

Competenz Learner Success Plan

2026/2027

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Executive summary

Since 2019, the Competenz Learner Support Framework has evolved from a literacy and numeracy-focused initiative into a comprehensive, learner-centric support system designed to improve engagement, credit achievement, and retention. Following the identification of high learner inactivity within Mechanical Engineering, targeted first-year interventions were introduced, leading to measurable improvements in outcomes.

A significant investment in 2021 further strengthened this approach, aligning support with the Tertiary Education Commission's Ōritetanga Learner Success Framework and introducing personalised mentoring, study groups, and enhanced literacy and numeracy assistance. Support was expanded to address the needs of younger learners, Māori and Pasifika learners, and those facing socio-economic barriers. These initiatives have delivered sustained improvements in achievement outcomes, alongside strengthened governance, robust reporting practices, and data-informed oversight to ensure timely intervention and continuous improvement.

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, Competenz also undertook the TEC Learner Success Diagnostic. The diagnostic confirmed that many elements of our Learner Support Framework are well established, particularly in the areas of targeted literacy and numeracy support, data-informed monitoring of learner progress, and strong employer partnerships. It also highlighted opportunities to further strengthen learner feedback loops, expand support approaches into additional sectors, and deepen employer capability to support learners in the workplace.

Across 2026 and 2027, Competenz will maintain a clear and unwavering focus on being customer centric, with a strengthened emphasis on deepening our partnership with employers to drive learner success.

Building on our well-established and high-performing Learner Support framework, our priority over the next two years is refinement and consolidation. We will enhance support during critical progression periods, continue embedding strong pastoral care practices, and ensure learner voice directly informs decision-making. Our approach remains data-driven, with insights from reporting, industry engagement, and stakeholder feedback shaping targeted, practical actions.

A key strategic shift across is advancing employer capability. Through the continued rollout of our Employer Onboarding Framework, the development of Employer Capability Criteria, and Train the Trainer workshops, we will ensure workplaces are equipped not only with the capacity but also the culture, skills, and support mechanisms required to enable learner success. Complementing this, our MVC (Most Valuable Coach) campaign recognises and celebrates workplace champions who actively support learners, reinforcing shared responsibility and embedding learner success as a workplace priority.

Governance and quality oversight will remain robust through the enhanced role of the Education and Quality Improvement Committee (EQIC), which provides strategic guidance, monitors compliance with regulatory requirements, drives continuous improvement, and maintains a sustained focus on learner achievement.

Background

Competenz learner support has evolved considerably, accelerating even more so in 2021. Initially our primary focus was on L&N, which included integrating L&N into learning materials and setting up a provider network for cohort-based tuition. The 2018 L&N strategy involved collaborating with key providers to target Level 2 qualifications and larger learner groups, developing L&N toolkits for account managers, and offering one-on-one support through provider partnerships in 2019.

In late 2019, a review of the NZC Mechanical Engineering program, which launched in August 2018, revealed that 42% of learners were inactive. Given that a significant portion of these learners were under 25, many faced challenges with self-directed learning because they lacked the necessary tools and were still developing the maturity to manage their online learning effectively. As a result, it became clear that targeted interventions were necessary, especially during the learners' first year. This led to the development and implementation of the Learner Support framework.

In late 2020, the Competenz SLT and Board approved the investment of \$1.2M into learner support over a two-year period.

In 2021, we launched a new Learner Support Framework designed to align with the Tertiary Education Strategy and TEC's Ōritetanga Learner Success approach. This framework provided a targeted approach to learner support, aiming to improve credit achievement and enhance the learner experience. Following extensive testing in 2020, the framework was implemented for NZC Mechanical Engineering learners, which represent approximately 34% of Standard Training Measures (STMs). The support mechanisms included Inductions, Study Groups, L&N support, and Mentoring.

The framework's alignment with the TEC Strategy and the Ōritetanga Learner Success approach emphasised key principles:

1. **Learner-centric design:** the framework was designed based on the needs and goals of learners, offering the required support to help them succeed
2. **Key partner relationships:** engaging employers to ensure their understanding of roles and responsibilities, as well as involving family and whānau
3. **Clear pathways and progression:** providing learners with clear insights into the potential outcomes of their qualifications prior to enrolment and during induction.

By late 2021, it became clear that further enhancements were necessary to better support our priority learners. Working collaboratively with Ngā Kaiurungi (Competenz Māori Advisory Board), the focus was shifted to incorporating Te Ako Tiketike principles, whilst continuing to align with the TEC's Education Strategy and the Ōritetanga Learner Success approach. Alignment to the Te Ako Tiketike model, while purposefully designed using Te Ao Māori principles, ensured all learners would benefit.

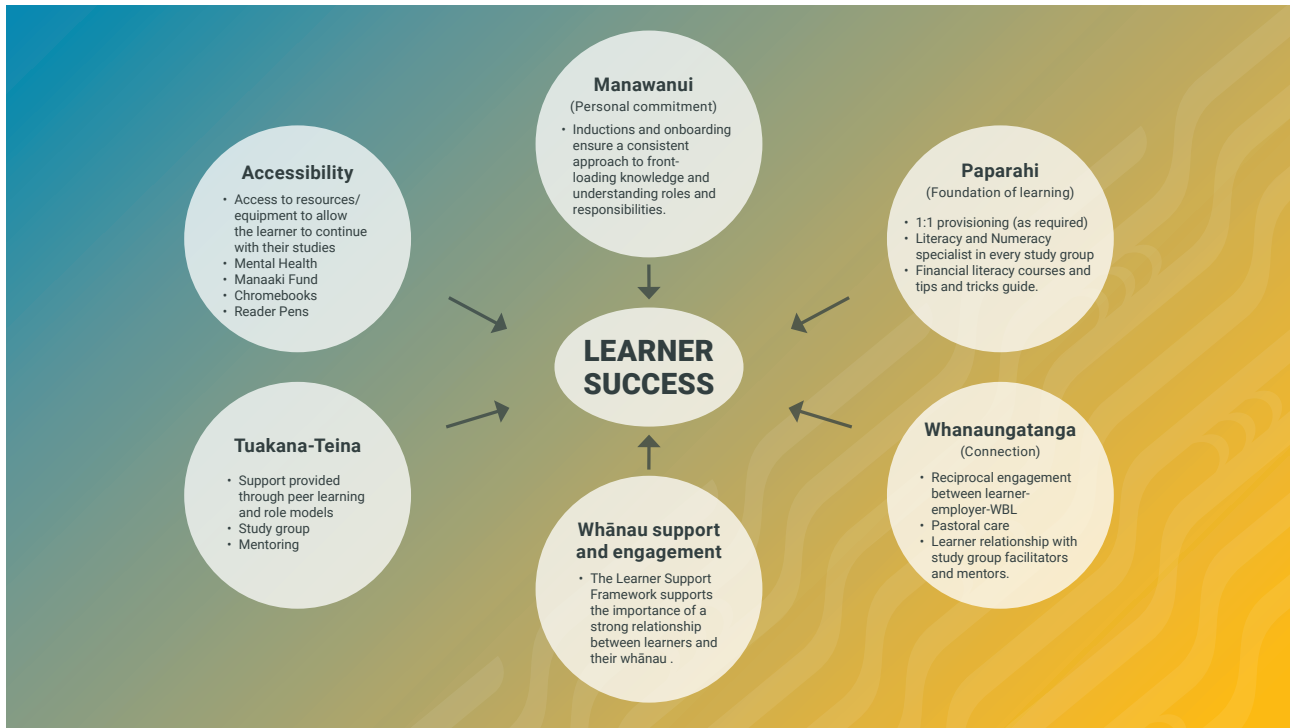
These key factors include:

- Personal commitment, attitude, and motivation of the learner
- Tuakana-Teina (mentoring, peer learning, and role models)
- Connectedness (with the employer, colleagues, and ITO)
- Whānau support and encouragement
- Strong foundational skills for workplace learning (literacy, numeracy, and financial management).

The diagram below shows the current structure of the comprehensive Learner Support framework. Our partnerships with support services, employers, learners, family/whānau, social agencies, and others have evolved significantly, leading to a more holistic approach to learner support. These developments are key components of the TEC's second phase of the Framework.

While the model outlines various distinct elements that contribute to effective workplace learning, successful outcomes depend on the interaction and interconnection among these elements.

Te Ako Tiketike – Learner Support Framework



The process begins with an initial assessment using the LNAAT. Based on the LNAAT results and consultations with the Training Advisor (TA), who engages with both the learner and their employer, learners are categorised into one of three groups to receive targeted support based on their needs:

- **LS Group 1:** Meet and/or above the national threshold
- **LS Group 2:** Slightly below the national threshold
- **LS Group 3:** Below the national threshold.

For the first two years (2022–2023), the distribution of learners across the three groups remained stable, with 70% in Group 1, 20% in Group 2, and 10% in Group 3. However, in 2024 and 2025 a noticeable shift emerged, with learners entering post-school education with lower L&N skill levels. By 2025, this resulted in a revised distribution of 50% in Group 1, 35% in Group 2, and 15% in Group 3. This represents a significant change in learner profile and has required increased funding to support ‘at-need’ learners from the commencement of their learning journey.

There has been an increase in learners self-identifying as needing more extensive support.

Below is a summary of the core support provided to each learner, categorised by group.
 Additionally, various other support mechanisms, such as financial literacy programs, Chromebooks, and mental health services, are available to all learners.

	Mechanical Engineering	Fabrication	Fire Protection	Refrigeration & Air Conditioning	Plastics	Niche Sectors	Forestry	Customer/ Provider
Assessment Type	• Online	• Online	• Online	• Online	• Online	• Online	• Online/ Paper (NZA only)	• Online/ Paper
LS - Support Group 1	• Online induction	• Online induction	• Online induction	• Online induction	• Online induction (Work in progress)	• Online Induction (Mechanical Building & Dairy Systems)	• Nil	• Nil
LS - Support Group 2	• Online Induction • Study groups for six months (compulsory)	• Online Induction • Study groups for six months (compulsory)	• Online Induction • Study groups for six months (compulsory)	• Online Induction • Study groups for six months (compulsory)	• Online Induction • Study groups for six months (compulsory)	• Nil	• Nil	• Nil
LS - Support Group 3	• Online Induction • Study groups for six months (compulsory) • Literacy Aotearoa intervention available where required (referral put through by TA) **All other LS offerings (Chromebooks for quals with core online units only)	• Online Induction • Study groups for six months (compulsory) • Literacy Aotearoa intervention available where required (referral put through by TA) **All other LS offerings (Chromebooks for quals with core online units only)	• Online Induction • Study groups for six months (compulsory) • Literacy Aotearoa intervention available where required (referral put through by TA) **All other LS offerings (Chromebooks for quals with core online units only)	• Online Induction • Study groups for six months (compulsory) • Literacy Aotearoa intervention available where required (referral put through by TA) **All other LS offerings (Chromebooks for quals with core online units only)	• Online Induction • Study groups for six months (compulsory) • Literacy Aotearoa intervention available where required (referral put through by TA) **All other LS offerings (Chromebooks for quals with core online units only)	• Literacy Aotearoa intervention available where required (referral put through by TA) • **All other LS offerings (Chromebooks for quals with core online units only)	• Literacy Aotearoa intervention available when required	• Literacy Aotearoa intervention available when required

Components of the Learner support framework are detailed below:

Manawanui - Personal Commitment

Inductions

Our induction process is tailored to equip each learner with the essential skills, knowledge, and confidence to start their online learning journey effectively. A major component of the induction includes navigating the Canvas online learning platform and completing a question set.

Our key focus areas to date include:

- Mechanical Engineering
- Refrigeration & Air Conditioning (RAC)
- Fire Protection
- Plastics.

Tuakana-Teina - Mentoring

Study Groups

Study groups provide a valuable forum for learners to address questions and queries across all units, supported by Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and Literacy, Language, and Numeracy (LLN) Specialists.

Learners may participate in mainstream study groups or specialised Māori and Pasifika study groups, which are smaller in size and embed appropriate cultural protocols. Targeted drawing study groups continue to support learners transitioning from school who may have limited hand-drawing experience due to a greater focus on CAD-based learning.

Building on the successful introduction of the Neurodiversity & ESOL study group in 2024, in 2025 Learner Support Group 3 learners have been separated into a dedicated study group with fewer learners, a higher-touch support model, and access to an e-assessor to ensure quality, individualised one-to-one support.

As at the end of 2025, we had 1,018 learners enrolled in our fortnightly study groups across the following sectors:

- Mechanical Engineering
- Refrigeration & Air Conditioning (RAC)
- Fire Protection
- Plastics.

Competenz study groups are primarily conducted online, but we also offer some face-to-face sessions in response to learner feedback. In addition to the numerous Competenz-coordinated study groups, there are various employer-led groups across the country that are frequently attended by our field teams.

Mentoring

Since the introduction of the Learner Support framework in 2021, Competenz has made substantial investments in providing mentoring services for learners facing literacy and numeracy challenges, or requiring additional one-on-one support beyond the quarterly TA visits. In addition to this we have historically offered Māori and Pasifika learners the option to be mentored by individuals of similar ethnicity. In late 2024 we concluded these dedicated mentoring services, as our study groups have been progressively enhanced and are now sufficiently equipped to address these needs.

