



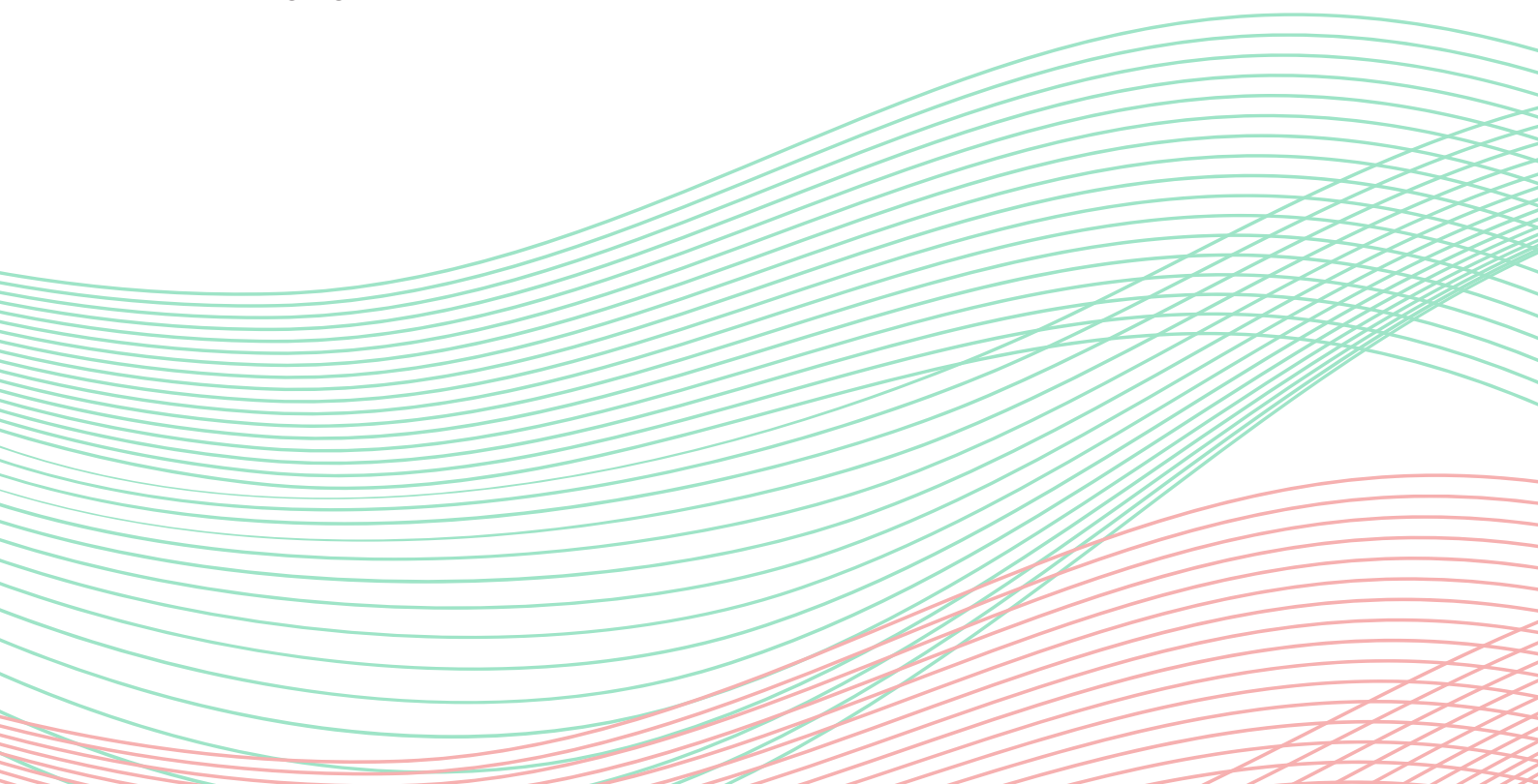
GOOD YOUTH EMPLOYER PROJECT REPORT

AUGUST 2025



PREPARED BY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The YEA Good Youth Employer Project 2025 is a collaborative initiative to tackle the attitude gap that often stands in the way of creating great employment experiences for young people across Aotearoa. Our main goal is to develop a practical resource that empowers employers to better engage and retain young talent. We want workplaces to be welcoming, inclusive, and supportive—places where all young employees can thrive.

A core part of this project is co-design, which means we've brought together a diverse array of stakeholders—youth, industry leaders, government representatives, and nonprofit organisations—all have generously shared their knowledge and insights. Their input will now help us to craft a resource that's fit for purpose, adaptable, easy to access, and truly relevant to those who will use it.

We're especially focused on supporting Māori, Pasifika, disabled, neurodivergent youth, and NEETs—groups that are often marginalised or overlooked. With forecasts suggesting Māori and Pasifika will make up around 40% of the workforce under 40 by 2041, combined with the fact that over 12% of young people are NEET, and the NEET rate for disabled youth is over 45%, it's clear we need to act now. Addressing the specific needs of these groups presents a real opportunity to unlock their potential and build an inclusive, engaged, and productive future workforce.

To ground our work, we've engaged directly with young people through surveys and youth-led sessions, making sure their real-life experiences shape our approach. At the same time, we've gathered insights from employers about what they need—practical tools, guidance for managing diverse needs, and a compelling business case for investing in the next generation.

Throughout the project, we've identified key themes: the pervasive disconnect between what employers and young employees expect, the importance of solid support systems in the workplace, the need for true inclusivity, and the incredible value young people bring. We've also pinpointed shared goals—such as the desire to foster positive work relationships, mutual respect, clear communication, and a commitment to quality work. These commonalities will be leveraged to create a resource that genuinely supports successful employee engagement and retention.

After a deep discovery phase, we're excited to pilot an innovative tool called Start Smart—an induction planning tool designed to help employers set up their new young hires for success. Moving forward, we'll focus on developing this resource, running a strategic pilot, and planning for long-term sustainability.

We are mindful of potential challenges—including the risk of tokenistic engagement, the need for sustained employer buy-in, and the ongoing commitment required to address systemic issues. But with a clear vision and a strong set of guiding principles, we're confident that as we move into the pilot stage, this project can truly make a positive difference for both businesses and young people across the motu.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charlotte Mitchell', with a stylized, cursive script.

Charlotte Mitchell
YEA Chair

ABOUT YEA



A LITTLE BIT ABOUT OUR KAUPAPA

YEA exists to ensure all young people in Aotearoa between the ages of 13 and 30 have the skills and confidence to thrive in the changing world of work.

Our mission is to create a collective voice leading systems change for Youth Employability in Aotearoa.

We are a registered charitable trust #CC62525.

INTRODUCTION

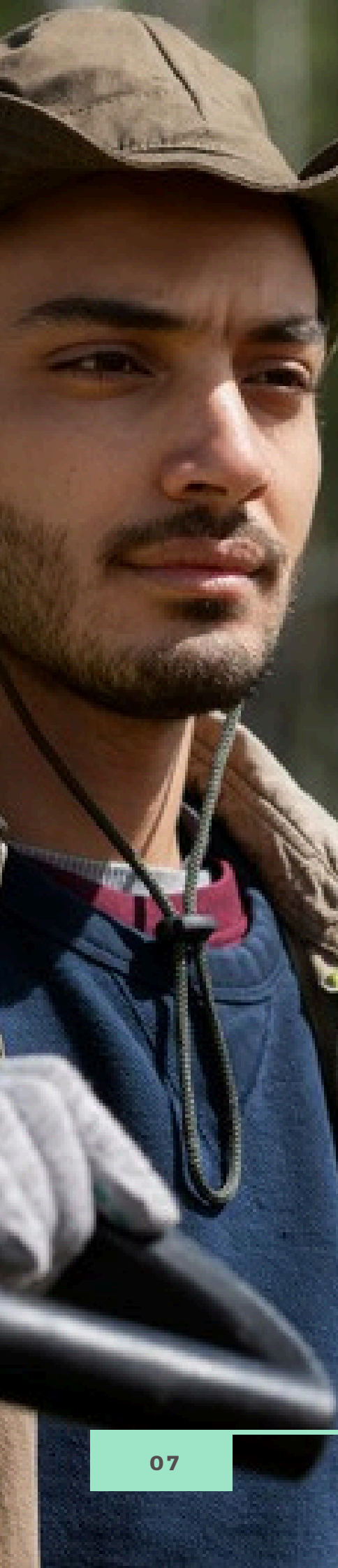
The YEA Good Youth Employer Project 2025 stands as a testament to collaborative effort and a deep commitment to improving the landscape of youth employment in Aotearoa. At its core, the project seeks to develop a resource that empowers employers to enhance the engagement and retention of their young employees by creating a culture and environment that supports the needs of younger generations.

This report reflects the journey undertaken, celebrating the diverse voices and insightful contributions that have shaped the project's direction. With the generous support of the **Todd Foundation, the JR McKenzie Trust, and the Len Reynolds Trust**, and the dedication of numerous partner organisations, this initiative has delved into the multifaceted challenges and opportunities present in the current employment landscape.

OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following sections will provide a comprehensive overview of the project, highlighting key themes, critical considerations for the resource, potential pitfalls, and a reflection on the process undertaken.





PROJECT OVERVIEW

A COLLABORATIVE ENDEAVOUR

The foundation of the Good Youth Employer Project lies in the framework developed by Tātaki Auckland Unlimited in 2022, specifically designed for Māori and Pasifika youth. YEA has been gifted this framework, and has used it as a starting point to consider how we can approach the challenge laid out in the 2016 Attitude Gap report* that exposed the tensions created by the different expectations between employers and young employees.

Our project scope includes the perspectives, experiences, and needs of NEETS, neurodivergent, and disabled youth, as well as Māori and Pasifika youth, to help inform a truly inclusive and universally designed resource that gives voice to those typically marginalised within the workforce.

This report takes us to the point of prototype development. Future stages include a pilot, refinement, launch, and promotion. The discovery phase of this project has generated a wealth of knowledge that will inform future projects to enhance youth employment across sectors and industries.

The project's mission extends beyond resource creation; it embodies a vision of collaborative partnership, the value of lived experience, and the vital importance of youth voice. It has brought together a collective of individuals and organisations committed to fostering positive change for youth employment in Aotearoa.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

THE PEOPLE DRIVING THIS PROJECT



MEG LYSTER
YEA YOUTH LEAD



HOLLY DUFF
YEA YOUTH LEAD



JONO CRAIG
YEA TRUSTEE



EMMA GODWIN
YEA DIRECTOR

COLLABORATORS

THE PEOPLE INFORMING THIS PROJECT

Leveraging the strength of the YEA network, we convened a diverse group of professionals and young people, each generously contributing their time and expertise to this initiative. Their invaluable insights, lived experience, and collaborative spirit have been crucial in shaping both the project's outcomes and its future impact.

To ensure a robust understanding of the employment landscape, workshops were structured with dedicated working groups focusing on either employers' or young employees' perspectives, while encouraging the free exchange of insights relevant to both parties. Each working group was supported by a facilitator appointed from the YEA Stewardship Group.

Our Youth Leads, Meg and Holly, played a pivotal role in capturing the voice of young people to inform decision-making for this project. In addition to attending workshop sessions, Meg and Holly led Kai & Kōrero sessions with youth. Insights from these sessions were gathered and fed back to the working groups to enrich discussions. A survey, distributed to young employees via the YEA network and LinkedIn, provided additional youth voice.

WORKING GROUPS

INDUSTRY

Heather Lowery-Kappes, YEA
Abe Naus, Potentia
Hayley Grey Hanga Aro Rau
Astrid can Holten, Hanga Aro Rau
Beth Nalter, St Dominics College
Eva Thompson, Student Job Search
Genevieve Griffin-George, PicMi
Joanna Hall, Employers and Manufacturing Association
Kelley Marra, Waihangā Ara Rau
Kate Peters, Tertiary Education Commission
Patrick McKibbin, Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce
Pip Direen, Muka Tangata

MĀORI

Jami Dickson, YEA
Julia Pura-MacKenzie, Ministry of Education
Lenny Andrews, Hāpai Tūhono
Tinaka Birch, Toi Mai Ohu Ahumahi
Trina Tamati, Tōnui Consultancy

NEURODIVERGENT

Caitlin Wilson, YEA
Jon Bowen, Ministry of Education
Kartini Clarke, Young Neurodiversity Champions
Lachlan, Nagle, iLead
Rachael Wiltshire, iLead
Tracey Rountree, ADHD NZ

DISABLED

Charlotte Mitchell, YEA
Lavinia Lovo, iLead
Taylah Rasmussen, iLead
Nicole Wallace, Tertiary Education Union
Ben Wallace, Special Olympics
Gemma O'Donnell, Chronically Legal
Louisa Kelly, Manaaki Ability Trust

PASIFIKA

Henry Samia, YEA
Alilia Parker, Ministry of Social Development
Malaea Evile, Ministry for Pacific Peoples
Sina Uilelea, Youth Inspire

TRAINING

Gaeleen Wilkie, YEA
Jane Denton, Te Tahī Youth
Poppy Clapperton, Industry Training Solutions
Rebecca Irvine, Apprenticeship Training Trust

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Jono Craig, YEA
Maree Brannigan, Mayors Taskforce for Jobs
Peggy Veen, Far North District Council
Alison Black, Kāpiti Coast District Council
Vicky Chia, Christchurch Youth Council

KAI & KŌRERO SESSIONS

We are deeply grateful for the invaluable support of the following organisations

Victoria University of Wellington Careers
Department
iLead
Student Job Search
Manaaki Ability Trust

ADHD Lived Experience Advisory Panel
Youth Inspire
Taupō Pathways
Partners Porirua
Te Tai Ohinga



Project Timeline

A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

The project's key milestones were achieved through a series of designed workshops.

