

Integrating Te Ao Māori into Food & Fibre Workplace Retention Initiatives

Retention Pilots
Te Ao Māori Report

May 2025



Mihimihi

Acknowledgements

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā karangatanga maha, tēnei te mihi atu ki a koutou katoa. Nau mai, haere mai ki tēnei pūrongo. He tirohanga motuhake tēnei ki Te Ao Māori i roto i te kaupapa o te 'Pupuri o ngā Kaimahi'. Mā ngā wawata, mā ngā moemoeā, ka taea te whakatinana i te pae tawhiti.

To all esteemed voices and leaders, we acknowledge you. Welcome to this report. This is a uniquely Māori view within the 'Retaining our People' project. Through shared dreams and aspirations, we move towards a better future.



Te Kōrero Whakataki – Executive Summary

He kupu whakataki: Māori are a vital and growing part of Aotearoa's food and fibre workforce. Retaining Māori kaimahi (employees) is not only a matter of equity, but also a strategic opportunity to strengthen the sector's resilience, innovation, and cultural richness. This workstream placed a Māori lens across a wider retention initiative to ensure Māori Kaiwhakawhiwhi mahi (employers) have the tools and confidence to support their Māori staff effectively and respectfully.

Project Context: The Retention Pilots project, led by Food and Fibre CoVE in 2024–25, was developed in response to persistently low employee retention rates in the sector. It aimed to test whether simple, low-cost tools could help employers improve retention by better supporting their staff.

Why Te Ao Māori Was Included: Māori are over represented in the food and fibre sector, making up nearly 19% of the workforce (Ministry for Primary Industries, 2021). In specific sectors like forestry and wood processing, red meat and wool, and seafood, this representation is 20%. This highlights the need for retention strategies to align with Māori experiences and values. This workstream was established to create culturally relevant resources for employers and to elevate mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) within workforce development efforts.

Purpose and Scope: The Te Ao Māori workstream developed a dedicated *Māori Cultural Confidence* section in the Employer Toolkit and ensured that Māori perspectives were integrated across all content. It also guided culturally appropriate engagement, evaluation design, and promotional strategies.

Engagement-Led Design: The content was shaped by kōrero (discussion) with 15 Māori kaimahi and Kaiwhakawhiwhi mahi from across the sector. Their insights highlighted the importance of whanaungatanga (relationships), manaakitanga (care), and visibility of tikanga Māori in the workplace. These themes directly informed the structure and tone of the Toolkit content.

Pilot Results: Pilot results showed strong initial interest in the Māori-focused content (the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section was the second most visited Toolkit section in Pilot one) but lower engagement in Pilot two without direct promotion. This indicates that employers value Māori content when it's presented, yet may not actively seek it out.

Strengths-Based Outcomes: Stakeholders praised the section's tone, practical examples, and emphasis on reflection and action. The workstream demonstrated that when Te Ao Māori is authentically embedded in tools, employers respond with greater confidence and openness.

Next Steps: Recommendations include continuing to integrate Māori content throughout employer tools, supporting employer cultural capability development, and promoting through trusted iwi, hapū, community, and industry networks. With ongoing commitment, this kaupapa can help foster culturally safe, inclusive workplaces where Māori can thrive.


Ko te pae tawhiti whāia kia tata, ko te pae tata whakamaua kia tina.

Seek to bring the distant horizon closer, and hold fast to what has been achieved.

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Te Kaupapa me te Horopaki

Purpose & Background

Why a Te Ao Māori lens on retention?

Te Kaupapa me te Horopaki – Purpose and Context

Te Kaupapa / Purpose

This report presents the outcomes of a kaupapa Māori workstream focused on improving the experience and retention of Māori kaimahi in Aotearoa New Zealand's food and fibre sector. The purpose of the workstream was to explore how Te Ao Māori (the Māori worldview) and mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge systems) can be respectfully and practically integrated into everyday workplace practices.

At the heart of this mahi (work) is the belief that culturally inclusive workplaces lead to better outcomes – for Māori kaimahi, for Kaiwhakawhiwhi mahi, and for the sector as a whole. As Māori now make up approximately one in five workers in the food and fibre workforce, there is a growing need for employers to build their understanding of tikanga Māori (Māori protocols) and develop culturally safe environments that honour Māori identity, values, and contribution.

This report was developed as part of a wider initiative to strengthen staff retention across the food and fibre sector by supporting employers with simple, accessible tools and guidance. The Te Ao Māori workstream ensured that Māori perspectives were not only included – but embedded at every level of this work.

Ngā Whāinga / Objectives

Food and Fibre CoVE is interested in understanding the benefits of advising employers of Māori kaimahi on integrating Te Ao Māori and mātauranga Māori approaches into their work environments, as well as explaining what those approaches may look like in different circumstances.

This workstream set out to achieve five key objectives:

- Create culturally grounded guidance for employers – supporting them to build confidence and competence in applying Māori values, language, and protocols in the workplace.
- Develop a dedicated *Māori Cultural Confidence* resource – a standalone section within a broader Toolkit designed to support employer learning and practice.
- Engage directly with Māori kaimahi and Kaiwhakawhiwhi mahi – to ensure the guidance is grounded in lived experience and reflected the diversity of roles, contexts, and expectations across the sector.
- Evaluate how employers interact with the Māori content – particularly for those who may feel uncertain about where or how to start.
- Provide practical strategies and recommendations on how industry, government, and Māori can continue to help food and fibre employers embed Te Ao Māori in sustainable, authentic, and mana-enhancing ways.

The intention is not to prescribe a single “right way” of doing things, but to offer pathways and resources that empower employers to take meaningful steps – wherever they are on their cultural journey to ultimately support Māori kaimahi in the sector.

Ngā Kitenga Rangahau – Research Findings

Overview of Research Findings on Māori Workforce Retention

This kaupapa explored both existing literature and insights drawn directly from uiui (interviews) with Māori kaimahi and rangatira (leaders) across Aotearoa's food and fibre sector. These individuals brought a dual lens of employer and employee experience, offering grounded, real-world perspectives.

Acknowledging the mahi that prompted the 'Retention Pilots'

Ako Aotearoa – Māori Success in the Workplace

The report *A Model for Successful Māori Learners in Workplace Settings* by Ako Aotearoa (Ako Aotearoa, 2008) highlighted the central role of Māori values and relationships in successful learning and retention. It emphasised that ako (reciprocal learning), whānau support, whakapapa (genealogical connection), and whanaungatanga (relationship-building) are fundamental to positive Māori engagement. With Māori comprising over 16% of industry trainees, this research reinforces the importance of culturally informed, relational approaches to support learning and career progression.

Scarlatti for Food and Fibre CoVE – Attraction and Retention Research Programme

The findings from the Ako report align with what was found in Scarlatti's *Situational Analysis - Implications for the Upcoming Retention Pilots* report (Food and Fibre CoVE, 2022), which examined patterns of Māori participation and retention across the sector. While Māori engagement in the workforce reflected national levels, the research found that Māori were less likely to remain long term and underrepresented in leadership and management roles. The research identified an opportunity to foster long-term Māori retention and advancement by aligning workplace practices with Māori values and aspirations.