After hours service

An after-hours support service is provided by the E-Assessment team. Learners can call the 0800 number to speak directly with an E-Assessor for clarification on questions, or to understand feedback and the subsequent steps required.

Paparahi - Strong Foundations

Literacy and Numeracy Support

If a learner is placed in Group 3, Competenz collaborates with Literacy Aotearoa to conduct a needs assessment and develop a support plan, which primarily involves 1:1 tutoring in the workplace. The amount of support provided, based on the Initial Needs Assessment, ranges from 30 to 200 hours per learner. Additionally, study groups receive support from a Literacy and Numeracy specialist, whom learners can consult on a fortnightly basis.

Disability Action Plan

Competenz has implemented a comprehensive Disabilities Action Plan (refer to Appendix 1), and has made substantial progress over the past two years. Initially, there was limited understanding of the disabilities present within our learner network. However, we have significantly improved our approach by capturing relevant information through the Training Agreement during the sign-up process and, for learners receiving support from Learner Support, through a dedicated questionnaire.

We now offer Neurodiversity workshops and Mental Health First Aid courses for Competenz staff to further support our learners. To ensure that learners with disabilities receive appropriate learning support, Competenz collaborates with Literacy Aotearoa for the assessment of literacy and numeracy concerns, as well as for diagnosing learning difficulties and implementing the necessary support measures. Our Study Groups, staffed by literacy and numeracy experts, provide learners with valuable support on a fortnightly basis.

In 2025, we enhanced our support by introducing a dedicated neurodiversity-focused study group, providing learners with conditions such as dyslexia a collaborative and structured environment to improve engagement, learning outcomes, and confidence.

Financial Literacy

By taking a holistic approach to learner support, we have seen clear and positive outcomes. The impact of this support is reflected in the learner feedback below. Without this intervention, the learner has indicated they would have been likely to withdraw from their apprenticeship:

“I was considering withdrawing from my apprenticeship because I was struggling financially and living week to week. The session on spending and prioritising needs and wants helped me reassess my finances. I realised I wasn’t struggling due to low income, but because I was spending on unnecessary items and not using a weekly budget. The budget template was particularly helpful.”

Whanaungatanga - Connectedness

Whānau support and engagement

Whānau engagement sessions were introduced in late 2023 to strengthen connections with whānau and communities in support of learners’ aspirations. Initially delivered as monthly sessions, the model was later adapted to a quarterly format to better engage Māori and Pasifika learners and their whānau. Session content evolved in response to feedback, focusing on key topics and interactive discussions, and provided opportunities for whānau to better understand available support and their learner’s journey. Māori and Pasifika Training Advisors also contributed by sharing their own apprenticeship experiences.

In 2025, the focus shifted from delivering standalone Whānau Engagement sessions to refining and embedding whānau support within the broader Learner Support model. Time was spent reviewing the initial trials, identifying barriers to engagement, and redesigning a more sustainable and accessible approach. Key progress included developing clearer and more proactive whānau outreach, drafting a Whānau Guide aligned to the Learner Support Guide, and creating A5 Whānau support cards to enable practical conversations with learners and their families. This work has strengthened the foundation for more effective whānau engagement, with refreshed delivery planned from 2026.

Accessibility

Chromebooks

Chromebooks are provided to learners enrolled in core online units within their programs, to support those with limited or no access to suitable devices for online learning. Currently, Competenz has 319.

Chromebooks allocated to learners, with a large proportion designated for our priority learners with an additional 30 purchased at the end of 2025.

Manaaki Fund

Under Te Pūkenga, Competenz was able to access the Manaaki Fund to provide one-off financial assistance to learners experiencing unforeseen hardship. Through this fund, Competenz supported 1,082 learners, distributing a total of \$541,650. This funding is no longer available, and no Manaaki Fund support was accessed in 2025 or beyond.

Summary of distributed funds:

- 2024: \$348,900 distributed to 698 learners
- 2023: \$114,500 distributed to 231 learners
- **Total = \$463,000 to 929 learners.**

C-Pen reader device

Acknowledging that this is an initial step towards supporting our dyslexic learners, TAs can apply for a C-Pen Reader device on behalf of their learners. The C-Pen Reader equips learners with a tool that enhances their ability to read, comprehend, and learn independently.

Partnerships with Employers

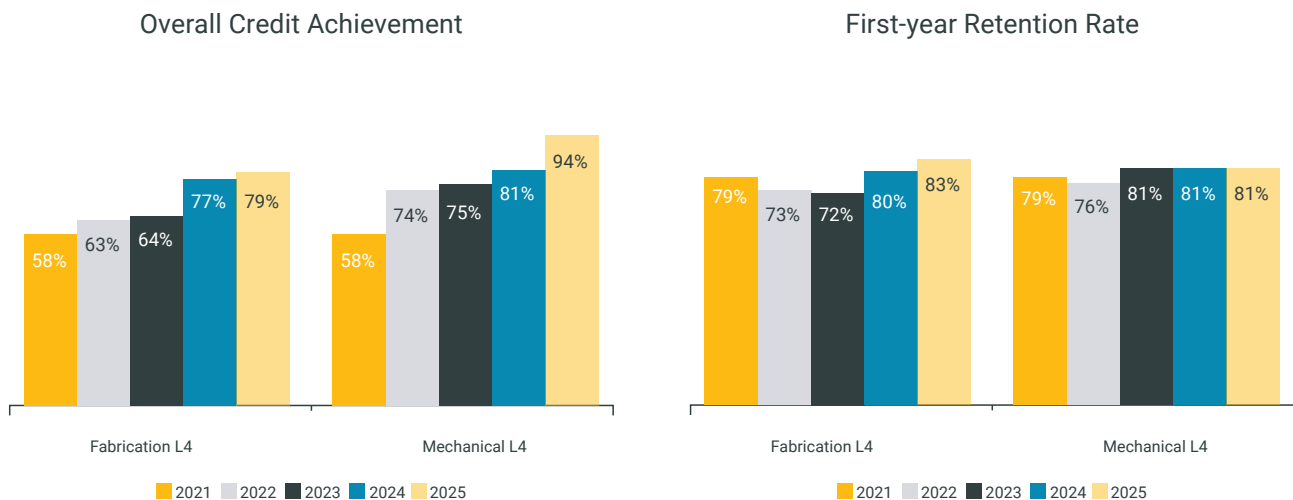
Employer engagement was a key component of Competenz 2025 Learner Success Plan. Throughout the year, Competenz delivered a strong programme of employer workshops. Attendance and engagement were high, with consistently positive feedback from employers. The workshops enhanced employers' understanding of how to support apprentices from induction through to ongoing motivation and retention, while also creating valuable opportunities for peer learning and networking. Employer feedback has generated strong demand for the ongoing continuation of these workshops.

