

Executive Summary

Kia ora koutou,

I hope you had a restful Christmas break and were able to spend some quality time with whānau and friends.

As we enter 2023 it is the perfect time to reflect on our achievements from the most recent, activity-filled quarter while also looking forward to the exciting year ahead.

Before the end of 2022 we visited three national education fairs in Thailand to promote the Waikato region as an international education destination, progressed the Freight Action Plan, hosted workforce development leads from seven regions and announced our partnership with Māoriverse.

We also took up the opportunity to highlight the value drivers of our region in an op ed for the NBR, an online publication and authority in New Zealand business news and analysis. These are just a few of the opportunities Te Waka has progressed in recent months: continue reading for our full report.

Looking ahead

Our November business sentiment survey took the pulse of business confidence and priorities in the Waikato region – insight that we're keeping in mind as we plan for 2023.

Key takeaways included continued ambition and confidence within the Waikato, with 55% of business owners expecting to grow in the next 12 months. Some of this positivity is region-specific, with results showing a distinct gap between business confidence in the local economy versus the national economy.

With one of the key challenges businesses face in the Waikato being a shortage of talent, Te Waka's Workforce Action Plan is firmly in play to help drive the region's economic development strategy.

Our key workforce priorities for 2023 include creating a framework for local businesses and educators to engage with one another more effectively and continuing to build and maintain ongoing relationships. We will continue to drive for action as a member of the Waikato Regional Skills Leadership Group and our partnership with Hanga-Ara Rau will give further insights into qualification gaps that need filling.

We have a lot to be excited for in 2023 in our four priority areas - facilitation, connection, advocacy, and data and insights - that will lift economic performance across the region and improve the wellbeing of Waikato people and communities.

We look forward to working with you and keeping you updated through the year.

Ngā mihi,



Fiona Carrick | CEO

Facilitation

Learn Waikato Thailand trip

In November, as part of the Education NZ (ENZ) and industry-funded Thailand campaign, our Workforce Development Manager, Pratishtha Purohit, represented education providers of the Waikato region at three national education fairs in Bangkok and Phuket. Our attendance was very well received, with 103 leads generated and relationships built with 30 Thai agents. We promoted the Waikato region as an intentional education destination for students, parents, and agents.



A group of the Thai school delegates will visit the Waikato in early 2023 to explore opportunities for school exchange programmes. Our online Learn Waikato marketing campaign in Thailand will run until April 2023 to continue to generate leads for the region. Te Waka also hosted a virtual webinar at the end of November with over 44 attendees, including Thailand agents, Waikato schools, tertiary institutes, Te Pukenga and the University of Waikato to showcase their offerings, introduce themselves to our target market and build closer relationships between educators and agents to support long-term growth.

Our active promotional activity has contributed to a 60% increase in website views and toolkit registrations on our Learn Waikato website, and we expect to continue seeing steady growth.

Freight Action Plan

We have continued our stakeholder engagement with industry, local government and central government to progress the Freight Action Plan during the December quarter. Based on industry feedback and support we are prioritising two workstreams as we enter 2023:

- **Network capacity and resilience:** A steering group has been established and we are expanding its scope to incorporate freight linkages into Auckland and Taranaki. This workstream will focus on creating a compelling vision for long-term investment in an inter-regional transport network that enables safe, efficient, resilient, low-carbon movement of freight between the Waikato and its neighbouring regions.
- **Skills:** We are engaging with the Waikato Regional Skills Leadership Group (RSLG) to identify gaps in the availability of driver training courses locally and to advocate for those gaps to be addressed through the reform of vocational education. We are also working with the Road to Success team at Transporting NZ to raise awareness and support uptake of their industry-led truck driver training programme.

Workforce Action Plan

Te Waka has developed its Workforce Action Plan to 2025, founded on supporting delivery of the Waikato Regional Skills Leadership Group (RSLG) workforce plan and Te Waka's economic development strategy. The purpose of the plan is to enable the development of a diverse, thriving, and adaptable Waikato workforce.