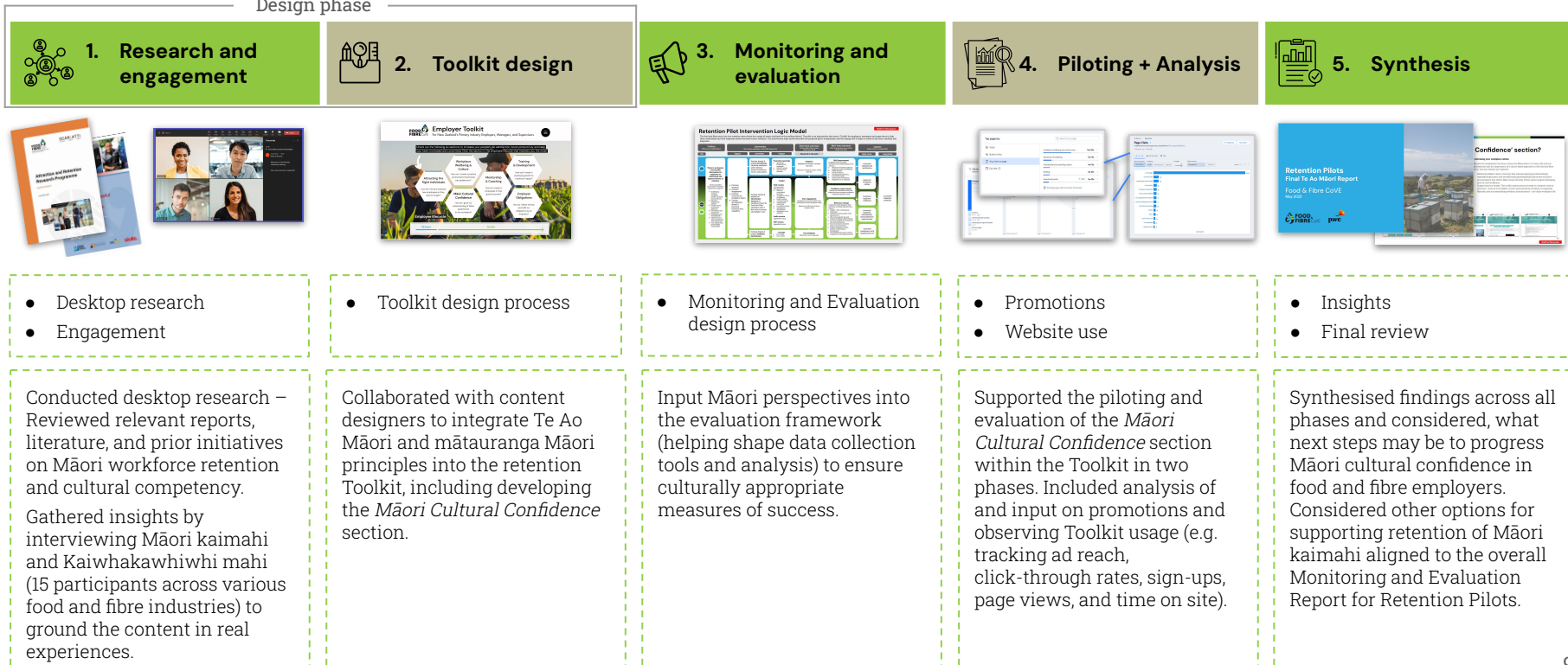
Te Huarahi – Methodology

How the workstream was undertaken

Te Huarahi – Methodology

The project was undertaken in five stages. The Te Ao Māori workstream was actively analysing, providing expertise, and considering outputs throughout.

Design phase



Te Wāhanga Hoahoa

Design Phase

Includes:

- Rangahau ā-Rorohiko – Desktop Research (page 11)
- Te Ara Kōrero – Engagement Approach (page 15)
- Ngā Kitenga o ngā Kōrero – Insights from Engagement (page 16)
- Te Mahi Whanake o te Wāhanga Māori – Developing the *Māori Cultural Confidence* Section (page 18)
- Ngā Ihirangi o te Wāhanga Māori – What's in the *Māori Cultural Confidence* Section (page 19)
- Te Ao Māori i Roto i Ētahi Atu Wāhanga – Integration of Te Ao Māori Across the Toolkit (page 21)

Rangahau ā-Rorohiko – Desktop Research

Method

The desktop research phase began with an analysis of key sources, including Ako Aotearoa's report *A Model for Successful Māori Learners in Workplace Settings* and Scarlatti's Attraction and Retention 2023 research, commissioned by Food and Fibre CoVE. This research helped identify gaps in current knowledge and guided the direction of this workstream.

The central aim throughout was to explore how Te Ao Māori concepts could be meaningfully integrated into food and fibre workplaces to improve Māori kaimahi retention. Academic and kaupapa Māori research on workforce wellbeing, cultural competency, and Indigenous employment outcomes (e.g., Fitzgerald & McLaren, 2006; Hikuroa, 2016; Intezari et al., 2020) consistently emphasise the importance of valuing mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge systems) and applying tikanga (cultural values and practices) in organisational settings to create inclusive, respectful, and culturally safe environments.

From these sources, five interrelated focus areas were synthesised from this research:

- 1) Pastoral Care,
- 2) Mentorship and Learning,
- 3) Māori Worldview and Identity,
- 4) Mātauranga Māori, and
- 5) Policy and Practice Integration.

Two additional areas were also explored given their direct relevance to retention: Training and Development, and Attracting the Right Employees.

1. Te Manaaki i te Tangata – Pastoral Care and Inclusive Practice

Research consistently affirms that culturally grounded pastoral care is central to the wellbeing and retention of Māori in workplace settings. Ako Aotearoa's research (2008) highlights the importance of whānau, reciprocal relationships, and a values-led environment in supporting Māori ākonga (learner) and kaimahi. Practices such as manaakitanga (care and hospitality), whanaungatanga (relationships), and aroha (compassion) are not "nice to have" extras, but essential to how Māori engage meaningfully in learning and work. When these values are reflected in daily organisational life—through formal and informal support, flexible policies, and leadership behaviour—Māori staff feel seen, respected, and motivated to stay.

In the food and fibre sector, where roles are often physically demanding and isolated, this sense of relational support can be especially important. Employers who provide cultural leave (e.g. for tangihanga), offer regular check-ins or buddy systems, and normalise the use of te reo Māori and karakia (ritual chant) are more likely to foster trust and cohesion. As FitzGerald & McLaren (2006) noted, Māori kaimahi who feel their culture is acknowledged and integrated in the workplace tend to report higher job satisfaction and commitment. Embedding manaakitanga as a leadership and HR principle supports both retention and a values-aligned organisational culture.

Rangahau ā-Rorohiko – Desktop Research

2. Te Ako me te Whakapakari – Mentorship and Learning Relationships

Mentorship has long been recognised as a powerful mechanism for supporting career progression, but for Māori, effective mentoring must reflect culturally familiar ways of relating and learning. The tuakana–teina model, which is grounded in whānau and hapū dynamics, reflects a reciprocal learning relationship where knowledge is shared with care, humility, and accountability. Hook et al. (2007) emphasised that mentoring Māori within a Western, hierarchical framework often fails to resonate and can result in disconnection or tokenism. Instead, Māori learners and workers thrive in relational environments that centre trust and shared identity.

In the food and fibre sector, where on-the-job training and informal mentoring are common, adopting culturally appropriate mentoring structures is both feasible and impactful. For example, introducing tuakana–teina style buddy systems, a relationship between a tukana (experienced individual) and teina (less experienced individual), for new employees or using hui-style mentoring sessions can normalise relational mentoring. These practices allow Māori to build confidence and competence while maintaining their cultural identity. Ako (reciprocal learning) is not just a pedagogical concept—it reflects a deeply Māori way of understanding knowledge and relationships, where both mentor and mentee grow through the exchange. Employers who honour this concept in their mentoring practices will better retain Māori kaimahi and create more resilient teams.

3. Te Ao Māori – Māori Worldview and Cultural Identity in the Workplace

Te Ao Māori, the Māori worldview, is grounded in the interconnectedness of people, place, and the environment. It informs not only how Māori perceive the world, but also how they relate to others and to their work. When workplaces affirm this worldview through practice, they create space for Māori to bring their full selves to work—an essential precondition for retention. Intezari et al. (2020) argue that Indigenous values, when genuinely integrated, contribute to employee engagement and organisational wellbeing. These values include respect for collective decision-making, acknowledgement of whakapapa (genealogy), and emphasis on holistic wellbeing.

In the food and fibre sector, which is inherently connected to the land (whenua), integrating Te Ao Māori is particularly relevant. Practices such as acknowledging whenua in team meetings, recognising the role of karakia in seasonal work, and designing workplace rituals that reflect Māori values can strengthen cultural alignment. Importantly, affirming Te Ao Māori does not mean creating separate systems for Māori kaimahi—it means transforming workplace culture to be inclusive of indigenous worldviews, benefiting everyone. When Māori identity is respected and normalised, retention becomes less about fixing a problem and more about enabling belonging.

Rangahau ā-Rorohiko – Desktop Research

4. Mātauranga Māori – Knowledge Systems and Environmental Relationships

Mātauranga Māori is a holistic knowledge system that encompasses environmental, spiritual, genealogical, and practical knowledge passed through generations. It is deeply tied to te taiao (the environment), and to ethical principles such as kaitiakitanga (guardianship) and whakapapa. Hikuroa (2016) explains that mātauranga is not static; it evolves with the context while maintaining its foundational values. In the food and fibre sector—where interaction with land, seasons, and ecosystems is constant—mātauranga provides a rich, relevant framework for understanding and managing resources in culturally and ecologically sustainable ways.

Examples of mātauranga in action include the use of the maramataka (Māori lunar calendar) to guide planting and harvesting cycles, or the performance of karakia before significant work begins, acknowledging spiritual and environmental connections. Integrating these practices into workplace culture not only affirms Māori identity but enhances ecological awareness and sustainable practice. This deepened connection can enhance Māori kaimahi wellbeing and pride in their work, contributing to retention. Employers who respect mātauranga not as a cultural token, but as a knowledge system equal in value to Western frameworks, help create workplaces that are truly inclusive and future-facing.