FEBRUARY 2025 WORKSHOP 01

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

MARCH 2025 WORKSHOP 02

EXPLORING PERSPECTIVES AND FRAMEWORKS

JUNE 2025 WORKSHOP 03

INTEGRATING YOUTH VOICE AND CONCEPT PITCH

JULY 2025 THINKPLACE DESIGN WORKSHOP

REFLECTION ON DISCOVERY PROCESS & OUTCOMES - PROTOTYPE FORMATION

AUGUST 2025 WORKSHOP 04

REPORT AND PROTOTYPE PITCH & FEEDBACK

NEXT STEPS

DEVELOPMENT OF PROTOTYPE

PILOT

REFINEMENT

LAUNCH & PROMOTION



PURPOSE

UNDERSTANDING AND EMPOWERMENT

The core purpose of the YEA Good Youth Employer Project 2025 is to gain a profound understanding of the needs, motivations, and aspirations of young people in the workplace. By engaging directly with both young employees and employers, the project aims to bridge the gap between expectations and experiences, fostering a more inclusive and supportive employment environment. The ultimate goal is to equip employers with a practical and accessible resource that enables them to create workplaces where all young people can thrive.

“What motivates me at work is proving to myself that I can do more than I thought I could or was told I could.”

Kai & Kōrero participant

KEY THEMES FROM THE WORKSHOPS

A TAPESTRY OF INSIGHTS

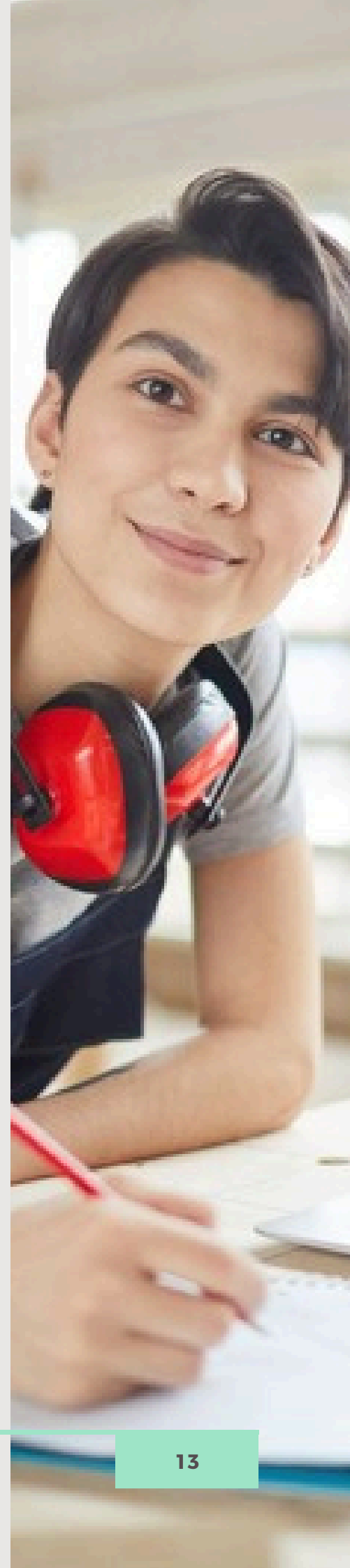


The workshops conducted throughout the project have served as rich forums for dialogue and discovery, revealing several key themes that underpin the challenges and opportunities in youth employment.

“We see employers seeking retention and employees seeking belonging; this commonality creates an opportunity for the two to meet in the middle.”

Genevieve Griffin-George, Founder, PicMi

- **The Disconnect** A recurring theme is the disconnect between employer expectations and the realities faced by young employees. This includes a lack of understanding of cultural nuances, communication styles, and the impact of societal pressures on young people's lives.
- **The Need for Support** Young people consistently express a need for greater support in the workplace, including mentorship, clear communication, and a sense of belonging. This support extends beyond traditional training to encompass emotional well-being and a recognition of individual needs.
- **The Importance of Inclusivity** The project highlights the critical importance of creating inclusive workplaces that value diversity in all its forms. This includes actively addressing biases, promoting cultural understanding, and providing accommodations for neurodiverse and disabled employees.
- **The Value of Youth Voice** The workshops underscore the immense value of incorporating youth voice into workplace practices. By actively listening to and valuing the perspectives of young employees, employers can create more engaging, supportive, and relevant work environments.
- **The Impact of Systemic Issues** The project recognises that many of the challenges faced by young employees are rooted in broader systemic issues, such as economic inequality, lack of access to education and training, and societal biases. Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach that extends beyond individual workplaces.



YOUTH VOICE

AMPLIFYING LIVED EXPERIENCES



A cornerstone of the YEA Good Youth Employer Project is the amplification of youth voice. Through in-person Kai & Kōrero sessions and an online survey, young people aged 16–30, representing diverse backgrounds and experiences, have shared their perspectives on what motivates them, what challenges they face, and what they wish employers knew.

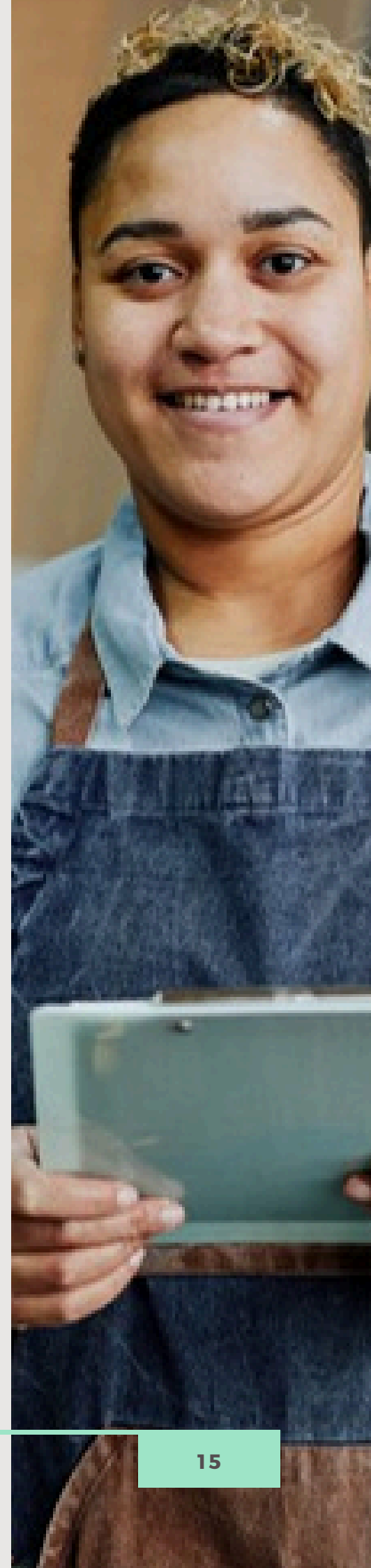
“Respect should be given to youth if they are expected to be respectful; we want to be met halfway.”

Kai & Kōrero participant

- **Motivations** The project found that young employees are motivated by opportunities for growth, a sense of purpose, and a supportive work environment. They seek workplaces where they feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique skills and perspectives.
- **Barriers** The barriers to engagement identified by young people are often rooted in a lack of understanding and support from employers. These include rigid workplace cultures, a lack of flexibility, and biases that limit opportunities for advancement.
- **Wishes** Young employees expressed a desire for employers to be more open-minded, understanding, and willing to invest in their development. They want employers to recognise their potential, value their contributions, and create workplaces where Health & Wellbeing are a priority and young employees feel safe, supported, and empowered to thrive.

The youth survey insights further illuminated key areas for improvement in workplace practices. Participants emphasised the need to move away from outdated practices such as rigid hierarchies, lack of work-life balance, and a failure to prioritise diversity and inclusion.

They called for more flexible work arrangements, a greater emphasis on employee wellbeing, positive mentorship, and a commitment to creating a culture of open communication and mutual respect.



EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVES

WHAT THEY NEED



Throughout the project, it has been crucial to understand the perspectives of employers—what they need, what they want, and what strategies they believe are effective for engaging and retaining young employees. This section summarises key insights from the workshops and related discussions, highlighting the challenges and opportunities they perceive in the current employment landscape.

“Unconscious bias can manifest as a lack of empathy, and this creates poor work environments and experiences—because there’s too much urgency, because there’s not enough ‘time’, but if people are not important, then nothing is important.”

Jon Bowen, Principal Advisor, Secondary Transitions, Ministry of Education



- **Demonstrated Business Benefits**
Employers need to see a clear business case for investing in youth engagement. They want to understand how attracting, engaging, and retaining young employees can improve their bottom line, enhance their reputation, and contribute to their long-term success.
- **Practical Tools and Resources**
Employers express a need for practical tools and resources that are easy to implement and tailored to the specific needs of their industry and workplace. They seek guidance on how to create inclusive job descriptions, conduct effective interviews, and provide meaningful feedback.
- **Understanding Youth Culture**
Employers recognise the need to bridge the generational gap and adapt their management practices to effectively engage with younger employees.
- **Support for Managing Diverse Needs**
Employers seek support for managing the diverse needs of young employees, including those from different cultural backgrounds, neurodivergent youth, and those with disabilities. They want to learn how to provide reasonable accommodations and create a supportive workplace environment for all.
- **Peer-to-Peer Learning**
Employers want to learn from one another; they want effective and efficient guidance from trusted and reputable business leaders.

- **Clear Expectations and Accountability** Employers emphasise the importance of setting clear expectations and holding young employees to account for their performance. They want to create a culture of responsibility and professionalism while also fostering a supportive and developmental environment.
- **Loyalty and Retention** Employers want to retain their young employees for the long term. They seek to create workplaces where young people feel valued, supported, and have opportunities for growth and advancement.

“Young people are taught about and engage with introspection really early on, and are looking for work-life balance really early on in their career.

This is a BIG difference from previous generations who had the intention of getting ahead, which typically meant doing lots of overtime.”

Abe Naus, General Manager—Auckland, Potentia



COMMONALITIES BETWEEN YOUNG EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS

The workshops, Kai & Kōrero sessions, and the survey revealed several key commonalities between young employees and employers, suggesting a shared ground for building stronger, more effective working relationships.



“We need a shared vision with the young person of what comes next. Share an understanding with the young person of the decision-making processes, and what’s next for the business in five years’ time, and what’s next for the young person, and what that journey looks like.”

Lenny Andrews, Pou Tokomanawa, Hāpai Tūhono

- **Desire for Positive Relationships** Both employers and young employees want to have good relationships in the workplace. They desire trusted relationships built on mutual respect and understanding. Both sides recognise that positive relationships contribute to a more productive and enjoyable work environment.
- **Aspiration for Quality Work** Both employers and employees want to achieve good outcomes and produce quality work. This shared desire can be a powerful motivator for collaboration and a focus on excellence.
- **Seeking a Mutually Beneficial Arrangement** Employers seek retention of employees, while employees seek belonging. This creates an opportunity to meet in the middle, where employers create a welcoming and supportive environment and employees commit to contributing their skills and talents.
- **Need for Mutual Respect and Accountability** Both employers and young employees highlighted the importance of mutual respect and being held accountable. Employees want to be treated with respect, while employers need employees to take responsibility for their actions and performance. Establishing clear expectations and consequences can foster a sense of fairness and trust.



- **Importance of Communication** All parties agree on the need for clear and effective communication. Employees are looking for explicit direction and clear guidance, while employers want clear, direct, and timely responses. Open dialogue, active listening, and a willingness to understand different communication styles are essential for building strong working relationships.
- **Desire for Success** Ultimately, both employers and employees share a common desire for good outputs. They want the organisation to succeed and for individuals to thrive within it. This shared goal can align their efforts and foster a sense of teamwork and collaboration.
- **Apprehension of Working Together** Apprehension of working together was expressed by both sides, but so too was a desire to engage and learn.

These commonalities provide the project with leverage points that can be used to help bridge the gap between employers and young employees. They can provide a foundation from which a resource can be created that will foster a more collaborative, supportive, and productive work environment.

“Resentment as a young person is easy to build up. If you’ve never done an office job before, it’s often different than what you expected. If employers expect something from someone, they need to give them support to achieve it.”

Kai & Kōrero participant

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As the project moves towards the creation of a prototype resource, several key considerations will guide the design and development process:

- **Accessibility** The resource must be informed by universal design principles, and be accessible to employers regardless of their existing knowledge or resources. It should be easy to use, practical, and relevant to the diverse needs of young employees.
- **Inclusivity** The resource must reflect the diverse experiences and perspectives of young people, including Māori, Pasifika, neurodiverse, and disabled youth. It should actively challenge biases, promote cultural understanding, and provide practical strategies for creating inclusive workplaces.
- **Align with the Mana Taiohi framework** The resource must be grounded in the lived experiences and perspectives of young people. It should empower employers to listen to and value youth voice, creating workplaces where young employees feel heard, respected, and supported.
- **Actionability** The resource must provide employers with concrete actions that they can take to improve youth engagement and retention. It should offer a practical solution that can be easily implemented in the workplace.
- **Tikanga Considerations** Incorporating tikanga will enrich the resource, making it more relevant to Aotearoa and engaging for young employees.

- **Sustainability** The resource must be designed to be sustainable over time, with ongoing opportunities for feedback, evaluation, and improvement. It should be a “living document” that evolves to meet the changing needs of young employees and employers.
- **Affordability** The resource must be low or no cost to produce/reproduce/implement.

“Rangatahi are wired differently from older generations. They are hardworking, but it’s important to create an environment where they feel supported to be themselves.”

Survey respondent



PROTOTYPE IDEATIONS

FILTERING AND DISTILLING

Following Workshop Three, the lead team held an ideation session with the ThinkPlace design team.

The purpose was to filter through all the information gathered and distill the key themes into ideas for a resource, including those already pitched by the working groups.

Due to time and resource constraints, only two products were shaped into a pitch to present to the working groups at Workshop Four. Members of all working groups were asked whether or not the prototypes met their expectations, whether they were fit for purpose, and which prototype, if either, they wanted to see developed into a resource for the pilot phase.

There was overwhelming support for prototype two, Start Smart, outlined on the following pages. Pitch material and feedback can be found in the appendices.

“The most helpful thing to better understand job requirements is to discuss with employees.

Job descriptions are not helpful

—they are full of jargon.

Having a convo with someone allows you to ask questions. Talk through exactly what is required of us. Don’t just make us read a book on it.”

