



2025/26 Work Programme Quarterly Reporting

Quarter 4: 1 April to 30 June 2026

1 OVERVIEW

As the final quarter of the 2025/26 financial year, Quarter 4 marks a period where many WEDS initiatives converted regional priorities into practical action, strengthening partnerships, and building the evidence, capability and relationships needed to support long-term economic resilience.

In Food & Fibre, the Capability Boost pilot completed its Discovery Phase, providing a clearer understanding of the capability challenges and opportunities facing primary sector businesses. Future Options also transitioned into implementation, with kiwifruit feasibility and strong wool workstreams progressing into delivery. Together, these initiatives are helping build the knowledge, confidence and investment pathways needed to support diversification, value-add production and greater sector resilience.

Skills & Workforce Development activity continued to strengthen connections between industry, education and young people. Skills for Work moved from planning into delivery, reaching students through workplace visits and industry engagement activities while progressing development of the Wairarapa Work Ready Passport. The health sector's Attract, Connect, Stay initiative also achieved important milestones, including the launch of the Tūhono Directory and continued delivery of activities that support workforce retention, workplace culture and community connection.

Within Water Resilience, the A Case for Action report continues to provide an evidence-based platform for advocacy and investment discussions, while evaluation of the Water Summer Series is demonstrating early behavioural change and increased confidence among participants to adopt and discuss water resilience practices.

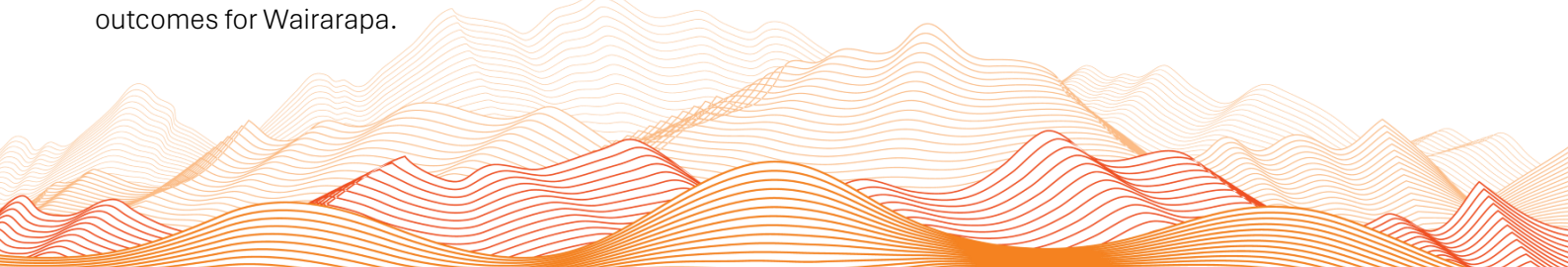
Collectively, this year's work demonstrates the value of a coordinated regional approach. WEDS has continued to act as a catalyst, bringing together industry, education, community and government partners to progress initiatives that individual organisations could not easily deliver alone. While many initiatives remain in their early stages, the programme is increasingly moving from planning toward implementation, creating stronger foundations for future economic growth, resilience and investment across Wairarapa.

1.1 Key achievements for the quarter

- **9 Food & Fibre businesses completed** the Capability Boost Discovery Phase, creating a regional Capability Insights Overview to guide future capability investment (Appendix 3).
- **2 Future Options priority opportunities** (kiwifruit and strong wool) progressed into procurement and implementation, moving the programme from planning into delivery.
- **1 new Tū Hauoranga website and Tūhono Directory** launched, strengthening connections to healthcare services while supporting workforce attraction and retention.
- **100+ young people engaged** through workplace visits, industry connection events, and youth engagements for Wairarapa work ready passport helping improve awareness of local pathways and visibility of WEDS and Skill Wairarapa initiatives within the community.

1.2 Looking ahead

This report marks the completion of the 2025/26 WEDS Work Programme. Across the year, WEDS has focused on building the partnerships, evidence base, capability and investment readiness needed to support long-term regional prosperity. An Annual Impact Report will follow, bringing together the achievements, outcomes and lessons from across the year while highlighting how WEDS investment has contributed to long-term economic outcomes for Wairarapa.



2 INITIATIVES

2.1 Food & Fibre (Primary Sector): Increase productivity and resilience in Wairarapa's food & fibre sector by equipping businesses with the knowledge, skills and support needed to drive efficiency, innovation, and sustainability.

Action	Collaboratively deliver a series focused on upskilling businesses to educate and grow their capability to collectively lift the Sector.			
Lead	WEDS PMO			
Expected Outcome(s)	- Businesses gain tools and insights to improve operational efficiency and value chain optimisation. - Strengthened rural network and shared learning opportunities that drive sector-wide improvements. - The sector is recognised for its innovation, sustainability and high-value production, improving market access and investment confidence.			
Status	Progress		Funding	
WEDS PMO Intervention	The WEDS PMO is leading the design of a one-on-one Food & Fibre Capability Boost Programme to strengthen the operational and strategic foundations of Wairarapa producers. This builds on previous business capability workshops and aligns with WEDS objectives to enable diversification, value-chain participation and innovation within the region's primary industries.			
Progress Report	The Wairarapa Capability Boost pilot completed its Discovery Phase during the reporting period, with nine participating businesses undertaking detailed one-on-one capability assessments. The pilot engaged a diverse cross-section of sheep and beef, dairy, horticulture and viticulture businesses representing more than 7,200 hectares across the region. Through structured interviews and business diagnostics, participants identified their growth aspirations, operational challenges and capability needs, providing a region-wide snapshot of workforce and business capability requirements within Wairarapa's food and fibre sector. The Discovery Phase confirmed that participating businesses are actively pursuing growth, diversification and productivity improvements, but face common capability constraints across leadership, workforce planning, business systems, financial management, succession planning and strategic decision-making. The findings have informed the development of a regional Capability Insights Overview (Appendix 3), providing valuable evidence to guide future capability initiatives, strengthen collaboration with industry partners and ensure future investment is targeted towards the areas of greatest need.			
Progress Milestones	- Completed Discovery Phase with nine pilot businesses. - Identified clear patterns in capability gaps to inform future workforce and business capability initiatives. - Produced a Capability Insights Overview to support evidence-based design for future capability building to see the sector working more collaboratively to better support business success. - Demonstrated strong demand for tailored capability support, validating the pilot model as an effective approach to understanding business needs.			
Next Steps	- Continue to share the Capability Insights Overview with interested industry partners and stakeholders to inform future capability investment and programme design. - Work with participating businesses to connect them with targeted capability development opportunities aligned to their identified needs.			

