (including discrimination, unconscious bias, and non-monetary preferences).

Income inequities by ethnicity

²⁸ Deloitte & Hanga-Aro-Rau, 2022

²⁹ *ibid*

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ Reid, 2023

³² E.g. Cochrane & Pacheco, 2022; Deloitte & Hanga-Aro-Rau, 2022. Mase, 2022.

³³ Cochrane & Pacheco, 2022



(Source: Mase, 2022, New Zealand Herald)

Understanding that inequitable outcomes in adulthood across a range of social, economic and health measures are forged early in life, successive governments have prioritised learner groups, targeted funding, and developed population-based initiatives to address such disadvantage. Resourcing must continue to be focussed on at-risk youth leaving school with no, or lower-level qualifications, among whom those who have been traditionally poorly served by a westernised schooling system will be highly represented.

One traditional measure of poor transition outcomes has been young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), although some critics³⁴ argue that this count misses young people who are moving between low paid and/or short-term jobs and/or low-level tertiary education. It also misses the impact of 'limited employment' – small amounts of part-time or casual work, an undesirable category with poor prospects for life or work satisfaction. The scale of this issue is depicted below:

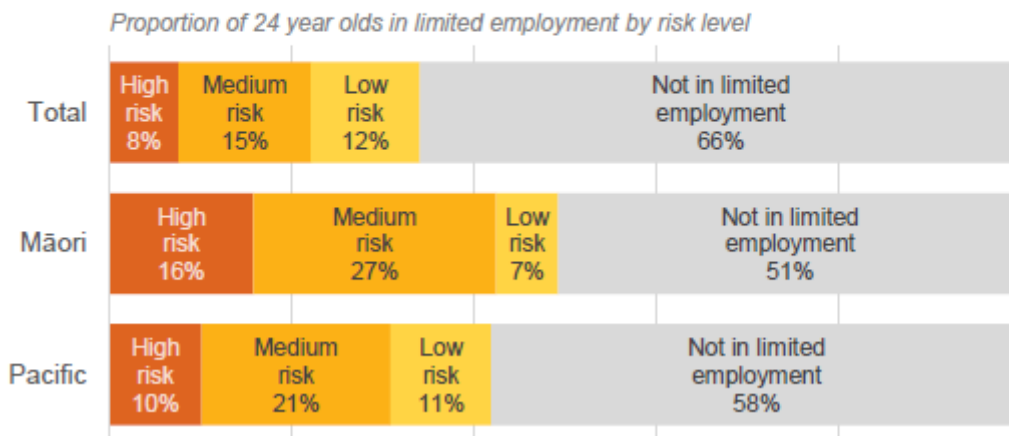
Young people and the risk of limited employment outcomes

77,000 or 15% of all 16-24 year olds are considered to have medium to high risk of limited employment outcomes. For those aged 24 years, this increases to 22%



³⁴ E.g., McGirr & Earle, 2019

More than half of young people in limited employment at age 24 had been in limited employment for the majority of years since leaving school



(Source: McGirr & Earle, 2019)

Key determinants of the poorest long-term employment outcomes have additional risk factors, including: experiencing intergenerational benefit dependency; contact with Child, Youth and Family/Oranga Tamariki and/or with the justice system; being a young parent (particularly before age 19); and leaving school with no or low qualifications.³⁵

Key to achieving a thriving, equitable Aotearoa New Zealand is the equal opportunity – for everyone – to gain qualifications and work and life experiences to fully participate in our society. A redesigned VET system will need leaders who understand the cultural realities of inequity in educational attainment and career aspirations and can design pathways into modern trade professions and 21st century workplaces.

4. Unpacking the strategies

4.1 Effective transitions are central to VET and national success

Industries' biggest challenge is the attraction, development and retention of their workforce,³⁶ a challenge, too, for many other stakeholders, including training providers, and school and tertiary career staff. The industries supported by H-A-R (manufacturing, engineering and logistics forecast 155,700 job openings over the next 5 years, and demand is predicted to outstrip supply by around 58,000. This shortfall is exacerbated by our ageing workforce, and the high percentage of workers leaving or retiring in the next five years: for example, up to 81% in commercial transport.³⁷ It is critical that our manufacturing, engineering and logistics sectors have confidence in a sustainable pipeline of talent, and a training system that will

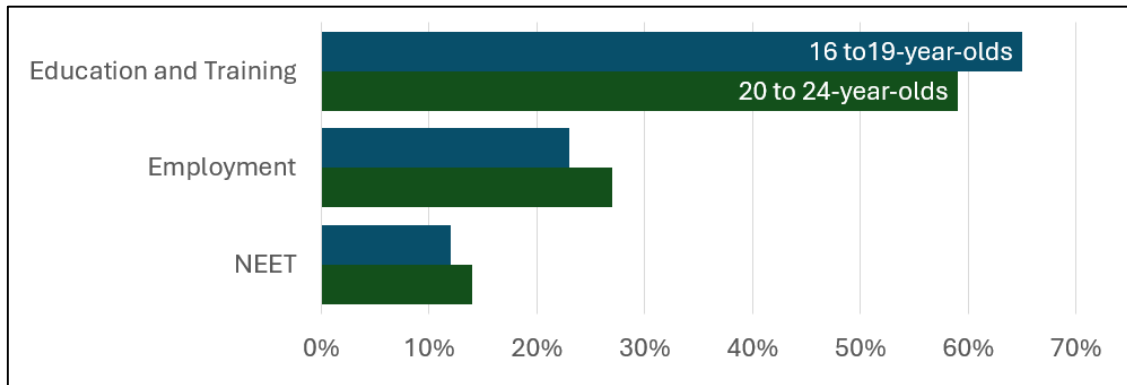
³⁵ McGirr & Earle, 2019

³⁶ Deloitte & Hanga-Aro-Rau, 2022; 2023

³⁷ Infometrics, 2024

provide adequate and essential industry-endorsed education pathways (such as some of the examples offered as recommendations, in Section 5).