Kai & Kōrero participant

PROTOTYPE

START SMART INDUCTION TOOL

Introduction and Purpose

Start Smart is an induction tool designed specifically to support employers, particularly SMEs, in effectively onboarding and engaging their young employees. Inspired by the MBIE Employment Agreement Builder, it offers a straightforward, step-by-step guide to help ensure new young workers are set up for success from the outset. The tool will be adaptable based on individual needs, serving as the first of three planned resources, with subsequent guides focusing on Professional Development and Performance Appraisal processes.

Principles, Needs, and Opportunities

Grounded in the guiding principles of this project, this prototype will thoughtfully incorporate tikanga, particularly reflecting the intentions embedded in pōwhiri. By drawing on the insights from youth voice and working group discussions, it will prioritise features that genuinely resonate with both young employees and employers across Aotearoa, fostering a respectful and inclusive foundation for positive engagement.

Start Smart will incorporate space for employers to assess the needs of their employees, and their own needs, set mutually beneficial goals, and reflect on their approach during onboarding. The tool will also include myth-busting sections to dispel misconceptions about youth engagement and guidance that encourages responsible leadership. It will guard against assumed knowledge, helping employers to clearly guide their young staff, and will feature tips and links to frameworks, other tools and guides for ongoing or specialist support. Video content featuring good youth employers will illustrate successful approaches and provide peer-to-peer advice on best practice.

Key Considerations in Development

In creating this tool, several important considerations will be addressed to maximise its effectiveness. First is ensuring ease of use: the interface will be simple yet robust enough to provide meaningful guidance without overwhelming users. The balance between simplicity and comprehensive support will require ongoing testing with early adopters. It will be essential to incorporate a login feature for saving progress, and consistency and accuracy of information will be vital. Content reviews, particularly from employment law advisors, will be required.

Building partnerships with MBIE will help embed this resource within existing government resources, increasing its credibility and reach. Additionally, mechanisms for ongoing updates and maintenance will be planned, with clear responsibility assigned to ensure the content remains relevant and accurate.

Finally, the development process will include strategies to encourage uptake, including engaging early adopters, promoting the resource through the YEA Network, and ensuring the tool is adaptable for diverse business sizes and sectors. Ongoing evaluation metrics, such as engagement through Click-Through Rates (CTRs), implementation rates via user surveys, and employer testimonials, will be essential indicators of success.

Conclusion

Start Smart aims to create a practical, accessible, and culturally responsive induction resource that supports employers in establishing strong, positive relationships with young employees. Its design will be informed by the project's principles, youth voice input, and employer needs, with careful attention to usability and sustainability to ensure long-term impact and continuous improvement.



“Employers need to stop treating young people as if they are another species, it is not our fault that mobile phones and TVs were stuffed in our faces along with sugar and other poor choices—all excuses that employers use when their first-year apprentice they bully doesn't show up. These are choices the kids did not make but had to cope with.”

Survey respondent

POTENTIAL PITFALLS

NAVIGATING CHALLENGES

Despite the project's many strengths, it is important to acknowledge potential pitfalls that could hinder its success:

- **Tokenistic Engagement** There is a risk that employers may engage with the resource in a tokenistic way, without making meaningful changes to their workplace practices. To mitigate this risk, the resource must emphasise the importance of ongoing commitment and provide tools for measuring impact.
- **Lack of Employer Buy-In** Some employers may be resistant to change or unwilling to invest the time and resources necessary to implement the resource effectively. To overcome this challenge, the resource must clearly demonstrate the benefits of youth engagement and provide compelling evidence of its impact on business outcomes.
- **Sustainability Concerns** Ensuring the long-term sustainability of the resource will require ongoing funding and support. YEA must develop a comprehensive sustainability plan that includes strategies for securing funding, building partnerships, and engaging stakeholders.
- **Failing to Adapt to Change** The employment landscape is constantly evolving, and the resource must be adaptable to meet the changing needs of young employees and employers. Regular evaluation, feedback, and updates will be essential to ensure its ongoing relevance and effectiveness.
- **Ignoring Systemic Issues** The resource alone cannot solve the systemic issues that contribute to youth unemployment and disengagement. YEA must advocate for broader policy changes and collaborate with other organisations to address these underlying challenges.

LESSONS LEARNED

WHAT WE'LL DO DIFFERENTLY

This project represents a first of its kind for YEA and there were valuable lessons learned to improve how we engage with the sector in future endeavours.

- Working group members, notably members of the Māori working group, expressed their preference for and the importance of kānohi-ki-te-kānohi. Going forward, funding must be assigned to enable in-person hui.
- Working group members, notably members of the disability and Māori working groups, expressed a preference for monetary compensation for their involvement. Given the pressures on these representatives, in particular, in the current political environment and 'consultation exhaustion', future project work must assign funding of koha for participants.
- Ambiguity was challenging for some members of working groups, so ways to mitigate the impact of ambiguity when it's unavoidable (or purposeful, as it was in this project) need to be considered.
- The ambitions of the project didn't match the funding available. The experience of this project will help YEA scope for future works.
- Having a Youth Lead who was highly competent in facilitating workshops was invaluable. The experience of working with the Youth Leads has led YEA to decide to employ a Youth Lead to help YEA ensure authentic youth voice for all our mahi.

REFLECTIONS ON METHOD & PROCESS

A CELEBRATION OF COLLABORATION

The YEA Good Youth Employer Project 2025 has been characterised by a commitment to collaboration, inclusivity, and a deep respect for diverse perspectives.

The workshops, surveys, and consultations conducted throughout the project have generated a wealth of insights that will inform the development of a truly impactful resource and future projects and resource development.

The project's success is a testament to the dedication and contributions of all parties involved, including the leadership team, partner organisations, employers, and, most importantly, the young people who have shared their stories and experiences.

As the project moves forward, it is essential to maintain this spirit of collaboration, and ensure that the voices of young people remain at the heart of the effort.

“Welcome new employees with a mihi—ranging from informal to formal—this is significant for the team to introduce themselves. Have food prepped and encourage interaction afterwards and don’t go straight into doing business.”

Kai & Kōrero participant

FUTURE FOCUS

NEXT STEPS

By embracing the lessons learned and remaining committed to its core values, the YEA Good Youth Employer Project 2025 has the potential to transform the landscape of youth employment in Aotearoa, creating workplaces where all young people can thrive and contribute their unique talents to the country's success. Based on the insights gained throughout the project, the following will be actioned by YEA:

- Prioritise the development of a resource that is accessible, inclusive, and youth-centred.
- Develop a comprehensive plan for the pilot to test and refine the resource and develop a use-case for employers.
- Create a plan for sustainability of the project going forward that considers how the resource can exist without YEA.
- Advocate for broader policy changes to address systemic issues that contribute to youth unemployment and disengagement.

“In an ideal world, one shouldn’t have to disclose disabilities, you should be accepted regardless. When you get the job you should be asked, what can I do to support you?”

Kai & Kōrero participant

APPENDICES

RECORDS OF COLLABORATIONS & ENGAGEMENTS

The following appendices include:

• Workshops' Summaries	31
• Kai & Kōrero Summary	67
• Youth Voice Survey Summary	82
• Design Workshop Prototype Ideas	97

APPENDIX ONE

WORKSHOPS SUMMARIES

Workshops one and four were each conducted in single sessions with all members of the working group present. During these workshops, breakout rooms were used for smaller group discussions. Workshops two and three were held separately for each working group, meaning each group had its own dedicated session.

Prior to each session, working group members were sent summaries of previous workshops and questions to consider for the upcoming workshop.

Conversations were often free-flowing, so not all specific questions were answered.

What follows are the summary notes from each workshop, condensed into employees' viewpoints and employers' perspectives.

WORKSHOP ONE

EMPLOYERS' PERSPECTIVES

Motivations to employ youth focus around need, such as replacing an aging workforce and creating economic and social resilience in the regions, as well as commercial advantageous such as cheap labour, being able to hand back a trainee to a scheme if the employee is seen as a bad fit, and value-add, such as bringing in tech and innovation skills.

Notably, there were a greater number of **barriers** than drivers. A key theme is lack of understanding of or misconceptions about youth - cultural and language barriers. Another theme was lack of support and/or capacity for managing youth, and the perception that youth come with a higher risk of PGs and, in economic challenging times, employers prioritise risk mitigation.

WHAT EMPLOYERS WISH THEIR STAFF KNEW ABOUT THEM

Typically, employers want their young employees to understand the challenges they face, the cost of running a business, the complexity of the situations they face, the risks and responsibilities that come with their role. They also want young people to temper their expectations by understanding that the employer worked their way into their role over a number of years. Employers want young employees to understand the expectations they have, that everyone has a role to play, and not everyone can be privy to all the information about the business. Employers want their young employees to know they will give them time and support in exchange for their positive attitude.

WHAT EMPLOYERS THINK IS THE BIGGEST MISCONCEPTION MADE BY YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT EMPLOYERS

They are rich! So they don't need to worry if staff don't show up or things go wrong. They don't like young people, think they are incapable, and don't want to hire them. It's easy to be the boss and that what is appropriate for senior staff should apply to junior staff.

WHAT EMPLOYERS BELIEVE IS THE BEST APPROACH TO GET TO KNOW

Being as inclusive as possible and providing opportunities for engagement with a variety of tasks/projects/work streams is identified as a constructive way to get to know their young employees, as well as getting to know them and understanding their background.

What employers have in common with their young employees

Employers were young once and have the same feelings towards work as their young employees, such as not always feeling like going to work, finding purpose in their employment, wanting work-life balance, and the desire for success. Employers are also learning and are interested in growth and development.

What employers think young employees need to understand about the business

Workplace culture, habits, expectations are different from school or from their experience as a NEET. Authenticity isn't always required, there's a need to smile and get on with the job even if you're feeling bored. Sometimes micro-management or certain standards, or emphasis on health & safety are requirements. The bottom line is always there, even in a passion industry, for example, delivery to client needs is paramount. There are unwritten rules and harm or repercussions can occur if they're not followed.

Resources or practices employers use to engage young people in their mahi

Money, awards, celebrations, social activities, and team building, were among the typical tactics used for staff engagement. Also mentioned were resources in mental health and well-being, and associations such as Farm Strong.

Tools or mechanisms used to help facilitate understanding of their young employees

The sharing of values, flexibility around work-life balance, and beers on a Friday.

Important questions we have not asked

- What strategies are there to engage with rangatahi in the education system - schools, polytech, tertiary, PTEs, and - with MSD clients and workbrokers?
- What legislation changes are needed to make it easier to improve work experience?
- How can we create more opportunities to engage youth from a younger age in their world of work?

OTHER POINTS RAISED

- High trust culture – newer employees feel unsafe and need more structure to know what ‘good’ looks like. There’s a need to provide more scaffolding and support.
- Miscommunication of standards and deadlines.
- How do we value young employees when AI means we won’t need people for so many entry-level jobs?
- Gen Z are the Covid generation, which means they come with different life experiences than we had growing up.
- Young people are taught about and engage with introspection really early on, and are looking for work-life balance really early on in their career. This is a BIG difference from previous generations who had the intention of getting ahead, which typically meant doing lots of overtime.
- Young people are bringing a lot of wisdom to the workforce around work-life balance.
- In rural environments, young people can be very isolated – they need opportunities to meet with other youth. Simple things like getting to the bank or supermarket, especially if working odd hours, they need to be given time to access services they need. So flexibility around work hours is KEY for young people working in rural environments.

- Overseas research shows that four or more exposures in the world of work makes a huge difference to young people's transition from education to employment. Exposure, Explore, Experience (see Dave Turner 2020 model).
- Many go to university as they don't know what else to do, rather than follow a clear pathway.
- Potentia runs a cafe-style work exposure experience between employers and youth.
- UK school-aged apprentices only have one day per week in education, the rest of the week is spent in industry placements (from age 16+).
- Employers need support. There are not enough resources available for employers to know how best to get to know young employees and how to adjust communication styles as required.
- What would make you look for someone young to employ?
- Many assumptions aren't helping employers to engage young people.
- Manawatu Council has sent out a survey. Should we send out a national survey to employers via councils to ask, will they employ young people, what do they want them to know?

WORKSHOP ONE SUMMARY

EMPLOYEES' PERSPECTIVES

DRIVERS THAT MOTIVATE YOUNG EMPLOYEES TO ENGAGE

Pasifika - Respect and feeling valued in a culturally safe workplace, feeling part of a community, need to support family.

Māori - Influencers, a Māori and or Māori supportive people/ environment such as sporting entities.

Neurodivergent - Respected and treated as an equal, having variety in the work or multiple jobs/roles.

Disabled - Purpose and fulfillment, giving back through meaningful work, being a role model for other rangatahi in a similar situation, being able to break the stereotypes and stigma.

BARRIERS THAT LEAD TO THEIR DISENGAGEMENT

Pasifika - not represented in many workplaces, limited experience beyond their immediate community, stereotypes, not being heard, lacking tools to challenge misconceptions about them as youth and as Pasifika, cultural clashes, not fully understanding the role, mismatch in expectations vs. reality.

Māori - Different challenges at home, knowing what they want and rejecting non-Māori inclusive workplaces, funding cuts to NGO support agencies, lack of pastoral care, internalisation of a lifetime of racism, power dynamics that favour the employer, employer racism.

Neurodivergent - Burnout, lack of psychological safety with disclosure not being safe.

Disabled - Public narrative of disability as very linear, preconceived notions about what is and isn't possible for a disabled person, employing as a 'favour' rather than as a benefit to the business.

WHAT EMPLOYEES WISH THEIR EMPLOYERS KNEW ABOUT THEM

Pasifika - Need a why, hope work will be enjoyable, younger siblings do not speak around elders and can slip into this mindset in the workplace, asking questions may seem like a challenge or reflect badly on their level of intelligence or appear as a lack of preparedness.

Māori - Don't want to be the same as Pākehā, they want their values and tikanga respected in the workplace.

Neurodivergent - Need clarity of role, needs, capabilities, energy levels, and task-completion capability changes day to day, need to know how, neurodivergent is a strength, have different ways of working, rejection sensitive.

