

Te Hiku Workforce Insights Report

Te Hiku-Crown Joint Work Programme

June 2026



Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide workforce and training insights to support workforce planning, training delivery, and investment discussions for Te Hiku. Prepared by the Waka Tāpiri team, it responds to requests from local training providers, employers, Te Hiku Iwi, and government agencies for a stronger evidence base to better understand workforce demand, learner needs, training opportunities, and barriers to participation.

This is the first Te Hiku Workforce Development Insights Report, with future reports planned biannually.

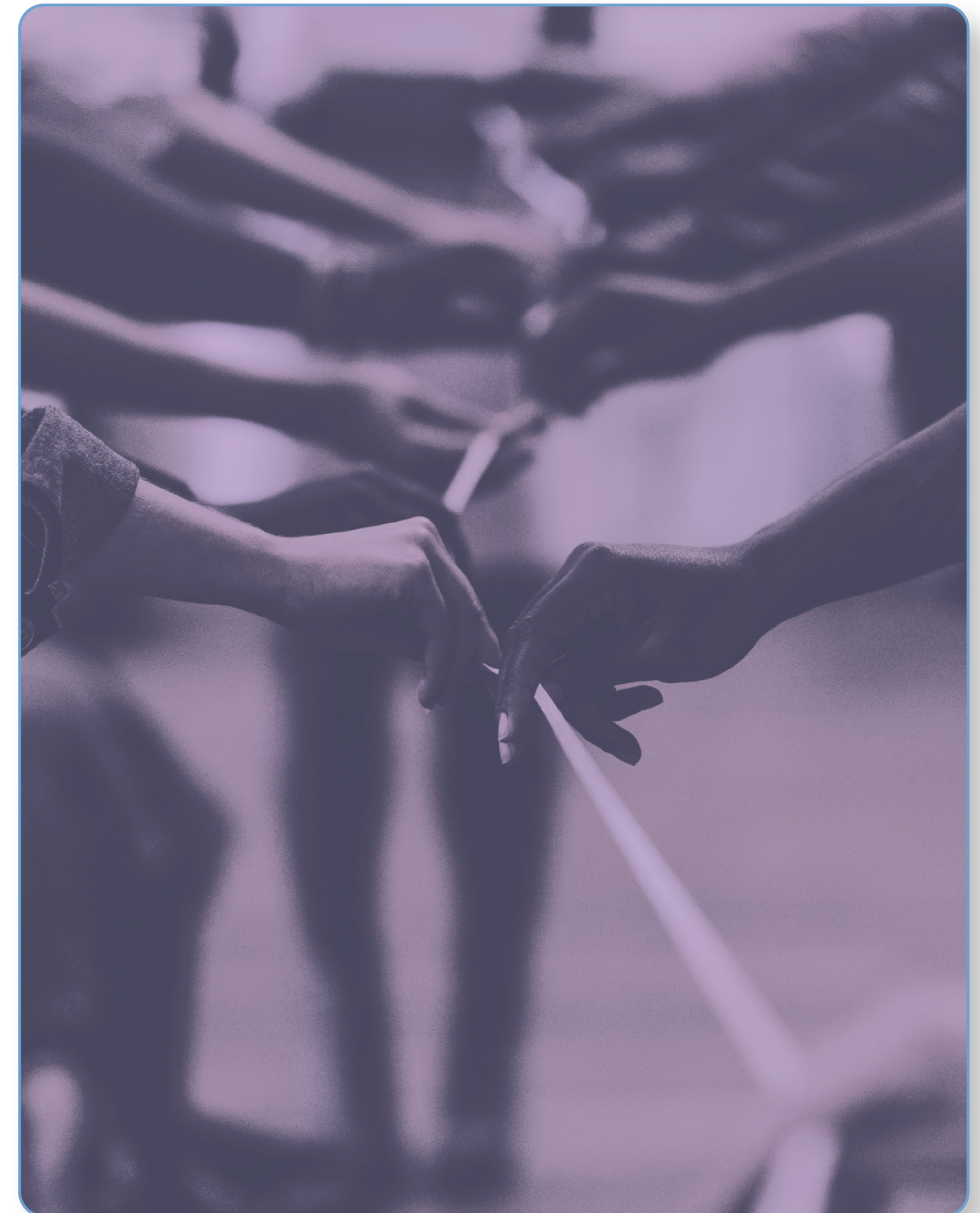
The report brings together local and national data, workforce trends, employer feedback, whānau voice, and engagement with Te Hiku Iwi, training providers, employers, local stakeholders, and industry groups to identify current challenges, emerging opportunities, and evolving workforce needs across Te Hiku. These insights help inform what training is needed, where and how it should be delivered, and which areas may require future investment.

