



**RINGA HORA**

**Services**

Workforce Development Council



**Voices of the Service sector**

**- *What we've heard***



He rau ringa e oti ai - Many hands make light work

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## Papakupu- Glossary of te reo Māori

**ā-kanohi** – face to face

**awhi** – embrace

**hapū** – Sub-tribe

**hui** – meeting

**iwi** – tribe or confederation of tribes

**kaimahi** – employees, workers

**kaitiakitanga** – guardianship, stewardship

**kaupapa** – topic/s, matter/s for discussion, subject/s, issue/s

**kaupapa Māori** – A philosophical Māori approach, incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori society

**kōrero** – speech, narrative, story

**mana** – prestige, authority, spiritual power

**manaakitanga** – hospitality, kindness, generosity, support

**manaaki tangata** – supporting people

**manuhiri** – visitors

**motu** – island, country, land, nation

**pono** – be true, valid, honest, genuine, sincere

**rangatahi** – youth

**rūnanga** – tribal council

Rōpū – groups

**te Ao Māori** – The Māori world

**te Ao Māori worldview** – The Māori worldview

**tika** – to be correct, true, upright, right, just, fair

**wānanga** – meeting, gathering

**whanaungatanga** – relationship, kinship, sense of family connection

## Glossary of terms used

**Māori business** – a business owned by Māori, which included small to medium enterprises

**Iwi business-** business owned by iwi and or Hapū

**Significant employers of Māori-** those that employ a significant amount of Māori or a high percentage of Māori.

## Glossary of symbols used

- A visual signpost that reinforces a recommendation put forward by participants during hui

 Shaded quote box to emphasise quotes from participants

## He whakamihi- Acknowledgements

This report was produced on behalf of Ringa Hora Services Workforce Development Council (Ringa Hora Services) by Te Amokura Consultants; Rewa Harriman (Senior Consultant) - Te Whakatōhea, and Leah Ihaia- Te Ua (Consultant) - Tuwharetoa/Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki.

Te Amokura Consultants warmly acknowledges the contribution made to this research by all participants. The business owners, employees, iwi, hapū and whānau who were interviewed about their experiences within the Service sector; the businesses who welcomed us on-site; and the owners/operators who made themselves available to share their perspective. Your participation in this research has enriched the findings and your voices have shaped the body of this report.

We would also like to acknowledge and thank the kaimahi of Ringa Hora Services, especially Leo Shen, Taryn Batters & Rachael Brown for allowing us to be a part of this kaupapa and trusting us to conduct this important research alongside Scarlatti.

**E kore ngā mihi e mutu ki a koutou katoa, ngā ringa raupā o te rāngai ratonga.**

**Ko te whāinga mātua, he hua ka puta mai i ēnei kohinga kōrero.**

## Ko wai mātou- Who are we?

Te Amokura Consultants specialise in policy, engagement, strategy, communications, and growing cultural competency through understanding Te Tiriti and a te ao Māori worldview. The team have a strong network of connections within Māori communities across the motu.

Te Amokura exists to drive and provide better outcomes for Māori.

## Tuhinga whakarāpopoto : Summary

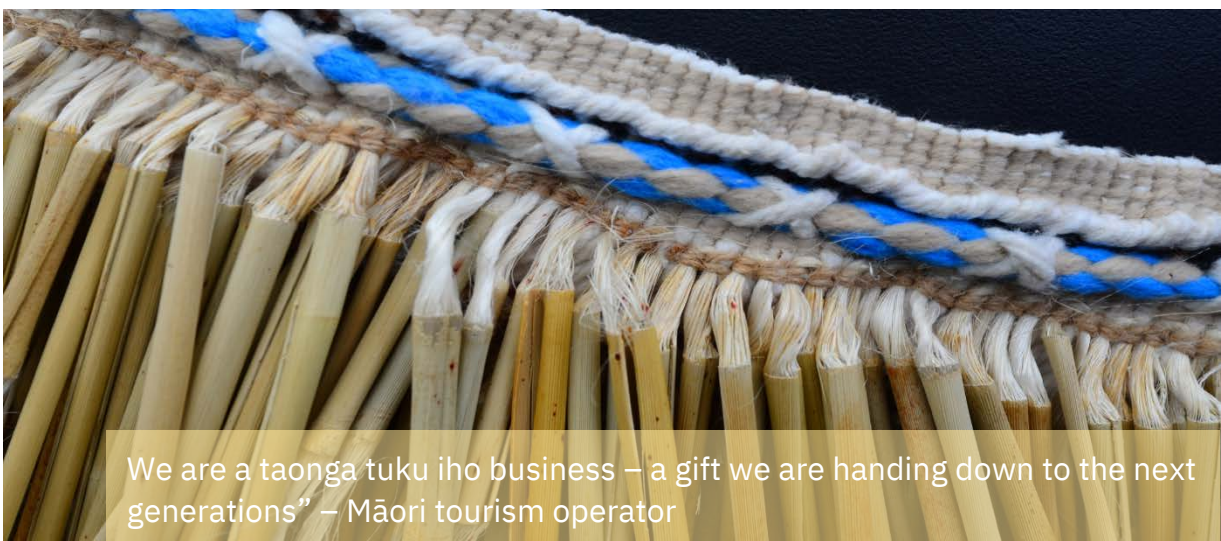
This *Voices of the Service sector* report aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the Service sector through the the voices of Māori, iwi and hapū from within the sector. All participants made valuable contributions and represented either Māori small- medium enterprises, iwi/hapū businesses or Significant employers of Māori in the Service sector.