Disabled - Don't always know what is going to work for them until they try methods/equipment out, don't have a handle on limitations, it takes time to figure all of this out.

WHAT EMPLOYEES THINK IS THE BIGGEST MISCONCEPTION MADE BY EMPLOYERS ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE

Pasifika - will do the work others don't want to do, happy to do low-pay work.

Māori - Need work, so will just do it because they need the money, will drop out of work without a good reason.

Neurodivergent - Thinking they know about neurodiversity because they've heard of or know someone neurodivergent.

Disabled - Expecting them to know what works and what doesn't work for them.

WHAT YOUNG EMPLOYEES BELIEVE IS THE BEST APPROACH TO GET TO KNOW AN EMPLOYER

Pasifika - Connecting and grounding as a team, space that's safe where you can mix and mingle, time with a mentor, strength-based approach to managing staff, safe space to come forward and discuss risks, relatable manager.

Neurodivergent - Employer provides a resource (workplace guide) that details culture/what to expect when working there - social and professional expectations - make it clear, this is not obvious to everyone, part of resource space for employee to write what works for them, have a template for employers to fill out - list of things they might want to notice - how breaks work, social aspects, unwritten rules. Template for employee to fill out - communication style, feedback needs. Needs to be a template that forms the basis of a conversation/guides a conversation- not just a piece of paper that isn't seen again.

Disabled - To be upfront and honest about communication and working styles, it can be hard for disabled youth to be able to read between the lines of how the employers work and want to engage with each other.

WHAT YOUNG EMPLOYEES HAVE IN COMMON WITH EMPLOYERS

Neurodivergent - Apprehension of working together, shared goals for good outcomes, desire to figure out the best ways to communicate, productivity, wanting to do well.

Disabled - Likely to have experienced some type of disability or have a loved one/friend who has experienced this. Covid is a really good example of how employers were able to make modifications to the way we work. Using a collective experience could help bridge the gap for disabled youth to advocate for working conditions that suit their way of working. Disabled Youth are eager and willing to work, they want to find meaningful employment.

METHODS OR PRACTICES YOUNG EMPLOYEES USE TO HELP THEM STAY ENGAGED

Pasifika - Own culture, when the environment is hospitable, pastoral care when available, Whānau support.

Māori - Whānau support, pastoral care when available.

Neurodivergent - Sensory input or opposite, track tasks, routine or variation, meeting breaks and clear agendas/purpose, tools available at any moment, flexibility in work location.

Disabled - Navigating their own disability and what works well for them is not a streamlined process, there is a lot of trial and error involved. Working to find what works well for them and working with their employer to do so will help them stay engaged. Building a relationship with their employer and having trust between them.

TOOLS OR MECHANISMS YOUNG EMPLOYEES USE TO HELP FACILITATE UNDERSTANDING

Māori - Support/training provided by NGOs.

Neurodivergent - Workplace feedback.

Disabled - It is up to the individual as everyone's needs are specific to them, however, there are a lot of great organisations that can help facilitate understanding. Often these are at a regional level, but there are some national organisations that can help too.

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS WE HAVE NOT ASKED

- What does the working group think employers could do to support Neurodivergent employees?

OTHER POINTS RAISED

- Use terms correctly in all areas of equity and inclusion.
- Offer opportunities for genuine feedback for employees regarding support that may be needed (not requiring specific disclosure but highlighting the support).
- Rather than accountability meetings for tasks employer to employee – flip it – accountability for workplace employee to employer.
- Employers themselves may have a back injury or a knee injury and they know the accommodations that they make for themselves in the workplace and they know that it takes trial and error. Almost everybody would have had an experience where they either had an injury or illness that meant they had to make even temporary accommodations.
- Figuring out how to accommodate for disability should be placed within a learning and development framework.
- In the current economic environment, a lot of Pacific youth are not encouraged to go into higher education or seek high-paying jobs.
- Prioritise jobs to get money now. Lots of people are having to drop out to support family, especially if the eldest has lots of siblings.
- There are more mixed Pasifika youth trying to figure out who they want to be.
- Youth development strategy Aotearoa and the six key principles are a good framework.
- Create a space for young people to come forward and discuss their risks.
- Acknowledgement of the changes to culture occurring for those youth who identify as both Māori and Pasifika.
- Te Potuo do internships for Māori and Pasifika and they have things specific for both Māori and Pasifika.
- Even if companies have Māori and Pasifika employees and want to help weave in their culture, they might not have the resources to do so. They need support from government.

- Employers willing to go through a progressive leadership course (could be HR) to develop a safe space in the work environment (a community feeling) eg let's go for lunch, get a coffee.
- Financial literacy is needed— behaviors around budgeting and understanding to save up for something meaningful rather than just using it on small things. Motivation to go to work drops after the expensive, short-term goal is reached. Long-term goal setting would be useful.
- Sometimes young Pasifika know what to expect from job descriptions but sometimes job descriptions do not accurately reflect the role.
- Cold responses to family duties are especially bad.
- Businesses are arrogant in their thinking, haven't woken up to the fact that the future workforce will have a high percentage of Māori. They will be hit by a generation who have the reo and are politically savvy. Unless businesses change and adapt, attract, recruit, onboard, and change their physical environments, they will miss out on the best employees. If we don't see the change, Māori youth will start their own business.
- Our education system still only caters to white middle class and Asian students. Some schools are still streamlining Māori and Pasifika as 'low ability kids'.
- Careers in schools is broken.
- Rangatahi futures is under review – there will be a pilot to deliver into kura and marae.
- Employers need to understand how f***ed up the system is and what it is that rangatahi Māori face. Eg, identify that a young Māori person was set up to fail.
- Even though there are Pākehā who are empathetic, they don't feel racism, so how do you communicate the issues with them?
- The face of career counselorsa needs to change to understand and support rangatahi Māori.
- If employer can access the whānau and build a relationship, then you'll get the young person engaged.
- Support from schools to allow kids to remain in employment - relationship between industry and schools is needed.

- Everyone is one event away from being disabled. It is important we equip our workforce to be able to accommodate disabled youth as they are eager and willing to work.
- Disability is such a broad term; there are lots of different types, meaning we can't create solutions with a broad approach.

WORKSHOP TWO SUMMARY

EMPLOYERS' PERSPECTIVES

REFLECTIONS ON WORKSHOP ONE

- Young people coming for support are needing help because the market is so bad.
- Don't look at neurodiverse as a negative.
- It's almost like our youth need to be marketed.
- Working groups were largely aligned in our thinking – the experiences were similar across the groups.
- Same barriers and opportunities with some nuances across the motu.
- We need better identification in primary school of learning needs.
- Councils have social/progressive procurement policy. How could this be leveraged? Note that Central Government has removed the wellbeings from Local Government, but what other levers can local government access?
- Social procurement needs to be looked at, noting that progressive social procurement is political.
- Businesses offering career/work exploration – what responsibility do employers have in pre-employment engagement?
- Employers could be more upfront about what skills people will gain, and help them see the value in what they're doing while they're there.
- Room for improving the induction and onboarding processes, with an emphasis on having a more consistent approach. Often new hires are left to navigate these processes on their own, depending on who trains them, which can lead to inconsistencies and gaps in understanding.

- There's a significant gap between how different generations communicate and understand each other. The younger generation may not respond in the traditional ways that employers expect (like acknowledging receipt of an email or responding with formal feedback), which can create misunderstandings about whether they are engaged or paying attention.
- Understanding sensory profiling - for example, a neurodivergent young employee will have sensory likes and dislikes.

COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKSPACE

- Employers need to be explicit about their expectations, but they also need to understand the learning and communication styles of younger workers.
- Employers might interpret what they perceive to be a lack of response as disengagement, when it's actually just a difference in communication style.
- Walking beside the young person as they transition into the workplace, making sure they are comfortable.
- Having a mentor – “there are no stupid questions” philosophy.
- Approachable manager.
- Culturally/ethnically appropriate support – language barriers, cultural assumptions, misconceptions.
- Recognizing and adapting to various communication preferences can improve team dynamics and reduce misunderstandings.
- Leaders regularly checking in on their teams, ensuring that work is progressing as expected and that employees know how they're performing.
- Asking questions, if employees don't ask questions, employers might assume employee is not interested.
- Some employers are open to different ways of communication so long as there is communication.

- Talking about whānau - how the team has a sense of belonging.
- A reasonable timeframe for responses is really important.
- A strong communication framework, established from the start, helps set expectations clearly on both sides.

LEARNING STYLES IN THE WORKPLACE

- Leaders need to regularly check in on their teams, ensuring that work is progressing as expected and that employees know how they're performing.
- Do SMEs even have the capacity to consider this?
- There needs to be a clear understanding from the employer about their expectations for the employee, while also ensuring the employer takes the time to understand the employee's or young person's learning style. It's about creating a mutual understanding of these aspects.
- There's space to improve the induction and onboarding processes, with an emphasis on having a more consistent approach. Often, new hires are left to navigate these processes on their own, depending on who trains them, which can lead to inconsistencies and gaps in understanding. It was recommended that employers implement standardized systems, like videos and other multimedia, to ensure a consistent approach to training across the organization. This would also help cater to different learning styles, as it's essential to recognize that people learn in various ways.

BUILDING TRUST IN THE WORKPLACE

- Young people, in particular, may struggle to build trust in certain work environments, and employers may sometimes unintentionally block this process due to biases.
- Trust-building is a two-way street, both parties need to invest time and energy into fostering it.
- Trust doesn't come automatically; it takes time and effort to develop genuine relationships. This process is not something that can be rushed or treated as a simple checkbox.

- Creating a sense of whānau, ensuring the youth feel part of something.
- Reward positive behaviour with more hours with someone who needs gradual progression.
- Bantering - nicknames.
- Staff benefits.
- BBQ drinks.
- Providing an environment for employers and employees to interact on a more casual basis.
- If work is done by lunch-time Friday, then we go home lunch-time Friday.
- Incentivisation. Employers want to hear questions to know that they have been heard.
- Employers want to see how young employees show up and demonstrate that they were listening and watching through their actions.

FEEDBACK ON EXISTING RESOURCE EXAMPLES

- Cards could be on a ring and there could be one side for SMEs and other side for an HR manager.
- Cards could be focused on how to support youth with different needs.
- Resource has to require short, sharp implementation.
- Face-to-face interaction is vital - not necessarily in person, could be online, but it needs to allow for meaningful, direct, communication.
- Resource should require delivery human to human.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- Having a trusted person to guide and support new employees, particularly at the start of their journey, is essential.
- Employers could be more upfront about what skills people will gain in their early career stage, and help them see the value in what they're doing while they're there.
- Improving the induction and onboarding processes, with an emphasis on having a more consistent approach. Often, new hires are left to navigate these processes on their own, depending on who trains them, which can lead to inconsistencies and gaps in understanding. It was recommended that employers implement standardized systems, like videos and other multimedia, to ensure a consistent approach to training across the organisation. This would also help cater to different learning styles, as it's essential to recognize that people learn in various ways.
- Better identification in primary school of learning needs.
- "Get dotted" exercise, which helps identify different communication styles among team members. This exercise categorizes individuals into different communication styles, such as empathetic or direct, to improve mutual understanding and collaboration. "Get dotted" exercise was used in a community event for local businesses, which received positive feedback. This exercise helped businesses understand their communication styles and improve interactions within their teams.
- We need a database to track who is using the resource so that we can gather feedback and continuously improve.
- Video of good employers to support the why of the resource.
- We need someone to hit up the big companies such as PnS to encourage them to set quotas for employing Māori, Pasifika, disabled youth and NEETs.

WORKSHOP TWO SUMMARY

EMPLOYEES' PERSPECTIVES

REFLECTIONS ON WORKSHOP ONE

- Questions around authentic consultation with Maori for development of the Tātaki Auckland Unlimited framework.
- Concerns around use of Te Whare Tapa Wha as a tool by people who are not equipped to implement.
- We do need a framework, we have tikanga to help guide the creation of one.
- While it can be argued that one size won't fit all, the overarching principles remain the same regardless of size of organisation.
- Key to effectively working with Māori is accountability. What does that look like in terms of drivers from an exec. or board level down? How can we get employers to commit when the economy is rough – how do you get them to commit, and what's the method to ensure it's efficient, authentic, and gets the outcomes for Māori?
- Need metrics - need workplace demographics – how many Māori, where do they sit? How can you grow your Māori staff if you don't know who they are and where they are in the organisation.
- We need a shared vision with the young person of what comes next. Share an understanding with the young person of the decision-making processes, and what's next for the business in five years' time, and what's next for the young person, and what that journey looks like.
- Kids coming out of a supportive kaupapa environment landing in racist employment environment – how do they manage that, how can they be supported?
- How can we prepare our rangatahi in kura to face those situations. How to select places to work, what things do they need to find out, working alongside Māori business are a great start.

- The consideration of the young employees is not on top of mind for work brokers. Can work brokers work to find those companies that value Te Ao Māori? So that our youth can find a pathway to use their reo, align them with Māori employers.
- Rangatahi aren't just a resource to plunder. If employers want to recruit rangatahi from their community, then they have to be engaged with their community. It all comes back to whanaungatanga which is all around tikanga.
- Misconception 1. Pacific youth are perceived as less driven and more challenging to manage due to unconscious biases and additional relationship-building efforts required.
- Misconception 2. There is an assumption that their productivity is lower, which is often not the case when given the right support and environment.
- Pacific Youth excel under pressure and possess an intrinsic drive that can be harnessed with proper guidance.
- They value relationships and community, drawing strength and motivation from these connections.
- Employers can benefit from providing roles that align with Pacific youth lifestyle, such as night shifts or jobs that suit their personal schedules.
- Create a team environment that fosters a sense of belonging and financial independence
- Offer internships and opportunities that build a person-first approach rather than viewing them merely as employees.
- Being more aware of accommodations that are made in the workplace and those that are not in place, how can we make it more accessible.

COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

- Important to feel safe to disagree, to communicate in a way that works for you, being able to be authentic and not having to wear a mask, allowing time needed for response, checking that everyone got the information they need to understand/respond, reaching consensus, reciprocity, checking in.
- Two way conversation, with no judgement. However this is not something that can happen overnight; trust needs to be built, and rangatahi need to ensure that they are in a safe situation.

LEARNING STYLES IN THE WORKPLACE

- Need to have all options of learning styles available when teaching, allow movement, different abilities at different times of the day, clarity - black & white (struggle with ambiguity), detail, find suitable space, written explanations/instructions.
- Young people are generally comfortable with hybrid work due to their experience with online learning during high school and university. This familiarity can help them adapt to flexible work environments more easily.

HOW YOUNG EMPLOYEES FEEL VALUED/HEARD

- Being treated as an individual and not having people who assume a stereotype.
- Trust that individuals know themselves.
- Not being sent to OT because the employer isn't listening to what is being asked for.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- Have flexibility around the face-to-face interactions - still have it as interactive, but some people might struggle to meet face to face with leadership - be intentional with interactions.
- Universal design principles need to be the priority.

FEEDBACK ON EXISTING RESOURCE EXAMPLES

- Flash cards aren't going to work as they can just be used to try to look like you care but underneath it's inauthentic.
- Pasifika youth respond well to hands-on and quality engagement with a focus on practical, action-based learning.
- Employers should be present and actively listen to the youth to make them feel valued.
- Young neurodiversity champions card game is a good starting point and not small talk.
- Interactiveness
- First example is most accessible - tailored to big or small organisations.
- Multi modal is most accessible for all access needs.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- Need people to go into industry and run workshops with employers to teach them how to work successfully with rangatahi.
- Introduce the willing to those who are already working successfully with rangatahi - showcase the exemplars.
- KPIs around employment and retention of rangatahi Māori that are tied to bonus payments.
- Have auditing and a good youth employer “stamp”.
- Create video content made by youth – rangatahi interviewing good youth employers.
- Create a safe space for feedback and encourage group settings to facilitate open communication.
- Effective communication should be accepting and action-oriented, not just verbal affirmations.
- Move away from tokenism and promote genuine agency and responsibility in the workplace.
- For different types of work, colour code it, eg. office work, customer service.
- Tailor it by only using what is relevant.
- Template used for workshops could be cards.
- Give to people a day prior for preparation, rather than five minutes to write answers, or slido.
- Need to have a facilitation guide <https://askjan.org/topics/interactive.cfm> a North American example of how to provide accommodations for people with a disability.

WORKSHOP THREE

SUMMARY

EMPLOYERS' PERSPECTIVES

REFLECTIONS ON SUMMARY OF KAI & KŌREO SESSIONS

- Reinforces the importance of the social aspect of work - the opportunities to build social connection.
- It takes a real effort to build an inclusive culture.
- How does the physical location affect the experience of work?
- Larger organisations need to look at the teams within the larger team.
- We don't see a lot of people with disabilities in the Council space – this is a challenge for Local Government to consider - disability is exponentially challenging in rural locations
- Power dynamics – require strong advocacy from support groups – ie MTFJ.
- Make sure your young workforce know they are valued! – many different ways to do this.
- You can reward with time! This can be a motivation.
- Emerging workforce don't have previous experience, or context, to compare with the current experience.
- Catastrophizing is prevalent - there are more extreme positions on everything.
- There's a need for strategic oversight to ensure effective youth development and the importance of having resources to support these initiatives.
- While youth raised their desire for flat hierarchy, it's important to recognise accountabilities and responsibilities, so how do we manage hierarchies appropriately?
- There's evidence of exploitation, poor communication, and harmful power dynamics at play.

- Key themes were valuing staff, the need for communication channels to express concerns, a desire for a curious culture in the workplace, so staff can ask questions, learn, explore opportunities, and have their voice heard, and the need for young employees to understand the why, a solid induction.
- Clear that they want guidance and support, but want employers to have confidence in them as well.
- Their concepts around hierarchy, when considering these comments in the context of the other comments, it seems that they're not really after a flat structure, but want respect, regardless of their position.
- Big theme is around a sense of belonging - they want to feel part of a team, it's not just a transactional relationship they want.

WORKSHOP THREE

SUMMARY

EMPLOYEES' PERSPECTIVES

REFLECTIONS ON SUMMARY OF KAI & KŌREO SESSIONS

- The disclosure feedback and accommodations - resonated with own experiences.
- Difficulties around workplace culture, understanding what the rules are, bureaucracies or strict rules can be hard to navigate as rules are not explicit or are contradicted by practice. For example, you have a half-hour lunch break, but you've been at a cafe for an hour with the team, does that mean you have to work another 30 mins at the end of the day? No one explains what the rule is.
- A person needs to be reflected in the workplace culture and it's clearly not happening.
- Strong desire for a social interaction came up - but social group events etc not always great for neurodivergent people - so there needs to be options on how to engage and optional engagement.
- For the neurodivergent youth, it's not so much about socializing at work, but understanding how others work and how to interact with one another to get the mahi done, without burning out due to social obligations.
- Understanding the communication styles of colleagues and managers is critical.
- Unconscious bias creates a lack of empathy and this creates poor work environments - because there's too much urgency, because there's not enough 'time', but if people are not important, then nothing is important.
- The why really matters to young people, but the rules need to make sense - it can't be 'this is the way we've always done it'.
- There's a willingness to be trusting but poor communication is getting in the way.

WORKSHOP THREE

SUMMARY

EMPLOYEES' AND EMPLOYERS' PERSPECTIVES

COMMONALITIES WE CAN LEVERAGE

- Both employers and employees want good relationships in the workplace, trusted relationships.
- Both want good outcomes, they both want quality work.
- Employer is seeking retention and employee is seeking belonging, which gives them the opportunity to meet in the middle.
- Mutual respect and being held accountable.
- Communication needs: around shared expectations - employees are looking for direction and guidance and employers want skills and how they can be built.
- Common desire for good outputs.

MOTIVATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS TO ADOPT OUR RESOURCE

- Easy to use, easy to pick up, plain language.
- Direct, clear to the point, no fluff.
- No extra cost.
- No HR degree required to understand - accessible.
- Economic benefits of taking on someone starting out in their career, training them up and investing in them, not just in an economic way, can lead to economic benefits for your company.
- Resource is an opportunity to brand yourself as the youth employer of choice - be the most attractive employer to attract the best candidates - kudos for the employer.

- Right place - right time: when an employer engages with the likes of MSD or employer programmes, schools.
- Give the resource to the youth so that they can take it with them when they start.
- Can the resource meet specific pain points - eg, how do you communicate to an employee what it is you need them to do.
- Evidence that it works - testimonials from specific groups of people (hospitality = large numbers of youth and neurodivergent youth in particular) - case studies.
- Hits the bottom line.

MOTIVATIONS FOR EMPLOYEES TO ENGAGE WITH RESOURCE

- Needs to directly impact them and be accessible in different formats, easily absorbed in short soundbites.
- If employees can see themselves in it, they will engage with it.
- Will reflect multiple learning modes - eg, scan QR code to listen.

WHAT WE WISH IT COULD DO

- Help employers not already engaged with careers and pathways feel more comfortable and confident to hire rangatahi.
- It will speak to the challenges employers have and support them.
- Better workplaces in which people thrive, stay, and grow through good communication and engagement.
- Make the implicit explicit.
- Encourage employers to be flexible and have the confidence to experiment.
- Facilitate more open communication between employers and employees about everyone's needs and how they can be met.
- Reduce burnout.

- Enables employer and employee to collaborate.
- Educate employers about disclosure - employees should be able to say what they need and not have to say why.
- Make all young people feel seen in the workplace.

WHAT IT WILL LOOK AND FEEL LIKE

- Tikanga.
- Whānau inclusive.
- It meets the needs of different learning styles - It will have info-graphics (accompanying text) - be multimodal - visual, text, audio (podcast with real voice), QR code links to audio or video and different text options.
- It's broken down into chunks, it can be picked up when needed.
- It should feel collaborative.
- Customizable for learning needs, accessible font, colour considerations.
- A living document.
- Empowering.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- High levels of uptake: measurement of uptake - feedback from users.
- It's shifting behaviours in the workplace: retention rates have improved. It has shifted how young people feel about the world of work in NZ - happier employees, more stable employees, reduced costs for employers.
- More employers who haven't been engaged are using the resources and seeing the benefit of it for them.
- Reduction in the amount of precarious work environments for youth.
- Lowering of the NEET rate.

- Increase of school leavers going into apprenticeships.
- Reduction in number of people leaving NZ - people returning.
- Lower rates of turnover because young employees understand what's going on as they will have more of a say about how they can work with the culture, not for the culture, and the culture includes their way of learning, communicating, and socialising. Improvement of workplace cultures.
- Young employees find their workplace a safe space.
- Accommodations are made and needs are being met.
- Young employees feel empowered - not falling into the burnout trap they've seen their parents fall into.
- Workplace conversations are more honest and authentic between employer and employee.
- Young people experience human kindness and respect in our places of work.
- Young people transition successfully from education or NEET to employee.

RESOURCE IDEAS

On-boarding Tool

(such as the MB employment agreement builder: <https://eab.business.govt.nz/employmentagreementbuilder/startscreen>)

This would cover ongoing pastoral care, team culture, clear job description – what are the needs we need to meet? KPIs, Performance Development, clear expectations, recognition (how to celebrate success), the benefit of being a good youth employer. ‘Mandatory’, ‘Recommended’, and ‘Optional’ fields.

Good Youth Employer Accreditation

Future project to authenticate good youth employers A resource of resources A database of information that employers can access and ask questions of it - questions are promoted to show other employers what resources they access.

Tikanga-informed induction pack

Translate/unpack the concepts behind a pōwhiri. Supporting the transition into a new space for a new employee, if this is done well, it will set the relationship between employee and employer. Employer welcomes the youth, explains who they are, their purpose, their culture. Employee with whānau/friends acknowledge. Kai begins the Manaakitanga. Karakia psychologically puts team in the frame of mind to be tau and ready. Brings the collective together as a team.

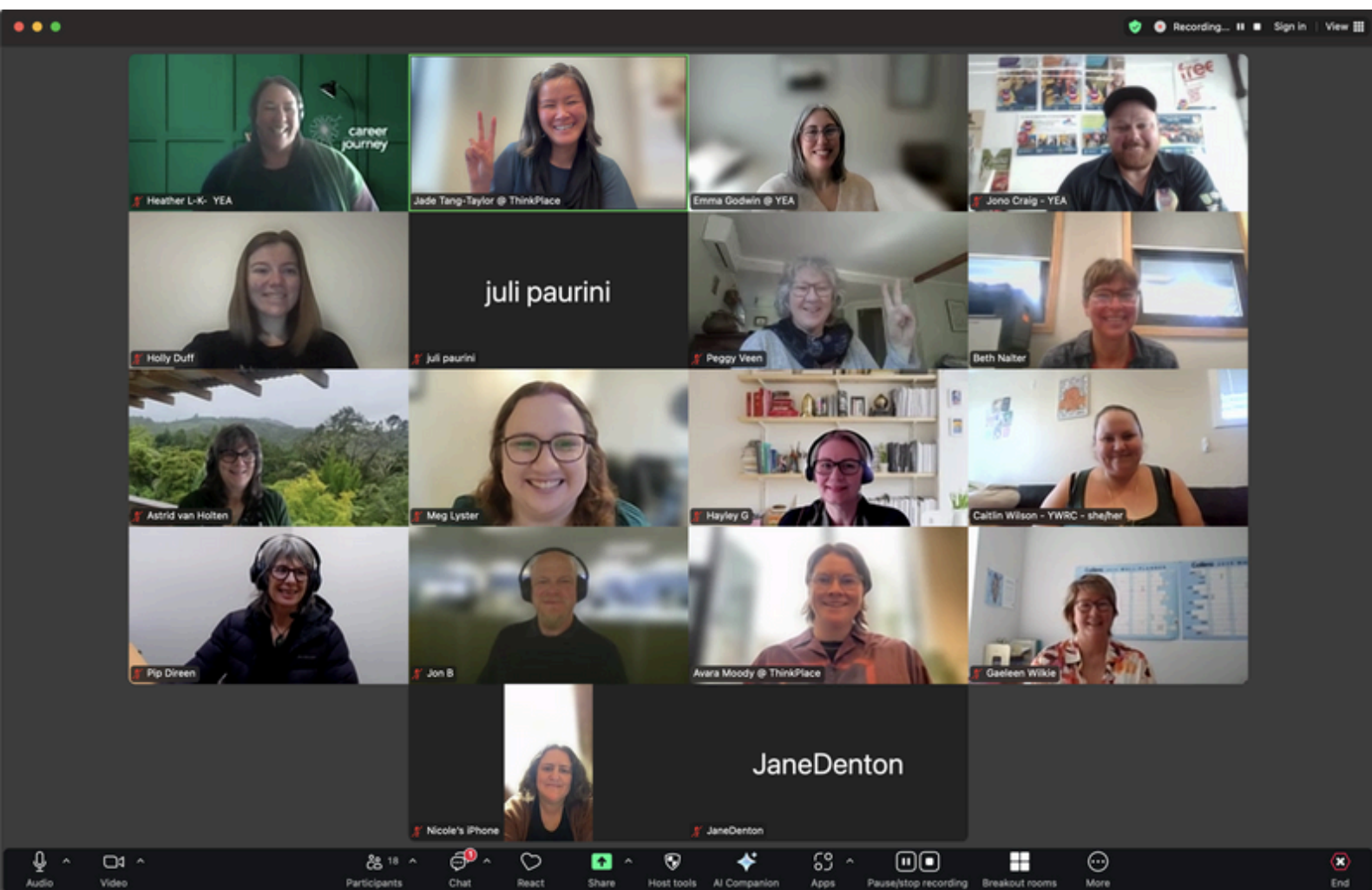
Handbook Template / Team Charter

Intention is to make the implicit explicit. Making clear all the unwritten rules, outline of expectations (communication), standards, explicit non-negotiables and highlighting where there is flexibility, accommodation requests without requiring naming of disability. This should be a collaborative creation - a conversation starter. (<https://accessadvisors.nz/>). Replace ‘learning’ with ‘working’ (see: <https://view.genially.com/623b8550473d8800194831a7/interactive-image-udl-thinking-cycle>).