5. Ngā Kaupapa Here me ngā Tikanga – Policy and Practice Integration

Tikanga refers to the ethical frameworks and customary protocols that guide Māori behaviour and decision-making. It is increasingly being recognised in Aotearoa's legal and organisational systems as foundational to bicultural practice. According to Mead (2016), tikanga “provides the moral, cultural, and practical compass by which actions are judged.” Integrating tikanga into workplace policies goes beyond cultural celebration—it embeds Māori values into the day-to-day operations and expectations of an organisation.

Large organisations have begun to reflect this through formal policies such as Indigenous Intellectual Property guidelines, Te Tiriti o Waitangi commitments, and tangihanga leave. Smaller organisations can apply tikanga more informally—by observing proper greetings, allowing time for whānau responsibilities, and ensuring respectful communication. In the food and fibre sector, where many businesses are SMEs or family-run, fostering a respectful culture rooted in tikanga can be particularly effective. It signals to Māori kaimahi that their values are not peripheral, but central.

Importantly, effective integration of tikanga also requires recognition of the diversity of iwi and hapū across Aotearoa. Each has its own kawa (protocols), histories, and relationships to place and land. Policies and practices integrated into the workplace should reflect this diversity, not assuming a single Māori worldview, but instead identifying and respecting the distinct tikanga that may apply in different locations or organisational contexts. When tikanga is woven into policy in ways that honour this variation, Māori kaimahi are more likely to feel safe, respected, and inclined to stay.

Rangahau ā-Rorohiko – Desktop Research

6. Te Whakangungu me te Whanaketanga – Training and Development

Training and development opportunities are essential for workforce retention across all groups, but they hold particular significance for Māori. Jolly et al. (2016) argued that when Māori are supported in their learning and career progression, they are more likely to stay, contribute meaningfully, and step into leadership roles. Learning environments that are inclusive of learning styles that are informed by tikanga and kaupapa Māori, such as through kanohi ki te kanohi wānanga (face-to-face learning), have proven to be highly effective in tertiary education and can be equally impactful in workplace settings.

In the food and fibre sector, training often happens on the job and informally, which presents an opportunity to integrate culturally supportive practices. Employers who provide professional development pathways, cultural capability training, and mentoring not only support skill-building but also signal that Māori kaimahi have a future in the organisation. As the sector looks to future-proof its workforce, investing in Māori training and leadership development is both a cultural and economic imperative. Culturally responsive training isn't just about inclusion—it's about unlocking the potential of Māori kaimahi to lead, innovate, and thrive.

7. Te Hūnuku i te Tangata Tika – Attracting the Right Employees

Attracting employees whose values align with an organisation's culture is a key part of long-term retention—and for Māori, that means workplaces where cultural identity is recognised and valued. The recent increase in demand for Te Ao Māori and tikanga-aligned skills across the Aotearoa labour market (Workforce Demand Report, 2023) reflects a broader shift: employers who understand and implement Māori values are increasingly attractive to a bicultural, values-driven workforce. The demand for tikanga and Te Ao Māori skills, which grew over 700% from 2014 to 2023, underscores this trend.

In the food and fibre sector, this means that employers who actively incorporate values such as manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga, and whanaungatanga into their recruitment and onboarding practices are more likely to draw Māori applicants who seek alignment between work and identity. Culturally aware recruitment is not about exclusion—it's about clarity, authenticity, and mutual respect. When Māori see their values reflected in job descriptions, leadership, and company policies, they are more likely to see a long-term future with that employer. Retention starts before hiring—by creating an organisation where Māori feel welcome from the outset.

Whakakapinga – Conclusion

The desktop research phase confirmed that Māori kaimahi retention is best supported through workplace environments that reflect and uphold Te Ao Māori values, tikanga, and mātauranga. While targeted research specific to the food and fibre sector remains limited, the evidence shows that culturally affirming practices—such as mentoring grounded in whakapapa, inclusive policies, and value-based leadership—enhance not only Māori wellbeing but organisational success.

By drawing on a diverse evidence base, this research identified seven key areas that underpin Māori retention: pastoral care, mentorship, worldview, mātauranga Māori, policy integration, training and development, and value-aligned recruitment. These themes formed the foundation for engagement with Māori stakeholders and informed the design of the *Māori Cultural Confidence* content within the Employer Toolkit. Grounding this work in kaupapa Māori ensures the resulting guidance is not only relevant, but empowering for employers and Māori kaimahi alike.

References can be found in Appendix B.

Te Ara Kōrero – Engagement Approach

He Rautaki Kōrero – Engagement Strategy

The engagement approach was designed to centre Māori voices and lived experience within the food and fibre workforce. While initial plans focused on conducting small wānanga (focus groups), the approach was adapted to one-on-one uiui (interviews) to create a more intimate, culturally safe environment for kōrero. This allowed participants to share insights openly and in depth.

These interviews aimed to:

- Validate findings from previous desktop research.
- Deepen understanding of the Māori experience in the food and fibre sector.
- Identify culturally relevant resources and practices.
- Gather real-world examples to inform the design of the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section.

Interview objectives were clearly defined, and tikanga Māori was embedded in the process—through practices such as mihi and respectful protocols. Analysis was used to identify key insights from the kōrero.



Ngā Tāngata i Uiuitia – Who Was Interviewed and Why

Ten Māori kaimahi and kaiwhakawhiwhi mahi were interviewed, selected from across a range of food and fibre sub-sectors including dairy, horticulture, aquaculture, forestry, and iwi- or hapū-based operations. The sample represented both small- and large-scale organisations, with a focus on including diverse regional perspectives and a balance of frontline and leadership voices.

Ngā Pātai me te Take – Questions and Rationale

Interview questions were designed to address a gap in literature around Māori kaimahi experiences and employer cultural confidence. The questions aimed to explore both challenges and opportunities, with a strong focus on identifying practical actions to improve cultural confidence in the workplace.

Questions included:

- What are the primary challenges that Māori individuals currently face in the food and fibre sector workforce?
- What opportunities exist for employers to better support their Māori kaimahi?
- What are the attributes of an employer who effectively supports their Māori kaimahi, particularly in relation to their Māoritanga (cultural identity)?
- What advice would you give to non-Māori employers who want to upskill and better support Māori in their organisation?

These questions were intentionally open and strengths-based, encouraging reflection on values, relationships, and examples of best practice. The kōrero that emerged from this process directly shaped the tone, structure, and examples in the Toolkit, ensuring that the final product is grounded in real, sector-specific Māori experience.

Ngā Kitenga o ngā Kōrero – Insights from engagement

Primary Challenges Faced by Māori Individuals

Interview participants described several challenges affecting Māori retention in the food and fibre sector.

- A recurring issue was the lack of culturally inclusive learning environments. Training and development opportunities often follow Western models, with limited support for Māori ways of learning such as ako (reciprocal learning) or kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face engagement).
- Another common theme was the absence of visible Te Ao Māori values in daily workplace practices. This lack of integration led many to feel culturally isolated or disconnected from their identity at work.
- The underrepresentation of Māori in leadership roles was also noted, creating a gap in visible role models and clear progression pathways.
- Participants also stressed the importance of culturally appropriate mental health and wellbeing support, which is often unavailable or not tailored to Māori needs.

Opportunities for Employers to Support Māori Kaimahi

Despite these challenges, participants identified several practical opportunities for employers to better support their Māori kaimahi. Most noted a lack of existing resources and expressed enthusiasm for tools that are:

- Simple and easy to use.
- Focused on building everyday cultural confidence.
- Framed in a welcoming, non-judgemental way.

Interviewees suggested that helpful resources might include introductory guidance on Te Ao Māori values, te reo Māori basics, suggested daily practices (like karakia), and ways to engage respectfully with whānau. Participants emphasised that employers don't need to be experts—but they do need to be open and willing to try.

Characteristics of Supportive Employers

Participants described culturally supportive employers as those who consistently integrate Māori values into their business, not just during special occasions. These employers:

- Apply values like manaakitanga (care), whanaungatanga (relationships), and kaitiakitanga (guardianship).
- Use and respect te reo Māori in everyday settings.
- Acknowledge significant cultural events and support time off for whānau commitments.

Supportive employers also showed flexibility, promoted holistic wellbeing, and recognised the importance of balancing work and life in culturally responsive ways.

Advice for Non-Māori Employers

When asked what advice they would offer non-Māori employers, participants encouraged an approach grounded in humility and relationship. Rather than focusing on formal training alone, employers were encouraged to engage in a shared learning journey alongside their Māori kaimahi.

They emphasised the value of embedding small, consistent practices.

Ngā Huarahi mō te Angitū – Summary of Research

The research phase, while intentionally focused and exploratory, has provided valuable insights into the experiences of Māori within Aotearoa's food and fibre sector. It confirms that Māori kaimahi face distinct challenges—particularly around cultural identity, representation, and learning environments—but also that there is strong potential for change when employers are supported to respond effectively.