	• Evaluate the pilot programme and develop recommendations for a scalable regional Capability Boost model. • Use the findings to shape future WEDS Food & Fibre initiatives and strengthen alignment with industry capability programmes.
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2.2 Food & Fibre (Primary Sector): Strengthen the resilience and growth potential of Wairarapa's food & fibre sector by supporting **diversification**, fostering **innovation**, and enhancing market access.

Action	Deliver resources to help the sector to explore new products and opportunities to build resilience and diversify income streams.			
Lead	WEDS PMO and Leftfield Innovation Limited			
Expected Outcome(s)	• Businesses are better equipped to adapt to market changes and environmental challenges through diversifying income. • Strengthened local infrastructure ensures businesses can connect with higher-value markets more effectively. • Encourages innovation, attracting new business opportunities and partnerships across the sector.			
Status	Progress		Funding	
WEDS PMO Intervention	Funder and co-lead of the future phases of this initiative.			
Progress Report	The Future Options workstream has transitioned from opportunity identification into implementation, with priority workstreams now progressing through procurement and delivery. Following completion of the prioritisation process, the kiwifruit feasibility workstream has been contracted, with a work plan agreed and delivery commencing in July 2026. Procurement for the strong wool workstream is also underway, with responses to the open tender closing on 9 July and appointment of a delivery partner expected shortly thereafter. Preparatory work has also continued for the olive sector workstream and scoping underway for a first initiative to be delivered to help support growers. The WEDS PMO have had some initial discussions with the Grains and Seeds project team to identify opportunities where WEDS can support the development of a sustainable regional supply chain. To inform implementation, the WEDS PMO with Lisa Portas travelled to Taranaki in May to meet with the team leading Venture Taranaki's Branching Out programme. The visit provided valuable insights into governance, grower engagement, project sequencing and implementation approaches, helping ensure Wairarapa's Future Options programme builds on proven practice while responding to local opportunities and challenges. Collectively, these activities represent a significant shift from strategy development towards practical action that will support on-farm diversification, strengthen regional value chains and improve the resilience of Wairarapa's food and fibre sector.			
Progress Milestones	• Transitioned from planning into implementation. • Appointed a delivery partner for the kiwifruit feasibility workstream, with a work plan agreed and delivery commencing in July. • Released an open procurement process for the strong wool workstream, with responses due in early July. • Commenced scoping of the olive sector workstream and identified opportunities to support sector development.			

	- Initiated discussions with the Grains and Seeds project team to determine where WEDS can add value in strengthening regional supply. - Undertook a study visit to Taranaki to learn from the Branching Out programme, applying lessons to strengthen the implementation approach for Wairarapa.
Next Steps	- Commence delivery of the kiwifruit feasibility workstream and monitor progress against agreed milestones. - Complete procurement and appoint a delivery partner for the strong wool workstream. - Finalise the scope and implementation approach for the olive workstream. - Continue working alongside the Grains and Seeds project team to identify opportunities for regional collaboration and supply chain development. - Apply insights from the Taranaki Branching Out programme to strengthen stakeholder engagement, governance and delivery across all Future Options workstreams. - Continue identifying opportunities for diversification that improve farm profitability, resilience and regional economic value.

Action	Support producers to have local processing, distribution, and logistic facilities to improve supply chain efficiency and competition.			
Lead	Wairarapa Seed Project Leadership Team			
Expected Outcome(s)	- Businesses are better equipped to adapt to market changes and environmental challenges through diversifying income. - Strengthened local infrastructure ensures businesses can connect with higher-value markets more effectively. - Encourages innovation, attracting new business opportunities and partnerships across the sector.			
Status	Progress		Funding	
WEDS PMO Intervention	Co-funder for submission package to Kānoa - Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit.			
Progress Report	The Lower North Island Seed Cleaning and Storage Facility has continued to progress through its establishment phase during the reporting period. A significant milestone has been the establishment of “Wairarapa Harvest Hub Limited”, providing the commercial entity that will lead the project into its next phase. The project has also gained increased regional visibility through recent media coverage, highlighting strong collaboration between growers and investors to regenerate the lower North Island grain and seed industry and reinforcing the strategic importance of the facility to the region. The project remains in the establishment phase ahead of entering into a funding agreement with Kānoa. WEDS has continued to monitor progress and has been seeking to meet with the project team to understand how it can best support the project as it transitions into implementation.			
Progress Milestones	- Established Wairarapa Harvest Hub Limited to lead the commercial delivery of the project. - Continued progressing the project's establishment activities ahead of contracting with Kānoa. - Increased awareness of the project through regional communications and stakeholder engagement.			
Next Steps	- Complete the remaining establishment activities required before entering into a funding agreement with Kānoa. - Progress project implementation following execution of the Kānoa funding agreement.			

	- Continue discussions between WEDS and the project team to identify where WEDS can add value. - Support opportunities to strengthen regional grower engagement and maximise the economic benefits of the facility for Wairarapa.
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2.3 Food & Fibre (Primary Sector): Develop a strong, shared narrative for the Sector that fosters collaboration, enhances regional awareness, and elevates the profile of local businesses.

Action	Create opportunities to profile our local producers and a sense of regional narrative , growing awareness of the diverse food and fibre offerings.			
Lead	Destination Wairarapa			
Expected Outcome(s)	- A unified sector narrative increases local and national recognition of Wairarapa's food & fibre strengths. - Enhanced profiling of local businesses drives greater engagement from buyers, investors, and consumers. - Stronger collaboration within the sector fosters knowledge exchange and shared opportunities. - A well-connected and well-promoted sector attracts investment, talent, and business growth opportunities.			
Status	Progress		Funding	
WEDS PMO Intervention	Co-funder and supporting role to the project delivery team.			
Progress Report	During the reporting period, the Wairarapa Shared Narrative Project transitioned from establishment into active delivery. Following completion of the project brief, a procurement process was undertaken led by the Destination Wairarapa team to appoint an independent research and engagement partner for Stage 1. This phase of work has focused on ensuring the project will be grounded in robust, representative insight from across the region. As part of the procurement, a draft engagement approach was outlined to ensure the project captures perspectives from a wide range of stakeholders, ensuring the resulting shared narrative reflects the diversity, values, and distinctiveness of Wairarapa. This marks an important shift from scoping into implementation, with the foundations now in place to begin structured community and stakeholder engagement.			
Progress Milestones	- Finalised project brief. - Completed procurement process for Stage 1, the "Community Engagement and Insights" phase. - Appointed independent research and engagement provider to lead Stage 1. - Received draft engagement approach designed to ensure inclusive and representative regional participation.			
Next Steps	- Finalise contracting with insights and engagement partner. - Finalise engagement approach, including stakeholder groups, rollout and participation methods. - Commence community and stakeholder engagement across Wairarapa.			