WORKSHOP FOUR SUMMARY

PROTOTYPE PITCH

- Prototype One and Two were presented to the working groups. A summary of each pitch follows, along with the feedback collated from the workshop attendees.



PROTOTYPE ONE

YOU(TH) MATTER

DESCRIPTION

This is a **communities of practice chatbot**. It will support employers to create good communication and productive/supportive relationships with young employees. The host platform will also house videos of good youth employers providing advice on what works and what doesn't, as well as youth speaking to what works for them.



WHY THIS IDEA IS IMPORTANT

- It will create a safe space for employers to ask questions
- It will be able to respond immediately to employers
- It will be grounded in the guiding principles of this project

WHO IT WILL BENEFIT

- Young employees
- New & existing youth employers
- Good Youth Employers who will become recognised leaders

WHO IS NEEDED

- Software developer
- Good youth employers
- YEA network members
- Intern

WHAT IS NEEDED

- Funding/resourcing for developer, intern, pilot, marketing
- Funding/resourcing for video content and creation

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- High engagement numbers - data points
- High implementation rates - user survey
- Growing testimonials

RISKS

Sustainability / Employers not implementing advice given / Advice given not working

PROTOTYPE ONE

FEEDBACK

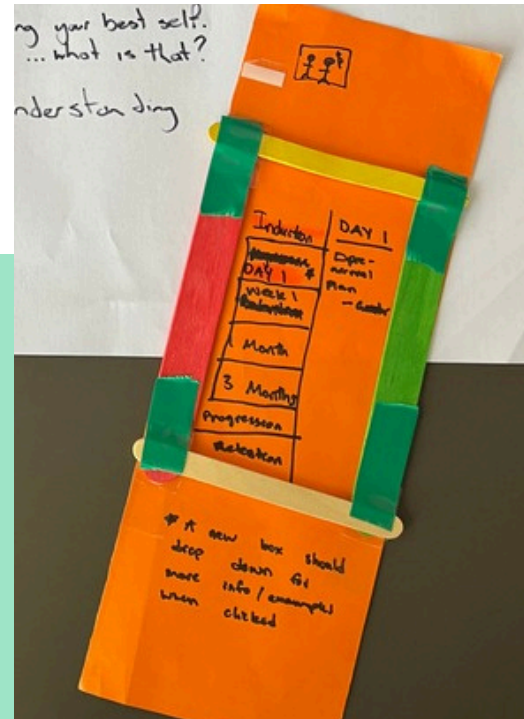
- Many appreciate the idea of providing a low-pressure, accessible way for employers to explore ideas and best practices before engaging more deeply, especially by leveraging AI to keep the platform current and relevant. The name of the platform is generally well-liked, and there is positive feedback about including voices of good youth employers to share positive approaches. It's also seen as a focused, best-practice resource that can be moderated effectively.
- However, there are concerns about sustainability and how the chatbot would fit within the broader landscape, as it could risk being seen as just another resource among many. Some worry about the technological literacy gap—many users might feel uncomfortable or intimidated by AI or may lack understanding of its ethical and security implications. There are questions about whether employers would use the chatbot to prepare or solve problems, and where it would be hosted—ideally somewhere accessible like the MBIE website. The term “chatbot” itself can carry negative connotations, making some think of an impersonal, robotic interface, whereas emphasizing AI and tools might offer a more positive impression.
- Quality control, ongoing updates, and the frequency of use are also concerns. Some fear that the tool could be misinterpreted as employment coaching, providing advice that might not always be accurate or legally sound—especially around sensitive areas like employment law, Tikanga, and Te Tiriti. Clear disclaimers would be necessary, stressing that the platform isn't a substitute for legal or cultural advice. The potential costs of building and maintaining a comprehensive resource library could be substantial. Integration with existing software that employers already use might improve adoption.
- There would also be a need for multiple checkpoints within the system to ensure safe and accurate guidance. Since the AI's capabilities depend heavily on its developer's knowledge, it's important that those creating the chatbot understand AI restrictions and include warnings when legal issues could arise. The platform should not stand alone but be complemented by other resources. Additional challenges were identified as SME employers' capacity to navigate this tool, the likely uptake, and whether the AI can stay current with the latest research and studies. Overall, many see promise in the concept but emphasise careful planning around trust, legal implications, user accessibility, and ongoing management.
- Ultimately, this prototype was seen as a possible future project but not one for YEA to tackle at this stage.

PROTOTYPE TWO

START SMART

DESCRIPTION

This is **an induction tool** similar in format to the MBIE Employment Agreement Builder. It will help businesses ensure their new young employees are set up for success. It will provide a step-by-step guide and allow for needs-based adaptation. This would be the first of three resources, the following two being: Professional Development Guide, and Performance Appraisal Process Guide.



WHO IT WILL BENEFIT

- Young employees
- SMEs with low HR capability and capacity

WHY THIS IDEA IS IMPORTANT

- It will create a scaffold for good youth employment by encouraging intentionality and shared understandings
- It will reduce overwhelm for SMEs in particular

WHO IS NEEDED

- Web developer
- Employment law advisor
- MBIE
- YEA Network

WHAT IS NEEDED

- Early adopters
- Simple but robust guidance

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- High engagement numbers - data points
- High implementation rates - user survey
- Adopted by MBIE

RISKS

Complexity vs Usability - getting the balance right

PROTOTYPE TWO

FEEDBACK

- The feedback highlights many strengths of the Start Smart induction tool, emphasising its potential for sustainability and ease of use compared to prototype one. Many see it as a practical resource that can be easily handed over and resourced, making it especially beneficial for young employees and employers who often lack formal induction processes. The app format is desirable for its user-friendliness, which could facilitate a seamless experience for both employers and young employees—especially during individual discussions or onboarding. It is viewed as a complementary tool that could improve understanding of employment obligations and foster positive relationships from the start, encouraging safer and more constructive engagement.
- There is enthusiasm for partnering with MBIE, seeing this collaboration as increasing credibility and making the tool more accessible to businesses—particularly SMEs. The ability to develop paper versions could broaden accessibility further. The tool is also seen as a good way to promote positive leadership, helping employers create a safe space where young people feel comfortable raising concerns, thus reducing potential long-term issues.
- Incorporating Te Ao Māori perspectives will be essential to ensure cultural relevance. Features such as login options for saving progress, consistency of information, and opportunities for future application—like advice tips, myth-busting, and videos—are considered valuable enhancements.
- Further ideas include connecting this resource with existing tools, frameworks, and culture competency workshops such as Yavu from Ministry for Pacific Peoples. Or incorporating a pulse check to evaluate ongoing engagement, as well as integrating employer and employee perspectives. The team will need to consider who is responsible for updating and maintaining the app's relevance—likely MBIE—and how to motivate businesses to adopt it. Additional features like educational plans or career development components could add value, but clear strategies for engagement and sustained relevance are vital to ensure it becomes a practical, long-term resource.
- Prototype Two was favoured over prototype one by a clear majority of the attendees as it answers the expectations of project partners and is considered to be more easily realised and implemented. The plan to enhance the tool with videos of good youth employer champions from Prototype One will be incorporated into the Start Smart prototype.

APPENDIX TWO

KAI & KŌREROS SUMMARY

Youth leads, Meg Lyster and Holly Duff, ran a series of workshops with youth, including youth from our key focus groups. Participants were assured anonymity and were informed of the purpose of the project before they agreed to participate. YEA provided kai as a thank you to participants, and YEA has committed to sharing project progress and outcomes with the organisations that hosted these sessions.

Attendees were asked to focus on motivations for engagement other than financial rewards. Sessions were not recorded; therefore, some responses are paraphrased rather than exact quotes.



Partners Porirua, Youth Inspire, Maankai Trust

KAI & KŌRERO SESSION

SUMMARY

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES

MOTIVATIONS FOR WORKPLACE ENGAGEMENT

- Doing a career I love and am studying towards.
- Feeling like I'm accomplishing something – seeing the result of your actions or contributing to society.
- Proving to myself that I can do more than I thought I could or was told I could.
- When employers have a task and put it to the floor, so they don't give it to someone specific to give other people a chance.
- When employers recommend tasks to them: "I'd be really interested in seeing how you approach this".
- When employers hand-hold only when requested.
- Money.
- Want to give back to the community (such as working for NFP).
- Having a workplace that is understanding and accepting, understanding when certain accommodations are needed, and are flexible when it comes to providing them.
- Having an employer who is ok with me asking questions, the same questions, even after being told everything, I need that to feel that I am doing the right thing.
- When employers are inviting, supportive, and understanding.
- Knowing I can learn and expand my career in a positive, supportive workplace.
- Achieving one's own goal.

- Helping people.
- Keeping social skills up-to-date.
- Learning new cultures.
- Purpose and growth - knowing why we exist as a company and how we help our community.
- Feeling valued by employers. If people actually thank you for your work and say we appreciate you, it means a lot – especially from management. It helps you feel secure, we all want to belong.
- Having the manager know who you are. Makes you want to do more work for them. It's about showing respect.
- Understanding the why of the organisations. "You're doing this because of XYZ".
- Opportunities, growth, recognition, good feedback, praise, validation, having a really fun team, good vibes, my co-workers.
- As an adult, it's harder to make friends. As a uni student, your friendship group gets smaller after graduation, so having a friendly group of people to work with can make you look forward to coming to work. Encourage these relationships, don't prevent people from talking in the office. Have opportunities to connect after work.
- Making sure everyone is equal. Have a flat hierarchy where everyone is respected.
- My manager says hi every morning and bye in the afternoon, makes me want to turn up and work harder.
- Having a monthly charcuterie board and fridges in the office with a variety of drinks.
- Have a paid hour after work (with all different ages) where you can drink and eat and talk. This made me so much more comfortable approaching other teams that I otherwise would not have had contact with. I think so highly of the company and it made me want to work harder for them. This is even though I was made redundant!!!

BARRIERS TO WORKPLACE ENGAGEMENT

- Not being accommodated.
- Sometimes you don't always have the capacity to meet expectations.
- Underestimating the value that a young or disabled person can provide.
- Putting disabled young employees in a box and viewing them as advocates for their group in general. Don't force someone to become an advocate.
- Standards of the workplace (hours worked and work assigned) are very draining and it can be uncomfortable telling employers.
- Employers need to learn what flexibility looks like.
- Many employers won't mention accommodation needs during job application when it should be part of the recruitment process - just ask what will make our jobs easier for us.
- Being placed by Work and Income somewhere you don't want to go. Some jobs just aren't for some people and if it's the wrong fit, you can easily start thinking – screw this how is it helpful for my career?
- Managers having a superiority complex.
- Not being paid for the hours that you work.
- If you finish at 5pm some employers expect you to get the cleaning done by 5 while still serving customers until 5. They get mad at you for clocking out late.
- When they expect you to work like a dog and don't take into account differences in tasks. When they expect a fast-paced workforce but don't hire enough people to support a fast-paced workforce.
- There is a feeling that questions are not welcome. Sometimes employers or senior staff straight up ignore you.
- Expectations that disabled people should work overtime and take on more tasks without compensation.

- There are always power struggles.
- Often the jobs that are available for young people aren't the right jobs for youth who are neurodivergent.
- Youth can easily be taken advantage of.
- Expectation that you have to adapt to the norm, which is very tricky when it's not possible for you to do that.
- Employers see a disabled person as broken, that there's something wrong with us. They only see the disability.
- Giving you a pat on the back for not taking a break or leaving late. Or places where bathroom breaks are monitored, cause you can use the bathroom as a place to collect oneself and not disrupt other people. There are people who take the piss but they're not usually the people with ADHD.
- Frustrating when you know what is helpful but you're not allowed to do that. I was told by an employer they know more about what ADHD people need than I, someone with ADHD, knows.
- Being told neurodivergent is not a disability. Being told not to say 'disability' as it makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Just seeing their kids when they hear ADHD, not understanding how it manifests in the adult.
- It's frustrating when you know what will help you do your job but you're not allowed to do that.
- Bitchy behaviour and petty workplace culture.
- Bureaucracy - structures that, despite your best efforts, you cannot do what you feel should be done - feeling like you can't overstep your mark.
- Expectation that those with differences need to be resilient and a 'put up with how things are' attitude.
- Being told 'you're young, you don't know anything' when you try to give feedback.

- Being dicked around. Being told, oh you did this really well and go on about good stuff but then switch it up and say what you did wrong. It gives you a false sense of security and pulls the platform out from under our feet – it makes it worse in the long run.
- Resentment as a young person is easy to build up. If you've never done an office job before it's often different than what you expected. If employers expect something from someone, you need to give them support to achieve it.
- It's a horrible feeling to ignore what you are feeling. But the reality is that you are unlikely to be listened to. "We've had this terrible experience at work and I know who to escalate it to, but I don't want to be the scapegoat for the issue if I raise concerns". It's hard to think, "if I say something, will there be repercussions?". "What if they know better than me?" "What If I am reprimanded?"
- Depending on your upbringing, some people won't question their elders.
- Sometimes, if it is a real problem, employers will be more likely to sweep it under the rug.
- Raising a PG always comes back to hurt the employee as people see you as a future problem.

WHAT WE WISH EMPLOYERS KNEW ABOUT US

- It's hard when you're a youth to say 'no'.
- I need people to be black and white with the information they give me.
- My questions aren't critiques, I'm asking to get the brain rolling.
- We can come across differently to how we'd like to come across.
- I want to learn.
- We are young, we may not know things, and we want them to understand that we are trying and trying to learn.
- I would be more confident if I was shown how and have someone willing to teach.
- Although I may not have experience, I am willing to learn.
- I want a job I can grow and learn in, and work my way up.
- I want to make a difference.
- I am mischaracterised as a white straight man from Auckland so people don't think I have awareness of issues and think less of my opinions when I have a lot of experience with other cultures.
- People with disabilities bring perspectives that other people do not have. Both physical and intellectual.
- Remember that high-performing people are human too. Maybe they have a different way of thinking.
- They've also been in the same position as us. But as people get older, they forget what it is like to be young. The economy is a mess for us. Life is not the same as what it used to be: house prices, inflation etc. Old people started at a time when you couldn't be flexible and had to show up from nine to five. But that doesn't mean we should too when we are not getting the same societal benefits as them.