Waka Tāpiri is a Te Hiku workforce and training coordination mechanism established through the Te Hiku–Crown Joint Work Programme under the umbrella of Te Hiku Iwi Development Trust. Its role is to support shared understanding and strengthen alignment between workforce demand, training provision, learner needs, and local development priorities.

Waka Tāpiri does not deliver training programmes or employment services, nor does it hold funding allocation or commissioning responsibilities.

Instead, it supports workforce insights, information sharing, and connections across training providers, employers, Te Hiku Iwi, industry groups, and government agencies to help strengthen pathways and participation in workforce and training opportunities for Te Hiku whānau.

The data included in this report reflects the latest available information as of May 2026.





Executive Summary

Te Hiku faces a unique combination of workforce opportunities and challenges. Population growth, regional development, and changing workforce needs are creating opportunities across housing and infrastructure, healthcare, renewable energy, environmental resilience, food production, digital capability, and local enterprise.

At the same time, high rurality, transport costs, lower household incomes, caregiving responsibilities, and increasing economic pressures continue to affect participation in training and employment opportunities across Te Hiku.

The findings show strong alignment between whānau aspirations and areas of workforce demand, particularly across healthcare, education, trades, social services, Te Reo Māori, business administration, and practical vocational pathways. However, participation barriers and limited local provision continue to affect access to training and ongoing learner engagement.

The report highlights the growing importance of flexible, locally delivered, workplace-based, modular, and culturally responsive training pathways that better reflect the realities of rural communities, working adults, caregivers, and rangatahi transitioning into employment or further study.

The insights within this report highlight areas where stronger alignment and coordinated action across training providers, employers, industry groups, Te Hiku Iwi, and government agencies could contribute most directly to the following social wellbeing outcomes outlined in the Te Hiku Iwi-Crown Social Development and Wellbeing Accord:

Mātauranga – Education and Skills

Whai Rawa – Economically Secure and Sustainable

Whānau Ora – Secure Standard of Living

Mana Māori – Culturally Strong

Te Hiku Context & Economic Environment

Te Hiku has a young and growing population, with 32% of residents under 25, creating growing demand for education, training, and employment opportunities.^{1B}

With 84% of whānau living in rural areas, travel distances and transport costs remain significant barriers to accessing training and mahi.^{1A}

Median incomes in Te Hiku sit 39% below the national average, reducing many whānau’s ability to absorb rising living costs or invest in training.^{1C} Te Hiku’s economy also relies heavily on sectors sensitive to fuel and freight costs, weather events, and wider economic conditions. This can place additional pressure on household incomes, local businesses, and employment.^{1D}

These conditions reinforce the importance of local and flexible training delivery, alongside skills that are likely to remain in demand during periods of economic pressure.

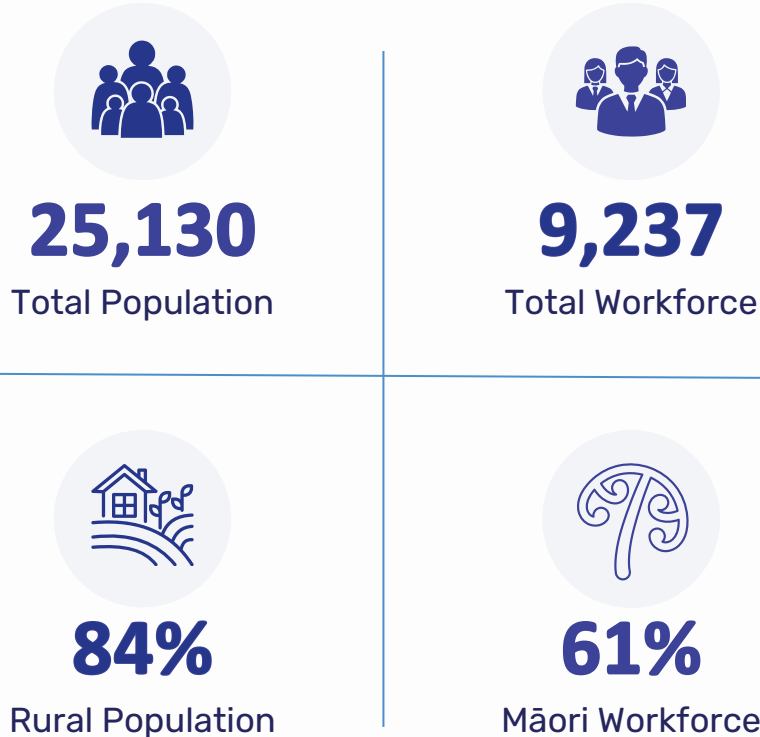
This includes:

- construction and infrastructure
- electrical and solar
- regenerative food production
- repairs and maintenance
- practical trades
- digital capability and enterprise skills

Sources: MSD Employment Profile 2025 ^{1A, 1C}; BERL Te Hiku Wellbeing Report 2025 ^{1A}; Infometrics Regional Data 2026 ^{1A, 1B}; Te Hiku Economic Risk Brief 2026 ^{1C}.