2.4 Food & Fibre (Primary Sector): Strengthen workforce capability and resilience in the food & fibre sector by aligning training and development initiatives with the Wairarapa Skills & Workforce Action Plan.

Action	Deliver workforce capability initiatives that strengthen leadership, people management and workplace culture across Wairarapa's food and fibre sector, improving business resilience, workforce retention and productivity.			
Lead	Beef + Lamb NZ and DairyNZ			
Expected Outcome(s)	Increased leadership capability and confidence within farming businesses, resulting in stronger workplace culture, improved staff engagement and retention, and more productive and resilient food and fibre enterprises.			
Status	Progress		Funding	
WEDS PMO Intervention	Co-funder and delivery partner.			
Progress Report	During the reporting period, the WEDS PMO partnered with DairyNZ and Beef + Lamb New Zealand to design and coordinate the first cross-sector workforce capability initiative for the WEDS food and fibre workstream. Planning focused on delivering an introductory leadership event that responds to workforce challenges identified across the primary sector, including leadership capability, communication, workplace culture and staff retention. The programme has been co-designed to provide practical, immediately applicable tools while also creating pathways into longer-term learning opportunities. Venue, speakers, programme content, marketing and delivery arrangements were confirmed, with registrations opening ahead of the event scheduled for early July 2026.			
Progress Milestones	- Established a collaborative partnership between WEDS, DairyNZ and Beef + Lamb New Zealand to deliver a cross-sector workforce capability initiative. - Co-designed an event programme focused on practical leadership, communication and team performance for farming businesses. - Co-developed a post-event evaluation approach to measure participant outcomes and identify demand for ongoing capability programmes.			
Next Steps	- Deliver the workforce capability event on Tuesday 7 July 2026 at Copthorne Solway. - Collect participant feedback and evaluate changes in leadership confidence, capability needs and interest in further learning opportunities. - Support interested participants into cohort-based capability programmes delivered by industry partners and/or WEDS. - Use evaluation findings to inform future workforce capability initiatives within the WEDS Food & Fibre work programme.			

2.5 Skills & Workforce Development: Strengthen Wairarapa’s workforce by implementing the **Wairarapa Skills and Workforce Action Plan**, ensuring local businesses have access to skilled talent and our people have clear pathways into sustainable employment.

Action	Support attraction and retention of key workers, with a priority to the healthcare sector , by strengthening community connections and promoting a whole-of-person approach to workforce development.		
Lead	Tū Hauoranga Trust		
Expected Outcome(s)	Whole-of-community retention strategy: Recognising that “we recruit and retain a family, not just a worker,” the initiative fosters connections to employment, housing, recreation, and community networks that help keep professionals and their families in the region. This supports a long-term community-led approach to attract and build relationships with our workforce. Cross-sector collaboration: Attract, Connect, Stay thinking and tools become transferable, enabling other sectors to adopt similar strategies to reduce turnover and extend average tenure beyond the two-year average. Reduced silos and fragmentation: The initiative builds shared understanding across sectors about the systemic and cultural actions needed to attract and retain staff, improving regional workforce planning and collaboration. Enhanced regional reputation: A more coordinated and people-focused approach helps create a comparative advantage for Wairarapa as an attractive, supportive place to live and work, boosting the region’s appeal to skilled professionals across industries.		
Status	Progress		Funding
WEDS PMO Intervention	Co-funder and administration/co-ordination support.		
Progress Report	During Quarter 4, Tū Hauoranga Trust continued to implement the Attract, Connect, Stay framework, with delivery primarily focused on the Connect and Stay components of the model. Ongoing changes to central government health workforce priorities and recruitment processes have meant the programme has deliberately prioritised activities that strengthen workforce retention, workplace culture, and community connection, while positioning the region to respond quickly as national recruitment settings become clearer. By focusing on the elements of the framework that can be influenced locally, the initiative continues to build a more connected and supportive workforce, laying strong foundations for future attraction activities when the external environment allows.		
Progress Milestones	- Successfully launched the Tū Hauoranga Trust website and Tūhono online directory, improving the visibility of local health and wellbeing services and strengthening workforce and community connections. - Supported the settlement of a new GP through the Strategic Connector role, providing tailored relationship-building and community connections. - Progressed cross-sector collaboration to support the development of the Wairarapa Youth Hub, bringing together health and community partners to improve service coordination. - Delivered the Better Health Workplaces workshop on 19th of June with 15 participants. - Delivered a Connected Communities event on 26th April at The Screening Room, strengthening awareness on AI capability and enabling professional networking across the participants representing different roles within but not limited to the health and wellbeing sector. - Continued to build partnerships with health providers, community organisations, and regional stakeholders to support the long-term implementation of the Attract, Connect, Stay framework.		

Next Steps	• Embed and promote the Tūhono online directory and Tū Hauoranga Trust website, increasing awareness and encouraging uptake across the region. • Use the website as the primary platform for event promotion and ticket bookings, while incorporating user feedback and website analytics to inform ongoing improvements. • Analyse outcomes from the 2026 Better Health Workplaces programme to identify opportunities to further strengthen workplace culture and workforce retention. • Deliver a further programme of Connected Communities events to strengthen professional networks, community engagement, and workforce wellbeing. • Continue monthly Tū Hauoranga Trust e-newsletters to promote events, share resources, and strengthen connections across the health and wellbeing sector. • Continue to embed the Connect and Stay components of the Attract, Connect, Stay framework while maintaining readiness to progress Attract initiatives as national health workforce priorities and recruitment settings become clearer.
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Action	To improve workforce outcomes by ensuring school students obtain the Skills for work and workplaces have the Skills for youth . This initiative will continue to strengthen awareness and understanding of local opportunities, education, training and employment pathways in the Wairarapa.			
Lead	Skill Wairarapa/ WEDS PMO			
Expected Outcome(s)	• Equip school students with essential, industry relevant work ready skills. • Support employers to engage, develop and retain young workers. • Improve alignment between education, training and industry needs. • Promote equitable access for Maori, Pasifika and all young people. • Reduce duplication and strengthen regional collaboration. • Increased awareness of local pathways • Stronger connections between schools and industry • Improved youth retention in the region			
Status	Progress		Funding	
WEDS PMO Intervention	Funder and Co-Ordinator of the initiative and actions			
Progress Report	Skills for Work has now moved from the planning phase into implementation and delivery, as outlined as the next step in the Q3 report. Many of the agreed actions are now underway, with two of the three priority actions already delivering successful events. The third action, the Wairarapa Work Ready Passport, is also progressing well. An offline working group is meeting regularly, youth engagement activities are underway, and community partners are being established to support the continued development of the programme. A new action was also identified and supported this quarter under the Skills for Work initiative. The Wairarapa Whanaungatanga Career Expo 2026, led by Wairarapa College and supported by the WEDS PMO, has been introduced to replace the Industry Big Day Out previously delivered by REAP Wairarapa. The Skills for Work initiative has become an important mechanism for delivering meaningful outcomes in the short term while longer-term programmes, such as the Wairarapa Work Ready Passport, continue to be developed. As the passport evolves, it will provide a framework that brings together and strengthens the various Skills for Work activities and other community partners initiatives and activities into a cohesive regional approach.			