In parallel, the Employer Onboarding Framework trial commenced in Q4 2025 and is continuing into Q1 2026. Rather than implementing a single onboarding model, the trial has focused on testing key components designed to both support employers and identify their specific needs. These include increased frequency of Training Advisor visits, structured onboarding consultations, refined employer support materials, and enhanced performance reporting. Insights gathered through the trial are informing the development of a scalable, fit-for-purpose onboarding framework, with the dual objectives of improving first-year learner success and retention, and meeting employer needs.

Alongside these initiatives, Competenz celebrated the critical role of employers through the Most Valuable Coach (MVC) campaign in 2025. Employers across all sectors and regions actively participated, with the campaign recognising and showcasing workplace champions who went above and beyond in supporting learners. The campaign was hugely successful, raising awareness of best practice, reinforcing a culture of shared responsibility, and positioning employer contribution as a central driver of learner success.

Impact of our Learner Support Framework to date

Mechanical and Fabrication Level 4 Credit Achievement and First-Year Retention

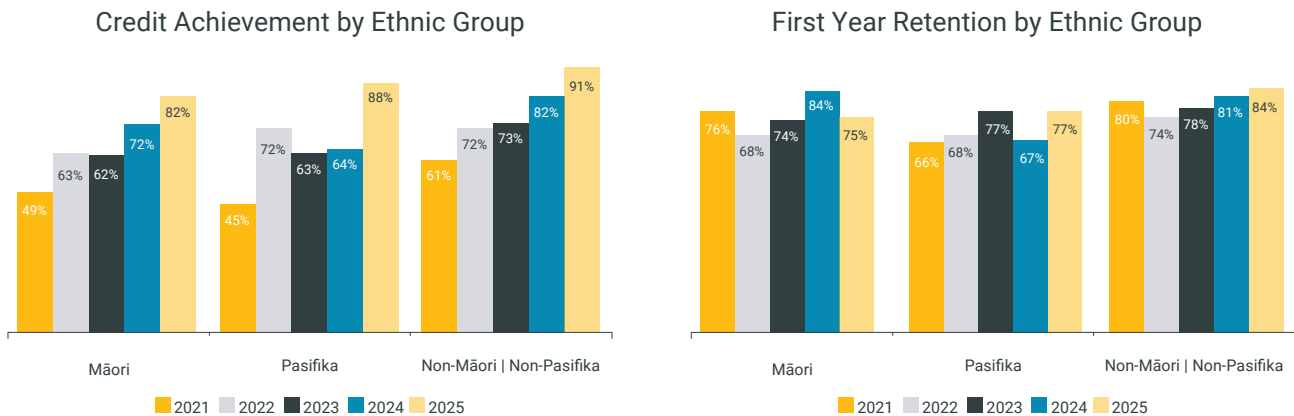


Competenz has been providing dedicated Learner Support to learners in Mechanical Engineering and Fabrication since its inception. This support framework has significantly contributed to improved credit achievement, with results rising from 58% in 2021 across both strands to 79% in Fabrication and 94% in Mechanical Engineering by 2025—an accomplishment we are exceptionally proud of.

Our Learner Support framework focuses heavily on helping first-year learners establish effective study habits and routines, which positions them for long-term success. This strategic approach has played a key role in holding first-year retention rates at approximately 80% over the past five years.

Mechanical and Fabrication Level 4 by Ethnic Group

Credit Achievement and First-Year Retention

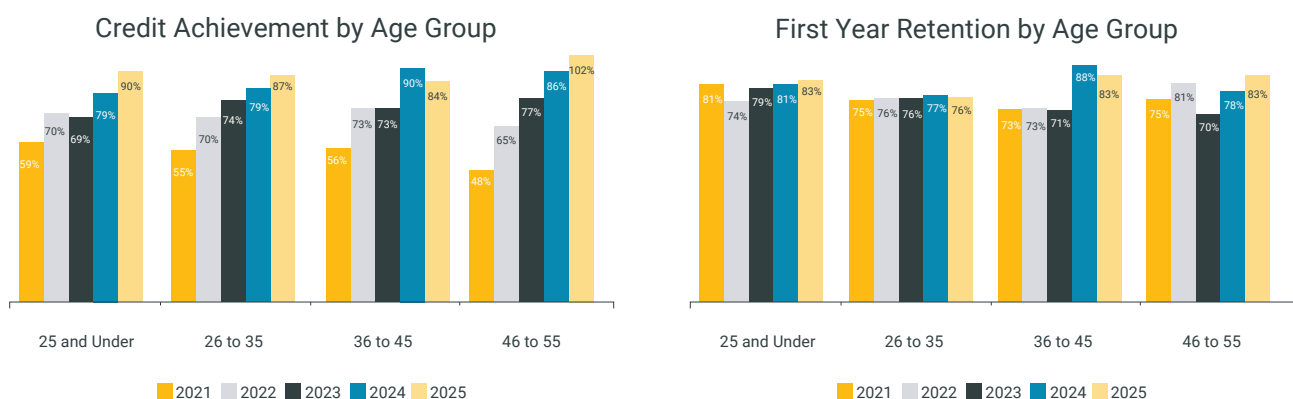


A critical element of our Learner Support framework is the provision of targeted services for our underserved learners. This focus has led to substantial improvements in credit achievement rates, especially among our Māori learners, whose success rate increased from 49% in 2021 to 82% in 2025.

For our Pasifika learners, we implemented initial support services in early 2022, resulting in a remarkable rise in credit achievement from 45% in 2021 to 72% in 2022. We recognised that this progress had slightly plateaued in 2023 and 2024 and with renewed focus and additional strategies in the 2025 learner success plan, we raised credit achievement for Pasifika to 88%.

Mechanical and Fabrication Level 4 by Age Group

Credit Achievement and First-Year Retention



A significant proportion of NZC Mechanical Engineering learners are under 25, and in August 2018, many struggled with self-direction and the maturity needed to effectively manage their online learning. As a result, our targeted interventions were initially focused on this group. However, we have observed that these interventions have positively impacted learners across all age groups, leading to improvements in credit achievement.

Governance

Competenz has developed a suite of Learner Management Policies (LMP) to align with the TEC's funding conditions, while also supporting the dynamic needs of learners. These policies guide our field staff in managing learner progress, ensuring that the TEC requirements are met and learners stay on track.