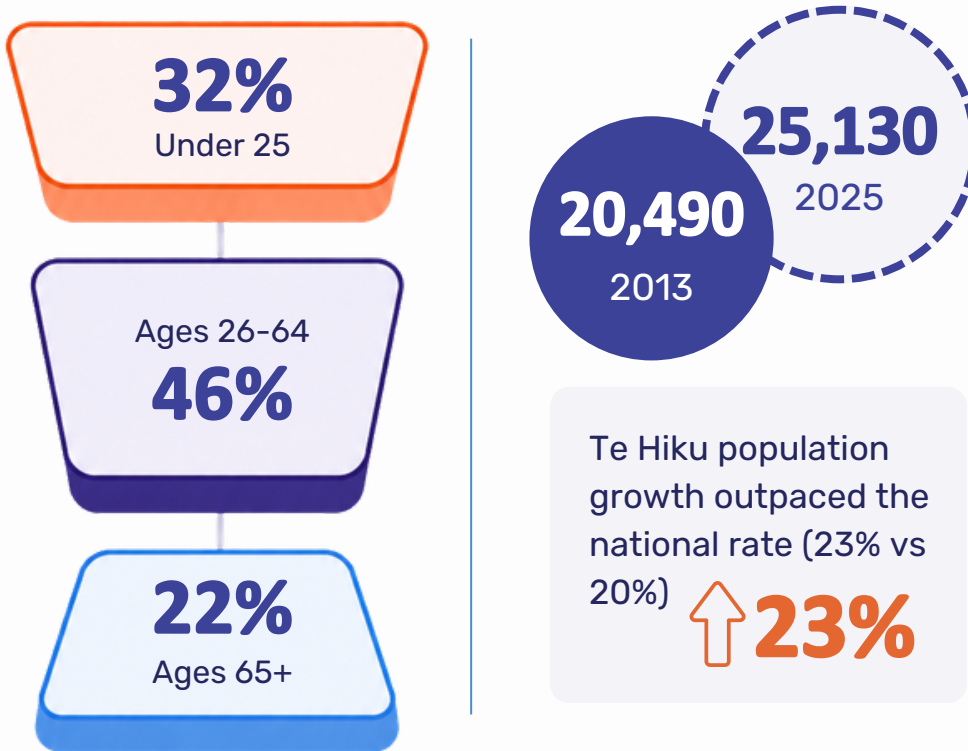
Te Hiku at a Glance

1A



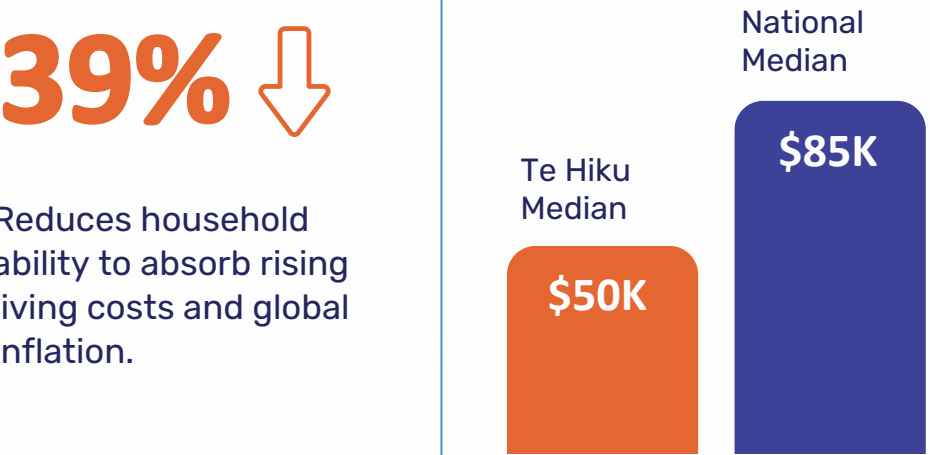
Te Hiku Population Profile

1B



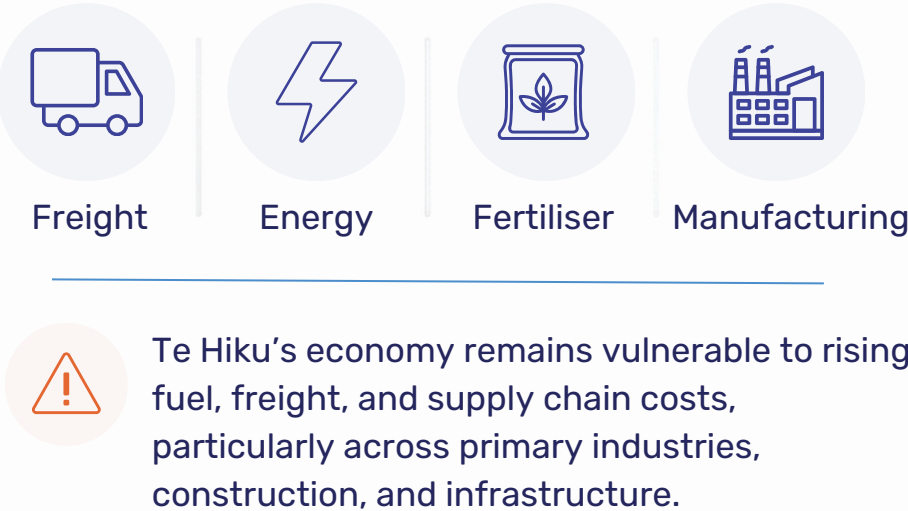
Median Income Comparison

1C



Economic Pressures

1D



Te Hiku Workforce & Industry Insights

Te Hiku has a workforce of more than 9,000 people with strong employment across primary industries, construction, education, healthcare, and retail.^{2A} Between Oct 2024 and Oct 2025, 863 vacancies were advertised locally, with the strongest demand across education and training, healthcare, trades, and retail.^{2B}

Whānau aspirations align closely with many of these workforce needs. Teaching, nursing, social work, youth work, health, trades, Te Reo Māori, business administration, and entrepreneurship featured strongly in the 2025 Te Hiku training needs survey.