We set out to explore and learn more about their experiences within the sector, focusing on resilience and workforce mobility during Covid-19 and the challenges facing the sector today with skills and workforce shortages.

The focus of this report is predominantly on Māori within the Service sector, however it did extend to non-Māori businesses as well.

Our engagements concentrated on these parts of the Service sector;  
*Food & wholesale, Accommodation, Retail, Tourism and Security.*

This approach was built on connection, trust and kōrero. We held a safe space for our participants to share their experiences and stories which gave a glimpse into their world; to see the Service sector from their perspective.



## Te Mahere : Our approach

With Covid-19 still in the community when we began engagements, we conducted the majority of the hui (meetings) online. Recruitment for all hui were in the form of a phone-call and followed up with an email and background information on the subject matter. In the later stages of the engagements, we did run a handful of hui in person as the workforce shortages meant that many had to work instead of attending the scheduled zoom engagements. We travelled to participants' workplaces to fit in around their availability

Workshops and one-on-one interviews were held with a range of rōpū including;

- Māori
- non-Māori businesses
- iwi/hapū owners of businesses and/or their representatives
- employees

Participants came from varied backgrounds and represented a cross section of sector interests including;

- food & Wholesale
- retail
- accommodation
- tourism
- security

We used our extensive networks and relationships within Māori communities to assemble quality participants to share their korero and be a part of this kaupapa. Quotes have been used where possible to illustrate pertinent points.



## Kohinga kōrero: Data collection

Notes were taken at each hui, zoom and interview. These interactions were also recorded via zoom to ensure important kōrero was not missed. All recordings and notes will be destroyed at the conclusion of this project.

All participants of online hui were guided by a presentation. Each presentation was prepared according to its category which provided an overview of Ringa Hora services and the purpose of the project. There were standard questions to steer the kōrero but we allowed time and space for participants to open up about issues concerning them, their region, iwi and hapū.

We provided the questions and further information to each participant prior to the engagements so they could attend fully prepared.

## Ngā tāngata : Our audience

In this research Te Amokura Consultants used a te ao Māori approach guided by *manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, tika & pono*. We engaged with Māori, iwi and hapū representatives and non-Māori stakeholders across the motu in order to get broad and rich qualitative data from. Some participants came with years of experience in the sector while others were fairly new to their industry.

Participants within the sectors covered included;

- managers
- owner-operators
- supervisors
- employees

We spoke to 53 participants including the non-Māori businesses. Below is a breakdown of the regions and iwi, hapū representatives we spoke with.

### Regions

**Te Tai Tokerau- Northland**  
-Kaikohe

**Tāmaki Makaurau- Auckland**  
-Auckland

**Hauraki- Waikato**  
-Hamilton

**Waiariki - Bay of Plenty**  
-Murupara  
-Ōhope  
-Opōtiki  
-Rotorua  
-Tauranga  
-Taupō  
-Whakatāne

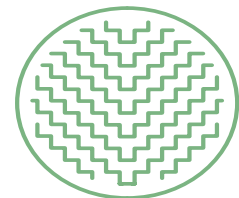
**Te Tairāwhiti - East Coast**  
-Gisborne  
-Hicks bay  
-Ruatoria  
-Tolaga Bay

**Te Waipounamu- South Island**  
-Christchurch  
-Dunedin  
-Kaikōura  
-Kaiteiteri  
-Queenstown



### Iwi and Hapū

Ngāti Awa  
Ngā Rauru kīhahi  
Ngāti Porou  
Ngāpuhi



Waikato-Tainui  
Ngāti Whakaue  
Te Aitanga a Hauiti  
Te Whakatōhea

## Key themes which emerged across engagement audiences

Māori participants	Non-Māori participants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Māori businesses are grounded in cultural values and driven by a collective outcome.</li> <li>• Resilience comes from a different place and is defined by a te ao Māori worldview.</li> <li>• Smaller businesses were impacted heavily by COVID-19, however businesses owned by iwi or larger umbrella companies had more financial insulation.</li> <li>• Labour shortages are causing major issues.</li> <li>• Recruitment is through employing whānau and friends first.</li> <li>• The workload for owner/operators is very high, most are working in the business and not on the business itself.</li> <li>• The Māori service sector is undervalued.</li> <li>• No business support that is te ao Māori and kaupapa Māori orientated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COVID-19 impacts have exacerbated staff and skills shortages.</li> <li>• Regional barriers and issues impact workforce numbers.</li> <li>• The international workforce is a key part of the employee base.</li> <li>• The workload for owner/operators is very high, most are working in the business and not on the business itself.</li> <li>• Workforce mobility is fluid throughout the sector when there is capacity - there's no capacity at the moment.</li> <li>• There are internal learning pathways set up within businesses to ensure the transferability of skills and fundamentals.</li> <li>• The sector is undervalued.</li> </ul>

## Māori Business

- *Food & Wholesale*
- *Retail & Accommodation*
- *Tourism*



## Māori Business – Service sector : Overview

Māori owned businesses are unique, usually grounded in cultural values and driven by a collective outcome. In many cases, it's their avenue to connect and celebrate being Māori. Māori are innately entrepreneurial as a people and that is evident in the breadth of their businesses.

Māori businesses are by and large driven by purpose over profit, while being a financially successful business is important it's not the driving force nor the priority. Their purpose comes from their 'why', whether it's employment opportunities for whānau, showcasing their culture to others or expressing themselves through their product.

Generally, Māori owners are wearing multiple hats in their businesses, particularly the small and medium-sized enterprises. They're the manager, the designer, the marketing executive, the list goes on, it's a case of doing whatever it takes to keep their business dream alive. Many get caught up in the trap of working in the business, and not on the business.