Being a good employer in this context means more than operational competence; it involves embracing tikanga Māori and fostering respectful, values-based relationships. Across both the literature and kōrero from uiui, it was clear that employers who actively apply Te Ao Māori principles—such as whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and kaitiakitanga (guardianship; stewardship of people, place, and environment)—are more likely to retain Māori kaimahi and build positive, inclusive workplaces.

Practices such as accommodating whānau obligations, using te reo Māori, and incorporating karakia into daily routines were highlighted as simple but meaningful ways to affirm Māori identity at work. These actions not only support individual wellbeing but contribute to a more cohesive, resilient workforce overall.

While few past initiatives have placed Māori cultural identity at the centre of retention efforts, this project—through the Te Ao Māori workstream—has responded to that gap.

By embedding mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge systems) into practical tools and everyday employer guidance, the workstream lays a foundation for long-term, culturally responsive workforce development.



Te Mahi Whanake o te Wāhanga Māori – Developing the *Māori Cultural Confidence* Section

Purpose of the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section

This section of the Toolkit was created to help employers build confidence engaging with Māori kaimahi. It is a standalone section within the free Employer Toolkit and includes practical insights, actions, and everyday examples to support inclusive workplaces where Māori contributions are valued. The section provides practical guidance and insight to support inclusive workplaces that value Māori identity, knowledge, and contribution.

The aim is to provide employers with clear, entry-level pathways to embed Te Ao Māori into everyday practice—ultimately fostering workplaces where Māori kaimahi feel seen, supported, and able to thrive.

Integrating the research and insights

The development of this section was grounded in a wide range of evidence. Insights were drawn from:

- Scarlatti's Attraction and Retention research (page 7)
- Ako Aotearoa's Māori Learners in the Workplace (page 7)
- Themes identified through desktop research (page 11)
- Uiui (interviews) with Māori employers and kaimahi (page 16)

These sources were synthesised to identify the key cultural concepts, challenges, and opportunities that should be addressed in the Toolkit. The structure of the section was carefully designed to introduce best practices for incorporating Te Ao Māori into workplace settings—starting with foundational values and progressing to real-world examples and suggested actions.

Positioning of the reader

The section is written for the average New Zealander—especially those willing to learn but unsure where to start. It uses plain language and avoids jargon, while respectfully acknowledging the deep cultural significance of the content for Māori.

This is a starting point, and is not intended to replace lived experience or formal cultural training, but to serve as a respectful and practical starting point for learning.

Design elements

The design of the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section was guided by insights from the wider workstream and Toolkit user feedback. Key principles included:

- Plain language – Free from jargon and accessible to a wide audience
- Visual explanation – Use of illustrations to support understanding
- Relatable voice – A friendly, conversational tone
- Broad relevance – Examples drawn from a range of business types, including small enterprises, Māori-owned employers, and large sector employers
- Concise format – Short sections with clear headings and takeaway actions
- User-friendly navigation – Short, scannable titles, visual cues, and multi-format delivery (web, PDF, audio/video)

These design choices ensure the resource is engaging and easy to use—supporting busy employers to take confident, culturally grounded steps toward creating more inclusive workplaces.

Ngā Ihirangi o te Wāhanga Māori – What is in the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section?

Structure of the Section

The *Māori Cultural Confidence* section is organised into three key parts to help employers understand and apply Te Ao Māori in the workplace:

- **Fundamental Elements of Te Ao Māori**
- **Informing Your Workplace Culture**
- **Simple Things You Can Do**

These sections build on one another, moving from foundational knowledge to practical application.

1. Fundamental elements of Te Ao Māori

This introductory section presents four key concepts: mātauranga Māori, te reo Māori, tikanga, and whakapapa. Research shows that when employers understand these basics, Māori kaimahi feel more seen and supported.

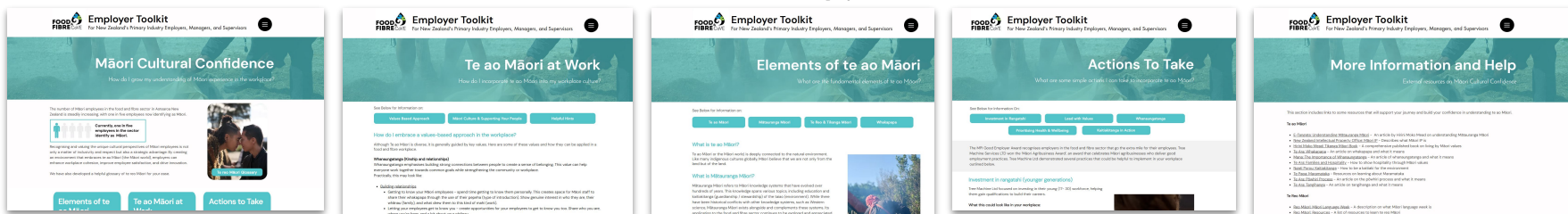
Interviewees noted that many workplaces still lack visible cultural integration. Examples such as planting native bush or holding karakia before work were shared to show how simple actions can honour tikanga and connect with Māori values.

2. Informing your workplace culture

This section emphasises the deep connection Māori have to te taiao (the natural environment) and the importance of a values-based approach in the food and fibre sector. Two key themes are explored:

- Embracing Māori values: Concepts like whanaungatanga (relationships), manaakitanga (care), and kaitiakitanga (guardianship) help create inclusive environments that reflect Māori ways of being. These values support belonging, growth, and wellbeing.
- Supporting your people: The Toolkit shares practical ways to integrate cultural practices—such as te reo Māori, correct pronunciation of names, recognising Matariki, and accommodating whānau commitments—into daily workplace life.

Figure 1. Parts of the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section in the Employer Toolkit



Ngā Ihirangi o te Wāhanga Māori –

What is in the *Māori Cultural Confidence* Section?

Simple things you can do based on good practice

This section brings together research insights and highlights what good employer practice can look like in action. Many employers expressed a desire to better support Māori kaimahi but felt unsure how to begin. Real-world examples, like Tree Machine Ltd, provide clarity and confidence by showing what's already working.

Tree Machine Ltd, recognised through the Ministry for Primary Industries' Good Employer Awards, demonstrated how Te Ao Māori values can be authentically embedded in a business. Their approach is grounded in whanaungatanga, kaitiakitanga, and manaakitanga, and includes actions such as:

- Investing in rangatahi Māori through training and mentoring
- Opening meetings with karakia and encouraging the use of te reo Māori
- Supporting whānau needs and recognising tangihanga leave
- Delivering training in ways that reflect diverse learning styles

These practices aren't one-off gestures—they're part of a workplace culture that values Māori identity and supports wellbeing. By sharing this example, the Toolkit shows that good employer practice starts with values, relationships, and a willingness to learn.



Te Ao Māori i Roto i Ētahi Atu Wāhanga

How Te Ao Māori is incorporated into other sections

While the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section offers a dedicated space to build understanding, Te Ao Māori principles have also been intentionally woven throughout other sections of the Employer Toolkit. This integrated approach reinforces that Māori values and perspectives are relevant across all aspects of workplace culture, not just within a standalone resource.

Attracting the Right Individual

In the recruitment section, Te Ao Māori is referenced as a guide for inclusive hiring practices. Drawing on interview insights, the Toolkit encourages employers to consider inviting whānau into the recruitment and onboarding process—reflecting the idea that welcoming a new employee often involves acknowledging their wider support network. This approach recognises the importance of collective identity and relational decision-making for many Māori applicants and helps create a sense of belonging from the outset.

Workplace Wellbeing and Culture

The Te Whare Tapa Whā model is included in the wellbeing section to introduce cultural wellbeing as a vital component of holistic health. The model presents wellbeing as a wharehau (meeting house) supported by four walls—taha tinana (physical health), taha hinengaro (mental health), taha wairua (spiritual health), and taha whānau (family health). This acknowledges the importance of cultural identity and connection in maintaining wellbeing, particularly in rural and isolated settings common in the food and fibre sector. This framework helps normalise kōrero around mental health, which is often under-discussed in many workplaces.

Mentorship and Coaching

The tuakana–teina model is included as a culturally responsive approach to mentoring. It reflects a reciprocal relationship where a more experienced individual (tuakana) supports a less experienced one (teina), in a dynamic rooted in trust and relational learning. This mirrors learning styles common in marae contexts and offers a natural, values-based way to foster development and belonging in the workplace.

Employee Legislation

The Toolkit encourages employers to review and align HR policies with cultural practices, including provisions for tangihanga leave. This recognises the cultural and emotional significance of mourning practices and the need for flexibility in times of bereavement. Insights from engagement emphasised the importance of acknowledging Māori customs in workplace policies—not as an exception, but as part of respectful and inclusive employment practice.

Training and Development

The Toolkit references Te Ara Poutama, a metaphor for professional growth grounded in whakapapa (genealogy) and the journey of learning. It encourages employers to see development as a culturally meaningful process, where Māori kaimahi are supported not just to upskill, but to grow in identity and leadership. Incorporating this concept helps reframe professional development through a Māori lens, offering a pathway for progression that is relational, aspirational, and culturally affirming.