Progress Milestones	• Quick Fire Connections – Health Industry Event: Delivered on 18 June, with 85 students from five Wairarapa secondary schools connecting with 24 health professionals in a speed-networking format. Feedback from participating organisations was positive, with all indicating they would participate again. Student engagement and suitability for future events will be strengthened through improved participant selection. • Workplace Visit – NZ Police: Delivered on 4 June, with 16 students from Kuranui College and Mākoura College visiting the Masterton Police Station. Students gained first-hand insights into policing careers, including recruitment, working conditions, career progression, remuneration, and work-life balance. • Wairarapa Work Ready Passport (working title): Development has progressed through targeted youth engagement with the Masterton District Youth Council, Young Farmers, and upcoming engagement with the South Wairarapa District Youth Council and UCOL students. The concept was also presented to the Wairarapa Principals' Cluster, with Ponatahi Christian School and Wairarapa College expressing interest in participating in a 2027 pilot.
Next Steps	• Deliver the next Quick Fire Connections – Trades Industry Event, tentatively scheduled for 13 August, subject to confirmation of the event venue. Deliver two additional Workplace Visits: NZ Police – 4 August, providing an opportunity for students who were unable to attend the previous visit due to capacity limits. Corrections – 6 August. This will have a focus around opportunities in corrections i.e. parole officers and supporting role with support from their recruitment officer. • Support delivery of the Wairarapa Whanaungatanga Careers Expo on 18–19 August. • Continue development of the Wairarapa Work Ready Passport (working title), with a draft programme framework expected by late September.

Action	Provide improved service, supervision, management training and skill development across local sectors.			
Lead	Business Wairarapa			
Expected Outcome(s)	A more resilient, future-ready workforce: By building core customer service and business skills, participants are better equipped to meet evolving visitor expectations, adapt to seasonal fluctuations, and contribute to sector resilience. Enhanced business performance and retention: Strengthened workforce capability improves service quality, fosters positive workplace culture, and supports the retention of skilled staff—contributing to sustained enterprise growth and regional economic vitality.			
Status	Progress		Funding	
WEDS PMO Intervention	Co-funder.			
Progress Report	Over Q4 Business Wairarapa delivered the final workshop to complete their WEDS contract obligations. This was the Buddy to Boss workshop and was attended by 11 participants. Overall, the workshop had strong positive feedback and with participants leaving with practical skills and the confidence and mindset to apply them within the workplace.			
Progress Milestones	WEDS and BW have signed a new contract in Q4 for an additional 4 workshops with an allowance made for one-on-one mentoring. This mentoring will be for participants have signalled they would like further support after the attending their WaiHost workshop.			
Next Steps	Business Wairarapa continues to progress planning for the WaiHost programme, with four workshops scheduled to be delivered from August and September 2026, with dates to be confirmed. While the workshops will commence slightly later than initially planned, the			

	programme remains on track and will continue to support the development of customer service capability across the region.
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Action	Understand Wairarapa's digital fluency , packaged with tailored learning programme offerings and formal qualification opportunities for both students and the business community.			
Lead	Waitech Trust			
Expected Outcome(s)	Future-ready workforces: Students and workers gain the digital skills needed to thrive in modern jobs, education, and business environments. More competitive and resilient local businesses: SMEs are better equipped to adopt digital tools, improve productivity, and adapt to market changes. Reduced digital inequality across the region: Targeted delivery ensures equitable access to digital learning opportunities, especially in rural and under-served communities.			
Status	Progress		Funding	
WEDS PMO Intervention	Funder and administration/co-ordination support.			
Progress Report	• Waitech Trust continued progressing insurance arrangements for the community laptop pool. This has been a complex process due to the laptops being loaned across multiple organisations and stored at different locations, including Mākoura College and the WellingtonNZ office, rather than a single Trust premises. The insurance process is now nearing completion. • The Trust has been reviewing its long-term strategic direction and priorities. With the appointment of Nicola Belsham as a Trustee, discussions have focused on how to communicate the Trust's renewed energy and refreshed direction, including the development of a social media and communications plan. • A refreshed work programme is being developed, building on the Digital Fluency initiative while expanding the community laptop programme. This will create new opportunities to improve digital access and capability across the Wairarapa			
Progress Milestones	• Digital Fluency baseline testing continued, providing an initial benchmark of students' digital capability to inform future curriculum development. • Six laptops were loaned to the Mayor's Taskforce for Jobs to support clients with digital job-seeking activities, including creating CVs, accessing employment websites, and completing online job applications. • One laptop was loaned to WellingtonNZ for use at the Business Wairarapa Summit to sign up businesses to business capability programmes and workshops. • Preparations continue for the community laptop pool, with laptops expected to become available once insurance arrangements are finalised. Skill Wairarapa members and schools will be advised when the laptops are available for community and education use.			
Next Steps	• Finalise insurance arrangements for the community laptop pool. • Complete Digital Fluency baseline testing at Mākoura College and use the results to develop a targeted digital fluency curriculum. • Finalise the Waitech Trust work programme and communications plan to promote the Trust's renewed direction and upcoming initiatives. • Launch the community laptop loan programme and begin wider rollout to schools and community organisations across the Wairarapa.			

2.6 Water Resilience: Identify and advance key economic development projects within the **FY25/26 Wairarapa Water Resilience Strategy Work Programme** to strengthen Wairarapa's economic resilience, attract investment, and support sustainable growth.