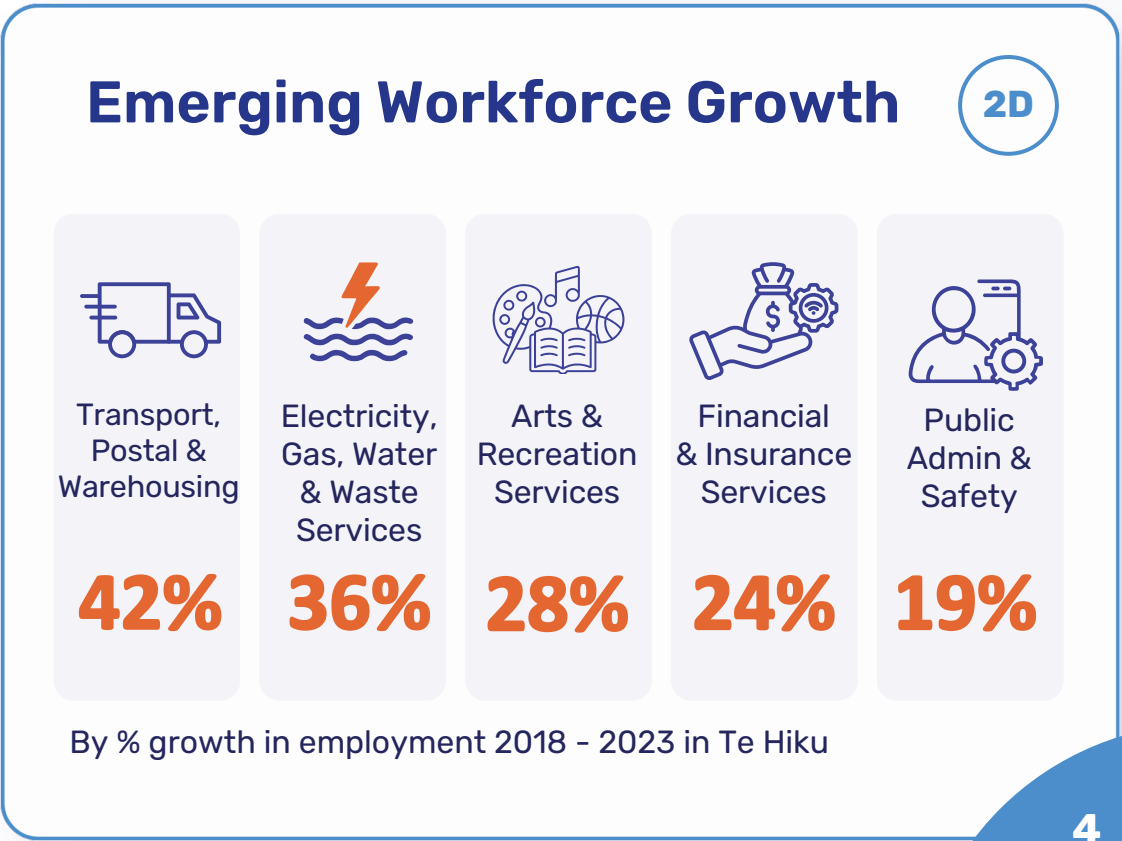
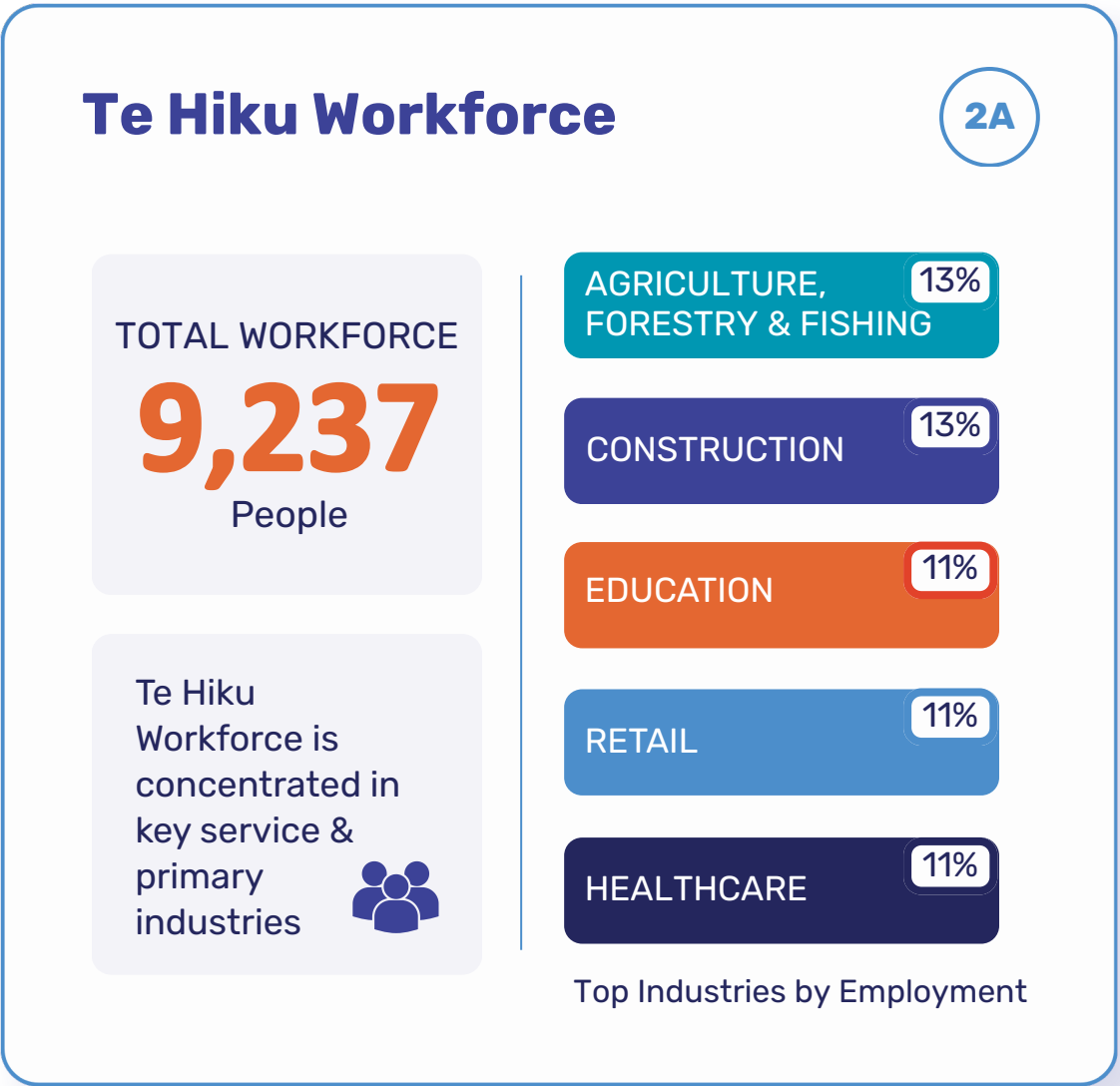
Te Hiku Iwi signals point to future opportunities in renewable energy, infrastructure, aquaculture, environmental resilience, enterprise, digital capability, and remote work.^{2C}

Healthcare employers indicated a demand for training in aged care and in-home recovery support. Construction and Infrastructure employers indicated that much of the current training demand remains focused on compliance, licensing, operational requirements, and practical workforce readiness. Further construction and infrastructure workforce signals are outlined on page 6.

Emerging workforce growth in Te Hiku is occurring across transport and warehousing, utilities, arts and recreation, financial services, and public administration.^{2D}

The strongest training opportunities sit where whānau aspirations, workforce demand, and future local development opportunities overlap.

Sources: MSD Employment Profile 2025^{2A}; Te Hiku Local Job Board Report 2026^{2B}; Discussions with Iwi and Rūnanga Reporting^{2C}; Training Provider Forum Discussion May 2026^{2D}; Construction & Infrastructure Survey 2025^{2D}; Te Hiku Training Needs Survey 2025^{2D}; Te Hiku Economic Profile Report 2025^{2D}.