In terms of recruitment or employment, the majority of Māori businesses try to employ whānau, friends or Māori first. It's a matter of looking within their trusted circle before expanding to the rest of the workforce. While there are full-time employment opportunities for some in these industries, a lot of the roles are either part-time or seasonal.



## Food & Wholesale

Our whānau in the food & wholesale sector are passionate, resilient and resourceful. Each one of them displays *'manaaki tangata'* through their food and beverage offerings. Regardless of where they are, the Far North, the East Coast or Auckland's CBD their desire to produce quality kai with warm service is evident. The geographical location of the business does make a difference - the experience for a Māori cafe in a large city compared to one along a remote coastline can vary significantly. In the city, businesses can have higher overheads and more competition whereas a remote cafe is challenged by logistics, foot traffic & environmental impacts.

*"Being in business on the Coast is a barrier in itself."*

Our participants were heavily impacted by COVID-19. The initial and subsequent lockdowns put extreme pressure on these businesses and their ability to operate normally. Some business owners shut down completely during this time, others shut down periodically and the rest pivoted to see what could be done under the restrictions. Businesses moved to contactless pick-ups or deliveries, DIY kits were provided by some and all increased their online presence.

The government wage subsidies helped keep permanent staff employed while part-time staff moved to other available mahi.

*“We had to scale down our business because we are a retail facing business, so needed to be in the kitchen. 120 bowls a day to about 50 bowls. We could not really work from home. We did have graduates pivoting to other roles in the business.”*

The mental toll on business owners has been significant, the stress to navigate these uncertain times and adjust to the different alert settings and restrictions has caused many sleepless nights. Not all businesses were able to survive Covid-19 and some owners had to make the decision to close permanently.

*“We had to close in May 2022, it just wasn't viable to keep open.”*

The ongoing impacts of the pandemic are still being felt by businesses, staff shortages are a major issue for the entire sector. While recruitment is problematic everywhere, it seems to be worse in regions outside of Tāmaki Makaurau, particularly remote areas.

Māori are resilient by nature, there is a long history of hardship and challenges that Māori have had to face pre and post-colonisation.

*“Being resilient is part of who we are and adjusting to the challenges of the day is part and parcel of running a business.”*

*“It is in our DNA as Māori to naturally be business and resilience minded, we build up to this and add to our character.”*

*“We are constantly having to build resilience through the hardships. It is through the moment of realisation that you have to do your best to deal with it. you learn a lot by ‘doing’. Your own networks, being around like-minded people.”*

Māori work as a collective and band together during times of adversity.

- All participants agree more Māori-specific mentoring will be advantageous and help Māori businesses thrive into the future.
- While there are support networks out there; being exposed and mentored early will better equip Māori businesses to the highs and lows of owning and operating a business.



*“If I was exposed to these things earlier it would have made a big difference. Knowledge is key and being exposed to business early in life - business operation & sales”.*





## Retail & Accommodation

Māori retail and accommodation businesses are vibrant and creative. They're an expression of identity, culture and community. All of the business owners have created their businesses as a direct link to their culture and a way to celebrate it. Most retail businesses we spoke to operate online with the addition of pop-up stores at markets or other events. The two accommodation participants rely heavily on international tourists who are given a quintessential Māori/kiwi experience as part of their stay.

Similar to the food and wholesale sector, retailers and accommodation businesses suffered severely throughout the pandemic. While a small number of hotels transformed into MIQ facilities, the rest of the accommodation sector was crushed with the border closures. The local market helped to some extent but it did not cover the loss of the international tourists.

*"80% of visitors are from Travel Essence [Travel Company]. In the next 3 months, we will have no visitors at all."*

Retail businesses had to up the ante online to continue with their sales but this was a challenge for some without digital expertise.

The other major issue was the supply chain which also hindered their workflow over this time.

*“The supply chain was a challenge, to source this stock, as I cannot find a supplier in NZ as it's not the same quality.”*

*“Transitioning in and out of Auckland was difficult. We couldn't move stock through. It was a logistical nightmare.”*

With events cancelled, that sales stream also disappeared for some retailers. For those who had stores, rent relief was requested but not always given.

One participant is still repaying the arrears.

The mental health of those running retail businesses and accommodation offerings was hit hard and they continue to feel the impacts to this day.

*“Try to navigate the sales, [the] mental space to navigate, learning how to share what I was going through and connect authentically through the brand. The mental aspect on how to get sales, as there were no parties or events.”*

Some of the participants have other jobs to supplement income, with the intention of moving full-time to their business once viable. Whānau is relied on to help out with the business to varying degrees, it could range from being employed full time to assisting on a voluntary basis. The majority want to use their business as an opportunity to get rangatahi involved from an early age.

Like their food and wholesale peers, resilience is apparent throughout these Māori businesses and this part of the sector. Participants credited their Māori world view for their degree of resilience.

*“As Māori we get in and we do it. We think for the long term because who will make them if I don't? That's resilience. It's not about economic gain. it doesn't matter what the Service or product, the resilience comes from the deeper te ao Māori meaning. It's more to do with the kaupapa, as the mother of it, and you want to see it reach its potential.”*

The participants have identified three key areas that would support Māori businesses moving forward:

- more Māori mentorship
- more training aimed at lifting Māori businesses to become self-sufficient and;
- a Māori business directory where connections can be made.