Te Wā Whakamātau – Piloting Results and Analysis

Includes:

- Te Wāhanga Whakamātau – Introduction and purpose of the Piloting Phase (page 23)
- Rautaki Whakatairanga – Promotion Strategy (page 25)
- Te Tukanga Whakamātau – Piloting Process (page 26)
- Ngā Hua o ngā Whakatairanga – Pilot Promotion Performance (page 27)
- Ngā Hua o te Whakamahi – Māori Content Performance Summary (page 28)
- Ngā Ara Whakatare – Navigation Patterns and Māori Content Linkages (page 29)
- Ngā Tauanga Whakamahi – User Navigation and Engagement with Māori Content (page 30)
- Kōrero Mai – What We Heard from Employers and Industry (page 31)
- Ngā Whakaarotanga – Considerations for Future Development (page 32)

Te Wāhanga Whakamātau – Introduction to the Piloting Phase

Research questions and hypotheses

The retention pilot programme was developed to test whether low-barrier, accessible tools could help employers improve staff retention in the food and fibre sector. The pilot were structured around three central research questions (see Appendix C for full details):

- Will employers engage with simple, accessible resources to improve retention?
- How do elements of an Employer Toolkit influence employer confidence and retention behaviour within the first 12 months?
- Which elements—both in content and targeted cohort examples (e.g., Māori, school leavers, career changers)—are most impactful?

To support these questions, a set of hypotheses were developed. The Te Ao Māori workstream primarily aligned with research question three, under the hypothesis:

- “Advising employers on the benefits of integrating Te Ao Māori / mātauranga Māori approaches into their work environments will improve retention of Māori kaimahis.”

Retention pilot intervention logic

The food and fibre sector is affected by high turnover, often linked to challenging conditions, a lack of cultural inclusivity, and unclear development pathways. The Employer Toolkit was designed to address these issues by helping employers better understand and respond to the factors driving attrition.

The Intervention Logic Model (ILM) outlines the anticipated progression of change—from Toolkit engagement through to improved workforce outcomes. For the Te Ao Māori workstream, expected medium-term outcomes include:

- Improved employer skills and confidence in recognising the value of Māori culture and identity in the workplace.
- Changes in workplace practices to foster inclusion and embed tikanga and Māori values into day-to-day operations.

These outcomes are measured through engagement analytics, feedback, and usage of the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section within the Toolkit. Refer to Appendix D for the overall Intervention Logic Model.

While standard measures such as engagement analytics and survey feedback offer useful insights, it is equally important to interpret the impact of this work through a Te Ao Māori lens. This means taking a holistic view—recognising the relational, spiritual, cultural, and intergenerational dimensions of change that are not always visible in Western evaluation frameworks. The resource developed is more than a technical tool; it is part of a broader shift towards culturally grounded, mana-enhancing practice that values both identity and connection.

Te Kaupapa o te Wāhanga Whakamātau – Pilot Purpose

Purpose of the Pilot

The purpose of the pilots were to assess how effectively employers in the food and fibre sector engaged with the Employer Toolkit, with a specific focus on the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section.

This workstream aimed to understand whether the resource provided practical, accessible guidance for employers—particularly those who may be unfamiliar with tikanga or mātauranga Māori—to build cultural confidence and create more inclusive, supportive workplaces. In doing so, it contributes to the broader goal of helping employers lead with values, uphold tikanga, and foster whanaungatanga and wellbeing in the workplace.

The pilots also collected data on engagement and user feedback to identify what worked well and where improvements could be made—ensuring the resource continues to evolve and remain grounded in lived experience.

Objective of the pilot

The pilot sought to explore six key aspects of how employers interacted with the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section:

- Engagement with Promotions: evaluate how users responded to targeted promotional content (e.g. Meta and Google Ads) and the impact of outreach on Toolkit uptake.
- Audience Reach: understand who is using the section—roles, industries, or backgrounds—to assess whether it is connecting with the intended audience.
- Content Interest: identify which parts of the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section generated the most engagement and how this compares to other Toolkit sections.
- User Interaction: track how users accessed and navigated the section—frequency, duration, and preferred formats (e.g. website, PDF, audio/video).
- Perceived Usefulness: assess whether employers found the content relevant and applicable to building cultural capability and supporting Māori retention.
- Opportunities for Improvement: gather user feedback to refine and enhance the section, ensuring it remains practical, meaningful, and responsive to sector needs.

Rautaki Whakatairanga – Promotion Strategy

Promotions

The *Māori Cultural Confidence* section of the Employer Toolkit was actively promoted as part of the Pilots through paid online advertising, with the goal of increasing visibility and attracting employers to engage with the content.

The promotional strategy targeted a specific subset of the broader pilot audience—employers, managers, and supervisors in the food and fibre sector who either:

- employ or are looking to employ Māori kaimahi,
- are seeking to build cultural confidence, or;
- have expressed challenges in integrating Te Ao Māori values or tikanga into the workplace.

Importantly, ethnicity was not used as a targeting filter. Instead, the focus was on the user's context and engagement intent—reaching those most likely to benefit from the content.

Platforms used

The Toolkit in general was promoted in industry communication channels such as industry body newsletters, online forums and journals, and via paid promotion methods on Meta (in Pilot one) and Google (in Pilot two). Industry body communications promoted the Toolkit as a whole, while Meta and Google advertising campaigns were used for the promotion of specific Toolkit sections, including a *Māori Cultural Confidence* specific ad campaign and, therefore, are discussed in detail in this report.

- **Meta (Facebook & Instagram):** used to deliver targeted sponsored posts to the target audience, identifying employers via interests, job titles, and industry categories. These platforms allowed for visual storytelling and served as a hub for awareness and engagement during the campaign period.
- **Google Ads:** offered a more intent-based approach, presenting ads to users actively searching for terms related to Māori employment, cultural capability, and inclusive practices. This method also contributed to improving the Toolkit's long-term search visibility and accessibility.



Te Tukanga Whakamātau – Piloting Process

Pilot one – Meta Ads (Facebook & Instagram)

In Pilot one, paid promotions were delivered via Meta platforms—Facebook and Instagram—targeting employers, managers, and supervisors in the food and fibre sector. Ads appeared directly in users' feeds, enabling real-time engagement and response tracking.

The campaign used Meta's targeting features to reach users based on sector, role, and interest areas relevant to Māori employment. Effectiveness was measured using key performance indicators (KPIs) including:

- Click-through rates (CTR)
- Engagement and reach
- Conversions (e.g. Toolkit sign-ups or content access)

Further detail on Pilot two analytics is available on page 27.

Pilot two - Google Ads

Informed by learnings from Pilot one, Google Ads were introduced in Pilot two to support a more intent-based and long-term visibility strategy. These ads appeared in response to users' search queries related to Māori employment, cultural capability, and workplace inclusion.

Google's search-based model allowed for a more organic form of engagement, targeting users who were actively seeking relevant information. Performance was assessed by tracking:

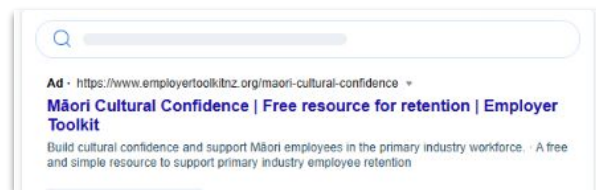
- Impressions and clicks
- Landing page visits
- Conversion pathways

Further detail on Pilot two analytics is available on page 27.

Figure 2. Meta Ad targeted at Māori Cultural Confidence section



Figure 3. Google Ad targeted at Māori Cultural Confidence section



Ngā Hua o ngā Whakatairanga – Pilot Promotion Performance



Pilot one **Meta Advertising (Facebook & Instagram)**

Pilot one used Meta platforms to promote the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section through targeted ads. While some ads received negative or dismissive public comments, this unexpected engagement increased visibility—boosted by Meta's algorithm, which prioritises high-activity content.

Key outcomes:

- 21,341 impressions
- 253 link clicks (Click-through rate: 1.2%)
- Conversion rate: 2 in 10 link clicks led to sign-ups

Despite challenges, the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section performed strongly:

- It was the second most visited page on the Toolkit website during this phase.
- It achieved the highest click-through rate across all email campaigns.
- Positive feedback was received from the industry, and Management group, reinforcing its relevance and value.



Pilot two **Google Advertising**

Pilot two used Google Ads, targeting users actively searching for relevant content. Unlike Meta's passive, feed-based model, Google relies on keyword search volume—which may be lower for Te Ao Māori-specific terms.