- It's such a weird concept that Gen Z don't work hard. This perception comes from each generation. The point of work is to make the world a different place, and for younger people, we are the first generation where our conditions will be worse than our parents.
- That Gen Z are quite understanding and empathetic, whereas the old people are like, "I went through this so should you".
- We want a lot more training and good training. If we're not trained properly, we have to guess things and then get in trouble for getting stuff wrong.
- We'd like to see some more respect and communication skills from employers when first starting a job.
- We want employers to be clearer in what they say.
- We want honesty about what the job actually entails.
- We'd love detailed resources that you can look back on (eg, training handbook), that can go alongside training.
- Less of a 'I wish they knew', more of a 'I wish the circumstances under which I told them about my disability were different', that there was trust and support to disclose on their own terms.
- A big misconception is that having a disability will make you more fit for a particular role. I don't want to be in a job due to my identity, I want to be in a job due to my skills and qualifications.
- Happy to let them know about disabilities, but only to the extent that it will impact work performance, otherwise, there's no need for disclosure.
- In an ideal world, one shouldn't have to disclose disabilities; you should be accepted regardless. When you get the job you should be asked, what can I do to support you?

THE TYPE OF SUPPORT WE WANT

- Some workplaces have unions and some don't – the unions make a real difference.
- Understanding about our challenges so its not as stressful.
- Accommodating.
- More training.
- Having someone who is neutral - such as the people who run the NGO programmes - to help out.
- Support to get tickets, licences etc that you need for work or to move up the ladder or get more pay or hours.
- Explaining How KiwiSaver works.
- Support with gaining qualifications.
- Money management support.
- Someone who understands and can relate to young people.
- Help in roles that carry a big emotional burden.
- Having a one on one helps recenter me and makes me feel like I'm not forgotten about.
- Go through things step by step as if I do not know anything. Being reprimanded for making mistakes I didn't know I was making sucks. Let us ask questions!! No question is too silly and make it clear it isn't annoying being asked.

WHAT WE THINK WILL MAKE A BETTER WORKPLACE

- Senior staff need to speak to each other and be consistent in what they're asking.
- Employers, don't turn up late if you make that a big deal for employees about being on time – don't be a hypocrite.
- The rules must apply equally for them.
- Respect should be given to youth if they are expected to be respectful; we want to be met halfway.
- Separate your work life from your personal life. This is especially important for employers.
- Believe staff when they are sick, especially when there is a medical certificate.
- In disciplinary meetings, don't bring the perpetrator into the meeting, as this is intimidating and they act in ways to prevent the victim from speaking. When something happens, complaints should be kept anonymous and meetings should occur one-on-one. There are also cases where the perpetrator would be told someone has complained about them, which then creates beef in the workforce.
- Care about your employees by showing understanding and being supportive.
- When starting someone new, know when it is fast-paced and when it is slow-paced and let them start off on the slower-paced days or times to better grasp the new skills. It's not helpful to start on a busy day!
- Understanding that everyone has weaknesses and strengths.
- The most helpful thing to better understand job requirements is to discuss them with employees. Job descriptions are not helpful – they are full of jargon. Having a convo with someone allows you to ask questions. Talk through exactly what was required of us. Don't just make us read a book on it.
- Employers letting go of the cultural expectations that everything should be done in the office and in-person for roles that can be done remotely.
- Office activities to build good camaraderie.

- More flexibility and understanding. Stop thinking something can only be done in one way.
- Provide written info with details about role and expectations and tasks.
- Accepting that there are different ways to do things, that there are many ways to get the same outcome.
- Not micromanaging young people, provide support, but have trust that we can get on with tasks.
- Flexibility to give more time or space for young employees - for example, can employers allow for a longer break one day if you worked without one the rest of the week?
- If people ask for more support, then give it to them, don't tell them they have to need less support.
- When first starting, have the manager/supervisor spend an entire week or two with them with a checklist they can refer back to later.
- Ask the question 'what do you need?'
- Establish in a one-on-one meeting at the start that the employee can book in a download session, like a 5 min session when needed or the 15 mins you'd use for a tea break. Being able to bring the things up when they come up and not have to wait for the official one-on-one would be really helpful.
- Develop open and honest relationships that accept uniqueness, such as, being able to say, 'my meds are not working great this week I might be too chatty, let me know'.
- Having people around the workplace in general encourage good workplace activities such as taking breaks – esp for people with ADHD otherwise, they won't take a break.
- Allow ADHD people to do what they need to do to look after themselves.
- Have deadlines, or something to be accountable for, ADHD can mean a lack of internal motivators; we need the external pressure. If there's no deadline, then why would I do it? There needs to be a deadline.

- Give young people the right to self-identification.
- Allow young employees to try out different things, you don't know what accommodations you need until you try things out – for example, using headphones in the workplace.
- Expectations setting is a big issue. For example, be clear about what would be an acceptable level of case management.
- Be honest about what is doable. What they can or can't facilitate in terms of work-around, accommodations etc. If you can't provide the support needed, then be honest about that.
- Not just saying stuff. Don't have a gap between what's being said and what's been done.
- Spend time getting to know each other and build a relationship so that there's trust.
- Having a chance to get to know the team who you will work with so it would be less awkward and easier to ask for help.
- Having icebreaker activities when you first start a new job.
- Regular talks, especially about the workplace with someone who's experienced.
- Being able to go to someone for help without them making you feel dumb and not important.
- Having someone I can tell the good and the bad to and who also understands that just because there's some bad doesn't mean I don't enjoy the job.
- Giving young people a chance. I have applied to job and have not been employed due to no experience/no qualifications. Employing young people supported on programmes as employers can see who you are and how you work (NGOs such as Taupō Pathways).
- Clear instructions and good examples.
- Having a mentor sort of person that you can talk to and ask questions of.
- Everything being explained clearly rather than having to guess, as guessing makes me nervous.
- Friendly and diverse.

- Managers who are patient with new people who may not have a lot of experience (we all start somewhere).
- Good camaraderie and a culture that makes the job not boring, even on slow days.
- Having a clear understanding of the further opportunities in the company - being clear if there is room for moving up internally in a company, because if you can't take on additional responsibilities or grow in your role you will hate it and it becomes a cycle as you may then adopt this pov towards yourself – I can't get better.
- More real and frank interviews with people who have done the job. Each job has its different realities – warn us of the type of people we get so you know who you will work with.
- Don't hound people for messing up, cool down and address it reasonably and check in early to prevent. Hounding people and making people feel as though they have messed up makes them feel like a bad person and less likely to try new things in the future.
- More frequent introduction sessions for the role and make them at a time that makes sense for employees.
- Support group is good for mental health (I noticed in one job that women were encouraged to have social groups but men weren't).
- End the assumption that men must be tough and not emotional. It's hurtful when someone assumes you are a certain way and you aren't.
- End gender in and out groups. No more colleagues going out without the other gender.
- Healthy inclusion, so not sidelining anyone. Culture has to give everyone a seat at the table. Good management should mitigate differences. Encourage talking things out and truly engage with people.
- Managers not internalising, but saying right away if something is a problem/bothering them.
- If employees are discussing things employers don't like, if the vibe of everyone seems fine, let them bond with each other however they want.

- Assume people want to bring the best to their job and treat them with the benefit of the doubt.
- Good management should mitigate differences. Encourage talking things out and truly engage with people.
- Welcome new employees with a mihi – ranging from informal to formal – this is significant for the team to introduce themselves. Have food prepped and encourage interaction afterwards and don't go straight into doing business.
- Have a clear strategy for what is trying to be achieved.
- Have someone you can ask "what is going on". Buddies are very important. Also going for lunch with buddy is good for morale.
- Treat the employee as if they will be a long-term employee. Will encourage them to work harder.
- Culture must come from leadership, not just young people.
- Clear communication eg, weekly meetings.
- Look at us as a person. Recognise that we have a life outside of work. We have appointments and needs.
- Don't take projects away from people if they lack the experience; help them achieve it.
- Employers should make it clear from the get-go that feedback is welcome.
- Having a Teams chat where everyone says happy birthday etc.
- Friday morning teas. Celebrate big birthdays.
- Let us grow as individuals. Give us a voice in the company.
- Allow us to help in different projects – this will increase our passion and interest in the job.
- Pay us what we are worth. So many people are being taken advantage of. Don't just get an intern for a job that is really important.

- Expect progression. See us as a benefit. The next generation is coming through, whether you like it or not. Old people are dying, and we are becoming the new workers and consumers.
- Can make complaints about your employers without it coming back to hurt you.
- Be flexible and adapt to modern times and adopt modern technology.

APPENDIX THREE

YOUTH VOICE SURVEY SUMMARY

A survey was shared with the YEA Network and on LinkedIn.

All questions were open-ended and therefore required a written response rather than multiple-choice or rankings. No questions were mandatory, so some were left unanswered.

All responses were anonymous.

Respondents: 28

Average Age 22

Rural 8%

Town 52%

City 40%

YOUTH VOICE SURVEY

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

WHAT WORKPLACE PRACTICES ARE OUTDATED?

- Putting people down, Older generations having the "She'll be right" attitude when throwing young people under the bus. Underestimating young people, who are just as smart and even smarter in some specialized areas. Older generations expecting younger people to let them have priority, for example, I had to cancel my holiday because a co-worker had booked a holiday in the same spot, I was expected to cancel mine due to being younger, even though I had booked mine much earlier than them.
- Not giving young people a chance and wanting someone that has all these years of experience, but no one is willing to train young people. They tell us we are impatient and want to start at the top, but they want to employ only experienced people.
- Paying people based on their qualification not their work ethic.
- Paper forms, phone calling instead of using a text message-based system.
- People's expectations that you are supposed to stay in a job for 20+ years.
- Rigid Hierarchies and Micromanagement (Managers making all decisions without input from employees, excessive supervision discouraging autonomy and creativity).
- Strict 9 to 5 Schedules (no flexibility for remote work regardless of employees' needs, ignoring benefits of hybrid work arrangements).
- Lack of Work-Life Balance Consideration.
- No Focus on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
- Punitive Disciplinary systems that include zero-tolerance policies that don't consider context or discourage learning. They can lead to lower morale, high turnover, missed opportunities for innovation hence inefficient productivity.
- Blanket ban on wfh/hybrid work (if applicable).

- Open plan offices.
- Rigid hours, employers that forget employees are human and can't work at 100% productivity for 8 hours in a row 52 weeks a year.
- Employees that think everyone works the same and ignore the needs of e.g. neurodivergent people.
- Expectation to work overtime by default.
- Interview processes that are too focused on competency, ignoring that team fit, personality, values and goals may make the hiring process faster/easier, but it can be very damaging to the working environment if the wrong person is hired.
- Dress codes.
- Only working from the office and having in-person meetings.
- Having strict start-finish and break times.
- Too many chains of command.
- Having to network on behalf of the organisation in your own unpaid time.
- Not allowing for team to talk about things that aren't work-related. We spend so much time at work, it's important not to make it a drag - it needs to be a place that people WANT to be. People are going to work better if they enjoy being where they work and the people they work with. Keeping in mind, of course, that this is so long as people are still getting their work done.
- Rigid 9-5 hours/work structure.
- Not having the option to work from home at a job that should allow it (e.g office jobs).
- Office jobs where you have to work in one sitting for multiple hours.

- I don't think weekly team meetings are out of date, but they often take a long amount of time and not a lot comes out of them. I think it would be better to have a very short stand-up or huddle or check in or something at the start of each day where everyone gets the chance to say where they are at both personally and professionally. This way everyone knows what everyone is up to, if anyone needs support in the work or task, and if anyone has anything going on outside of work which might impact them personally, ie a sick child at home or a doctor's appointment. Also forced unpaid lunch breaks. I prefer working through lunch and then getting to leave early. I don't want to be forced to go and take a break for 30mins when I don't need to and can use that time elsewhere in my day.
- Not adapting to useful technological advancements or societal changes.
- Open communication, enforced accountability.
- Job descriptions requiring x years of experience. Experience doesn't matter so much as being the right fit for the role. Not advertising salary bands.
- Turning up from 8am-5pm is out of date. It should be more socially acceptable how one starts and finishes their day, as long as they are finishing after eight hours and within reason so that you are present roughly at the same time your colleagues are too. Within the 8am-9:30am and 5pm-6:30pm range.
- Not so much out-of-date practices that are a problem, but new practices that have been coming up over the last 20 years, and more recently. For example, pretty much always being contactable because of smartphones. Also, for younger-young workers, just generally being treated like crap, because they're replaceable and there's a lot of stigma/stereotyping about them.

HOW SHOULD EMPLOYERS INDUCT NEW STAFF

- It is more than just reading a manual or job description. Opportunities to learn while working are very valuable, especially if you can learn from the person you are replacing so you get a feel for the place.
- I would also include a weekly reflection, a write-up for the new Kaimahi to reflect on their previous work week, what worked well or didn't, and pass up the line to the manager or team lead what they may need to better understand their mahi.
- It would be ideal to have a full day paid to observe what needs to happen in a day.
- Buddy system with someone of similar age.
- Make sure they give them a good amount of time to settle in, don't put any pressure on them for the first few weeks. The first few weeks should also be very structured and organised.
- A hands-on interactive induction.
- Induction Training or Workshop that gives them an overview of the Vision and Mission of an organization and the importance of their role and how it relates in that organisation.
- It is important to develop, establish, effectively communicate workplace Values within a space that takes into consideration all unique abilities of different individuals. In that way, it is to make them feel valued within themselves and how they can help reach the Vision and Mission of an organization. Hence, it is important to build that sense of Teamwork Trust with new staff and be open-minded to their ideas and feedback.
- Better training documents, handbook for new staff. Buddying with someone who is a similar age or seems like they would have similar interests and get along well with.
- Clarity on policies, conflict management (who specifically to go to for certain things/incidents).
- Mihi whakatau the day a new person begins in their role so they can get to know the rest of the team as people rather than just learning titles. My employer expected nothing productive out of me for the first three months and that gave me space to learn and absorb information I needed to know about the organisation and our staff.