Training, Learners & Whānau Voice

Training interest in Te Hiku is strong. Of the 144 whānau surveyed, 47% wanted to enrol in training and a further 41% were considering it. Whānau are clear about how they want training delivered, with 89% preferring training within Te Hiku alongside flexible delivery models.^{3A}

The indicative market size suggests around 7,000 potential learners across Te Hiku, most of whom are employed whānau, job seekers, and caregivers. This reinforces the importance of accessible delivery, learner navigation, and support that fits around work and whānau commitments, recognising that learner demand extends beyond school leavers alone.^{3C}

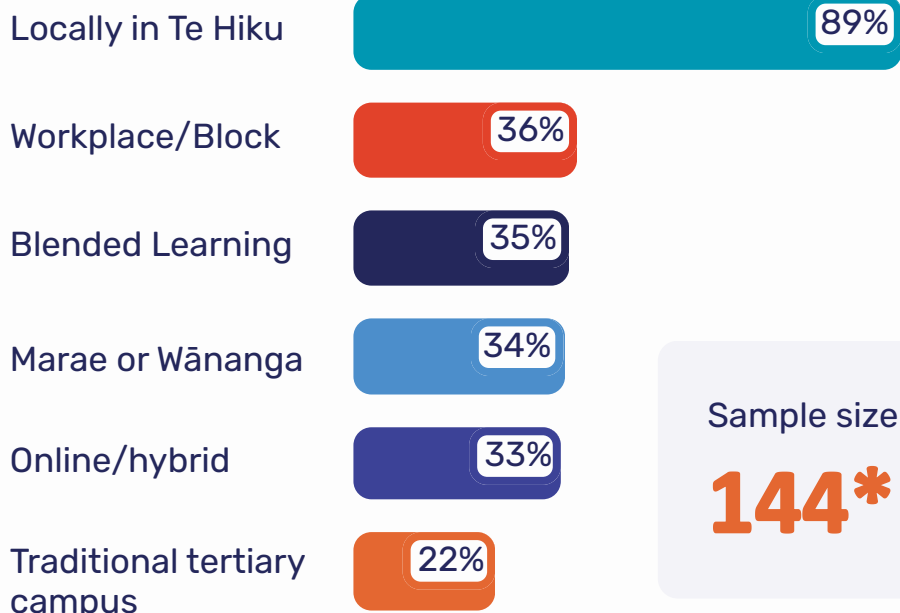
Data shows more learners are reaching Level 3, with the number of Level 3+ learners increasing by 53% between 2019 and 2024. While tertiary readiness has improved, tertiary enrolment among Māori school leavers has declined, suggesting that readiness is not consistently translating into tertiary participation. Addressing barriers such as transport, affordability, learner navigation and access to local provision may help more rangatahi transition into tertiary education, apprenticeships or employment.^{3B}

Over the past five years, whānau voice has consistently identified cost, transport, needing to earn while learning, caregiving responsibilities, unclear pathways, and limited local provision as key barriers to participation. Many of these barriers may be reduced through flexible, locally delivered training, workplace-based learning, modular programmes, and wrap-around support for learners.^{3D}

Sources: Te Hiku Training Needs Survey 2025 (*Respondents predominantly wahine in mahi)^{3A}; BERL Te Hiku Wellbeing Report 2025^{3B}; Te Hiku Whānau Voice 2020–2025^{3D}; Provider Discussions 2025–2026^{3D}; TEC Data 2026 3B; MSD Data 2024^{3C}; MSD Employment Profile 2025^{3C}.