## Māori Tourism

Māori tourism is a window into our whakapapa, culture and traditions. It's a way of sharing our stories, our people and our place with those from near and far. It sets Aotearoa apart from the rest of the world as a destination and continues to attract international visitors to our country. Māori tourism can be found in all corners of Aotearoa, in tourism hotspots like Rotorua and Queenstown through to our most remote areas.

The tourism sector was one of the hardest hit during the pandemic, the border closers literally stopped the flow of their customers and in turn their income. The ongoing uncertainty crippled Māori businesses where many had to close down during this time. The local market and support meant some operators could continue running their business at a lower capacity to supplement the losses.

*"I was really concerned for Māori operators providing a Māori experience, because the domestic market won't buy it."*

While most did rely heavily on the international market previously, pivoting during this time was vital. Concentrating on their own backyard and even changing up their offering to suit a local market was advantageous.

*“We pivoted to our local community, i.e., kura. We maintain this model with a 40% market.”*

*“When Covid-19 hit, we didn't have the stress of letting anyone go, or having to pay them, as it was just us. We pivoted and created a niche that suits the way we work. It shows in the reviews we are getting, that we are on the right track.”*

There is a dark shadow that has been left behind by Covid-19 though. As the sector finds its feet again with the return of international tourists, and the need to upscale their workforce, finding staff has become problematic. Participants believe the overall value and worth of tourism has lowered and people don't see it as a viable career pathway anymore.

*“We need to do a PR job on tourism.”*

*“We need to change the perspective of tourism to others, especially rangatahi. We need to build this up for people to see tourism as a good bet for the future.”*

Tourism is a natural fit for Māori, from our connection to the whenua to the way we embrace manuhiri. Many of the Māori tourism businesses employ whānau or close associates who have a vested interest in the business. It's also a way for rangatahi Māori to see a future in the industry as well.

*“We are able to bring on trainees and create pathways for our rangatahi to come into our business. It means they are employable throughout the whole year.”*

Māori culture is the brand that is showcased to the world and needs to be valued as such in the tourism sectors.

- All Māori tourist participants emphasised support is needed at the grassroots level, however this help needs to come from a Māori worldview.

*“How do we find business support that is te ao Māori and kaupapa Māori orientated. There's nothing in the mainstream/commercial space that works for us as Māori tourism.”*

*“We know what our business needs, being able to have a mentor, or someone who understands from a kaupapa Māori perspective. It needs to be tailored to the business, not a cut and paste copy. There's way too many boxes to tick. We can't tick YOUR box.”*

- It's unanimous that targeted funding towards training and upskilling Māori would be beneficial. Apprenticeships seems to be a popular model for the industry to follow.
- Creating a Māori advisory group made up of small and medium enterprises operators.
- Reimagining the vocational space could also be a game changer by placing students into the workforce earlier for exposure to the working environment.

*“Ringa Hora has a big opportunity here to look into the models being used by year 12/13. If we took vocational training into our Schools, where the Westminster system doesn't fit. Imagine them coming into vocational educational space or sitting with one of us for a year, getting NCEA credits as part of a vocational planning pathway that allows them to make the decisions.”*

## Iwi Business

- *Food & Wholesale*
- *Retail & Accommodation*
- *Tourism*



## Iwi Business – Service sector : Overview

Iwi businesses are unlike any other, they're established by the iwi, for the iwi. The businesses can vary but their purpose is the same to bring benefits to their descendants through cultural, social or financial success. In most cases, it's all of the above.

Similar to Māori businesses, iwi are driven by their purpose and the future wellbeing of their members. The financial success is important but there's particular emphasis on the cultural and social impact the business provides as well. While iwi and Māori businesses are grounded in similar philosophy, iwi businesses are more complex with extra responsibilities and direct accountability to current and future descendants.

*"We have an obligation much higher than a mum and dad business, the legacy that we must uphold and hand down is much bigger."*

In some cases the nature of the business is shaped by the location and the characteristics of their surroundings. For example coastal iwi will tend to be involved in fisheries while urban iwi have business interests in property.

More often than not there is a large Māori workforce in iwi businesses, and a portion of those have whakapapa connections to the iwi as well.

As one participant put it *"our aim is to employ our own people where we can."*





## Food & wholesale

Iwi participants in the food & wholesale sector are agile. Whether it's providing the best quality kai or developing their own people within the business, iwi commit to both with ease. However, the size, nature and geographical location of the business does influence them differently. Urban iwi businesses can be challenged by greater competition and higher overheads while their rural counterparts deal with workforce shortages & retention.

*"How do we ensure we are creating opportunities, and allow people to grow without the fear of losing them?"*

Covid-19 has had a severe impact on iwi participants in the food & wholesale part of the service sector. While some were classed as an essential service and could still operate under the different alert levels, the rules and restrictions during this period were challenging for the businesses. Juggling staff who were isolating or having an entire whānau out of the workforce were some of the issues they tackled.

Iwi businesses ensured the livelihoods of their staff regardless of their position or role and because of this most of the iwi participants were able to ensure job security and full pay.

*“Full pay was offered for the entire period which set everyone at ease. This decision was made during Covid-19. Our financial performance was limited, but the awahi that was received from the rūnanga was huge.”*

Manaaki tangata was shown in different ways.

*“The CEO gave up some of his own pay so that we could top up our staff because less hours means less money. He was topping up everyone’s pay so they were all getting the same as before.”*

The uncertain times meant staff had to be agile and employees showed their support for the business by diversifying their roles to keep the business ticking over. In some cases this extended to Covid-19 relief support as that was the priority for the iwi during this period.

Like all business in the food & wholesale, previous challenges with skills shortages were magnified during the pandemic and remain an ongoing concern sector wide.