Pathways into the workforce, and work-based training are equally critical for youth. Just over 60,000 school leavers transition from secondary school each year.³⁸



In 2023, on average across the year, 65% of 16- to 19-year-olds and 59% of 20–24-year-olds were participating in education.

Of those school leavers who enter tertiary education and training, 39% study at degree levels (7+), 25% study at Vocational levels (4-6), and 36% study at Foundational levels (1-3).³⁹ However, almost 40% of school leavers (in employment and NEET) do not carry on to any form of tertiary education – at least in their first year.

When industry training would lead to better wages and higher-demand vocations, this last figure represents a considerable waste of human capital⁴⁰ and longer-term socio-economic consequences. Better incomes support families and communities, with improved housing options, better food choices, and access to primary healthcare. They provide increased tax revenue and ultimately funding essential public services, such as health, education, infrastructure and superannuation.⁴¹

The link between industry and learner needs, and the ripple effect for society and the economy, is the VET transition space. The position of this Paper is that the importance of the development of career management competencies for young people – having the ability to make career decisions and pathway into roles that suit them and where they can develop their careers (and meet skill shortages) – cannot be overstated and MUST be resourced accordingly.

4.2 You can't be what you can't see⁴²

Schools are predominantly structured for an academic programme – The Ministry of Education measures and reports on how many young people they get through NCEA level 1, 2 and 3

³⁸ Education Counts, 2024.

³⁹ Transitions from Secondary School - EXTERNAL Report, 2022, pp 12, 18.

⁴⁰ Johnston, 2025

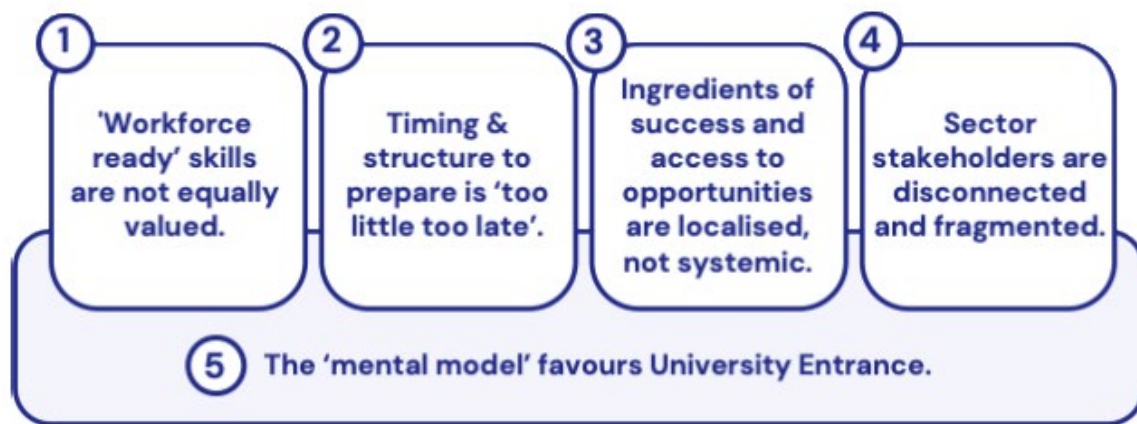
⁴¹ Hanga-Aro-Rau, 2024b

⁴² Expression attributed to Marian Wright Edleman, American activist for civil rights and children's rights

along with University Entrance; whereas structures in schools that support vocational education (such as Vocational Pathways awards) are often more limited and targeted to non-academic students. This 'status disparity'⁴³ means that the curriculum is dominated by subjects derived from university disciplines, rather than industry training pathways. A further challenge to promoting vocational careers is that funding for career education is not 'tagged' and can be diverted to other parts of the school, creating huge disparity in the delivery of career education across schools.⁴⁴

A recent study undertaken by ConCOVE⁴⁵ reported five distinct themes in the systemic gaps their study of vocational education in schools revealed:

Causes of fragmented and inconsistent delivery of VET in schools



(Source: ConCOVE, n.d., p. 7)

Unsurprisingly, most Year 12 and 13 secondary school students have low familiarity, awareness and knowledge of careers in the primary industries, and very low consideration of it as a career option.⁴⁶ One recent study found over half of young adults and over 60% of millennials view the idea of having a career in engineering, construction and civil infrastructure negatively. Indeed, misconceptions of the nature of work were widespread: 44% of millennials and 37% of young adults (aged 18-25) believed they lacked the physical strength for construction jobs. Additionally, around 30% of students felt they were not proficient enough in maths or sciences for these careers.⁴⁷

Influences on career aspirations vary across gender, different ethnicities, socio-economic variables, but the largest impact is from parents and family members, followed by schools, media sources, peers and role models.⁴⁸ The clear implication is that youth need to be exposed to as wide a range of authentic workplace options, from multiple sources, as possible. Providing these opportunities for successful careers engagement is not just the preserve of family and specialist career counsellors but also extends to non-careers school staff and

⁴³ Johnston, 2025

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ ConCOVE, n.d.

⁴⁶ TEC, 2020

⁴⁷ Waihanga-Ara-Rau, 2024

⁴⁸ TEC, 2020

leadership. Senior leadership in schools have a significant role to play in advancing dialogue about career education and guidance for their learners' sense-making process.

Employers also have a role to play in preparing school leavers to meet their own workforce shortages. Anthony Mann, Senior Analyst at OECD's Education and Skills directorate, emphasises 'who you meet' can make a difference.⁴⁹ By providing real tasks, constructive feedback and positive encouragement, employers can help young people develop the confidence, work habits and work identity that will support their future success. A good example is seen in the following case study:

Case study #1

Pathways into Logistics and Distribution around the Auckland Airport precinct

This 'Inspiring the Future' event began with the Hanga-Ara-Rau Pathway team approaching employers through the Supply Chain National Industry Advisory Group (NIAG) network, Wiri Business Association and via the 130 Auckland-based members of Customs Brokers and Freight Forwarders Federation of New Zealand Inc (CBAFF).