Preferred Training Delivery

3A

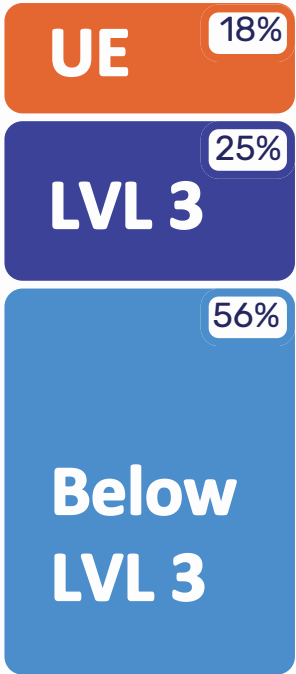


Sample size
144*

Te Hiku whānau prefer flexible, local and culturally responsive training options

Prepared, Not Progressing

3B



Level 3+ learners in Te Hiku

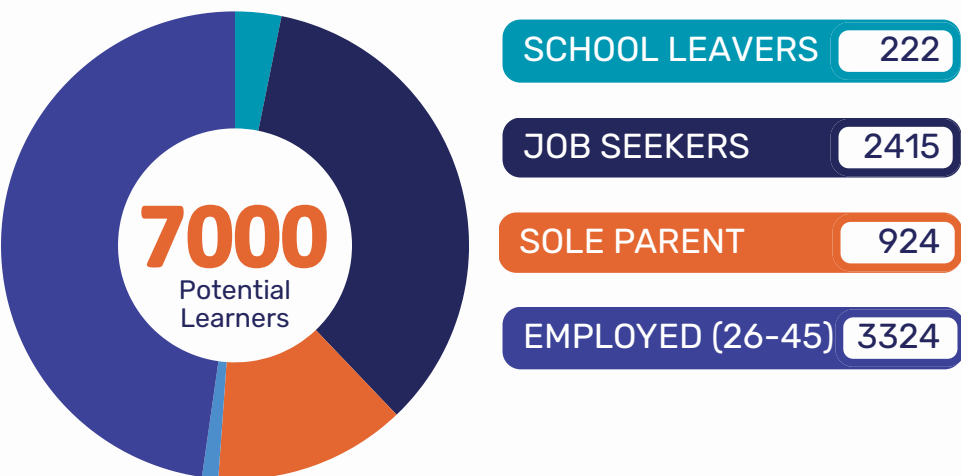


↓ 2025 data shows tertiary enrolment of Māori school leavers has declined over time

2024 School Leavers

Indicative Market Size

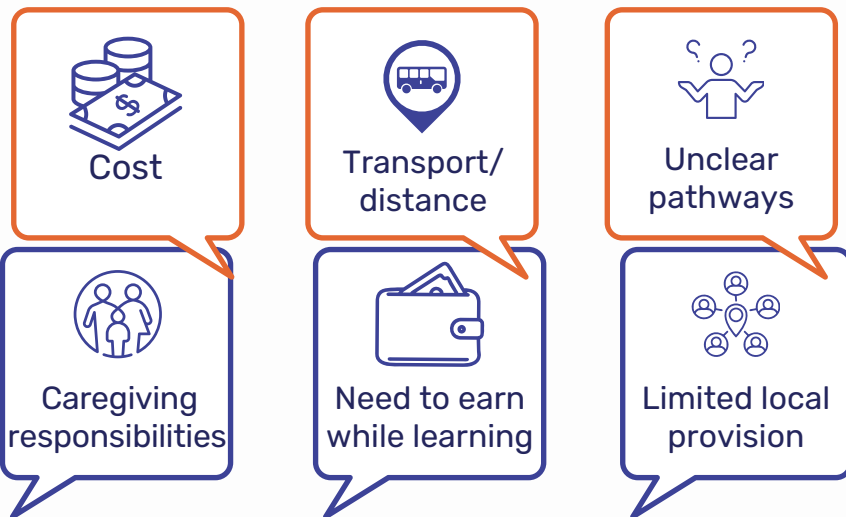
3C



The 7,000 potential learners in Te Hiku range from school leavers to employed whānau needing upskilling

Whānau Voice | Barriers

3D



Top six barriers Te Hiku whānau experience beyond school age

Construction, Infrastructure & Future Opportunities

Future workforce opportunities in Te Hiku span housing, infrastructure, whenua development, environmental resilience, and emerging industries. Together, these signals point to ongoing demand for practical trades and infrastructure-related skills.^{4A}

While construction activity may fluctuate, housing developments, infrastructure projects, and Māori land development continue to drive demand for skills in construction, civil works, fencing, water and irrigation systems, electrical and solar installations, repairs, and maintenance. Training providers can focus on transferable capabilities that can be applied across multiple projects and sectors.^{4A & 4C}

The planned \$500 million Whangārei Hospital build (2026–2031) and roading projects across Northland are expected to significantly increase workforce demand. This highlights the need for a dual workforce strategy that supports participation in wider regional opportunities while ensuring local workforce and development needs can continue to be met.^{4C}

Within Te Hiku, employer demand remains strong for short courses, licences, compliance training, and flexible, modular delivery integrated into the workplace.^{4B}

Strengthening workforce capability may also help build regional resilience and reduce reliance on external workforce supply.^{4D}

Sources: Construction & Infrastructure Sector Survey 2025^{4B}; Northland Construction & Infrastructure Roopu Presentation, 2026^{4C}; Te Kāuta Presentation, 2025^{4A}; Te Hiku Economic Risk Brief 2026^{4D}; MBIE engagement 2026^{4D};

Iwi Development Pipeline

4A



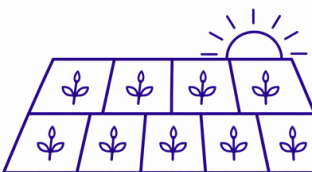
200 - 250

Homes underway



500+

Future potential homes



1,200

Māori land blocks identified

In Te Hiku, housing & infrastructure remain long-term workforce priorities

Construction & Infrastructure Signals

4B



Site Safe

High demand



Working at Heights

High demand



Confined Spaces

High demand



Hazardous Materials

Ongoing demand



MEWP

Ongoing demand

Compliance and site-ready capability remain priority workforce needs identified by employers across Te Hiku