Action	Develop and deliver public-facing communications collateral based on the A Case for Action report to convey the economic development rationale for regional water resilience solutions and support advocacy and investment readiness.			
Lead	Wairarapa Water Resilience Governance Group			
Expected Outcome(s)	• Enhances collaboration to implement sustainable water solutions. • Strengthens Wairarapa's ability to build resilience, ensuring long-term viability of water-reliant sectors. • Positions the region for future funding and infrastructure investment through well-defined project priorities that support regional growth			
Status	Progress		Funding	
WEDS PMO Intervention	The WEDS PMO continues to act as an advisor to ensure the water resilience programme aligns with and supports Wairarapa's broader economic development priorities.			
Progress Report	The A Case for Action report continues to provide the evidence base underpinning discussions around water resilience across the region during this reporting period. While no further project delivery activity occurred, the report remains a key strategic resource informing regional conversations and advocacy. The report continues to articulate the significant long-term opportunity for the Wairarapa, identifying the potential to generate an additional \$1.5 billion in regional economic activity and around 3,800 additional jobs by 2050 through improved water resilience. While these benefits are long-term, the report provides a shared evidence base that supports informed decision-making and strengthens the case for future investment. With the Wairarapa Water Resilience Strategy currently on hold, WEDS has continued working to ensure water resilience remains visible as a regional economic priority and that the findings of the report continue to inform future opportunities.			
Progress Milestones	• Maintained regional visibility of water resilience through updates to the Wellington Regional Economic Development Plan and WEDS Work Programme for 2026/27. • Transitioned the initiative from project delivery to strategic advocacy and influence.			
Next Steps	• Continue advocating for water resilience as a regional economic priority through appropriate regional forums and partnerships. • Monitor developments regarding future governance arrangements for the Wairarapa Water Resilience Strategy and identify opportunities for WEDS to contribute where appropriate. • Continue using the <i>A Case for Action</i> report to support investment conversations and future programme development as opportunities arise.			

2.7 Water Resilience: Facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing to build water resilience across Wairarapa industries.

Action	Deliver a Water Resilience Education & Networking Series , building on the successful Summer Series model, to bring together farmers, industry, iwi, regulators, and environmental groups to learn, share, and collaborate on water-efficient practices and innovations.			
Lead	Wairarapa Water Users Society Incorporated (WWUS)			
Expected Outcome(s)	- Improves water use efficiency and sustainability by inspiring the adoption of efficient practices and adaptive technologies. - Strengthens collaboration and trust across diverse water stakeholders, fostering informed, collective water management. - Shifts culture from compliance-focused to relationship-focused, reducing conflict and enabling cooperative problem-solving.			
Status	Progress		Funding	
WEDS PMO Intervention	WEDS continues as the main series sponsor and the PMO has supported planning for the 2025/26 event series to ensure stronger alignment with the Wairarapa Water Resilience Strategy (WWRS) and related regional workstreams.			
Progress Report	The 2025 Summer Series concluded in March, with more than 110 attendees across the three events. There has been no further delivery activity during this reporting period. Attention has now shifted to evaluating the programme's longer-term impact and considering the shape of a potential 2026/27 programme. Early feedback gathered following the completion of the series indicates the programme is contributing to behavioural and knowledge outcomes beyond event attendance. Participants have reported that the sessions have either reinforced or prompted changes to irrigation and water management practices on farm. Others have indicated they feel more confident discussing water resilience challenges and opportunities with peers, supporting greater knowledge sharing across the sector. These early outcomes demonstrate the programme's value extends beyond information transfer, helping build confidence, networks and a stronger culture of learning around water resilience within the primary sector. Planning discussions have also commenced around a potential 2026/27 Summer Series, with consideration being given to how the programme can continue to respond to emerging needs while building on the momentum established over the past three years.			
Progress Milestones	- Completed the third consecutive Summer Series providing practical, locally relevant water resilience learning opportunities across a range of farming systems. - Began capturing evidence of longer-term programme outcomes, including reported changes to irrigation and water management practices by participants. - Identified increased participant confidence to discuss water resilience challenges and share experiences with peers, strengthening sector capability and collaboration. - Commenced planning discussions for a potential 2026/27 programme, informed by participant feedback and emerging sector priorities.			
Next Steps	- Continue gathering evidence of behavioural change and longer-term outcomes to better demonstrate programme impact over time. - Develop a proposed 2026/27 event programme that builds on the strengths of previous years and responds to current sector priorities.			

2.8 PMO Operations: Strategic Investment Portfolio

Action	Develop a cohesive portfolio of regional strategic investment opportunities to bring together priority projects and initiatives that align with Wairarapa's long-term economic development objectives.			
Lead	WEDS PMO			
Expected Outcome(s)	A prioritised portfolio of transformational regional investment opportunities that provides a shared evidence base for decision-making, strengthens regional alignment, and improves Wairarapa's ability to attract investment over the next 10–20 years.			
Status	Progress		Funding	
WEDS PMO Intervention	Lead the development of the Strategic Investment Portfolio by coordinating procurement, facilitating collaboration between regional stakeholders, and overseeing the delivery of an investment-ready portfolio that aligns with existing regional strategies and priorities.			
Progress Report	During the reporting period, foundational work was completed to initiate the Strategic Investment Portfolio project. Initial discussions were held with regional partners to explore how similar portfolios have been developed elsewhere in New Zealand and to identify an approach that best reflects the Wairarapa context. A procurement plan and detailed project scope were developed, outlining the objectives, methodology and expected deliverables for the project. The procurement process is scheduled to commence in July 2026, seeking an experienced provider to facilitate a regionally led process that identifies and prioritises a small number of transformational investment opportunities capable of delivering long-term economic benefit for Wairarapa.			
Progress Milestones	- Completed project scoping and developed the procurement plan. - Confirmed the project objectives, scope, governance approach and key deliverables. - Undertook initial market and desktop research into comparable strategic investment portfolios to inform the Wairarapa approach. - Prepared procurement documentation for release in July 2026.			
Next Steps	Release the procurement opportunity and appoint a suitably qualified provider and commence the project delivery.			

3 BUDGET

3.1 Overview

The total operational budget available for the 2025–26 financial year (excluding people resources) was \$369,270, comprising the annual \$215,000 contribution under the Memorandum of Understanding and \$154,270 carried forward from the previous financial year.

