About this SROI Evaluation

New Zealand has a range of food and fibre work-based learning programmes which aim to equip participants with the necessary skills, connect them with their chosen fields, and develop work-ready trainees for the sectors involved.

This Social Return on Investment (SROI) Evaluation looked at the impact of five of these work-based programmes across farming and forestry, including calculating the return on investment for each programme.

The programmes evaluated included four vocational programmes typically serving young people under 24 years old:

- **Growing Future Farmers**
- **Whangārei A&P Society Farm Internship**
- **The Generation Programme**
- **Tokomairiro Training Forestry Pathways**
- **Ngā Karahipi Uru Rākau Scholarship***

More information about these programmes is available in the report: Social Return on Investment Evaluations on Food and Fibre Work-based Programmes.

**Ngā Karahipi Uru Rākau Scholarship is a tertiary education and internship scholarship*

Key Findings:

All the programmes provided a **positive return** for participants, industry and society with return on investment ranging from **3.5 to 17.0** for each dollar invested at a scheme level. Contributing factors to these high ratios included the benefits of improved educational outcomes leading to enhanced employment opportunities, improved financial and wellbeing outcomes for programme participants, and benefits for society in terms of improved participation in their local communities.

Pastoral care played a crucial role in enabling these young people to gain qualifications and meaningful sustainable employment that they may not have achieved otherwise. Without these programmes, a portion of participants would at best end up with minimum wage employment with some potentially becoming a NEET (not in education, employment or training). Such outcomes have a cost to society such as lost productivity and social welfare costs, as well as personal costs.

Evidence suggests local industry values the work skills and knowledge participants develop through these programmes. As programmes become established and develop a positive reputation, **demand for programme graduates tends to exceed supply.** However, for many of these programmes scaling up to be able to meet increasing industry demand is challenging.

A key challenge for these programmes is the **insecure, short-term nature of their funding** due to a reliance on government, even when they use a mixed funding model. This problem is compounded as these vocational programmes do not qualify as tertiary education providers and cannot offer apprenticeships. **Insecure funding makes these programmes vulnerable to closure, and difficult to plan for growth and expansion.**