Working in conjunction with Ara Education Charitable Trust (AECT) who kindly lent their premises and time to help coordinate the event, invites were sent to schools throughout South Auckland. Schools were asked to nominate up to 12 students aged between 16 to 18 that were keen to explore a career pathway in logistics, warehousing, supply chain or distribution; 94 students and 20 employers registered to attend.

Confirmed employers attended a pre-event online hui to plan scheduling and props/resources.

On the day, students were placed into small groups of 6-8, and following introductions, rotated through the business stands every 15 minutes to ask questions, hear career stories and learn how to enter logistics, supply chain and distribution industries, as well as the array of jobs available from entry level to graduate positions.

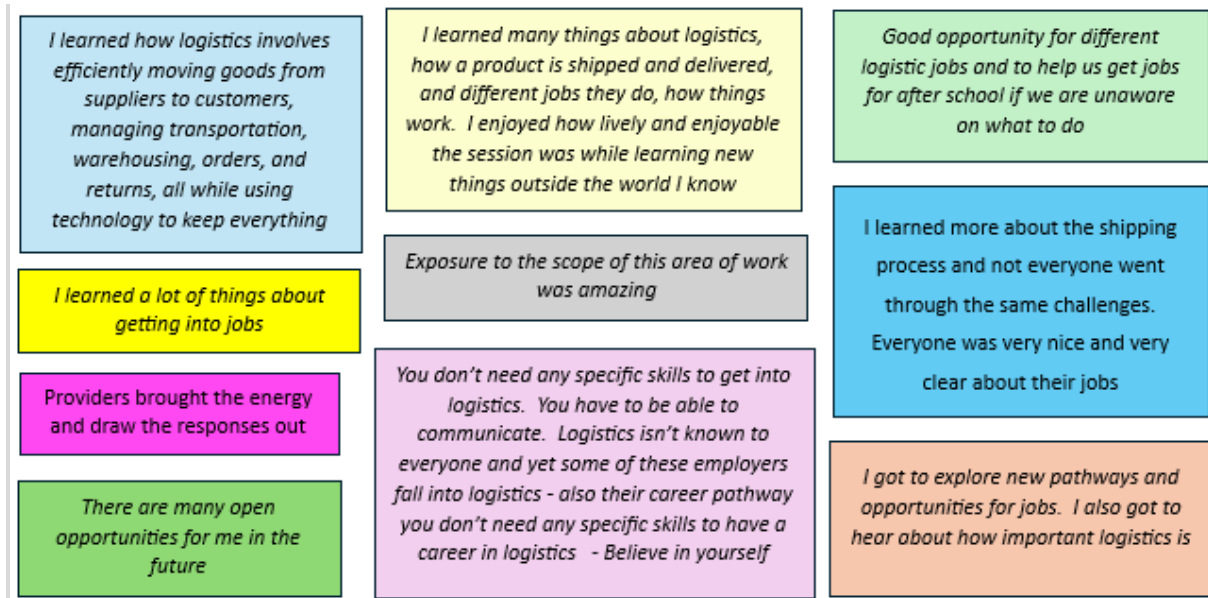
Companies represented on the day included Foodstuffs, Healthcare Logistics, Kerry Logistics (Oceania) Ltd, MoVE, On Demand Logistics, On Demand Training, Pro Pharma, Sneddens Global Logistics, Stockwells International Ply Ltd and Supply Chain Solutions.

Following the event, employers were invited to provide a work shadowing opportunity of 1-2 hours to interested students.

Employer feedback was positive, the companies in attendance were keen to run more events in the future. They told us the two-way conversations had greatly assisted employers in gauging a real understanding of student perceptions into their sectors.

Students were excited to learn of the many different pathways into logistics, as shown by these representative comments:

⁴⁹ Mann, 2020



A redesigned VET system needs to support academic learning *and* workplace training, with partnerships between employers and educational institutions to enhance curriculum relevance and facilitate early exposure to the workplace. Programmes need to include job search support, work experience, and job training with integrated, long-term support, rather than short, isolated, one-off interventions⁵⁰. Learners – career advisors and subject teachers – need to see firsthand the modern world of trades professionals, hear success stories, and experience ‘taster’ opportunities.

4.3 Planning a workforce pipeline for an unknown future

Today's world of work has been referred to as the 'age of acceleration' or 'hypercharge'⁵¹ and is accompanied by the uncertainty of employment predictability and security, or a single-career life. There are clearly important ramifications for how learning programmes and the transition to the workforce need to be approached. Yet there is concern too, with a recent article in the NZ Manufacturer⁵² noting that 55% of New Zealand's workforce lack basic digital confidence. An editorial in the same issue explains why, blaming a lack of investment in innovation: "the reality is NZ has been lagging the world in the adoption of best practices, improvement techniques, workforce development for over 40 years"⁵³

Sectors like manufacturing, engineering, construction and logistics recognise that investment in technology, particularly AI and automation software and hardware, and people who understand them, is essential. Callaghan Innovation⁵⁴ reports a 10.5% increase in technology adoption since their 2023 survey. Further, 80% of the employers surveyed understood Industry