Regional Workforce Opportunity

4C



\$500M

Whangārei Hospital Build 2026–2031



Participation
Capture opportunity and grow local workforce



Backfill
Protect local development and reduce workforce pressure



Pre-trades → trades



Site-ready certifications



Civil & infrastructure capability

Resilience & Future Skills

4D



Local Energy Resilience



Electrical, solar & EV



Food Production & Supply



Regenerative Growing



Repairs & Maintenance



Flexible local training

Building local resilience and reducing reliance on external systems and external workforce supply

Recommendations

These recommendations are based on the insights in this report and highlight opportunities to strengthen workforce participation, training pathways, and workforce capability across Te Hiku.

These recommendations align directly with the following social wellbeing outcomes outlined in the Te Hiku Iwi-Crown Social Development and Wellbeing Accord, supporting the long-term aspirations and wellbeing of Te Hiku whānau.



Mātauranga
Education and Skills



Whai Rawa
Economically Secure and Sustainable



Whānau Ora
Secure Standard of Living



Mana Māori
Culturally Strong

1

Align Training Provision with Workforce Demand and Regional Development Opportunities.

Supports: Mātauranga | Whai Rawa | Whānau Ora

Use workforce insights, employer engagement, and regional development signals to help inform programme planning and investment decisions. Prioritise pathways linked to healthcare, education, construction, infrastructure, renewable energy, digital capability, environmental resilience, and Māori land development.

Where workforce demand spans multiple sectors or remains uncertain, prioritise transferable capabilities such as administration, bookkeeping, customer service, digital skills, health and safety, project support, and work readiness.

This can strengthen workforce resilience, improve connections between training and local employment opportunities, and support a more adaptable regional workforce.

2

Expand Flexible and Local Training Delivery

Supports: Mātauranga | Whai Rawa | Whānau Ora | Mana Māori

Expand workplace-based, marae-based, blended, modular, and part-time training delivery options across Te Hiku. Explore evening, weekend, mobile, and satellite delivery models that help reduce transport and participation barriers for whānau.

Flexible and locally delivered training can improve access and better reflect the realities of rural communities, working adults, caregivers, and rangatahi.

3

Increase Focus on Adult Learners and Workforce Transitions*Supports: Mātauranga / Whai Rawa / Whānau Ora*

Recognise employed adults, job seekers, and caregivers as key learner groups alongside school leavers. Develop flexible upskilling, reskilling, short-course, and micro-credential pathways that enable learners to earn while they learn. Improve recognition of prior learning and create clearer pathways into employment, apprenticeships, further training, and higher-level study.

This can improve workforce participation and increase access to learning opportunities that fit around work and whānau commitments.

4

Strengthen Learner Navigation and Transition Support*Supports: Mātauranga / Whānau Ora*

Improve participation by supporting whānau to identify suitable pathways and successfully transition into training and employment. This requires investment in career navigation, mentoring, pathway mapping, employer engagement, pastoral support, and community-based outreach.

This approach can help reduce participation barriers, strengthen learner confidence and engagement, and support more successful transitions into training and employment.

5

Strengthen Partnerships with Te Hiku Iwi and Employers*Supports: Whai Rawa / Mātauranga / Mana Māori*

Increase collaboration between training providers, employers, and Te Hiku Iwi to support workforce development outcomes. Co-design training pathways, strengthen work experience and apprenticeship opportunities, and align provision with Iwi-led housing, infrastructure, environmental, and economic development initiatives. Early exposure activities, tasters, short courses, and introductory programmes may also help test learner demand before investing in larger programmes.

This can strengthen regional workforce capability, support locally responsive delivery, and improve alignment between workforce development, whānau aspirations, and Te Hiku Iwi-led priorities.

References / Sources

- BERL Te Hiku Wellbeing Report 2025
- Construction & Infrastructure Sector Survey 2025
- Discussions with Te Hiku Iwi and Rūnanga reporting 2024-2026
- Infometrics regional data 2025 - 2026
- MBIE engagement 2026
- MSD data 2024
- MSD Employment Profile 2025
- Northland Construction & Infrastructure Roopu Presentation, 2026
- Training Provider Discussions 2025-2026
- TEC Data, 2026
- Te Hiku Economic Profile Report 2025
- Te Hiku Economic Risk Brief 2026
- Te Hiku Local Job Board Report 2026 (data period: 2024-2025)
- Te Hiku Training Needs Survey 2025
- Te Hiku Whānau Voice 2020-2025
- Te Kāuta Presentation, 2025
- Training Provider Forum Discussion May 2026
- Te Hiku Iwi-Crown Social Development and Wellbeing Accord

Report Information

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- Native Sports Performance – Ahikaa | The Fire Project
- Sylvia Nugent – Te Kōhanga, Ahipara