Key outcomes:

- 1,500 impressions
- 50 total clicks
- Click-through rate: 3.33%

To reduce friction and encourage engagement, the required access form was removed and replaced with an optional pop-up. While this increased ease of access, it also meant registration data could not be directly linked to ad clicks, limiting our ability to measure conversions.

Ngā Hua o te Whakamahi – Māori Content Performance Summary

This section summarises the performance of Māori-focused Toolkit content across both pilot phases. Full analysis over all Toolkit chapters can be found on page 36 of the Final Monitoring and Evaluation Report.

In Pilot one, the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section was the second most visited section on the site, indicating strong initial interest and engagement. However, in Pilot two, its ranking dropped to sixth, and the most significant decline in site sessions across all six sections.

A similar pattern was reflected in the constituent pages in the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section, which received fewer site sessions during the second pilot. Furthermore, in Pilot one, three Māori-related content pages featured in the top 10 Toolkit pages, and this dropped to two in Pilot two. These results suggest that while the content remained available, fewer users discovered or revisited these sections. This may have been in part due to this topic not being frequently searched in Google, which was the promotion method for Pilot two.

This trend does not necessarily indicate lower overall interest in Māori content, but could highlight the effect of differing promotion methods on user behaviour.

For a full breakdown of section performance and total site sessions, see page 30. Table two is an abridged version of the full top 10 content pages for each Pilot period, found on page 36 of the Retention Pilots Final Monitoring and Evaluation Report.

**Table one: Toolkit sections ranked by popularity
(site sessions)**

Rank	Pilot one	Rank	Pilot two	#	Change in Rank
1	Attracting the right individuals	1	Attracting the right individuals		0
2	Māori cultural confidence	2	Mentorship and coaching		▲ 2
3	Workplace wellbeing + culture	3	Your obligations as an employer		▲ 3
4	Mentorship + coaching	4	Training and development		▲ 1
5	Training and development	5	Workplace wellbeing + culture		▼ 2
6	Your obligations as an employer	6	Māori cultural confidence		▼ 4

**Table two: Māori Cultural Confidence pages in the top 10 Toolkit pages
(site sessions)***

Pilot one	#	Pilot two	#
Māori cultural confidence	68	Te Ao Māori at work	33
Te Ao Māori at work	36	Māori cultural confidence	32
Elements of Te Ao Māori	26		

*Site sessions are visits to the site, and a session ends after 30 minutes of inactivity. This is an alternate measure to page visits, which is the number of times a site page is visited or refreshed. Site sessions tend to be slightly lower than page visits, but tend to be a more meaningful representation of website use.

Ngā Ara Whakatere – Navigation Patterns and Māori Content Linkages

Within the Employer Toolkit, 16 internal hyperlinks direct users to the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section. These links support intuitive navigation, allowing users to explore related topics based on their interests and search behaviour.

Navigation data shows that users often arrive at the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section from adjacent or thematically linked content:

- 14 visits originated from the Attracting the Right Individuals section.
- 13 visits came from the Workplace Wellbeing and Culture section.

These patterns suggest a strong interconnectedness between these topics, reinforcing the relevance of Māori cultural perspectives in recruitment and wellbeing conversations. It's also notable that these three sections are placed consecutively within the Toolkit, which may have contributed to user flow across them.

Observations were too low to draw inferences in navigation patterns between the two pilots.



Ngā Tauanga Whakamahi – User Navigation and Engagement with Māori Content

Analytics from the Toolkit reveal how users are engaging with the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section. The data highlights strong interest in practical, accessible resources—particularly the Actions to Take and Glossary pages, which align with research findings that employers want simple tools to build their cultural confidence.

The homepage of the Māori section recorded the highest number of site sessions (143), but a notable 50% drop-off occurred on subsequent pages. This indicates that many users are not navigating beyond the landing page, potentially limiting their exposure to the full content available.

Key insights from user behaviour:

- Users spend the most time on the *Māori Cultural Confidence* Actions page (avg. session: 12m 33s) and Glossary page, suggesting high engagement with actionable and explanatory content.
- The Elements of Te Ao Māori page had a lower average time on page, indicating a potential opportunity to improve clarity or layout.
- Te Ao Māori at Work shows sustained interest with a solid session duration and relatively high traffic.

Overall, this data suggests a genuine interest in Māori cultural concepts, especially when content is framed as practical and easy to digest. However, the steep drop-off after the homepage signals a need to improve user pathways and content visibility across the section.

Page path	Page views	Site sessions	Unique visitors	Avg. session duration	Avg. time on page
Māori Cultural Confidence	215	143	124	7m 18s	47.806s
Te Ao Māori at work	121	80	72	5m 14s	1m 40s
Elements of Te Ao Māori	64	44	37	9m, 40s	33s, 477ms
Te Reo Māori Glossary	33	26	23	7m, 56s	44s, 471ms
Māori Cultural Confidence Actions	35	26	23	12m 33s	1m 10s
Māori Cultural Confidence External Links	7	4	1	12m 0s	18.25s

Above: User Engagement with Māori Cultural Confidence Pages – Site Analytics Overview

Kōrero Mai –

What We Heard from Employers and Industry

The following quotes reflect feedback from employers, industry representatives and Māori Rangitira who engaged with the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section of the Toolkit.

Their insights offer real-world perspectives on the value, relevance, and impact of the resource—and reinforce the importance of making Te Ao Māori accessible, practical, and embedded in everyday workplace practice.

“

There are some things I really like. Especially the Māori experiences section and the buddy section.
(Industry body member)

“

The *Māori Cultural Confidence* section had a couple of good examples - really cool. **(Employer)**

“

We do not have any Māori tailored resources, and have a lot of employers who aren't comfortable with it, truthfully our employers wouldn't be ready. **(Industry body member)**

“

Providing culturally relevant training and leadership opportunities can empower Māori employees and lead to better outcomes for both employers and employees. **(Rangitira)**

Ngā Whakaarotanga – Considerations for Future Development

1. Platform Behaviour and Promotion Insights

Comparing Meta and Google Ads revealed different patterns of engagement with the *Māori Cultural Confidence* content. While users rarely searched for this topic directly via Google, they were more likely to engage when it was presented passively—such as through Meta Ads or email newsletters. This indicates that interest exists, but visibility is key. On the whole, industry communication channels were more successful than paid promotion methods, and resulted in more Toolkit sign-ups. However, because the industry channel promotion campaign was general to the whole Toolkit and not section specific (like for Meta / Google), there was no way to track number of impressions, or what proportion of these sign-ups were attributable to interest in accessing the *Māori Cultural Confidence* section. Industry channel promotion and tracking specific to Māori Cultural Confidence could be implemented in future research.

For future Māori-focused initiatives in this area, it is important to recognise which promotion methods influence behaviour. Proactive, values-based visibility (e.g. targeted emails, curated industry partnerships) may be more effective than relying on organic search alone.

2. Understanding the User and Levels of Involvement

Users engaging with the Toolkit likely sit at different points along a cultural confidence spectrum. The current *Māori Cultural Confidence* section serves as an accessible starting point—but some users may be ready for deeper content.

Future initiatives could include:

- Tiered resources for varying levels of understanding.
- In-depth case studies or learning modules for users wanting to embed Te Ao Māori further.
- Opportunities to connect with Māori experts or mentors.

This layered approach would help meet users where they are and deepen long-term engagement.

3. Search Query Insights – What People Are Looking For

Data from Website Analytics and Google search insights revealed user interest in:

- Māori values in business (e.g. kaitiakitanga, whakawhanaungatanga).
- Te Ao Māori concepts related to workplace culture.
- Te reo Māori pronunciation, particularly workplace-relevant phrases (e.g. “great work” in te reo).

Although not all queries led directly to site visits, they highlight growing curiosity and demand for accessible, culturally grounded resources. This supports earlier research findings and provides useful direction for future Toolkit enhancements.

Considerations for future development:

- Expand te reo content in the glossary and audio/video versions.
- Include pronunciation breakdowns and examples for commonly used workplace terms.
- Create language tools that respond directly to search trends and user needs.



Ngā Ara Whakamua

Future Opportunities for Deepening Cultural
Confidence

Ngā Ara Whakamua – Recommendations to Support Māori Retention

Insights from research, engagement, and pilot data clearly show that Māori kaimahi are more likely to remain in workplaces where their cultural identity is respected, their wellbeing is prioritised, and their contributions are genuinely valued. These environments do not occur by chance—they are intentionally created through leadership, culturally responsive practices, and the ongoing development of cultural confidence across all parts of the workforce.

The piloting phase revealed a strong willingness from employers to engage with Te Ao Māori content—particularly when it is practical, relatable, and accessible. However, the transition from awareness to action requires more targeted support. Toolkit analytics, feedback, and navigation patterns highlighted the need for deeper engagement, clearer pathways, and better integration of content across the user journey.

The following recommendations have been developed to respond to:

- The needs expressed by employers through feedback and usage data.
- The cultural insights shared by Māori kaimahi during interviews.
- The strategic opportunities identified in desktop research and good practice examples.