- I would probably say being paired up with one person who knows the role well and can train/support/be available to answer questions the new person may have. Also providing opportunities to shadow/work alongside other members of the team to get a feel for how everyone does things differently.
- If it is the person's first job, make sure they have support and a go-to person if they need help with something, so they feel comfortable.
- Making it a safe and comfortable environment.
- Not expecting perfection on the first day.
- Introduce them to the workplace and introduce them to everyone. Also, put them on with a nice co-worker for their first few shifts while they are still learning, so they feel comfortable asking for help if needed.
- Connecting them to other young people within the organisation and having clear role expectations.
- Complete and structured processes, opportunity to take one-on-one training in certain parts of the role if required.
- If I could change just one thing it would be that each new employee should be party to an informal chat with someone from HR who can explain what the expectations are around taking different types of leave (especially when is acceptable to take annual leave), attending appointments during the work day, working flexibly etc. With or without meaning to, new young employees wanting to make a good impression are taken advantage of by their employers. Information about the team the employee is joining should be socialised with the employee before they start, e.g. a resource with a picture of each team member, their job title, who they report to, and an interest outside of work. I would limit the number of trainings/inductions to two per day, and select on a basis of how immediately the employee will utilise the knowledge gained in each session. Information overload is real. I would prioritise IT inductions, because in an office workplace you can't do anything without computer/software access. And every employee should have access to a paper resource that spells out what to do and who to reach out to if you can't log into your laptop, connect to a printer etc. The new employee's manager/person they go to with questions should carve out time each day in their calendar to allow the employee to answer questions without feeling like they're a burden on their time.

- In pretty much every workplace I've been in, there's been just about no induction---except by managers who made one up themselves and had some teaching skills. The best method, I think, is a buddy system, with someone who has the patience and skills to teach. So give someone in the workplace an allowance or some recognition, for them to be the 'new employee inductor'.

HOW SHOULD EMPLOYERS SUPPORT THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR YOUNG EMPLOYEES?

- Connection to supervision or mentoring to help build all aspects of professional development. Being implemented early on can help with all sorts of development, can prevent burn out and can ensure the rangatahi have the tools in their kete before anything happens. Such as a work incident, bullying or burnout.
- Young people love working and proving themselves to their elders - 50% are told they aren't good enough when they are being raised, and 50% are told they can do anything and have a rude awakening when they hit the working world and aren't very useful at all. The best way an employer can support an employee is by finding the middle ground in this, tell him they can do it if they work their ass off, and they will. Once they make a mistake while trying to learn and you destroy their wellbeing, they aren't going to want to go far in your company, let alone life. Employers are to stop treating young people as if they are another species, it is not our fault that mobile phones and tv's were stuffed in our faces along with sugar and other poor choices - all excuses that employers use when their 1st year apprentice they bully doesn't show up. These are choices the kids did not make but had to cope with. I believe there is a fundamental link between the age you perceive young people as - if you treat a 21 year old like they are still 15, how are they going to grow up? You will make them think they are 15.
- It's very easy to say "I'm not their parent" you aren't their parent, but you are their boss, role model, inspiration in some cases - being a good role model isn't exclusive to the parenting function.
- The employers that complain about not finding good young employees, more often than not aren't looking in the right spot, or attract the same type of employee that they were once themselves.
- Talking to the young people, try to understand that today's life and living is not the same as when they were younger.
- Meeting with them regularly to see where they are at and actually take on board what they have to say.
- Hands on, working alongside a person that knows how to explain what they're doing in terms a young employer will understand.

- Encourage doing extra learning/course, incentivize professional development.
- Be confidence-building, and offer opportunities for PD. Be clear with expectations, and communicate well if they are missing the mark, it may not be because they don't want to, they may not understand. Also checking in one-on-one regularly to give them a place to voice any questions rather than having the young person needing to approach.
- I think the best way an employer can support someone is by believing in their ability to succeed.
- Having regular check-ins via meetings or team meetings online. Other than that, positive feedback and constructive criticisms are also important in making sure they are doing something right and good and letting them know when they have committed an error.
- Regular scheduled meetings with your manager, being upfront about expectations from the start, encouragement, giving them work that creates useful experience (e.g. tasks that build skills that the employee wants to improve on, not making them do things that are wildly different to the job description).
- Good training, kindness, making a supportive workplace environment.
- Awareness of growth and development needs and supporting those needs/goals e.g. training, PD, promotions (with extra pay if JD grows!) I have seen young people being taken advantage of because of their potential which has led to increasing the person's workload because they are so good/talented without fair remuneration.
- Regular fortnightly check-ins with your direct manager to confidentially share about personal stresses, how the role is going, project updates, professional development opportunities, and any queries.
- Allocations for employer to pay for and support employees' learning.
- Being open and flexible to young employees' life circumstances regularly changing, e.g. moving home, cities, getting married, starting a family etc.
- Show me how they want things done.
- Offering opportunities to develop skills.

- Offering opportunities to develop skills.
- Create a team environment that is positive so people feel that they want to continue to grow within their workplace.
- Upskill, identify pathways for career progression within that company.
- Being open-minded and understanding.
- Support, encouragement, flexibility in regards to mental health.
- Training, open communication.
- Be patient and take the time to mentor.
- Check in on them, maybe after their first week, then after their first month. Make sure they feel comfortable asking questions.
- Providing regular feedback in a way that is constructive and supportive, creating an environment where questions are celebrated rather than seen as inconvenient, and allowing them to have exposure to a range of tasks to help build their skill set.
- By showing ongoing support and giving credit where deserved.
- Thinking of a manager's role, giving their time. Time to answer questions, time to review work outputs and provide feedback, time to take their employee out for coffee so they feel valued. Ensuring the employee is offered any opportunities for professional development that training budgets allow for. A bare minimum of one per year. If a new, young employee is hired to fill a role no other employee has expertise in, arrange an external mentor.
- Hold expos for purpose of helping young employees make work and social connections - especially for those who have moved from out of town.
- Businesses need to recognise that young employees are still growing and developing--- work with them to identify gaps and then plan PD, instead of expecting them to be a 'complete product' or just getting rid of them when they don't perform. PD should also include not only company-specific things, but training that would be useful for their future careers.

ASIDE FROM MONEY, WHAT IS THE ONE THING THAT WOULD MAKE YOU WANT TO STAY WORKING FOR YOUR EMPLOYER?

- Flexible work hours - able to start or finish at times that work well for you. This includes the option to work a 4 day week well with longer days.
- As a disabled rangatahi - no sick leave restriction, being able to take leave when needed to look after my health.
- Other work benefits like development or leadership opportunities which are NOT non-paid or picking up the workload of another employee.
- Unfortunately with the way the government likes to act, money is most important - young people see this, they are hawked at by older generations about not being able to afford a home, yet netflix and spotify and pictures of restaurant food and beaches in Fiji etc are crammed down their neck via facebook, instagram etc. They are surrounded by people doing better than them (or appearing to be) so why wouldn't their fundamental requisite for enjoying a job, be the amount of money they earn? Back in the day when the cost of living wasn't a problem, this wasn't raised as much because money was not the end-all be-all. I unfortunately believe it now is, and if it isn't then this is what my environment has forced me to think.
- The close second are the people, and every job I have ever left has been due to the people, not the work.
- Support from that employer. I'll give you an example of what my dad's company does. They have our private car serviced as dad drives with it to work and back even helped mom with a new set of tires.
- Make sure your employees are still happy, listen to complaints and new ideas.
- Being seen for my work ethic instead of my age and qualifications. The respect and trust that I know what I'm doing.
- Workmates.
- Good workplace rewards/ work do's.
- The team I work in and how they work together and get along with each other, that the environment is supportive and not just everyone for themselves.
- Feeling cared about and supported.

- Passion, knowing you are appreciated for the work you've given, knowing the work you've done helps other people. Being valued. Fitting in with personal life schedule. Does not drain a person's life mentally, physically and emotionally but provides a work-life balance. Geographical location of workplace is favorable and can also be flexible to working from home. Giving considerations to working-mums and those with disabilities. Health and saving benefits.
- Nothing except the fear that only being here for less than a year will look bad on my CV.
- Permanent hours.
- Flexibility with hours, if something comes up in my personal life, I can work shorter hours one day and longer hours the next to make up for it without pressure or micromanagement. Family friendly workplace. Working for a values-based org is really rewarding and motivating.
- Ability to grow my leadership skills under a management style that inspires me.
- How well I am treated.
- A positive team environment where everyone is treated equally.
- Feeling valued and like I can progress.
- Opportunity to move up within roles and professional development.
- A good working environment and culture, a place that doesn't put you down, or makes you feel like you want to leave.
- A safe and fun environment.
- Nice manager.
- Workplace relations, if I have really good friends there I won't leave.
- It's convenient and I enjoy my work and who I work with. I also really like my employer because they are really nice and understanding.

- Having a sense of community within your workplace, and feeling like you are doing a good job within your role based on feedback from managers etc (positive relationships etc).
- I enjoy being able to serve my community, and I appreciate the flexibility my role allows. This means I have a perfect work and private life balance.
- Flexible working arrangements or exposure to a wide variety of workstreams due to working for a small organisation in a small team.
- The supportive environment which is helping my development.
- He Tangata.

IF EMPLOYERS IN AOTEAROA WANT TO RETAIN THEIR YOUNG EMPLOYEES, THEY SHOULD ...

- Listen to what rangatahi need in order to thrive in the work environment. Rangatahi have the answers.
- Treat them like adults, because that's what they are past 18 years old.
- Support them in every step.
- See them for what they are worth based on their work ethic.
- Take the time to train them properly.
- Be reasonable about mistakes being made due to lack of experience/ knowledge.
- Implement and promote use of technology, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace.
- Give them new opportunities and support them when they fail, not everything is about making the most money, it's about making a genuine connection as well. If people feel like they are valued and cared for then they will provide a better work output and enjoy coming to work.
- Rangatahi are wired differently from older generations. They are hardworking, but it's important to create an environment where they feel supported to be themselves.
- Effectively communicate the value of their skills in the broader picture of how it helps clients. Value feedback and ideas from young people. Foster, support and develop them to be the future managers, leaders, inductors etc, because we need to foster a positive working environment that can provide high quality and efficient productivity. If a person does not feel good mentally, physically and emotionally, then it is all for naught.
- Provide benefits employees have asked for that other employers do not always have (e.g. flexible working hours), pay them better.
- Foster a kind and supportive workplace environment.
- Acknowledge the potential and talent in young staff and support their growth with training, opportunities to try new things and to lead.

- Pay people based on what they produce and the value it creates for the organisation, regardless of the person's working hours/age/experience.
- Provide opportunities for growth equally for everyone.
- Rethink what a working week looks like.
- Throw the handbook out of the window and start fresh with an open mind.
- Look out for us and our mental health, being compassionate and considerate to our developing brains. Understanding why we do what we do.
- Encourage workers with good packages (salary, benefits, bonus etc).
- Be good people.
- Treat them with respect.
- Create safe open work environments so that the workplace is a positive space the employee wants to keep coming back to.
- Create a welcoming, open environment where feedback goes both ways, and allow them to access training opportunities where possible.
- Give credit where due and don't underestimate or think any less of the employee because of their young age.
- Pay them what they're worth. While it's understandable for someone to start on a foundational wage, there should be frequent opportunities (e.g. every six months) for performance reviews.
- Prioritise a modern approach young people will take a liking to.
- Treat them with dignity.

APPENDIX FOUR

PROTOTYPE IDEAS SESSION

All ideas for a resource prototype were captured and are listed in the following pages.

These will serve to inform considerations for prototype design as well as possibilities for future resource development.



- Chatbot: Q&A for employer with employer/employee advice.
- ‘Ask a youth’ feature - maybe ‘ask an employer’ feature.
- ‘Ask an experienced staff’ feature.
- Induction pack based on tikanga.
- Communication translator Apple AD / communication profile – addresses different understanding of what communication is.
- Māori principles (pōwhiri) broken down for Pākehā/other.
- Website with ability to filter by resource/ support - Resources provided could be separated based on type of business. Advice for small business different from medium business. Or could separate based on industry (tradies have different restraints from office work). Need to come up with alternative ways to help wellbeing.
- A resource of resources, digital - database of resources needs to have AI to make it more time efficient. Also should provide specific examples, not just themes.
- Mentoring system for employers with employees in similar roles.
- Resource on social wellbeing.
- Handbook template/ charter - Disclosure - disability, neurodiverse - What matters to me? Priorities.

- Resource on youth culture & needs e.g. Gen Z slang
- A website with different sections for different types of youth e.g. click on neurodiverse section for advice on them
- Engagement wheel - First 90 day's: Whakawhanaungatanga, challenge, reflection, KPI goal, feedback – loop back to the beginning and repeat
- Card deck - collaborative challenges
- Expectations matching tool
- Ways to approach conflict/ poor performance
- An onboarding tool, e.g. next step after MBIE's agreement tool
- Celebrate what good looks like - Storytelling to communicate value. Articles/video
- Videos of employer speaking to other employers
- Highlight videos: short animations with voice-overs of young peoples' feedback
- GYE accreditation / awards
- GYE tick, along lines of the Accessibility Tick
- Live online showcase: youth speakers sharing stories directly with employers
- Interactive, insights, digital "hub"
- Options of interactive & pre-filled guided, follows more universal design principles
- Interactive reflection wall: encourages employer engagement
- Story tiles: clickable, youth-generated quotes and ideas. Filterable categories: themes like induction, wellbeing, feedback
- Weekly insights newsletter: spotlighting one key takeaway regularly
- In an informal space specifically designed for questions, there could be less embarrassment over having "silly" questions. An alternative is a staff GC where young people can ask for timely advice at any time. used most effectively for small businesses or retail/hospo