*“There was a skills shortage in our sector within the community before the pandemic. Given the added complexity that Covid-19 brought to the business it just compounded the issue during recruitment phases slowing our ability to recruit given restrictions to travel and limited access to visitors onsite.”*

It wasn’t all doom and gloom for iwi businesses, some pivoted to an online service and delivered their goods to customers that way. This not only helped over the pandemic but it has continued to be a high value income stream for the business. Another iwi business used this period to reset and refocus.

*“We leveraged off the opportunity that we had all these skills around the world and we could tap into them because everybody was at home. We were able to rebrand and reposition our product.”*

Post Covid-19, staff shortages have continued to be problematic for business. Some participants have noticed a power shift where the job seeker is in the driving seat with so many options and jobs to choose from. Flexible working conditions are also some of the new requirements of potential employees.

*“I'm noticing that really, the roles have switched. They're almost interviewing us to see whether or not we fit the set of ideals.”*

However, growing the Māori workforce is part of the plan for our participants. This is not only to give employment opportunities to their own people but to also successfully sustain their business into the future. For those in areas with high Māori populations, it's a necessity.

*“Given the demographic of the community, growing the Māori working capability is the only way logically that we can sustain our business across generations. It is crucial that Māori are at the forefront of training and development in this space.”*

For our participants, attraction, training and retention are key areas to build their workforce. Some of the participants have collaborated with a training provider to upskill their workers. However, for those in rural areas, barriers still remain to access certain training programmes locally.

*“Our fear is that if we identify a really good person, and we send them away for training that we might not get that person back. That's a reality that we're definitely dealing with at the moment.”*

- One participant believes micro credentials could be one way to satisfy and motivate employees to continue through those entry level roles before moving up the chain

*“I think the trick there is that they've got to be able to see through to the other side, because if they come in and all they ever think is that they're going to be there for the next 23 years. They will just not be there for the next 23 minutes.”*

With the future in mind, training at all levels is essential to these businesses.

*“We need to be upskilling everyone across the whole value chain.”*

- From an operational standpoint pathways into technology and digital literacy at all levels would be advantageous.





## Retail and Accommodation

The iwi retail and accommodation businesses are similar to the other tribal businesses, with their overarching purpose to serve their people while balancing the financial and social outcomes. Our participants have a mixture of businesses from property through to accommodation, and one is involved in retail.

While all participants were impacted by Covid-19, it varied in terms of its degree. For one retail participant it was extremely difficult, they were an essential service and could operate under all alert levels but the health and safety restrictions for both staff and customers plus community fear during that time heightened an already stressful environment. Some staff couldn't work due to their whānau circumstances so they had to reduce their operating hours accordingly. Revenue took a hit over this time.

*“Our shop sales dropped dramatically because we just had people coming into the window paying for the gas and leaving, most of our profit is made from our shop sales.”*

The business diversified where they could over this period which helped reclaim some of the losses.

For one of our accommodation businesses, there wasn't any downturn in profits as they were used as an MIQ facility. However, if this hadn't occurred things would've been very different.

*"We would have been in trouble. Things would have been a little bit dicey for a while."*

Another accommodation participant pivoted to become an emergency accommodation provider, this helped ease their financial strain temporarily. There was a period of time when customers started to book again and they balanced emergency accommodation with regular customers but after a while they ceased their emergency offering. Levels of occupancy are starting to bounce back but it's very unpredictable which has been problematic to roster staff and upscale when needed.

*"It's hard with casual workers, if you can't give them somewhat regular work they'll go elsewhere."*

During the lockdown stage, staff were supported by the government wage subsidies and topped up by the iwi to 80%. Throughout the pandemic it's been a case of mucking in where needed for this participant.

*"I've been plugging holes to stop the dam from bursting."*

Iwi again supported their businesses, and gave them a backstop if and when needed.

*"There is insulation from the iwi, so the stress on income, profitability and losses are absorbed by the iwi."*

The workforce generally reflects the community, recruiting iwi members where possible and the rest of the employee base is made up from the local community. For example, one business is 25% Māori which aligns to the Māori demographic for their region. Currently, labour shortages are causing major concern for all businesses.

*“Across the board, it is very difficult to recruit and hire.”*

*“The sector needs to be more attractive for workers, we need to ensure we are demonstrating best practice when it comes to supporting staff wellbeing. The pathways are there – the people currently are not.”*

*“We’re focused on growing our own workforce, and we are seeing huge dividends.”*

*“As an iwi, we want 25% of our commercial spend to be on whānau owned businesses by 2040.”*

Some already have strong partnerships with training providers while others are just starting to create those relationships. The beauty that these partnerships entail is the balance between working and training within your iwi while gaining the skills needed for particular roles and career pathways.

*“90% of our money is around pastoral care, not just for the tribal member but for our organisations that have partnered with us to ensure that you know, they are creating pathways, more pathways and opportunities for our whanau.”*

*“It’s just making sure that in order to build a more resilient sector, we need to make sure that the programmes that we have in place, have the support.”*

Finding the right organisation to partner with is essential for iwi businesses.

*“We’re very mindful of solidifying our partnerships and relationships that align with our strategy.”*

*“Alternative education has been the key to work with our whānau in terms of employment.”*

For all participants, the most important aspect is connecting whānau back to opportunities.







## Iwi tourism

Iwi tourism is Māori tourism with a distinct connection to iwi whakapapa, whenua and history. This gives them the mana and authenticity to share their stories, people and place with visitors from around Aotearoa and abroad. It's another avenue for iwi to showcase their own cultural uniqueness and iwi identity.