⁵⁰ McGirr & Earle, 2019

⁵¹ O'Connor, NZ Manufacturer Dec. 2024

⁵² Ibid, p. 14

⁵³ Walsh, NZ Manufacturer Dec. 2024, p. 1

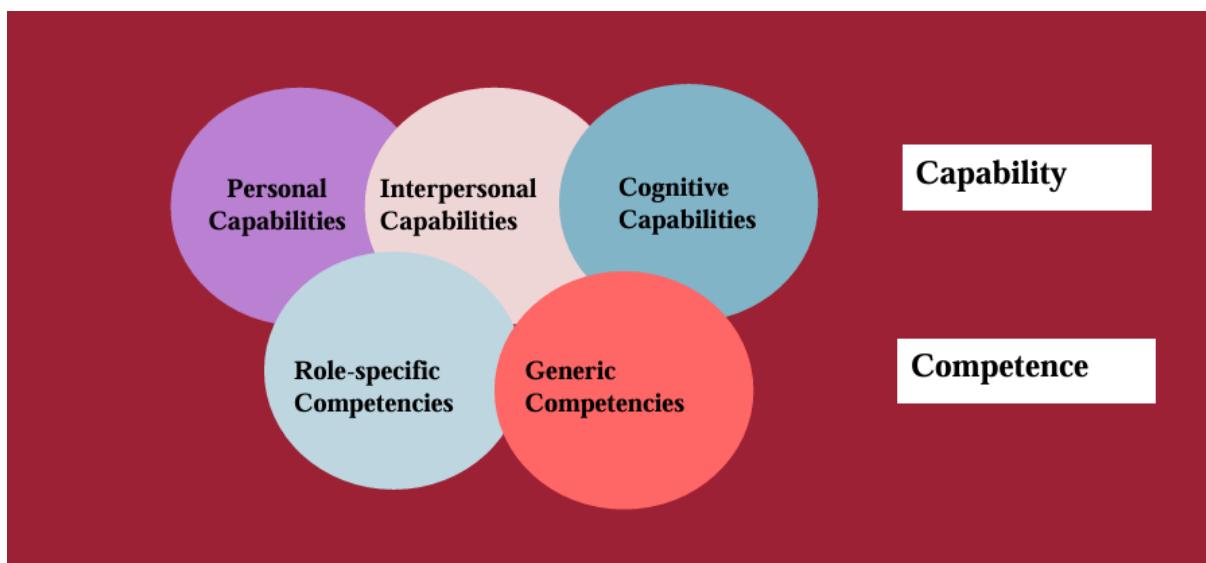
⁵⁴ Callaghan Innovation, 2025

4.0 solutions⁵⁵, although far fewer (a third) felt they had the right/sufficient people, resources and technology to support implementation.

These findings match that of our own industry engagement, surveys and commissioned research over the past five years⁵⁶ where many employers reported that new employees, and by extension, the providers that prepared them, often did not understand the jobs and the industries that they were coming to. This resulted in a mismatch between skills and competencies taught in qualifications, and what is needed by industry. As David O'Connor from The Learning Wave writes, "Technology integration demands more than cutting-edge tools, it requires skilled hands and confident minds."⁵⁷

Professor Geoff Scott addresses this issue when he talks about developing graduates who are not only work ready for today but are also "work ready plus" for tomorrow.⁵⁸ His model for a professional capability framework distinguishes between capabilities (adaptive skill sets) and competencies (what is taught and known):

Professional Capability Framework



(Source: Scott, 2019)

⁵⁵ Industry 4.0, also known as the Fourth Industrial Revolution, is defined by the emergence of digital industrial technology, and includes AI, 3-D printing, Big Data & Data Analytics, and the Internet of Things (IoT) <https://engineeringmastersonline.rutgers.edu/articles/industry-4-0-vs-5-0-whats-the-difference/>

⁵⁶ <https://hangaarorau.nz/publications/>

⁵⁷ O'Connor, NZ Manufacturer Dec. 2024, p. 14

⁵⁸ Scott, 2019, p. 108

Scott lists a series of capabilities which ranked greater than 4 out of 5 in his survey of 147 Sydney employers:

Personal capabilities: Willing to learn from errors; calm under pressure; perseveres; responsible; wants to do a good job; ethical practitioner; sustainability literate; adaptable; knows own strengths/ weaknesses; can defer judgement; pitches in; has sense of humour & perspective.

Interpersonal capabilities Empathy – can work with diversity; listens; networks well; team player; communicates effectively; understands organisations; not intimidated.

Cognitive capabilities Can set priorities; sees key point; diagnostic not fixed approach; can adjust plans in practice; independent thinker; creative and enterprising.

Generic skills and knowledge Can organise and manage workload; effective user of IT; effective at self-managed learning and professional development; sustainability literate.

Many of these items align with what our own sector employers told us: employee work-readiness gaps include new technologies, digital skills, employability skills, literacy and numeracy, and general work-readiness. Core employability or transferable skills mentioned were work ethic, team-mindedness, critical thinking, problem-solving, an understanding of productivity, industry, and how businesses work, foundation literacy and numeracy.⁵⁹

Some of the solutions we have been proposing include:

- Longer and earlier transition pathways with improved connection between education providers and employers, to promote and understand *current* workplace practices and opportunities
- Bite-size and transferable qualifications, for example, micro-credentials
- Less theory and more practical delivery and assessment in qualifications that support different learning styles and strengths, for example, practice-based learning
- Online learning course options, with ongoing digital literacy support
- Partnerships between employers and external literacy and numeracy training organisations
- Role models and mentors in the workplace, in the community, in education. Key roles would be to inspire learners and help them map their own pathways into meaningful work
- Encouraging the concept of lifelong learning and ongoing development of skills.

A key role for new Industry Skills Boards will be to continue the work of the Workforce Development Councils in partnering employers and training providers to co-design accessible, dynamic learning programmes to evolve with industry needs. Alongside familiarity with tools and processes, there must be an emphasis on capability/skill development to prepare learners for the unknown future world of work.

4.4 An unbroken continuum

The ‘WE3 Continuum’ model⁶⁰ consists of Work Exposure, Work Exploration and Work Experience. It is the work of Dave Turner, an Australian expert on youth employment and

⁵⁹ Hanga-Aro-Rau, 2024a

⁶⁰ Turner, 2020

careers education, and offers a scaffolded approach (like Gateway in schools) to introduce rangatahi and young people to the world of work, with an emphasis on youth agency. Turner's model suggests but does not prescribe a series of activities that will work for learners, perhaps from the ages of 10-14, then 13-16, and possibly 16-18, moving from more school-based to more workplace-based (like Trade Academies in schools). The whole **connected** platform is underpinned by choice and provides a wide range of potential, multiple contributions for employers/ees and entrepreneurs to impact both to the education and career development of young people whilst helping to nurture and craft their future workforce.