Key policies include:

- **Training Plan Management:** balances learner workloads to prevent overwhelm while adhering to TEC requirements. Data from this policy helps monitor work and training balance.
- **Intervention Plan:** identifies learners at risk and outlines processes to help them get back on track. Data is captured in our Training Management System (TMS) to monitor progress. Targeted support includes increased engagement with TAs, enrolment in study groups, L&N support, and access to wellness and mental health services. Additionally, TAs collaborate with employers to identify further support that can be provided to help learners succeed.
- **Learner Eligibility Audit:** ensures learners remain eligible and engaged in training, learning, and employment.

Learner Management Policies are supported by structured reporting to track learner progress and ensure TEC compliance:

- **Day-to-day:** real-time BI dashboards on learner progress are provided to managers and field staff, with the Compliance Team monitoring trends and risks.
- **Monthly:** managers receive summaries of LMP outcomes, prioritised risks, and actions. A high-level summary is shared with the SLT.
- **Quarterly:** reports are provided to staff who are managing learners, highlighting those needing urgent support and requiring updates on any concerns.

The Learner Success Report is a regular agenda item at each monthly SLT meeting. It provides detailed performance insights by team, sector, and region, fostering a deep understanding of learner progress and enabling timely interventions where required. In addition to the LMPs, which ensure governance through compliance, this report serves as a tool for governance over learner achievement.

Competenz has also completed the TEC Learner Success Diagnostic, with findings informing the priorities outlined in the 2026–2027 Learner Success Plan and providing an additional benchmark for monitoring organisational maturity in learner success practices.

Competenz leverages **data analytics to drive improvements** across the business and refine the Learner Support framework through:

- Quarterly EPI reviews by the SLT
- Learner Success Reports
- Live dashboards accessible by TAs and Regional Managers (RMs)
- Eligibility audits which track active databases, quarterly visits, and compare 'credits assessed' to 'credits expected'
- Monitoring submission rates of e-Assessment units.

Learner Success Diagnostic – Organisational Capability

Competenz has completed the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) Learner Success Diagnostic to assess organisational capability across the six domains of the Ōritetanga Learner Success Framework.

The diagnostic confirmed that many learner success practices are well established, particularly in governance, data-informed decision making, and holistic learner support within core sectors. It also identified opportunities to strengthen consistency of delivery across all programmes, enhance learner voice feedback loops, and expand targeted support into additional sectors.

Operating across multiple industries and delivery models, capability maturity varies by sector. In core programmes such as Mechanical, Fabrication, and Refrigeration & Air Conditioning, and Fire, practices are well embedded and delivering strong outcomes. In other sectors, including Forestry, Manufacturing, and some subcontracted provision, approaches are at an earlier stage of implementation. The focus for 2026–2027 is to extend and adapt proven models to achieve greater consistency of learner support and outcomes across all sectors.

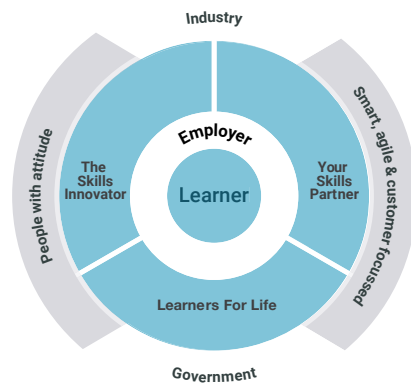
Note: Embedding within the Competenz context reflects that practices are well established, supported by systems and processes, and delivering measurable impact in key areas, while not yet consistently applied organisation-wide.

TEC Capability Domain	Current State	Context (Important Nuance)	2026 Focus	2027 Focus
Leadership & Governance	Embedding (high)	Strong governance, reporting, and EQIC oversight. Consistent across sectors.	Strengthen consistency and risk management	Consolidate and move toward fully embedded
Organisational Culture & Leadership	Embedding	Learner success is a clear priority; strong SLT ownership. Still building consistency across all field teams and sectors.	Embed learner success culture across all sectors	Sustain culture and continuous improvement mindset
Data & Insights	Embedding	Strong quantitative data (EPI, dashboards). Qualitative insights (learner/employer voice) less mature.	Strengthen qualitative data and feedback loops	Fully integrate into real-time decision making
Learner Voice	Developing	Mechanisms exist (surveys, focus groups), but feedback loops not consistently closed.	Improve visibility of actions taken from feedback	Embed learner voice in all programme design and decisions
Teaching & Learning (incl. Learning Design)	Embedding	Strong co-design with industry and SMEs. Good practice in core programmes; variation across sectors and subcontractors.	Strengthen feedback loops and consistency	Innovate delivery and improve learner experience
Holistic Learner Support	Mid–Embedding (variable by sector)	Highly embedded in Mechanical, Fabrication, RAC, Fire & Plastics. Early-stage or limited in Forestry, Manufacturing, and some subcontracted programmes.	Expand and adapt support models to new sectors	Achieve consistent embedded delivery across sectors

2026/2027 Learner Success Plan

World class skills for NZ industries | Transforming lives, every learner, every time.

Explore Ideas	To embrace the new
Team up	To unite and share
Make it happen	To own the outcome



Our vision for 2026 is clear: we will maintain an unwavering focus on being customer centric.

We envision a future where every Competenz learner thrives, empowered by initiatives that elevate their success through data-informed decisions, meaningful partnerships with employers, and ongoing staff development. Our commitment is to cultivate a culture of innovation and continuous improvement, ensuring our strategies remain dynamic, relevant, and in tune with the ever-evolving needs of learners and all our stakeholders.

Full year 2025

Qualification Group	STMs	% of Total STMs	Learners	Credit Achievement	Active Database	Programme Completion (Cohort)	First Year Apprentice Retention
Baking	170.5	4.4%	472	89%	91%	49%	77%
Business	65.2	1.7%	249	82%	92%	63%	NA
Distribution	8.2	0.2%	25	93%	92%	73%	NA
Fabrication	467.0	12.1%	1,068	79%	89%	37%	83%
Fire Protection	270.6	7.0%	749	72%	73%	40%	70%
Forestry	773.4	20.0%	2,984	59%	76%	55%	64%
FRPP	231.5	6.0%	1,059	101%	96%	93%	NA
Furniture	53.7	1.4%	133	79%	88%	54%	75%
Laundry & Dry-clean	3.9	0.1%	12	72%	100%	0%	NA
Locksmiths	31.0	0.8%	64	55%	87%	36%	100%
Manufacturing	132.7	3.4%	510	54%	55%	64%	NA
Mechanical	848.4	22.0%	1,922	94%	91%	34%	82%
Mechanical Building Services	40.9	1.1%	92	74%	88%	22%	100%
Occupational H&S	84.7	2.2%	312	97%	97%	92%	NA
Packaging	14.7	0.4%	58	94%	80%	38%	86%
Plastics Manuf	48.0	1.2%	127	67%	85%	45%	75%
Printing	49.0	1.3%	126	89%	97%	30%	95%
Rail	99.4	2.6%	300	65%	55%	91%	91%
Refrig Air Con	285.0	7.4%	651	84%	89%	39%	79%
Sales	12.2	0.3%	55	100%	100%	85%	NA
Signmaking	40.6	1.1%	123	98%	90%	67%	85%
Wood Manufacturing	129.8	3.4%	421	88%	85%	57%	89%
Total Competenz	3861.0		11,512	80%	84%	57%	78%

Speaking directly to our larger qualification groups – Fabrication, Mechanical, Refrigeration & Air Conditioning (RAC), Fire Protection, Manufacturing, FRPP and Wood Manufacturing – there is a clear correlation between investment in Learner Support and learner outcomes.