Iwi tourism was hit just as hard as their non-Māori counterparts during the pandemic with the border closures and alert level restrictions. Any type of lockdown impacted the tourism trade.

*“100% they affected us. Anytime there was any type of lockdown whether it was in the North or South, people just stopped traveling.”*

Due to the complete halt of tourists there were job losses for some, and like many others in the tourism industry the iwi businesses needed to diversify. One operator completely changed their offerings to attract domestic travellers while another operator used the time to upskill workers so they could cover multiple roles.

*“Our big focus was trying to maintain meaningful work for our people and that meant upskilling our team so they have a significant degree of versatility.”*

Another iwi tourism business tried a different approach by shifting some of their staff into their other businesses. This helped fill holes in the interim but hasn't been sustainable with ongoing labour shortages across the service sector.

The workforce is predominantly Māori in these iwi tourism businesses with the rest made up of locals and working visa holders during seasonal peaks. Iwi connections are desirable but not necessary. Training is normally given on the job as few come with the breadth of experience needed for the unique offerings.

Geographical challenges also remain for smaller, rural townships to attract available talent to fill vacancies.

*“Because we are a small town it is hard to attract talent.”*

*“When we advertise for people, we stipulate that we are after certain qualifications or skill sets but this is not a requirement. Many have worked for other tourism businesses but a majority come with no prior skills or training.”*

*“We have to do things differently because the historical lines of employment of recruitment are closed and not working.”*

Participants note, specialised skills do take longer to train and therefore require more resources.

Similar to other sectors recruiting employees is challenging at the moment.

It seems to be even more so for tourism after taking such a hit during the pandemic. People are hesitant to get into this part of the sector as they don't see it as a viable career. Participants will often recruit whānau, iwi members or local Māori as their preferred options.

*“Because we are a Māori business, we will 'head hunt' whānau, going past all the traditional interview processes.”*

Levels of employment have not sprung back to where they were pre Covid-19.

*“Before Covid-19 we probably hired about 75 people. Currently, we are sitting at about 30-32 and we will look to build as the demand comes back on board. About 80% are Māori.”*

- Looking ahead, participants see ‘earn as you learn’ schemes and on the job training as integral parts of their businesses which will also build a stronger workforce throughout the sector. Iwi tourism is special, they're guided by their past and driven by their future.

*“Our values are kaitiakitanga, manaakitanga, whanaungatanga.”*

## Significant Employers of Māori

- *Security*
- *Retail*
- *Tourism*



## Significant employers of Māori : Overview

This section of significant Employers of Māori in this report was based on recent research done by Te Puni Kokiri - *Te Mahurehure*. It found this grouping was fundamental to the Māori economy due to their workforce contribution. Unfortunately there is no specific database to identify these businesses but we did pull together a group that fit this description of businesses that have a large proportion of Māori employees.

Our participants' employees are generally determined by their regional or local demographic, and in one case, it was the nature of the role that positioned a higher percentage of Māori employees. Aside from one participant, there wasn't an official recruitment drive towards Māori, their workforce just aligned to their community.

*“Currently ⅓ of our staff are Māori, this has been a consistent theme for quite a few years. I think we have a good representation of the community and our unofficial recruiting strategy has always been to recruit local first.”*

With the majority of our participants, Māori can be seen at entry level roles through to senior leadership but this isn't always the case, in some businesses their Māori workforce are predominately at the entry end of the pipeline.

Rangatahi are also an important part of the demographic for many of our participants.

*“Many of the school students feed into many of the roles, there are many opportunities for rangatahi to grow here.”*

The same Covid-19 challenges impacted this group of employers; lockdown restrictions, staffing issues, declining customer base and loss of revenue. However, one participant's business thrived due to the increased need for security. Overnight, the value of his service exploded.

*"There was a big shift with COVID-19. Security industry was often just an afterthought and then all of a sudden, security was a valuable resource that was needed. We went from people security to property security."*

As most businesses were downsizing or trying to work remotely, this participant had to upscale and fast.

*"We started linking up with other companies like Air NZ to recruit, being their loaders, baggage handlers and anyone that kind of fit the security profile. We had air controllers, who patrolled all the traffic with the airplanes able to slot into our control room teams, so we had to work hand in hand with redeployment plans with other big companies."*

Other businesses were forced to do things differently which not only helped them get through Covid-19 but has also turned into an advantage moving forward.

*"Covid-19 gave us the opportunity to relook at how we do things, and with the labour shortages we made things a bit more flexible. We are taking those who have been specifically employed to do one job like a cashier role and creating an operator role so they can expand their skills. It's great for their CV and means more flexibility for us."*

Covid-19 did take its toll though, and participants all agree wellbeing has been greatly impacted.

*“A lot of our teams are tired, management roles have had to work quite operationally, we have had a lot of sickness, not just Covid-19 so our workforce is exhausted.”*

Attempts to partner with other businesses in the area to share staff was too difficult to pursue.

The wage subsidy was beneficial for all, it also meant some businesses kept their fixed contract staff on for longer than usual.

Skills shortages that existed before Covid-19 have only been exaggerated with the additional pressure of workforce shortages.

*“It is an ongoing issue of finding staff in spaces like our kitchen (chefs) and the shortage of overall staff has only made this harder for us.”*

*“There is a lack of labour and quality candidates, so we will have to focus on building our skills, which will take a lot of time and resources.”*

Skills that are lacking include vital customer service skills. Participants are concerned that due to the pandemic many of the rangatahi entering the workforce have been accustomed to interacting with others online rather than in person.