An excerpt from The Meaning of the WE3 Elements (Turner, 2020)

1. Work Exposure	2. Work Exploration	3. Work Experience
Activities that reveal ideas, information and concepts about a relatively unknown world of work and career development by young people.	Activities in which young people explore, examine and investigate a new and/or at times unexpected world of work – culture, options.	Activities that offer young people close and more sustained opportunities for observation and participation in one or more workplaces.
Young people tend to both be introduced to and receive information and insights from people already active in the world of work. Most often, the young people listen and watch an adult who is addressing their class – broadening horizons is a key theme.	Young people are activity engaged in discovering insights and understandings about options, norms, pathways, challenges and expectations by interacting with people already in the world of work. These young explorers boost their confidence and learning by working in facilitated pairs and/or small teams; interacting with employers/ees and entrepreneurs, and then sharing their learning within their peer group.	Young people are immersed in one or more world of work settings. They gain practical contacts, facts and insights through close encounters with adults and their place of work. Young people absorb, soak up, even assimilate into the culture of the workplace, by not only observing and exploring, but actually by participating whilst being supervised in their work.

A summary of the WE3 phases in the New Zealand context:

Step 1: Work Exposure (Awareness)

No one can choose what they do not know, adults included. Early engagement, such as career talks or workplace tours, broadens young people's understanding of available careers, challenges stereotypes and helps them make informed subject and career choices.

Activities include:

- Inspiring the Future events
- Site tours for students and teachers
- Career expos or industry days
- Presentations linked to school curriculum.

Step 2: Work Explore (Engagement)

This allows students to observe professionals and workplaces more closely. It builds relational insight of how workplaces operate, what roles exist and what personal qualities are valued.

Activities include:

- Job shadowing (1 - 2 hours)
- Industry open days
- Teacher and whānau visits to sites
- Taster placements during school holidays.

Step 3: Work Experience (Immersion)

Students contribute to real work and gain authentic experience – learning workplace expectations, communication and responsibility.

Activities include:

- Gateway (5–10 days' work experience with unit standards)
- Trades Academy placements
- Short-term volunteering (e.g. for Duke of Edinburgh awards)
- Internships or structured community-hosted experiences.

As Turner notes, work exposure, exploration and experience are not isolated events – they are a continuum which reinforces the structured, progressive nature of the WE3 model. The following case study exemplifies how this continuum has been enacted between Patton Engineering and Hastings Boys' High School.

Case Study 2:

Building Workforce Pathways: Patton Engineering and Hastings Boys' High School

Patton Engineering, a leading engineering firm in Hawke's Bay, like many businesses in the engineering and manufacturing sectors, has struggled to recruit qualified tradespeople. While migrant labour provided temporary relief, the company recognised the importance of investing in local youth to build long-term workforce capability.

With personal connections to Hastings Boys' High School, Directors Johnno Williams and Andrew Burn initiated discussions with school leadership to explore opportunities for collaboration. Through joint problem-solving, they identified critical resourcing gaps in the school's technology department, particularly the need for modern welding equipment.

Together, the school and Patton Engineering secured funding through the One Foundation Trust, enabling the purchase of welding equipment for use at both the school and the business. A joint governance board was established, including school leaders, trustees and Patton Engineering, to ensure the partnership was structured for long-term success. The agreed-upon engagement model was grounded in the WE3 continuum framework:

Exposure: Students visit the workplace, meet apprentice role models and learn about the industry environment.

Explore: Students participate in practical learning activities such as welding and fabrication, supported by Patton Engineering's team.

Experience: Students undertake regular, structured work placements, developing real-world skills and professional behaviours.

Operational Success Factors:

- Reliable student participation, aided through the school providing transport to the site
- Mentorship from age relatable peer apprentices and experienced staff
- Governance oversight through a joint board and community trust involvement
- Clear expectations for student conduct and engagement.

Industry outcomes:

- Six students progressed into apprenticeships with Patton Engineering
- Patton Engineering staff reported increased job satisfaction from mentoring young people
- Strengthened local employment networks, with former students contributing to the wider industry.

Education outcomes:

- Tripled student participation in engineering programmes at school
- Increased student engagement through access to real-world experiences
- Expansion of the initiative into new pathways, including the launch of a Building Academy.

4.5 The brokering-liaison-connection role

Workforce Development Councils (WDCs) were established to ensure the vocational education system meets industry needs and gives a stronger voice to Māori business and iwi development. Core functions include: working with industries to understand and plan for future workforce needs; standard-setting and qualification development; programme-endorsement – especially work-based learning such as apprenticeships; and advice to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) on vocational education investment. Underpinning these functions is a positionality as connector, linking stakeholder voices and aligning needs with services.

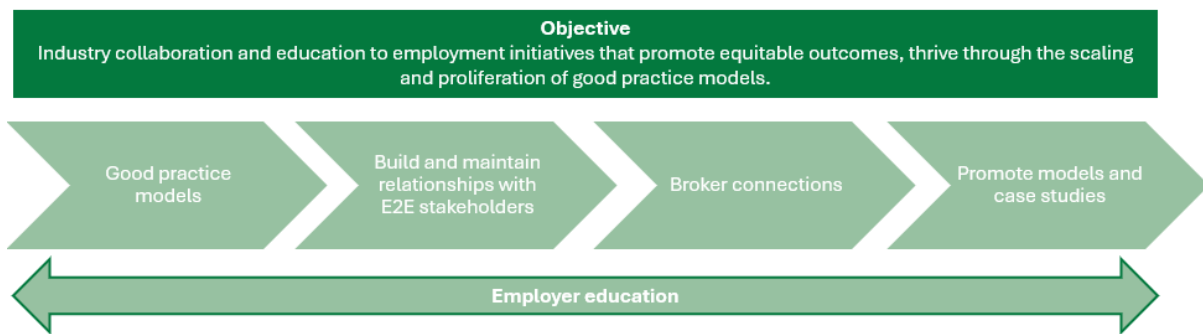
The Vocational Education and Training eco-system comprises multiple stakeholders: rangatahi-youth; education providers; career advisors; employers and industry bodies; iwi and community; unions and workers. In recent years, WDCs have worked to connect these parts together – brokering relationships, advocating for various parties' perspectives, liaising with government and sector agencies, championing success, providing guidance and resources, facilitating access, sharing good practice and organising industry-based events – for students and for career professionals.