High-performing groups: In Fabrication, Mechanical, and RAC, where significant investment has been made and Learner Support processes are well-embedded, 2025 outcomes demonstrate excellent credit achievement, strong first-year retention, and an active learner database. These groups exemplify the impact of a fully operational Learner Support Framework.

Developing / externally managed groups: FRPP and Manufacturing programmes are managed by external providers. The Learner Success Plan focuses on exploring and implementing targeted support approaches in these sectors, aligned with the Competenz framework, to strengthen learner engagement and progression.

Emerging groups: In Forestry, where structured Learner Support beyond Account Manager oversight has not yet been implemented, EPI data shows lower engagement and progress, reinforcing the need to expand support.

This commentary demonstrates that the 2026/27 Plan priorities are directly informed by observed sector performance, ensuring that interventions are targeted where they are most needed to sustain and improve learner outcomes.

Roadmap | People, culture and leadership

Competenz is committed to prioritising learner success, ensuring it remains a central focus across all levels of the organisation. Decisions about the actions and initiatives that drive learner progress are informed by analysis of a range of relevant data sources, alongside ongoing review of current practices to identify opportunities for improvement, wider application, and innovation. This includes exploring new approaches worth trialling to enhance learner outcomes.

Key data sources that inform decision-making include regular EPI reports, industry sector analytics, Training Advisor feedback, learner and employer focus groups, Consistency Reviews, Learner Voice surveys, and feedback from pilot initiatives or programme and resource development projects. Learner success is a shared organisational responsibility, with teams across Competenz contributing to these initiatives and engaging directly with learners, employers and industry to support improved learner outcomes.

In 2026/2027, Forestry will be a targeted learner success priority portfolio, reflecting the need to strengthen learner progression, assessment delivery, customer engagement, and programme relevance within the sector. This will include a review of the Forestry Account Manager operating model, including a trial of an Account Manager/Assessor split model in selected regions, alongside a stronger focus on foundational learner management practices, contract and workplace assessor management, and targeted industry engagement to improve learner outcomes and quality performance.

These priorities also reflect the findings of the Tertiary Education Commission Learner Success Diagnostic, which highlighted the importance of strengthening employer capability, improving learner voice feedback loops, and expanding targeted learner support across additional sectors

Our focus is on creating strategies that are practical, relevant, and aligned with learner needs. To achieve this, we recognise the importance of fostering stronger, long-term relationships with employers and industry stakeholders, with further emphasis on increasing industry engagement as a priority in 2026/2027.

Training and development remain a priority, equipping staff with the necessary skills to support diverse learner needs, including cultural and mental health considerations. Competenz is investing in all field staff to undertake Level 4 and Level 5 Adult Education qualifications, ensuring they gain a deep understanding of teaching practice to enhance work-based training. We also promote cross-functional collaboration to further improve the learner experience.

We foster a culture of innovation, piloting new support mechanisms and leveraging data analytics for informed decision-making to enhance learner outcomes.

The evolution of the Competenz Educational Quality and Integrity Committee (EQIC), formerly the Local Academic Committee (LAC), has established a more structured and inclusive approach to quality assurance and monitoring. Looking ahead, the committee's focus remains on continuous improvement and supporting learner achievement by strengthening organisational understanding of regulatory compliance and reinforcing a commitment to best practice across learning delivery, assessment, and quality assurance activities.

In addition to its role as a regulatory approval and oversight body, EQIC is actively involved in systematic reviews, including the Competenz Quality Management System (QMS), to ensure alignment with updated NZQA regulatory requirements and to support sustained and effective organisational self-assessment. In 2025, committee membership was expanded to include Competenz staff who work directly with learners and employers. This approach will continue into 2026/2027, alongside expanded terms of reference and membership to explicitly include learner success, reflecting Competenz holistic and connected approach to achieving improved learner outcomes.

Holistic Learner Support and Learner Centric systems

Since the launch of our Learner Support program in 2021, our services have become well established across Mechanical Engineering, Fire Protection, Refrigeration & Air Conditioning, Plastics sectors.

In 2026/2027, the focus will be on refining and enhancing support for these existing sectors, ensuring services continue to meet the evolving needs of learners.

In addition, 2026 marks the initial exploration of learner support in Manufacturing, a new area for the program. Manufacturing programs are typically shorter in duration, delivered in a one-to-many format, and can be run in conjunction with subcontractors. As such, support mechanisms will need to be tailored to this model. The focus will be on ascertaining learner support needs, defining an appropriate model, and trialling approaches to ensure effectiveness in this sector with roll out in 2027.

Alongside this, Forestry will be a priority sector for targeted learner success improvement activity in 2026/2027. The focus in Forestry will be on strengthening the core disciplines that support learner progression and completion. This will include embedding stronger sign-up and onboarding practices, consistent workplace visit and reporting expectations, learner intervention planning for at-risk learners, and the development of learner roadmaps to provide learners, employers, Account Managers and assessors with a clearer pathway to completion.

The Learner Support function plays a key role in identifying barriers to learner success, along with driving idea generation and trial initiatives. While some initial work was completed in 2025, in 2026, a primary focus will be on the critical periods following the first year, when apprentices often experience a slowdown in credit achievement, particularly towards the end of year two. Throughout 2024 and 2025, we conducted learner focus groups, we conducted two learner focus groups to gather feedback on these critical periods and explore ways Competenz can better support apprentices during these challenges. This feedback has helped shape a comprehensive plan with strategies aimed at re-engaging learners and enhancing their progress during this crucial stage.

In 2025, Competenz further strengthened its compliance with Pastoral Care Code (PCC) obligations. We prioritised learner feedback, enhanced the use of existing survey data, and continued learner focus groups to inform our strategic direction. The National PCC field plan was updated to address knowledge gaps and guide regional initiatives. Efforts focused on building PCC knowledge and capability within field teams, achieving tangible progress. Additionally, subcontractor contracts were revised to incorporate PCC requirements.