*“Many of our staff are school kids and particularly now, they are the ones who have done so online. This means that they are lacking a lot of customer Service skills that we need, they are not equipped to have face to face conversations.”*

Participants are either training their new staff themselves or partnering with others to upskill their employees.

*“We try to bundle all the training with the PTE’s (private training establishments) so they can put them through literacy, numeracy, COA (Certificate of Application) and anything else specific that our client is looking for.”*

*“Currently, many of our staff are doing the level three business course certificate to really help them understand where we sit in this space.”*

One participant has a very clear training system in place for employees.

*“Store Learning Pathways streamline learning to ensure the transferability of skills and retail fundamentals. Our NZ Future Skills Fund (NZFSF) is offered to all existing team members to enable them to study any programme of work in which they would like to upskill to make them more employable in the future, providing training and reskilling after leaving.”*

In addition to these offerings, they’ve also created a scholarship for those who want to build their retail career and take on further study. Funding is also available for staff who would like to complete short courses that aren’t available internally.

- Looking ahead, participants are unanimous that there needs to be more collaboration in the sector and the creation of tailored training programmes led by industry.



## Non-Māori Business

- *Food & Wholesale*
- *Retail & Accommodation*
- *Tourism*



## Non-Māori business – Service sector : Overview

The non-Māori businesses in the service sector have experienced the same highs and lows over the past few years. They're passionate about their businesses and their offerings but have been severely impacted by long standing workforce and skills shortages, the undervalued perspective of the sector and Covid-19.

Our participants have shown high levels of resilience to navigate the challenges that Covid-19 has brought. It was touch and go for some of these businesses, particularly the smaller ones but they endured.

*“We lost staff immediately upon reopening. I have had those numbers and I've struggled with probably short overall 40 staff for the past six months.”*

*“We don't have vast resources behind us like a lot of our neighbours who are able to draw on resources of the parent company.”*

Like Māori and iwi businesses, they needed to adhere to alert levels and diversify or adjust their business to survive. Participants say, while the government wage subsidies helped retain staff and keep the businesses afloat over the pandemic, the real concern that is currently facing everyone is workforce shortages.

*“The issue we are having with the workforce now is the lack of people we have applying for these positions.”*

*“Some roles have been left open for a very, very long time. And it was five to six weeks plus and we still haven't had anyone.”*

*“I've never in the whole time that I've operated 18 years, had zero candidates. Like, no one. Not one person.”*

Many businesses are running well under capacity, as they try to return to business as usual post Covid-19 it's getting increasingly hard to find enough workers. While skilled workers are preferable, in the current climate skills aren't as important as attitude.

*"For me, nine times out of ten attitude is the most important thing ever. If you have a great attitude, you have a positive nature, then you can problem-solve, take action. The skills stuff can be taught on the side but a good attitude is something that we cannot teach."*

*"Retail doesn't really need any specific skills, it honestly just needs a willingness to work and we teach everything else when they come on board."*

Businesses have tried different ways to tackle labour shortages. Businesses have had to close on certain days, reduce hours of operation or stop certain services to tackle the shortages. One participant spoke about joining forces with other businesses in the region to have a shared roster to help boost the workforce.

*"We do a fair bit of staff sharing through businesses. So it's helpful if we can top up the amount of hours and the other Cafe because it's quite quiet. They come and do a day here or one at the restaurant."*

The Service sector workforce is mobile, participants say workers can easily transfer their skills into other roles within the sector. However, the supply of rental properties in regional centres limits movement and acts as another barrier to increase their workforce. Another challenge for the service sector is its undervalued perception. Some regard the Service sector as low paying, low skilled & transient. Participants say, this impacts the way people view the sector and their involvement in it

*"Well, the real problem is that society in general doesn't see our sector as worthy."*

Non-Māori businesses within the Service sector are reliant on the local and national workforce but for tourist meccas like Queenstown, it's the international market that has traditionally propped up their workforce. They're desperate to re-establish these connections.

*"85% of the staff were on sponsored visas."*

Given its demographic, the cost of living, the size of the town and the transient nature of their workforce Queenstown has always had a problem with labour shortages. However, Covid-19 stopped the flow of holiday workers and also sent some home too. The impact of the border closures and subsequent lockdowns are still being felt today.

*"Like all of Queenstown we need overseas employees."*

*"Right now we just need international people because this is an international haven."*

Recruitment methods have also had to change to attract workers, for one participant social media has been the only avenue that has generated interest. Some are using incentives to get applicants but on a whole recruitment is proving to be very difficult.

*"People are paying cleaners like \$27 an hour. They're not going to want to work for us at minimum wage."*

*"Social media is becoming our only form of successful employment."*

If they do get people across the line, most of our participants are training new employees on the job. It's the preferred option for many.

*"We do have a training platform that we use internally to train our new recruits."*

Training does require resources, some businesses are better equipped to do this than others. However, participants agree if an employee can see a career pathway or progression in the business it does help with retention.

*“There needs to be a pathway passport for every person in the business, this helps with retention and growth.”*

Not all businesses can provide this kind of set up, one participant explained that hotel chains can give career pathways and opportunities as there are multiple roles but a motel business is normally made up of one owner operator or manager and the housekeeping staff. Ultimately though, it’s people. The businesses in the service sector need a growing workforce. There is no pipeline.

*“So if we got people and then the government helped us upskill those people then we’d get some momentum.”*



# Employees

- *Food & wholesale*
- *Retail & Accommodation*
- *Tourism*



## Employees: Service sector : Overview

The majority of employees we spoke to came from our spread of Māori/iwi and non-Māori businesses, as well as employees who were employed by other businesses within the regions we had engaged.