As at 30 June 2026, \$247,050 had been contracted to deliver the WEDS Work Programme, of which \$202,050 had been expended and a further \$45,000 was awaiting invoicing. An additional \$76,500 was under procurement, with contracts being finalised in July 2026. This brings the total budget committed to \$323,550, comprising the full annual allocation and a further \$108,550 from the carried-forward funding.

The remaining \$45,720 will be carried forward to support delivery of the refreshed WEDS Implementation Plan from July 2026.

Expenditure aligned closely with the priorities of the Work Programme. The largest investment was in Food & Fibre sector development (\$126,180), followed by Skills & Workforce Development (\$74,500) and Water Resilience (\$15,330). Programme operations and PMO overheads totalled \$31,040, in line with the budget.

In addition, WellingtonNZ invested \$214,885 in people resources to provide the WEDS Programme Management Office function.

3.3 Budget and Actual Expenditure as at 30 June 2026

Priority Focus Area	Initiative	Budget	Action	Actual as at 30 Jun
Food & Fibre (Primary Sector)	Increase productivity and resilience by equipping businesses with knowledge, skills, and support.	\$187,000	Collaboratively deliver a series focused on upskilling businesses to educate and grow their capability .	\$12,600
			Engage with frontier firms to explore implementing best practices.	\$-
	Strengthen resilience and growth potential by supporting diversification , fostering innovation , and enhancing market access.		Deliver resources to help the sector to explore new products and opportunities .	\$23,580
			Support producers to have local processing to improve supply chain efficiency and competition .	\$30,000
	Develop a shared narrative for the Sector that fosters collaboration, enhances awareness, and elevates profile.		Create opportunities to profile our local producers and a sense of regional narrative .	\$60,000 ¹
	Strengthen workforce capability and resilience by aligning training and development initiatives.		Deliver workforce capability initiatives that strengthen leadership, people .	\$-
Skills & Workforce Development	Strengthen Wairarapa’s workforce by implementing the Wairarapa Skills & Workforce Action Plan , ensuring local businesses have access to skilled talent and our people have clear pathways into sustainable employment.	\$116,500	Establish a local community-managed strategic connector role .	\$40,000
			Understand Wairarapa’s digital fluency , packaged with tailored learning programmes.	\$1,500
			Provide our people with a clear understanding of local pathways .	\$1,500
			Provide improved service, supervision, management training .	\$25,500 ²
			Other – Skills for Work	\$6,000
Water Resilience	Identify and advance key economic development projects within the FY25/26 WWRS Work Programme .	\$16,000	Develop and deliver public-facing communications collateral based on the A Case for Action report.	\$9,330
	Facilitate collaboration and knowledge-sharing to build water resilience across Wairarapa industries.		Deliver a Water Resilience Education & Networking Series .	\$6,000
PMO Operations	Strategic Investment Portfolio	\$20,000	Develop portfolio	\$-
	WEDS and Skill Wairarapa	\$20,000	Work Programme operations	\$20,276
		\$9,770	WNZ PMO overheads	\$10,764
		\$215,000	WNZ People Resources	\$214,885
		\$584,270	TOTAL WEDS EXPENDITURE	\$461,935

Notes: 1) Of which \$35,000 to be invoiced in FY27

2) Of which \$10,000 to be invoiced in FY27

Appendix 1: Planned Initiatives

Some initiatives and actions in the FY25/26 Implementation Plan have not yet been activated. The following provides a brief update on these initiatives to ensure visibility of all ongoing and planned activity.

Initiative	Action	Update
Food & Fibre (Primary Sector): Increase productivity and resilience in Wairarapa's food & fibre sector by equipping businesses with the knowledge, skills, and support needed to drive efficiency, innovation, and sustainability.	Engage with frontier firms to explore implementing best practices in efficiencies, value-add production, and sustainable growth strategies.	This is a placeholder action based on previous engagement with local manufacturing businesses, we are waiting for them to respond to proposed actions to progress.

Appendix 2: Impact Snapshot 2025/26

The following snapshot summarises each initiative by highlighting what has been delivered this financial year (2025/26), the early outcomes now emerging, and the longer-term impact expected. This approach provides greater visibility of the value and outcomes being achieved through the WEDS Work Programme, while demonstrating how individual initiatives collectively contribute to Wairarapa's long-term economic resilience and prosperity.

Initiative	Output(s)	Early outcome(s)	Long-term impact
Increase productivity and resilience by equipping businesses with knowledge, skills, and support.	Completed Discovery Phase with nine businesses and produced a regional Capability Insights Overview.	Businesses have a clearer understanding of their capability priorities, while the sector now have evidence to better target future capability investment.	Improved business capability, stronger leadership and workforce resilience, enabling food and fibre businesses to successfully grow, diversify and improve productivity.
Strengthen resilience and growth potential by supporting diversification , fostering innovation , and enhancing market access.	Review of Kiwifruit workstream contracted; wool workstream procurement underway; olive workstream scoped.	Priority diversification opportunities have progressed from concept into implementation, with industry partners actively shaping delivery and future investment pathways.	Increased farm diversification, stronger regional value chains and higher-value food and fibre production that improves regional resilience and long-term economic growth.
	Wairarapa Harvest Hub Limited established to lead the commercial delivery of the Lower North Island Seed Cleaning and Storage Facility.	Growers, investors and project partners are collaborating through a formal commercial structure to progress delivery of the facility.	A regionally owned processing facility that strengthens the lower North Island seed industry, creates higher-value supply chains, and generates long-term economic and employment benefits for Wairarapa.
Develop a shared narrative for the Sector that fosters collaboration, enhances awareness, and elevates profile.	Project design completed, procurement undertaken and research partner appointed to lead community engagement.	Regional stakeholders are beginning to contribute towards a common understanding of Wairarapa's identity, creating the foundation for more consistent promotion, investment attraction and regional storytelling.	A clearly articulated and widely adopted regional narrative that strengthens identity, supports investment attraction and promotes consistent messaging across the region.
Strengthen workforce capability and resilience by aligning training and development initiatives.	Cross-sector workforce capability initiative designed and launched in partnership with DairyNZ and Beef + Lamb New Zealand, with registrations opened for the first regional leadership event.	Industry partners have collaboratively identified workforce capability as a shared challenge and established a platform for future leadership and workforce development initiatives.	Stronger leadership capability across the food and fibre sector, contributing to improved workforce retention, business productivity and a more resilient regional workforce.
Establish a local community-managed strategic connector role .	Tūhono directory and Tū Hauoranga website launched. Welcoming communities resources developed. Workplace Culture improvement through Better Health Workplaces.	Health professionals and sector partners are increasingly connected to local networks, information and support services, helping strengthen retention and community belonging.	Wairarapa gaining a reputation as an attractive region for new healthcare workers resulting in more health recruits settling here and staying here. This will result in the wider Wairarapa community benefiting from improved access to healthcare services.