The key Workforce Development priorities for 2023 include:

- Create a framework for local businesses and educators to engage with each other more effectively.
- Build and maintain long-term and ongoing relationships with Educators, WDCs, RSLG and regional and national stakeholders.
- Support the delivery of priority Waikato RSLG initiatives.
- Complete the delivery of the Thailand campaign project and develop a proposal for the FY24 Education NZ funding to continue our support for international education in the region.
- Promote the Waikato as a desirable place to live and work, to attract and retain talent in the region.

Connection

Māori economic development

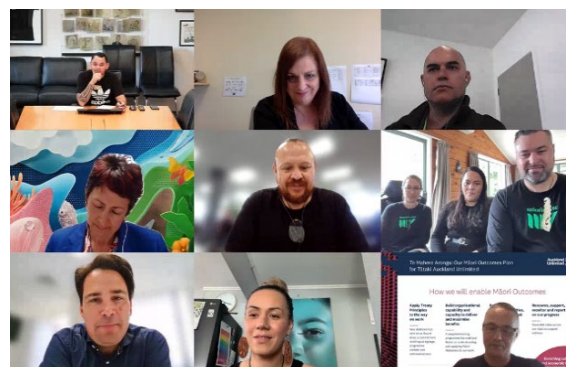
In December we announced our partnership with **Māoriverse** to deliver Māori economic development outcomes across the Waikato region through an online Māori business directory.

The directory will be available on www.maoriverse.co.nz alongside a toolbox that identifies providers to support the growth of Māori businesses. Both initiatives will create greater opportunities for Māori businesses within the Waikato by raising awareness and enabling connectivity.



In December we also hosted the very first **Mana Tangata** online hui – a cross-regional rōpū established to increase relationships and awareness for those working in the Māori business space in Aotearoa. This hui included some exceptional leaders from Economic Development Agencies, Chambers of Commerce and Māori Business Networks from across the country, all wanting to enhance their regions and their own knowledge and awareness.

The rōpū was privileged to have KOKIRI, Māoriverse and Poutama Trust present at the hui, providing insight into the support services they offer to Māori businesses. Our hope is to facilitate further Mana Tangata hui throughout 2023.



Tech sector connections

During the December quarter we were pleased to promote and attend a range of tech sector events in the region, including the Future Leaders in Tech (FLINT) Future of Work conference, IoT Waikato's November meetup, and LIC's series of Tech Waikato events. We are also encouraging local tech companies to apply for the NZ Hi-Tech Awards and attend an information evening in February 2023.

In our work with the Cultivate Trust we are working closely with the Tertiary Tech Alliance to plan for a 'speed networking' event to connect local technology students (from the University of Waikato, Wintec and Vision College) to local tech companies looking to recruit entry-level talent. We will also be supporting the Cultivate Trust to run local events during Techweek23.

Workforce development

In November, Te Waka hosted workforce development leads from seven regions to discuss common issues and key focus areas. We identified opportunities to collaborate, share, trial and implement successful programmes from other regions. Key focus areas for 2023 include supporting better connections between employers and educators, retention of young people, and skills shortages in crucial areas like manufacturing, logistics, primary industries, technology, road transport and licensing. We look forward to continuing our cross-regional partnerships and collaborating to share our insights.

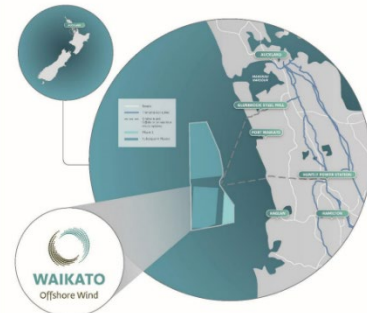


Te Waka is also collaborating with Hanga-Ara-Rau, the Workforce Development Council for manufacturing, logistics and transport. In January 2023 we will bring together MBIE, MITO, Road to Success, and Waikato-Tainui to explore the advancement of pathways for the logistics sector in line with significant developments in the region, including the Ruakura Inland Port and Titanium Park. We aim to conduct a qualification gap analysis for the logistics and transport sector, considering we expect to have an additional 7,000 operational-level jobs by 2024.