At H-A-R, we approached this role by developing a *Vocational Pathways Strategy*, with a 'two-thread' approach:

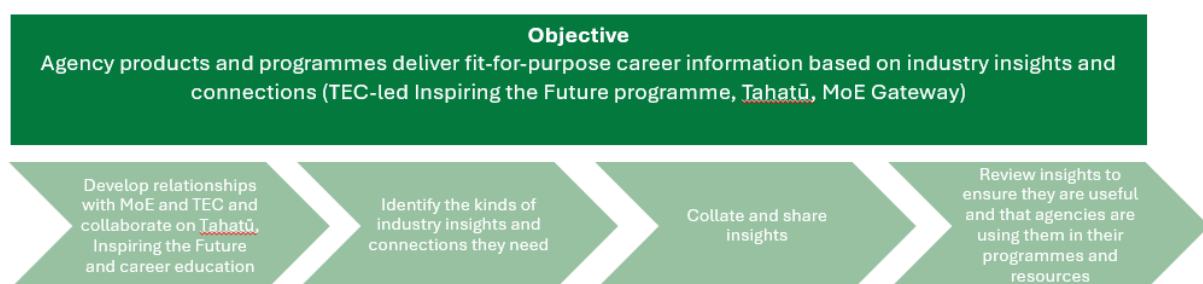
Hanga-Aro-Rau Vocational Pathways Strategy



Rautaki 1 – Brokerage and Advisory: Help employers understand how to work with the education system by sharing practical advice and promoting inclusive practices. This builds strong partnerships that benefit both learners and workplaces



Rautaki 2 – Inform the Careers System: Support learners and those who guide them by giving agencies and associations clear, industry-informed career pathways that connect education with real-world jobs



Transforming this strategy into action has been our work for the past four years. The following examples illustrate some of the ways in which we have worked with our partners to implement our *Vocational Pathways Strategy*.

Recent Hanga-Aro-Rau activities in the transition space

- **Developed a guide for employers**, offering practical, research-informed strategies and actions for employers to engage effectively with schools and communities
- **Delivered a series of Inspiring the Future events.** Highlights included:
 - Logistics: Collaboration with ARA - Auckland Airport precinct and five South Auckland schools, 80 year 12-13 students with an identified interest in the logistics industry (Case Study #1)
 - Food & Beverage manufacturing: Collaboration with ARA and Manurewa High, year 12-13 students with an interest in working in manufacturing
 - Collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development in Northland on their Connected Job Explore Expo for secondary students and youth jobseekers, sourcing industry role models and exhibitors
 - Whangarei Boys' High School – 320 year 9 students over three days, with 32 role models from industry and school alumni
 - Supported TEC to deliver an event at the Dunedin Careers Expo, with TEC selected role models (Year 12-13 students)
- **Arranged a van tour** for teachers and advisors in career and transition roles: e.g. August 2024, staff from five Auckland secondary schools, as well as representatives from Inwork NZ and MSD Connected joined a van tour, hopping on and off at six different Logistics companies for site tours, learning about recruitment into career entry levels and the various roles available, and meeting the right people to reach out to

- **Sought out exemplars of best practice in our sectors:** Patton Engineering and Hastings Boys' High School (Case study #2)
- **Developed an Employer Engagement Model (based on WE3) and a Good Practice Guide for industry** (Case study #3)
- **Conference workshops at CATE (Career and Transition Educators) conferences Whangarei 2023; Dunedin 2024**
- **Stakeholder relationships and professional memberships to contribute at a national level**
 - The Vocational Pathways team are all members of CATE (Association of Career and Transition Educators)
 - Some are members of the Career Development Association of NZ (CDANZ)
 - With other WDCs, delivered a webinar to national CATE members on Gateway opportunities in our sectors

Alongside these activities, the role of Hanga-Aro-Rau as connector was a cornerstone of the successful initiative described in the following case study.

Case Study 3: Connecting youth to careers in Logistics – Green Bay High School

The partnership between Rocket Freight, associated logistics businesses, and Green Bay High School in Auckland was driven by the leadership of Lisa Coleman, Company Director of Rocket Freight, following successful employment of two Green Bay High School students in previous years. Recognising an opportunity to repeat and expand this success, Lisa collaborated with other logistics businesses to provide students with greater exposure to the industry.

Several of the industry representatives who offered to be involved in the programme had direct connections to Green Bay High School – either as former students or whānau of current students. This strengthened the relevance of the engagement and provided students with relatable role models who had once been in their position.

The collaborative industry engagement included a range of companies and roles: Ports of Auckland | Manager of Māori Outcomes; Rocket Freight | NZ Customs Junior; The Warehouse Group | Talent Acquisition Partner; Willship International Ltd | Shipping Specialist; Cosco Shipping Lines NZ Ltd | Account Manager; and Reliable Transport | Transport Manager.

By involving a range of employers, students were introduced to the breadth of roles available in logistics – many of which are not typically promoted as pathways from school.

Using our Employer Engagement Model, we helped to facilitate an Exposure, Explore, Experience approach. Initially, students participated in an 'Inspiring the Future' style event where volunteers introduced their career journeys and industry insights in small group sessions, making the logistics industry more visible and accessible to students. This laid the foundation for follow-up opportunities, including work shadowing and work experience placements, allowing students to explore and experience real workplace environments.