Initiative	Output(s)	Early outcome(s)	Long-term impact
Understand Wairarapa's digital fluency , packaged with tailored learning programmes.	Secured 150 ex-MBIE laptops, progressed establishment of a community laptop pool, and completed Digital Fluency baseline testing at Mākoura College. Digital Fluency baseline testing at Mākoura College for all Year 9,10,11,12 and 13.	Improved understanding of digital capability needs and increased access to digital devices for community, education and employment-related activities. Students' digital capability is benchmarked, providing evidence to inform targeted learning support.	A digitally capable and connected Wairarapa community, with improved education, employment, and economic outcomes through equitable access to technology and digital skills.
Provide improved service, supervision, management training .	WaiHost workshops delivered in FY 27: 1. Train the trainer (19 participants) 2. Buddy to Boss (11 participants) New contract signed with WEDS to deliver another 4 workshops by end of Q2.	Participants report increased confidence and practical skills to support workplace supervision, customer service and team performance.	A skilled, resilient workforce that enables Wairarapa businesses in the hospitality and tourism sector to grow, retain talent, and deliver high-quality customer experiences, supporting a thriving regional economy.
Provide our people with a clear understanding of local pathways .	Delivered the Quick Fire Connections – Health Industry Event, connecting 85 students from five secondary schools with 24 health sector representatives. Delivered an NZ Police Workplace Visit for 16 students, providing direct exposure to policing careers. Established a working group and completed youth and school engagement activities to inform development of the Wairarapa Work Ready Passport.	85 students made new network connections and gained exposure and to a wide range of health careers and pathways they may not have previously considered, increasing awareness of opportunities within the health sector. Students gained a realistic understanding of policing careers, including recruitment requirements, working conditions, career progression and work-life balance. They also developed an understanding of how decisions made today—such as offending, drug use or drink driving—can affect future employment opportunities, encouraging more informed life and career choices. Schools, employers and community organisations are collaborating around a more coordinated approach to preparing young people for employment.	More rangatahi pursue health-related education, training and employment, helping to strengthen Wairarapa's future health workforce. More young people remain eligible for careers in policing and other sectors that require a clean criminal record. This results in strengthening the future workforce pipeline while supporting positive life choices among rangatahi. Shared regional planning and collaboration create a more connected workforce system, enabling collective action, efficient use of resources, and stronger economic development outcomes

Initiative	Output(s)	Early outcome(s)	Long-term impact
Other initiatives TBD .	Progressed development of the Wairarapa Work Ready Passport (working title) through youth engagement, school engagement, and collaboration with community partners.	Existing community programmes, expertise and resources are being leveraged to co-design a coordinated work readiness programme that reflects youth aspirations and local workforce needs. Youth engagement is also encouraging rangatahi to consider the skills and capabilities they need to prepare for employment.	A sustainable, region-wide Work Ready Passport supports young people to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence required for successful transitions into employment, education and training.
	Supported the establishment of the Wairarapa Whanaungatanga Careers Expo 2026 as a new Skills for Work action.	Schools, employers and industry partners are collaborating to provide coordinated career exploration opportunities, increasing awareness of local education and employment pathways.	A stronger, more connected careers ecosystem that improves transitions from education into employment and helps retain young talent within Wairarapa.
Identify and advance key economic development projects within the FY25/26 WWRS Work Programme to strengthen Wairarapa's economic resilience, attract investment and support sustainable growth.	Published A Case for Action report quantifying the potential economic benefits of improved water resilience, including up to \$1.5 billion in additional regional economic activity and 3,800 jobs by 2050.	Regional stakeholders now have a shared evidence base to support advocacy, planning and future investment decisions.	Better-informed investment decisions that support the long-term goal of generating an additional \$1.5 billion in GDP and 3,800 jobs through improved water resilience by 2050.
Facilitate collaboration and knowledge-sharing to build water resilience across Wairarapa industries.	Three on-farm learning events delivered, with more than 110 attendees across the 2025/26 programme.	Farmers report increased confidence discussing water resilience and applying improved water management practices on farm.	Increased adoption of resilient farming practices, strengthening regional water resilience and primary sector capability.
Strategic Investment Portfolio	Procurement plan and project scope completed, with procurement ready to commence.	Regional partners have aligned around a shared process for identifying transformational economic opportunities and improving investment readiness.	A coordinated pipeline of investment-ready projects that strengthens Wairarapa's ability to attract external investment and deliver long-term economic growth.

Appendix 3: Capability Boost – Discovery Phase Insights

Purpose of the Pilot

The Capability Boost pilot has been designed to support Wairarapa primary sector businesses to move from ambition to action - strengthening capability, improving resilience and unlocking growth opportunities.

The Discovery Phase focused on understanding where participating businesses are now, where they want to go and what capability gaps may limit progress.

Participating Businesses (a snapshot)

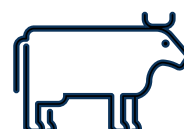
The pilot engaged a diverse cohort of ten established and emerging businesses across Wairarapa. Nine businesses completed the Discovery Phase, while one business was unable to participate due to health circumstances. These are strong family-ownership and are intergenerational businesses.



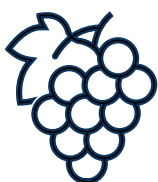
Landholdings ranged from
40ha to 1,200+ha
(collectively more than **7,200ha**)



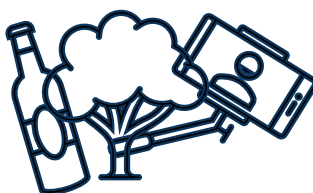
5 sheep & beef farms



2 dairy farms



3 horticulture/viticulture systems



Many mixed operations, including
forestry and carbon-related, food &
beverage value-add processing and
tourism.



Several businesses employ
15-25 seasonally

The pilot was delivered as a co-funded initiative, with participating businesses investing their own time, expertise and commitment alongside programme funding.

Development stage

- 40% growth and scaling
- ~50% are exploring diversification / new revenue streams
- ~60% are focused on succession and transition
- A strategic reset after achieving prior goals is an emerging theme across several businesses.

Why the businesses wanted to participate?