Advocacy

We are pleased to share the following updates for the December quarter, from sectors related to our regional economic priorities:

BlueFloat Energy, Energy Estate and Elemental Group Limited announced their shared plans for a multibillion-dollar investment in **Waikato Offshore Wind project**. The energy sector is a key growth industry for the Waikato region, and we look forward to seeing the new source of clean renewable energy support economic growth and increased investment to the region.



Ecogas opened their new facility in Reporoa, the first of its kind in New Zealand. The opening was a celebration of New Zealand's progress towards a circular economy. This landmark project is the largest food waste processing facility in New Zealand using advanced technology proven overseas. At its full capacity, the Ecogas facility will produce renewable energy, biofertiliser and renewable carbon dioxide from 75,000 tonnes of inedible food waste and other organic residues.



We were pleased to support the **HCLTech Rise Programme** milestone event in November, celebrating the progress of the Rise at HCLTech pilot programme. The Rise programme is focused on providing opportunities for Māori, Pasifika, women, migrants, and others looking to upskill and reskill in the IT sector.



Fieldays, the Southern Hemisphere's largest agricultural event was held at the infamous Mystery Creek venue from 30 November to 3 December 2022, the first Fieldays to be in the summer season. Fieldays is a hub for technology and innovation, and it highlights the important role the primary sector plays in the Waikato region's economy.



Fieldays is an important economic engine for the region and New Zealand. Between 2015 and 2019, the event's total impact on the Waikato region's economy was approximately \$855m (Fieldays Economic Impact Reports).

Fieldays supports education initiatives for students starting their careers in agriculture, health and wellbeing for workers and professionals in the industry and promotes the globalisation of agritech innovations.

Te Waka's presence at Fieldays was focussed on agritech and primary sector workforce development, attending several agritech events hosted by Callaghan Innovation and engaging closely with the Fieldays Careers Hub. During the event we celebrated the official launch of the Centre for Climate Action on Agricultural Emissions, the launch of Callaghan Innovation's Agritech Knowledge Hub, and the Waikato winners of Fieldays Innovation Awards, Riverwatch and the University of Waikato.

Data & Insights

Business Sentiment Survey

In December, we released the results of the fourth iteration of Te Waka's Business Sentiment Survey. The survey results reflect a business community that is backing itself to perform in a challenging business environment marked by cost pressures, skills shortages, and ongoing supply chain challenges. The full survey results are available on [our website](#).

Our next iteration of the Business Sentiment Survey is scheduled to run in March 2023.

EDNZ Conference

We were pleased to contribute the Waikato perspective to the Re-imagining our Regions Panel discussion at the Economic Development NZ Annual Conference in Ōtautahi Christchurch in November. The conference was a great opportunity for Te Waka to build connections with and learn from our economic development peers across Aotearoa. Building on the success of our partnership with Priority One for the Waikato & Bay of Plenty Freight Action Plan, we will continue to pursue opportunities for inter-regional collaboration for strategic sectors and growth initiatives in 2023.



Updates

Techweek23

Te Waka is excited to be the regional coordinator for Techweek23 that will run from 13-20 May 2023.

Techweek23 is a celebration of New Zealand tech, providing opportunities for the tech ecosystem to come together to inspire, inform, educate, and showcase how we are creating tech for a better tomorrow.



Waikato is a hub for innovation and is one of New Zealand's fastest growing regional tech sectors. It is important we showcase the great tech opportunities in our region with a week full of events.

If you are interested in hosting an event during Techweek23 please contact communications@tewaka.nz

University of Waikato – PR Paper

Students in their final year at the University of Waikato used Te Waka as a case study to implement their knowledge into creating a campaign plan for a real-life organisation.

The team was fortunate to attend the 2022 Waikato School of Management and Marketing's PR Campaigns Competition at The University of Waikato, where two teams of students pitched their strategic communication plans for Te Waka to a panel of judges.