Outcomes included:

- Increased student awareness of career opportunities in logistics and freight
- Positive feedback from both students and employers about the value of face-to-face engagement
- Strengthened personal and professional connections between industry and school creating pathways for future collaboration.

The Government has decided to disestablish the current WDCs and establish new Industry Skills Boards (ISBs). A key purpose is “to give industry a strong voice in vocational education”. This White Paper respectfully submits that a lot of such work has already been occurring. We hope that there will be substantive continuity within the new ISBs – in support for successful initiatives as those described here, and in inclusion in their workforce of liaison experts-on-the-ground, who have made such strong headway in developing and implementing models with the potential for scalability.

4.6 Consolidating fragmentation and cross-sector initiatives

A perennial issue for the VET sector is the irregular connection between industry and education organisations – three key causes have been suggested for this: (1) employers and pipeline organisations lack the time and resources to facilitate engagement, (2) guidance for employers on how to engage with the education ecosystem is scattered and (3) eligibility criteria for funding programmes can be cumbersome and changeable. A recent report found,

“New Zealand’s initiatives to support pathways from secondary school to industry training, primarily under the Youth Guarantee umbrella, are fragmented and constrained by funding limitations. Just 2.4% of young people aged 16–19 participated in Youth Guarantee between 2020 and 2023.”⁶¹

However, the report continues, “The good news is that the initiatives could form the core of a high-quality secondary school pathway to training.”⁶²

A summary of government-funded initiatives include:

- **Gateway** funding, also managed through TEC, supports school learners’ transition into the workforce by offering them workplace learning while at secondary school. Schools may use Gateway funding for a programme of study, training or a micro-credential. Again, pathways follow the six WDC industry divisions.⁶³
- **STAR (Secondary-tertiary alignment resource)** funding is a Ministry of Education grant for schools to support students’ transition to further education, training or employment. It can be used to fund courses and career-related experiences for students and/or to employ a STAR coordinator or administrator.
- **Youth Guarantee** fees free tertiary programmes are managed by TEC. They provide 16-24-year-olds who have left school with opportunities to study towards NCEA or equivalent qualifications at tertiary providers free-of-charge. The **Vocational Pathways** Map currently aligns with the six WDCs. Youth Guarantee also funds

⁶¹ Johnston, 2025, p. 2

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ <https://www.tec.govt.nz/funding/funding-and-performance/funding/fund-finder/gateway>

Trades Academies and Service Academies (blended learning programme partnerships between schools, industry training and tertiary providers).⁶⁴ Similarly, **Māori and Pasifika Trades Training Academies** aim to improve pre-employment trades training aligned more closely to the needs of employers and Māori and Pasifika communities.

The Education Counts report *Monitoring Gateway and Trades Academies, 2025*⁶⁵ attests the efficacy of both Gateway and Trades Academies programmes, finding they increased the likelihood of students staying in education at age 17 and achieving a Level 2 or higher qualification by age 18. These effects were consistent across genders and ethnic groups and sustained over time. The report further notes the effectiveness of Trades Academies has been maintained or increased since the number of places were increased from 2019, meaning that scalability of successful initiatives does work.

While career education and guidance provision in New Zealand schools is managed by the schools themselves, there are also other supports and initiatives in this area, such as:

- **CATE** (Association of Career and Transition Educators), a national organisation supporting career and transition education, and offering over 900 members professional development, collaboration, and resource sharing.⁶⁶
- **CDANZ** (Career Development Association of NZ), offering professional membership with a code of ethics and frameworks to promote professional standards and consistency across practitioners.
- **Employment Action Plan 2024** (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment⁶⁷) focussed on supporting people to use their skills to lead happier, healthier and more productive lives, contribute to the economy, support communities, businesses, industries and sectors and share in New Zealand's prosperity.
- **Going for Growth Plan 2025** (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment⁶⁸) seeks to develop talent and maximise the potential of New Zealanders, including ensuring businesses can access the people needed to help them compete globally and grow.
- **Inspiring the Future**⁶⁹ is a TEC programme that provides resources to schools to run short, engaging events with industry volunteers who share their career journeys and work experiences to expand students' understanding of future job possibilities.
- **National Careers System Strategy**⁷⁰ is a government-led approach to careers to establish a system that is "fair, equitable, and flexible", aligning education and training with industry requirements and workforce planning.

With a multitude of offerings originating from different authorities within the VET system, there is clearly a lot for students, whanau and employers to engage with. Seasoned industry liaison specialists, such as WDC transition teams, have been helping stakeholders make sense of,

⁶⁴ <https://youthguarantee.education.govt.nz/>
<https://www.tec.govt.nz/funding/funding-and-performance/funding/fund-finder/maori-and-pasifika-trades-training>

⁶⁵ Earle, 2025

⁶⁶ <https://www.cate.co.nz/about-cate/>

⁶⁷ <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/business-and-employment/employment-and-skills/employment/employment-action-plan-august-2024>

⁶⁸ <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/business-and-employment/economic-growth/going-for-growth>

⁶⁹ <https://www.inspiringthefuture.org.nz/#/>

⁷⁰ TEC, 2023

and gain access to, the supports appropriate to their needs. Yet just as some commentators call for this role to be expanded to include advising schools on curriculum development for industry training pathways⁷¹, the new Industry Skills Boards will start with a narrower set of functions and less funding than the WDC's.⁷²

The potential risk to the advisory role and its contribution to streamlining cross-sector offerings is one that will need managing in the new VET system.

4.7 Championing good practice and good partnerships

A key concern for the VET redesign is the losses which can occur: losses of institutional knowledge and resources, relationships, successful programmes and events, skilled personnel who know the sector, and overseeing bodies with expertise and experience.

WDC staff cover a range of functions, as described above, but are primarily connectors or bridges, between different parts of the system, and agents for advocacy. The myriad VET stakeholders need to know who their people are, have confidence in their commitment, and understand the measures of success and accountability which frame their role.

