

# Building talent through supported induction

A new training model for the Food and Fibre sector via  
group employment and residential training

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## Background

This paper describes a potential new delivery model for vocational education delivery for the Food and Fibre sector.

It sets out the elements of a model involving a sequenced combination of residential training and workplace learning, coordinated and supported through a group training arrangement.

The proposed model has been guided and inspired by a situational analysis of both traditional and innovative models of delivery occurring in Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond.

The design features of the proposed model below draw on these insights to maximise the key benefits of residential and group training. The goal of developing this 'hybrid' is to develop a systematic workforce development and talent pipeline for the benefit of industries within and across the Food and Fibre sector.

Finally, we describe a potential pilot that could be established to test the model, including industry demand, sequencing, modes of delivery, and cost-effectiveness.

While this proposed pilot is focused on foundation level delivery (NZQF Level 2) as a 'supported induction' to employment in the industry, the delivery model is extensible and could be expanded over time to offer a wider range of learning and professional development pathways in the industry.

## The model in summary

### Group Employment

The proposed model would operate as a group training (or group employment) scheme. That means the learner/worker<sup>1</sup> will be employed by an entity that is their employer within the meaning of the Employment Relations Act (2000).

The group employer will be responsible for all matters relating to the learner's employment (HR, ACC, recruitment), while also coordinating and supporting the structured training programme, including learning and pastoral support.

The group employer would work alongside the learners and host employers, to facilitate workplace placements, develop learning plans, and monitor progress. It will provide a range of learning support and pastoral support as required to support learner success.

There are several choices about the entity that takes on the role of group employer. These include:

- extending the scope of an existing group employer
- developing a group employer as part of an industry association

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'learner' is used from here in this paper, though it should be remembered throughout that the learner in this proposed supported induction model is an employed person throughout the process.

- establishing a group employment entity as a joint venture on behalf of several Food and Fibre sector associations
- “spinning off” a group training employer from an existing vocational education provider
- “spinning off” a group training employer from a labour hire company.

## Local Hubs

Again strongly indicated by the situational analysis, and to support local employment and provide localised solutions and support, the hybrid residential and work-based model would be delivered in several regionally based hubs. Such hubs must provide access to suitable accommodation, either onsite or through a partnership. Hubs must also provide suitable and high-quality access to support the relevant learning and skills training that will occur in the residential components of the programme, and critically, authentic care to address wider learner issues and barriers to achievement.

For a pilot, we propose three to four hubs are established to test the hybrid model, with different foci to compare and contrast the model’s effectiveness. E.g.:

- A single industry model
- A multi-industry model
- A regionally-focussed model
- An iwi-led model.

## Programme Structure

In keeping with group employment approaches, participation in the programme is an employment arrangement – it is not simply a course. The learners are workers, employed throughout, paid throughout, and with the possibility of moving through into employed positions with host (or other) employers including the possibility of remaining with the GTO as a higher level trainee/apprentice or cadet.

This means that even before the initial residential component (which we have termed ‘supported induction’), prospective learners meet employers from host companies as part of initial interviewing into the scheme. As well as initial screening and aptitude, this is about developing a strong purpose for the programme.

Timeframe	Activity	Outcomes
<b>Week 0</b>	<p>Recruitment</p> <p>Application/interview process involving host employers.</p> <p>Initial support for applicants.</p>	<p>Candidate selection</p> <p>Learner pre-screening</p> <p>Substantive roles offered.</p>
<b>Week 1 – 3</b>	<p>Residential 1 – supported induction.</p> <p>Go/no go assessment – the learner must satisfactorily complete to be placed with the employer.</p>	<p>Identify and evaluate own identity and personal strengths in the context of future goals and aspirations</p> <p>Apply personal wellbeing strategies and reflect on their impact to own wellbeing</p> <p>Apply literacy, numeracy and digital skills to develop tools that support future employment opportunities.</p>
<b>Week 4 - 15</b>	<p>Work placement 1 – Work-based learning (Employer A)</p>	<p>Demonstrate appropriate workplace practices and problem-solving skills in a specific vocational/workplace context</p> <p>Other industry-specific or sector-related skill standards.</p>
<b>Week 15 - 17</b>	<p>Residential 2 – collaboration and reflection</p>	<p>Identify and evaluate own identity and personal</p>

	Learner ILPs are developed based on employer feedback.	<p>strengths in the context of future goals and aspirations</p> <p>Apply personal wellbeing strategies and reflect on their impact to own wellbeing</p> <p>Apply collaboration skills to plan and implement a team project in a specific vocational/workplace context.</p>
<b>Week 18 – 30</b>	Work placement 2 – Work-based Learning (Employer B)	<p>Demonstrate appropriate workplace practices and problem-solving skills in a specific vocational/workplace context</p> <p>Other industry-specific or sector-related skill standards.</p>

## Learning content and credentials

When developing the situational analysis, we heard we needed to strike an appropriate balance between core capabilities, employability, and specific technical skills. Focussing on these transferable skills also provides flexibility and options to the learner in terms of future pathways. In our research we were reminded that the learners may have limited prior educational success, as well as a range of background factors that unless addressed might impede their chances of success. This includes mental wellbeing and resilience, and self-care, including financial planning, noting that selection for this programme brings with it the experience of regular income.