Each recommendation is tagged with its intended audience (e.g., employers, industry leaders, funders) and aligned with the ultimate goal of this workstream: retaining Māori kaimahi by supporting inclusive, values-based workplaces grounded in Te Ao Māori.

1. Deepen Cultural Engagement and Learning Opportunities

1.a – Create safe spaces for cultural learning

For employers, industry bodies, and Māori workforce facilitators

Support the establishment of wānanga, hui, or workshops that allow kaiwhakawhiwhi mahi and kaimahi to explore Te Ao Māori concepts through kōrero, reflection, and relationship. These spaces enable deeper understanding of tikanga and whanaungatanga and help shift cultural awareness into action.

Informed by: Interview themes, Ako Aotearoa research, and demand for practical, real-time learning opportunities.

1.b – Develop advanced resources for deeper learning

For content developers and sector training providers

Create follow-on resources for those ready to go beyond the basics—such as sector-specific examples, learning modules, and deeper guidance on kaupapa Māori frameworks and leadership approaches.

Informed by: Feedback from pilot users seeking more than an introductory section.

1.c - Develop a Te Ao Māori Cultural Capability credential that employees and employers can work toward

For content developers and sector training providers

Create a formal credential for employees and employers to work towards, and to recognise their work in deepening their Te Ao Māori knowledge and capability.

Ngā Ara Whakamua – Recommendations to Support Māori Retention

2. Build Sector-Wide Visibility and Normalise Māori Capability

2.a – Design sustained awareness campaigns

For funders, industry bodies, and Māori comms partners

Co-develop with Māori, ongoing campaigns that highlight the value of Māori cultural capability to recruitment, retention, and team wellbeing—especially in rural and regional areas.

Informed by: Pilot data showing passive promotions (e.g., Meta, email) drove more engagement than organic search.

2.b – Share sector-based case studies

For employers and content creators

Use real-world examples (like Tree Machine Ltd) to show how Māori values are applied in everyday business. Include whānau-based and small enterprise models that feel relatable and achievable.

Informed by: Strong response to case studies and calls for more practical examples.

2.c – Strengthen iwi and hapū partnerships

For industry bodies and project leads

Embed Māori partners in co-design, resource development, promotion, and governance as relevant to ensure materials are credible, and locally relevant **acknowledging the diversity of each iwi and hapū.**

Informed by: Engagement principles and Māori stakeholder feedback.

3. Improve the User Experience and Toolkit Functionality

3.a – Enhance internal navigation and flow

For digital designers and content developers

Reduce user drop-off by improving site navigation, using clearer pathways between content (e.g. related links, visual prompts, preview sections).

Informed by: Pilot data showing high homepage traffic but significant drop-off on subsequent pages.

3.b – Add interactive, user-led tools

For content creators and tech partners

Introduce a chatbot, glossary with audio support, and interactive tools (e.g. flashcards, self-assessments) to guide users through Te Ao Māori content in a personalised way.

Informed by: Feedback favouring accessible formats and common search behaviour around pronunciation and terminology.

3.c – Create downloadable visual resources

For employers, HR teams, and comms leads

Offer printable and shareable materials (e.g. values posters, onboarding one-pagers, bilingual workplace phrases) for use in team settings.

Informed by: Search trends and requests for ready-to-use resources.

Ngā Ara Whakamua – Recommendations to Support Māori Retention

4. Empower Industry Leadership for Cultural Change

4.a – Provide leadership-specific training, pathways, and opportunities

For business owners, CEOs, and sector leaders

Offer targeted learning that supports leaders to understand their role in shaping culturally inclusive environments, and to lead by example with confidence. Support Māori into leadership positions to influence and lead by example.

Informed by: Research and interview data showing leadership is key to cultural change, but many lack confidence.

4.b – Develop a leadership resource pathway

For Toolkit developers and sector learning providers

Co-design with Māori, a dedicated guide or section within the Toolkit for senior leaders on how to embed Māori values into business strategy, policy, and people leadership.

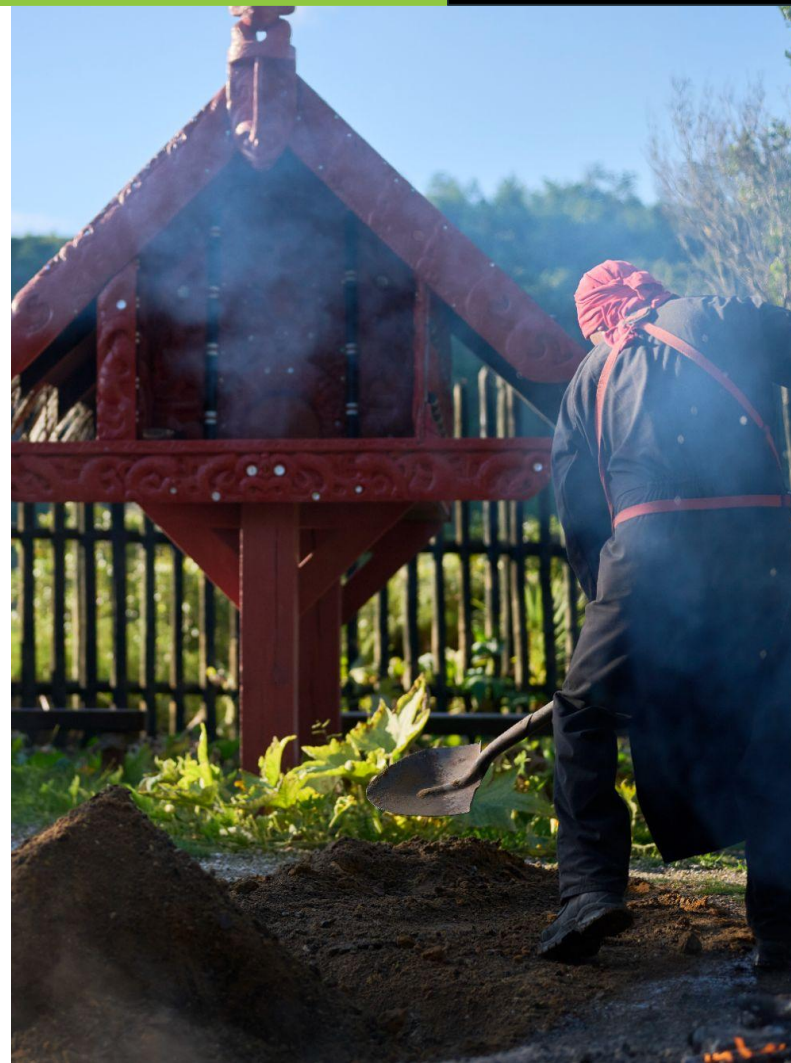
Informed by: Requests for tailored resources beyond general employer advice.

4.c – Establish peer learning and mentoring spaces

For industry bodies and leadership networks

Enable leaders to learn from each other by sharing experiences, tools, and lessons in applying Te Ao Māori in real business contexts.

Informed by: Engagement findings around the value of trusted, relational learning environments.





Ngā Whakaaro Whakamutunga

Final Reflections and Acknowledgements

Ngā Whakaaro Whakamutunga – Final Reflections and Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the generosity of those who shared their time, experiences, and whakaaro (insights) throughout the journey. Their contributions have shaped this mahi in deep and meaningful ways, ensuring it remains grounded in real experiences from within the food and fibre sector.

We would especially like to acknowledge the individuals who participated in interviews for the Te Ao Māori workstream. Your willingness to kōrero openly and honestly has brought invaluable richness to this work. Thank you to:

- Alix Te Kere
- Grace Rehu
- Hiraina Tangiora
- Kerri Ahomiro
- Wini Geddes
- Ben Purua
- Wiremu McMillan
- Karla Bradley
- Summer Wynyard
- Cheyenne Wilson

Your insights helped bring this kaupapa to life and ensured the Toolkit reflects the lived realities of Māori kaimahi and employers alike.

Also sincere thanks need to be given to Food and Fibre CoVE for their leadership, guidance, and unwavering support throughout this project. Your commitment to embedding Te Ao Māori into workforce development has helped pave the way for change that is not only strategic, but grounded in tikanga and whanaungatanga.

A sincere thank you to Renata Hakiwai and the HTK Group for their comprehensive peer review of this report. Anei rā – e rere ana ngā mihi ki a koutou mō tō koutou tautoko i tēnei kaupapa.

To the industry groups and organisations who engaged with this work—thank you for your openness, feedback, and collaboration. Your willingness to reflect, challenge, and grow alongside us has been critical in ensuring this resource is both practical and sector-relevant.

This mahi represents just one step on a longer journey towards cultural confidence, inclusion, and retention within the food and fibre sector.

We hope it serves as a taonga—a valuable resource that continues to evolve, inspire, and support those working to create workplaces where Māori can truly thrive.

"Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi."
With your food basket and my food basket, the people will thrive.

Important Note: Retention of Māori in the food and fibre sector is a complex issue. While this work focuses on encouraging cultural capability within workplaces, it is important to acknowledge that broader, systemic efforts are also needed. These include addressing structural barriers that impact Māori in the sector, expanding Māori leadership pathways, and ensuring that initiatives are led with Māori and by Māori—particularly at governance and strategic co-design levels.

A wide-angle photograph of a lush green agricultural field, likely a cornfield, stretching to the horizon. The sky is a clear, pale blue with a few wispy white clouds. In the distance, a line of trees and a small building are visible on the horizon. The foreground shows the detailed texture of the green leaves and stalks of the crops.

Ngā Āpitihanga Appendices

Appendix A: He Papakupu – Glossary of Te Reo Māori Terms

Term	Definition
Ākonga	Learner
Ako	Reciprocal learning
Aotearoa	Land of the long white cloud (New Zealand)
Hapū	Sub-tribe or extended kinship group
Iwi	Tribe or large kinship group
Kaimahi	Employees
Kaitiakitanga	Guardianship; stewardship of people, place, and environment
Kaiwhakawhiwhi mahi	Employers
Kanohi ki te kanohi wānanga	Face-to-face learning
Karakia	Prayer, blessing, or incantation
Kawa	Protocol; customary practices or rules
Kōrero	Speak, talk, discuss
Koha	Gift, donation, or offering given with respect
Mahi	Work, job, or task
Marae	Meeting place or communal gathering ground

Term	Definition
Maramataka	Māori lunar calendar used to guide activities based on the moon phases
Mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge systems, wisdom, and ways of knowing
Manaakitanga	Hospitality, kindness, respect, and support of others
Māoritanga / Taha Māori	Māori culture; Māori identity and worldview
Mātāwaka	Kinship group from a different region; non-local tribe
Pākehā	Non-Māori, typically of European descent
Rangatira	Leader or chief; a person of mana and responsibility
Taha hinengaro	Mental health
Taha tinana	Physical health
Taha whānau	Family health
Taha wairua	Spiritual health
Taiao	Natural environment; the living world
Tangihanga	Funeral and mourning process; ritual for farewelling the deceased
Te Ao Māori	The Māori world; Māori worldview and way of being
Teina	Younger sibling or less experienced individuals
Te Reo Māori	The Māori language
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	Te Tiriti o Waitangi – Māori version of the foundational document of Aotearoa
Tikanga	Customary values, practices, and protocols

Appendix A: He Papakupu – Glossary of Te Reo Māori Terms

Term	Definition
Tuakana	Older sibling or experienced individual
Uiui	Interview or structured discussion
Wānanga	Forum for learning; focused discussion or educational session
Whakapapa	Genealogy; ancestral connections and relationships
Whānau	Family or extended family group
Whanaungatanga	Relationships, kinship, and a sense of connection or belonging
Wharenui	Meeting house
Whenua	Land; also carries the meaning of placenta, symbolising deep connection

Appendix B: Ngā Tohutoro – References

The following references reflect the sources drawn on throughout the research and development of this kaupapa.

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Appendix C: Ngā pātai rangahau – Research questions and hypotheses

The overarching retention pilot programme aims to answer the following research questions (RQ) and test the related hypotheses. Each hypothesis relates to one or more of the research questions. The intervention logic model (ILM) in Appendix D outlines how each of the three RQs relate to the problems, intervention, and outcomes.

Research questions (RQ)

1. Will **food and fibre employers engage** in low involvement, accessible support to improve their retention rates?

2. How will elements of an Employer Toolkit (and associated webinars) **impact the perception and confidence of employers** to retain their employees within their first 12 months?

3. **What elements** (both sections on different aspects of an Employer Value Proposition, and segments including real examples of cohort applications - school leavers, career changers, and Māori) are **most impactful**?

Hypotheses

1. The development and promotion of employer training in areas employers find problematic could result in the earlier identification of potential issues, leading to timely and more effective remedies which, in turn, results in improved retention of workers.*

2. Effective **coaching and mentoring** results in improved employee engagement, employee confidence and mental wellbeing, productivity, etc., all of which contributes to improved worker retention.*

3. More effective **recruitment practices** could improve the quality of employees and increase their likelihood to stay longer in the food and fibre sector.*

4. Synergistic effects exist through the combination of hypotheses 1-3.

5. Advising employers of Māori kaimahi on the benefits of integrating Te Ao Māori / mātauranga Māori approaches into their work environments will improve retention of Māori kaimahis.

6. Food and fibre employers see the current retention rates as a problem.

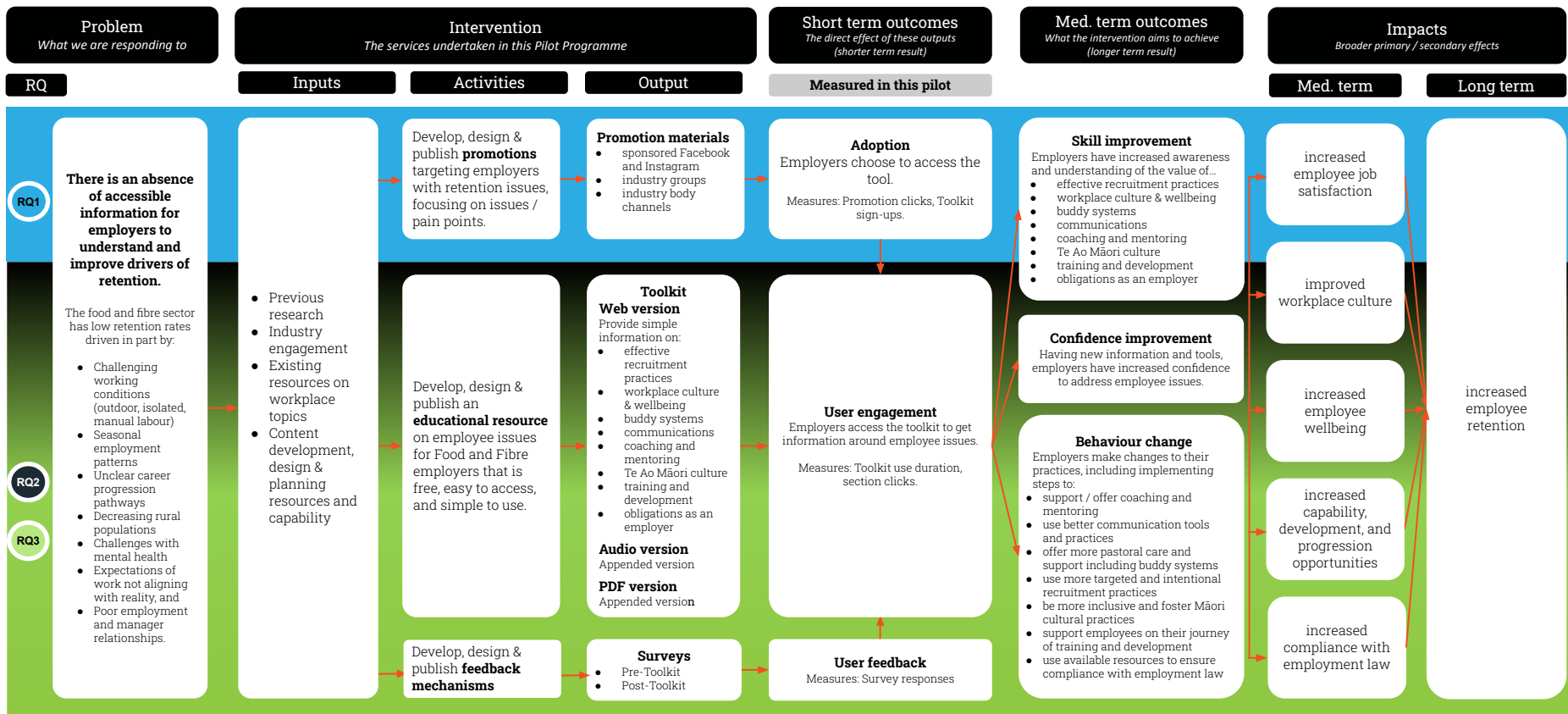
7. Food and fibre employers are motivated to, and know how to, improve their retention rates through engaging with the employer Toolkit.

8. Food and fibre employers are actively improving their employment practices.

*Your hypotheses

Appendix D: Retention Pilot Intervention Logic Model

The food and fibre sector has low retention rates driven by a range of issues (outlined as the problem below). The pilot is an intervention that uses a 'Toolkit' for employers, managers and supervisors to help them understand and treat employee issues that lead to poor retention. The intervention logic model describes the proposed pilot's components, and the change that it hopes to create in the short, medium and long term.





Ngā mihi

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