The Hanga-Aro-Rau pathways and transitions team have been highly effective in a range of functions which we believe are essential to our future workforce, including:

- Promoting employer-led engagement models that connect industry with education
- Supporting schools to prepare students for direct entry into industry
- Supporting schools to expand career pathways
- Raising awareness of skills shortages
- Encouraging employers to invest in youth development
- Creating equitable access to meaningful learning and work experiences
- Facilitating cross-sector gatherings and events.

This work is underpinned by two governance groups we hope to see supported under a new VET system.

First is our **Industry Stakeholder Group (ISG)**. Since 2022, the ISG has provided guidance and feedback on the organisation's strategic direction and performance, and advice and information from an industry perspective. Members represent a broad range and diversity of views and traverse the wide range of our 70+ sectors.

Members are from industry, non-profit and commercial industry associations, regional trusts, Māori and Pacific organisations, unions, high schools, and the National Iwi Chairs Forum. This is not business-as-usual: Hanga-Aro-Rau is the only WDC to have an industry-led advisory group guiding its strategy. Recruitment and selection look at the key capabilities needed for a strong representative group with cross-sector knowledge and deep community connections.

Second are our nine **National Industry Advisory Groups (NIAGs)** comprised of industry leaders from around the country. NIAGs advise Hanga-Aro-Rau about skills and training issues within their specific industry sector, with a particular focus on lifting the skill levels of

⁷¹ Johnston, 2024

⁷² MOE, 2025

the Māori workforce and other traditionally under-served groups. The platform allows specified industries to provide us with input about performance and initiatives, and to enable industry to raise issues and concerns.

Retaining established effective and informed industry advisory groups would allow the new Industry Skills Boards to ‘hit the ground running’ and go a long way to ensuring continuity in the handover of services. These groups already have the skills, knowledge and mana to steer the next set of entities through their establishment.

5. Recommendations for optimal transitions

5.1 National Career System Strategy

1. The **Action Plan for the National Career System Strategy**. Industry continues to play a key role in the delivery and success of the Strategy.
2. A **Digital Skills Framework** to build and assess the levels of digital capability is developed, similar to those in the UK, USA, Australia and elsewhere.⁷³

5.2 Partnerships between schools and industry

3. **Brokerage services** support schools to connect and develop partnerships with industry.
4. Employability skills are taught to all students, with relevant micro-credentials.
5. A set of **Employer Benchmarks** are created so employers can self-review their engagement with schools and employment of young people.
6. The **WE3 model** is promoted to schools as a stair-case approach to workplace experience.
7. **Inspiring the Future** is promoted to schools from Year 7 – 13. Support is provided that enables more schools to host programmes.

5.3 School leadership

8. All secondary schools have a trained careers workforce.
9. Schools have clear expectations on, and plans for, industry engagement (in line with the Education & Training Act 2020).
10. School leadership and Boards of Trustees are empowered by being educated on the value of career education; a culture of lifelong learning is actively promoted.
11. Every school has a current strategy for career education and guidance.
12. Career education leadership in schools is supported through development programmes.
13. Career education is a school-wide responsibility and integrated into the curriculum.
14. **Career Education and Guidance in New Zealand Schools** (2009) is reviewed and provides guidelines for career education (and industry engagement) and the development of student career management competencies at every year level.

⁷³ Alkema, 2023

15. The suite of **Career Education Benchmarks** (2016) is reviewed, providing guidelines for schools to self-review their career education programmes, including industry collaboration.

5.4 Aligned and transparent pathways

16. The disparity of esteem between vocational and university education is actively addressed.
17. Vocational pathways at school are aligned with Industry Skills Board sectors. Students can transition seamlessly into internships or apprenticeships by building on basic skills and Vocational Awards (to Level 3) earned at school.
18. There are opportunities for rangatahi to experience workplaces from Year 7 onwards through a scaffold model (such as the WE3 Continuum by Dave Turner) and programmes such as Inspiring the Future (TEC). Rangatahi are supported to break down stereotypes, engage with employers and experience workplaces to help make informed decisions.
19. Curriculum is co-designed with industry in collaboration. Schools are responsive to local workforce needs and industry can take on new employees with the skills it needs.
20. The Gateway programme is reviewed to ensure it creates real workplace learning opportunities for rangatahi so they can make informed decisions on learning and career pathways.
21. There are clearer, tighter and more unified connections between Gateway, Trades Academies, STAR funding and Vocational Pathways to facilitate easier transitions from school into vocational education.

6. Conclusion

In this White Paper, we have described seven fundamental principles of successful transitions from school to workplace.

We understand the complexity of challenges facing all stakeholders: economic imperatives, industry requirements, and learners' need for better understanding of the opportunities in industry sectors, such as Manufacturing, Engineering and Logistics. We know there is more still to be done.

There is a platform of successful career transition systems and processes currently working. Our approach has been to **equip** employers with insights and opportunities to engage with the education system and learners, and to **empower** learners and key influencers, such as careers advisors, with better understanding of industry careers and pathways. Multi-layered and integrated approaches such as 'Inspiring the Future' events, and which encapsulate the 'work exposure – work exploration – work experience' continuum, have been strongly endorsed by participants.

A significant contributor to this success has been the depth of collaborative engagement and high trust relationships established in recent years, including the leadership and governance roles contributed by our National Industry Advisory Groups and Industry Stakeholder Group networks. We strongly recommend the continuance of these critical forums in the new Industry Skills Boards system.

A redesigned VET system must be accessible and inclusive but also aligned with the needs of the labour market and industry's future trajectory. Equally essential is the retention of the advisory/liaison/connector role, linking stakeholders together to address the identified

weaknesses and build on existing strengths. We want and need our young people to thrive in the workforce and contribute to the nation's economic and social wellbeing. They are the key to the future prosperity of Aotearoa New Zealand, and why we are here, doing the work, and now – passing the baton.

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