Employees want more than just a good wage. They want to have a purpose, flexibility, and a stable job. They want to feel like employers care about them and provide opportunities to learn, grow and be promoted. Taking their well-being into consideration is also high on their wish list.

*“Employees are still struggling with the mental health aspect after being alone during lockdowns.”*

The motivation to work in the service sector differs, there are careers for certain roles e.g.; chef, pilot but for most of our participants, they didn't see themselves as having a long term career in the sector, to them it's merely a job. Roles are seen as fillers while they're studying, waiting for better job opportunities or topping up the household income. Many rangatahi gain their first job experiences within the Service sector and are happy to learn on the job.

Participants note that being an all-rounder enables more opportunities to find employment in the sector. There are many transferable skills within the Service sector particularly in the customer facing roles where communication skills are paramount.

*“Life skills helped me be industry fit, being a mother, volunteering in the community and my other mahi helped me in my jobs in retail and hospo.”*

*“Being older, enables you to have all the ground, entry-level skills needed to work in retail, hospo, and accommodation (cleaning) roles.”*

Traditionally businesses employed someone to fill a role but things changed during the pandemic, employees were expected to be agile and fill multiple roles, it's something that's continued for many employees.

*“In the past it has been, you're employed for this role but once Covid-19 hit, businesses diversified and have continued to do so.”*

Employees are feeling the pinch with the workforce shortages too. Major fatigue is setting in across the board with employees filling gaps and taking on extra workloads due to the labour shortages. Not having enough staff has put extra pressure on everyone.

*“We're tired, exhausted even.”*

*“Staff are working well over their allocated weekly hours to cover workforce shortages.”*

In terms of training or upskilling, many have done it on the job. However, participants say there are still barriers that exist for some when wanting to upskill outside of their mahi. The rising cost of living is proving to be a major challenge for those interested in upskilling, when they're just trying to make ends meet there's very little chance that they can attend any kind of training programme. In smaller townships, certain programmes don't even exist so that restricts their access. While most training providers can deliver their programmes online, not everyone has a device or an internet connection.



## Kōrero whakakapi - Final word

The Service sector is vitally important to Aotearoa and to the Māori within it. The countless businesses and their employees throughout the motu are invaluable to our economy and bring so much mana and pride to their mahi every day. They not only showcase who we are as people but who we are as a country.

The voices captured in this report further highlight the need to understand them better and allow their voices to be heard and amplified more often.

There's a great opportunity to try new approaches moving forward and challenge current norms within the sector.



## Appendix

### Questions we discussed with participants

(Not specific to sector)

*How many Māori do you currently employ?*

- *(Covid-19) In 2020 NZ started preparing for the arrival of a pandemic, businesses were preparing to think and work differently. How did your business prepare for the arrival of COVID-19?*
- *(Alert levels) From Feb-March 2020 the NZ govt started slowing down the movement of people and we were introduced to alert levels. How did the change in alert levels impact your business and how did you pivot?*
- *(Lockdown) Alert level 4 meant only essential Services could be working. How did lockdown impact your business? What were the challenges:*
  - *Income/business profitability*
  - *Process & Policy*
  - *Employee job security*
  - *Staff/workforce capability*
  - *Wellbeing*
- *How did you manage them?*
- *How mobile was your workforce during lock-down?*
- *What were the challenges and benefits of your workers?*
- *Were iwi organisations/providers an integral part of your operations? If so, in what way?*
  - *Were they able to transfer their skills into other areas of the business or sector?*
  - *What were the skills needed during that time and how did you match it?*
  - *What opportunities were created for employees during Covid-19?*
  - *What opportunities were created for your business during Covid-19?*
- *Overall, what impacts did COVID-19 have on this sector for Māori?*
- *What would you say are some of the key drivers for future success in a future pandemic?*
- *Thinking back, and if you had a chance to prepare better – what would that look like?*
- *What changes have you made since Covid-19 and continue to keep in place? Why?*
- *What skills, training and learning pathways are needed to build a resilient sector?*

## Employees

- *What sector are you currently employed in?*
- *How did Covid-19 impact your employment?*
  - *How long have you been in this sector?*
  - *If you changed jobs during Covid-19, what was your main reason for change?*
  - *Did it inspire a complete career change and if so, what was/is it?*
  - *Do you have whānau working in the same business/sector as you? How did it impact your whānau?*
- *Did you need a new specific skill-set for your job during Covid-19, if so, what was it, and how did you acquire them?*
- *What were your coping mechanisms during the lockdown period at work?*
- *Did your opening hours change during Covid-19? How did this affect your income and wellbeing?*
- *Were there training opportunities that you needed in order to upskill during this time?*
  - *If not, do you think this should have been a requirement? How should it have been done?*
  - *What did you find difficult during this time of change?*
- *Do you know of others who lost their jobs in this sector due to Covid-19 pressures? Did they have the skills to transfer to other employment across the sector?*

## Image references

**Cover photo** - Pakanui Webb & Bobbi Morice - Ruatoria Pies

**page 12** - Waka Abel Tasman Tours – Kaiteriteri

**page 14** - Ika Bowl - Auckland

**page 17** - Kohutapu Lodge - Murupara

**page 20** - Whirinaki forest footsteps – Murupara

**page 25** – Whakatōhea Mussels – Ōpōtiki

**page 28** - Ngāti Porou Seafood Group - Gisborne

**page 30** - Awa Motel - Whakatane

**page 36** - Skyline Enterprises – Skyline Rotorua

**page 46** – KJet - Queenstown