In 2026/2027, the focus of the PCC strategy will continue to center on gathering learner feedback to inform our strategic plans. However, a key priority will be establishing clear feedback loops to ensure learners are informed about the actions taken based on their input. Regional Field Team plans will remain essential, with an increased emphasis on reviewing and updating documentation to align with the PCC focus. This will include updating job descriptions, staff inductions, visit templates, and visit notes recorded in TMS.

We will continue to prioritise mental health support for our learners through our partnership with Vitae. Building on the success of our Neurodiversity and ESOL study groups, we will expand these groups as required. In 2026/2027, mental health topics will also be incorporated into Employer workshops, equipping them to better identify and support learners with mental health needs.

Forestry learners will also be a focus for targeted literacy and numeracy support in 2026/2027. Recognising the unique context of many Forestry learners, including remote locations, long working hours, shift patterns, and variable access to support services, Competenz will implement a Forestry-specific literacy and numeracy approach that improves awareness of available support, explores flexible and accessible support options, and works with employers to increase engagement with support pathways where required.

Partnerships with Employers, Industry, Learners and Whānau

Building on the success of the 2025 workshops, in 2026/2027 Competenz will continue to strengthen our partnership with employers through a robust program of regional workshops delivered throughout the year. These workshops build employer capability to support learners effectively, from induction through to ongoing guidance, coaching, mentoring, and assessment support.

The Employer Onboarding Framework, first trialled in 2025, will continue to be trialled in the first half with the final defined framework scheduled for completion by the end of Q2.

A new focus for 2026 is the development of an Employer Capability Criteria, which will sit alongside the existing capacity check (tools and equipment) and identify the skills, culture, support mechanisms, and processes required for employers to successfully take on and support learners. This criteria will be researched and established by mid-year and represents the final piece in the employer support puzzle. This step advances our goal of truly partnering with employers. Focus for 2027 will be on embedding this criteria.

Employer and industry engagement will be strengthened through a more structured engagement approach with key customers, contractors and industry groups. This will support improved understanding of learner needs, workplace barriers, programme relevance and emerging capability requirements, while also creating stronger feedback loops to inform service delivery, learner support and qualification development.

Learner focus groups will continue throughout 2026/2027, alongside scheduled learner and employer surveys. As identified in our Pastoral Care self-assessment, integrating learner feedback into our strategic plans remains a key focus, with insights from surveys and focus groups directly informing decision-making and ensuring learner voice remains central to the development and refinement of employer and learner support initiatives.

Collect, analyse and use data to inform decisions

Our current approach to learner success governance ensures timely monitoring and effective learner support. To maintain consistency, we will continue refining and monitoring these practices as needed, ensuring ongoing compliance, effective learner support, and consistent reporting within the existing framework. Additionally, our strong reporting practices will remain a cornerstone of our strategy, with a continued emphasis on data-driven decision-making throughout 2025.

A focus on improvements in both qualitative and quantitative data collection practices for moderation and consistency review in 2025 will support enhanced insights into identifying and validating areas of good practice, as well as indicating specific focus areas to concentrate on for further improvement.

Guided pathways

Competenz works in collaboration with the ISB's, industry and employer groups as well as the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) to ensure that the suite of programmes and micro-credentials available align with recognised pathways or support learner progression in skills and experience.

This includes the development of specialised programmes or training plans to enable learners to achieve in niche areas or to support changes in learner or employer circumstances that necessitate a change of direction or employment opportunity.

The introduction of a new programme in Mechanical Engineering level 3 in late 2025 provides an excellent starting point for potential future apprentices and supports employers to grow the skills of their people one step at a time with this scaffolded learning pathway.

Teaching and learning

The Competenz resource development and design model has a focus on real world industry validated opportunities to showcase relevant skills and experience through the involvement of learners, employers and subject matter experts in the development process. Prototypes and pilots are used to assess relevancy, user experience and to ensure the resulting assessment and learning resources are both technically accurate and fit for purpose. Design feature developments for accessibility are embedded into new release materials for the Print and Fire Protection programmes that are launching to learners in early 2026.

A key focus for the year ahead will be strengthening feedback loops from users and quality assurance tools to enhance the effectiveness of the resources, as well as exploring innovative ways to present authentic and validated workplace evidence to better support learner success.

Within Forestry, a further focus will be strengthening the quality and consistency of assessment practice through more robust management of contract and workplace assessors. This will include clearer onboarding and performance expectations, improved visibility of assessment activity and timeliness, stronger quality assurance and compliance processes, and targeted capability development to ensure assessors are well equipped to support learner achievement and deliver consistent assessment outcomes.