For this illustration, we applied a currently registered 30-credit self-leadership micro-credential, designed to allow wider resilience and employability and employment aspiration via an industry context, and involving workplace experience and work-based learning.

This micro-credential has a strong emphasis on mental well-being and resilience, another theme of our stakeholder engagement. It is based on the Whare Tapawhā model of holistic learning and supports teaching through a Kaupapa Māori approach. While this credential has been registered as a general NZQF credential, the ability to “plug and play” the applied contexts means it can readily incorporate aspects of Mātauranga Māori<sup>2</sup>.

One of the key benefits of residential training is the low-stakes repeatability of techniques outside of a commercial situation, and simultaneously the support from tutors and peers

<sup>2</sup> For disclosure, the Self Leadership Microcredential has been developed and registered by Ignite Colleges, which is owned by Skills Consulting Group. Ignite is also one of nine TEOs piloting incentive payments as part of the Learner Component of the Unified Funding System in 2023.

through cohort-based learning. This extends across learning support as well as strong pastoral care.

We combined this with the core insights and benefits of group training, including increased opportunity and flexibility for learners to experience a wider range of employers and workplace experiences, including reverting to the residential programme to address skills or learning gaps where necessary.

Finally, we've attempted to strike a balance in terms of the duration of programme components to ensure there is flexibility to meet learner and employer needs, sufficient time for skills development, the creation of efficient pathways to full employment, and addressing skill gaps where required.

Over 30 weeks, it may be possible for some learners to achieve more than 30 credits, while for others this will represent a stretch. The 30 credit credential, or a variant of it, would therefore be established as the 'base' credential for the programme, and, depending on the industry, we propose that 20 to 30 further level 2 credits are delivered via the 2 x 12-week work placements. Such 20 credit packages would be somewhat akin to the Gateway workplace experience programme offered by secondary schools but accessed here by a longer and more immersive workplace experience. These would be credits drawn from industry skill standards, or other micro-credentials, to provide a genuine and seamless head start into full apprenticeships or other vocational qualifications, via credit transfer arrangements.

As noted earlier, stakeholders have suggested that each hub in the pilot have a slightly different focus – regional, industry-based, or iwi-led – this would make a difference to the context and delivery approach for both the base credential and the selection of 'top-up' credits that might apply in each hub or each learner.

Following the 30-week process, the now fully inducted worker would pathway into full employment, preferably with a further training agreement to a full apprenticeship. At that point, they could be directly employed, but since it is likely they may be employed with one of the participating employers, they may also remain under the group employment arrangement for the life of their apprenticeship.

## Resourcing

An estimated cost structure for the proposed model is between \$16-17,000 per learner. This amount covers;

- costs associated with teaching and learning delivery
- assessment both in the residential scheme and on-placement
- the employment of the learner
- pastoral care
- facilitation of the workplace placement
- support for the host employers

This cost of delivery **does not** include the direct employer costs of learner wages, though it is acknowledged that the host employers' willingness and ability to pay for the learner/worker will be a key consideration for them in terms of participation.

## Establishing a Pilot

### Testing Demand

Along with high-quality group employer and delivery partners, a critical success factor in any group employment scheme is a sufficient number of willing host employers.

Our situational analysis indicated from Australian experience that a ratio of two employers for every learner was optimal for the long-term sustainability and overall quality of the scheme.

However, to establish a small-scale pilot we propose to engage willing employers, each employer willing and able to host two pilot learners.

In addition, the overall structure we propose will ideally rotate a learner such that they have exposure to more than one employer/workplace as part of the programme.

It also remains important to note that a pilot of this nature in itself does not prove the scalability of a model. This is due to selection bias in the initial participation which may not reflect wider willingness across the sector on the part of learners or employers. In other words, a pilot will not prove "if we build it they will come", but it will answer the question "should we build it?".

The success in standing up the model is designed to provide evidence for the industry that it should engage, and the ultimate vision is for hubs of this nature to provide a sustainable pipeline of talent as a recognised and respected "way in" to the industry.

We also note that ultimately, the model describes a sequenced programme of multi-mode learning that rather than be piloted might be considered for future implementation by vocational providers across the sector, including Te Pūkenga, Wānanga or PTEs.

### Learner Recruitment

It will also be important for the pilot to capture the effort and cost associated with recruiting learners. For a small-scale pilot, engaging suitable learners is likely to be relatively straightforward, however in today's very tight labour market, the initial recruitment of learners

into the induction phase could prove costly particularly given the strong need for host employer involvement and commitment from the very beginning. Since we also propose a specific graduation point from the supported induction to the first on-job placement, a perfect hit rate may also not be achieved.

When fully scaled up, however, the short induction period would be repeatable to remain in step with employer demand for inducted workers.

### **Employer Recruitment**

A successful group employment scheme relies on two main factors – a quality group employer, and quality host employers. Given the small scale of the proposed pilot, we suggest that relevant associations are invited to nominate employers with a strong track record of on-the-job training, particularly, but not exclusively, through the ITO system. The selection of employers will also be determined by the focus of the pilot hubs, in terms of target industries and employers.

## **Next Steps**

1. We propose that this programme structure and proposed delivery model be reviewed by the project steering group.
2. Following their refinement, we would be pleased to support an approach to relevant agencies to discuss resourcing, timing, and scale options.
3. We consider the ideal outcome would be to implement the pilot project (30 weeks first cohort) in 2023, optimised to seasonality in the sector.