Competenz Learner Success Action Plan – 2026 & 2027

Objective	Action	2026 Milestone / Measure of Success	2027 Milestone / Measure of Success	Responsible
Learner Management Policies	All Sectors excluding Forestry: Continue to monitor and refine these practices as needed, ensuring ongoing compliance, effective learner support, and consistent reporting	100% compliance with TEC requirements; improvement in learner engagement	Maintain compliance; increase uplift in credit achievement by 1.1% and first-year retention increase by 0.5% from 2026 baseline	Senior Leadership Team
	Forestry: embed core learner management disciplines, including improved sign-up practices, consistent workplace visit/reporting expectations, learner intervention planning, and learner intervention planning, and learner roadmaps	Forestry learner management framework defined and implemented by Q2; learner intervention plan process in place by Q3; learner roadmaps developed and piloted by Q4; evidence of improved consistency in workplace visit completion and follow-up actions	Core learner management practices embedded nationally across Forestry, with measurable improvement in learner progression, timeliness of interventions, and completion performance against 2026 baseline	GM Learner & Employer Experience
Academic Committee / EQIC	Strengthen organisational understanding of compliance and best practice; embed continuous improvement in learning delivery, assessment, and QA through systematic reviews	Complete 4 systematic programme reviews and implement ≥90% of identified improvement actions, improving learner outcomes compared with 2025 baseline performance	Complete a further 4 reviews, maintain ≥90% implementation of improvement actions, and demonstrate sustained improvement in learner outcomes	GM Learning Design & Innovation
Learner Support Services – Current Sectors	Continue LS framework support for current sectors	Improve performance from 2025 baseline levels: First-year retention increases from Fabrication 84%, Mechanical 83%, RAC 80% to 85%, 84%, and 81% respectively. Credit achievement increases from Fabrication 80%, Mechanical 94%, RAC 85% to 81%, 95%, and 86%	Further improvement with first-year retention increasing to Fabrication 86%, Mechanical 85%, RAC 82%. Credit achievement increases to Fabrication 82%, Mechanical 95–96%, RAC 87–88%	GM Learner & Employer Experience
Expansion of LS Services – New Sectors	Mechanical Engineering L3: Develop and implement learner support plans	Implement LS support for the programme with ≥80% of first-year learners achieving planned credits by Q4 2026	Maintain and improve performance with ≥85% of first-year learners achieving planned credits	GM Learner & Employer Experience
	Forestry: targeted learner support plan, including continuation of study group support, learner intervention planning, and targeted LLN support	Study group model confirmed by Q1; LLN support approach defined (Q3)	Forestry learner support model embedded nationally, supported by sustained learner intervention and roadmap processes	GM Learner & Employer Experience
	Manufacturing: Needs analysis (Q1), trials (Q2), support defined (Q3)	Defined LS plan by Q4 2026; credit achievement 56% (from 54%)	Credit achievement 60-65%	GM Learner & Employer Experience
Forestry Operating Model and Assessment Delivery	Review and trial an Account Manager / Assessor split model in Christchurch and Northland YTG, utilising contract assessors where appropriate	Trial completed by Q4 2026 with impact assessed across learner progression, assessment timeliness, customer satisfaction and team capability; recommendation made on model refinement / scale-up	Refined operating model implemented across priority Forestry areas where supported by 2026 results, with measurable improvement in learner progression, assessment timeliness and customer experience	GM Learner & Employer Experience
	Strengthen contract and workplace assessor management, including onboarding, communication, quality assurance, visibility of assessment activity and assessor capability development	Standardised Forestry assessor management framework established by year end	Assessor management model embedded by end of Q1. Measurable improvement demonstrated in assessment timeliness, quality and learner outcomes	GM Learner & Employer Experience
Support Services for 2nd / 3rd Year Learners	Needs analysis, trials, defined support	Develop and implement support services with tailored interventions for 2nd/3rd year learners defined and operational by Q4 2026	Improve learner progression with measurable improvements in completion and progression rates compared with 2026 baseline	GM Learner & Employer Experience
Key Accounts	Dedicated KA engagement: centralised monitoring, employer-led interventions, LLN, mental health, pilot programmes	Positive employer feedback ≥85%; maintained/improved learner outcomes in priority sectors; insights collected for 2027 rollout	≥90% positive employer feedback; sustained learner outcomes	GM Learner & Employer Experience
Mental Health Support	Support via Vitae; incorporate topics into Employer workshops	Increase learner engagement with mental health services from ~10% utilisation in 2025 to 15–20% of learners accessing Vitae services, with ≥50% of targeted employers attending workshops	Sustain and grow support uptake with 20–25% of learners accessing services and ≥60% employer participation in workshops	GM Learner & Employer Experience
Resourcing	Review external sub-contractor services	Define delivery model by end of H1 2026, establishing internal vs external capability plan	Improve retention outcomes in new sectors by 1–2% compared with 2026 performance	GM Learner & Employer Experience
Field Intervention Plans	Sectors excluding Forestry: Continue existing intervention practices	First-year retention maintained at 2025 levels in strong sectors; identify gaps in new sectors	Retention improved by 1–2% in new sectors	GM Industry Training
	Forestry: Implement structured learner intervention planning process for at-risk learners, including clear actions with learners, employers, AMs and assessors	Forestry intervention plan template and process implemented by Q3 and rolled out	Intervention planning embedded as standard practice across Forestry, contributing to improved retention and credit achievement against 2026 baseline	GM Industry Training
Pastoral Care Code (PCC)	Regional Field Plans	Complete and implement regional field plans by Q1 2026, embedding pastoral care processes across regions	Review implementation and update documentation, ensuring feedback loops operational by Q2 2027	GM Industry Training
	Establish feedback loops to communicate to learners actions taken based on input	≥70% learners report satisfaction in surveys	≥75% learners report satisfaction	GM Learner & Employer Experience
	Review & update documentation (JD's, staff induction, learner visit templates)	All documentation updated and implemented by Q2	Maintain updates; monitor adoption	GM Industry Training
Partnerships with Employers, Industry, Learners, Family	Employer workshops	Roll out national plan; ≥50% target employers attend; improved first-year retention	≥60% employer attendance; sustained retention	GM Industry Training
	Employer Onboarding Framework	Trials Q1; defined framework Q2; H2 rollout	National adoption; ≥80% target employers trained	GM Learner & Employer Experience
	Employer Capability Criteria	Research and define by Q2	Implementation across 80% of priority workplaces	GM Learner & Employer Experience
	Learner Focus Groups	Quarterly; outputs inform strategy	Quarterly; ≥75% actionable insights implemented	GM Learner & Employer Experience
	Structured customer and industry engagement plan with key customers, contractors, industry groups and the ISB established across sectors	Engagement plans developed by Q3 and commence roll out Q4; feedback gathered on learner relevance, programme barriers and capability needs	Structured engagement embedded, with evidence of programme / service improvements informed by employer and industry feedback, and stronger strategic customer relationships across sectors	GM Learner & Employer Experience
Assessor & Moderator PD	Workshops & industry collaboration	≥80% assessors complete PD; improved assessment quality	≥90% assessors trained; maintain assessment quality	GM Learning Design & Innovation
Guided Pathways	Collaborative pilots in Manufacturing & Engineering	Establish a Level 2 and Level 3 Manufacturing pathway framework by the end of 2026, creating clear progression pathways both from school into employment and within existing manufacturing workplaces	Manufacturing pathway pilot group established and operational by the end of Q2	GM Industry Training
Teaching & Learning	Co-design approach embedded	Positive learner & employer feedback ≥85%	Maintain ≥85% positive feedback; refine materials	GM Learning Design & Innovation
	PTE capability development in Adult Education	Review alignment with updated CMR requirements, identify any gaps, and develop an implementation plan by the end of 2026	50% of staff in learner-facing teaching roles (including field team, study group facilitators and e-Assessors) enrolled in or having completed Level 4 or Level 5 Adult Education qualifications	GM Learning Design & Innovation

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Key measures of success 2026/2027/2028

EPIC Description	2026 Commitment	2027 Commitment	2028 Commitment
Credit Achievement rate for all trainees and apprentices	76.8	80.8	81.8
Credit Achievement rate for Māori trainees and apprentices at level 4 and above	70.8	77.3	78.3
Credit Achievement rate for Pasifika trainees and apprentices at level 4 and above	68.6	80.4	81.4
Credit Achievement rate for trainees and apprentices aged under 25 at level 4 and above	76.8	84.7	85.7
Māori trainees and apprentices at level 4 and above as a proportion of all trainees and apprentices at level 4 and above	25.0	26.0	27
Programme completion rate for all trainees at level 1 to 3	62.9	74.5	75.5
Programme completion rate for all trainees at level 4 and above	58.5	62.1	63.1
Programme completion rate for all apprentices	37.8	40.7	43.2
First-year Apprentice retention rate for all apprentices	77.3	78.7	79.7

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