Across the cohort:

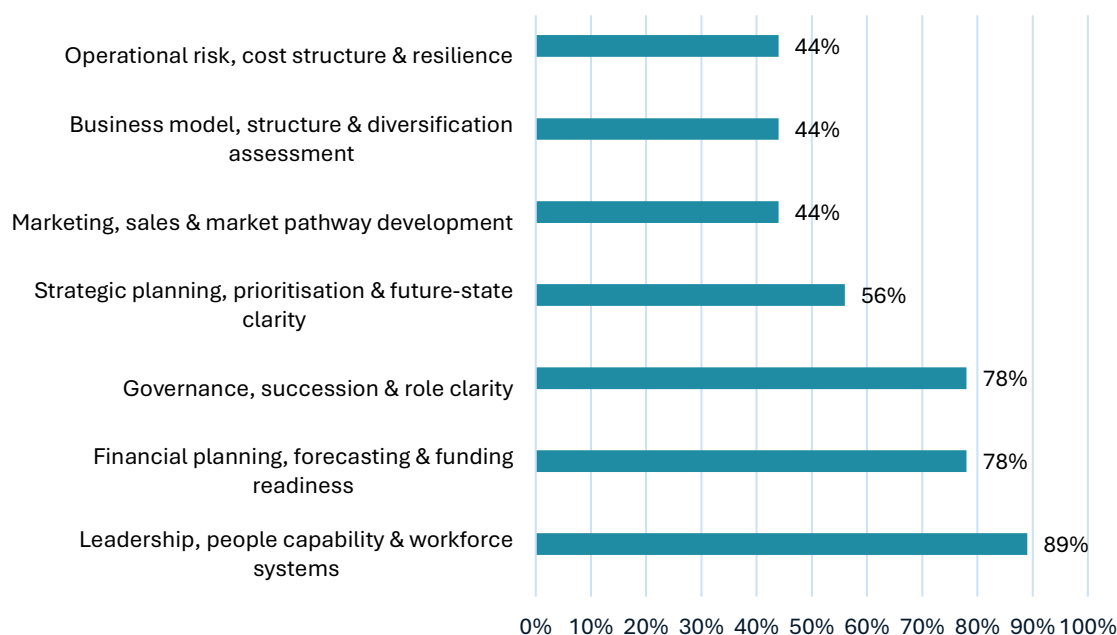
- 90%+ identified multiple competing opportunities (growth, diversification, or investment)
- 70%+ are already engaging advisors (informally or formally)
- Most businesses are investment-aware, but need stronger planning and prioritisation

Common triggers for engagement:

- Expansion or land acquisition decisions
- Diversification into tourism, processing or carbon
- Succession and ownership transition
- Managing increased complexity in multi-enterprise businesses

Key Capability Gaps Identified

The pilot engaged a diverse cohort of ten businesses, with nine completing the Discovery Phase. One additional business was unable to participate due to health circumstances. Seven consistent capability themes emerged across the participating businesses:



Key Insights from the Discovery Phase

Opportunity-rich, but priority-poor

- Most businesses have 3–5 major strategic opportunities in play simultaneously
- Few have a clear prioritised roadmap or sequencing plan

Key insight: The issue is not lack of ideas—it is focus and execution discipline.

High dependence on owners

- Most participating businesses identified a high reliance on one or two key individuals for strategic decision-making, operational delivery and key relationships.
- Common pattern:
 - Owners leading strategy
 - Owners running operations
 - Owners holding key relationships

Key insight: This creates constraints in: Growth execution, time for strategic thinking and succession readiness.

Financial capability lagging business complexity

- ~70% of businesses need stronger financial modelling and forecasting
- Common gaps:
 - Rolling cashflow forecasting
 - Scenario/testing capability
 - Investment and funding readiness

Key insight: Particularly critical for businesses: Taking on new debt, diversifying into new revenue streams and scaling production or infrastructure.

Marketing is a major constraint in value-add growth

Among diversified/value-add businesses:

- 100% had a strong product or story
- 44% participating businesses identified marketing execution, sales systems and market development as key capability gaps.

Key insight: The challenge: Converting great products into consistent revenue streams.

Succession is an immediate or emerging issue

- 60–70% of businesses identified succession as a current or near-term issue
- Several businesses have:
 - No formal plan
 - No clear successor
 - Increasing urgency (age, scale, complexity)

Key insight: This represents both a risk and a major opportunity for structured support.

Workforce and leadership constraints

- Most businesses employ staff but lack formal people systems
- Challenges include:
 - Recruitment (especially rural roles)
 - Delegation and leadership capability
 - Over-reliance on owners

Key insight: Scaling is limited by people capability, not just capital.

Early Value of the Pilot Programme

“The Discovery Phase helped us confirm our priorities, identify areas for improvement, and put structure around some of the challenges and opportunities we already knew existed. The independent review provided valuable perspective and a clear foundation for the next stage of development.” - Discovery Phase participant, June 2026

For participating businesses:

- 100% of participating businesses identified clear next steps through the Discovery Phase
- Clear identification of 2–4 key capability gaps per business

For Wairarapa:

- Identification of high-potential businesses ready to grow
- Evidence of strong demand for structured capability support
- Clear opportunity to accelerate diversification and value-add activity

Through targeted capability support, the programme has the potential to:

- Unlock investment decisions
- Accelerate growth ambitions
- Strengthen long-term business resilience

While access to capital, debt servicing, market conditions and profitability remain important challenges for many businesses, the Discovery Phase found that stronger capability in areas such as strategic planning, governance, financial management, leadership and market development would significantly improve businesses' ability to navigate these challenges and take advantage of future opportunities.

Why the Discovery Phase matters

The Discovery Phase has demonstrated that relatively modest investment in structured business diagnostics can quickly identify the highest-value opportunities for capability development.

Rather than applying generic support across a diverse group of businesses, the pilot has established a clear understanding of the specific challenges, opportunities and capability needs within each participating enterprise.

This approach provides greater confidence that future investment can be targeted where it is most likely to deliver measurable outcomes - whether that is supporting business growth, diversification, succession planning, workforce capability, governance development or improved financial performance.

Importantly, the Discovery Phase has also highlighted common themes across the cohort, creating opportunities for shared capability initiatives while still maintaining a business-specific approach.

Where to next?

The Capability Boost pilot is now moving from discovery into action. We are currently engaging participating businesses to gather structured feedback on:

- The value of the discovery process
- Priority areas for capability investment
- Preferred types of support

In parallel, we are working to:

- Identify priority support pathways for each business
- Assess where shared support approaches can deliver scale (e.g. workshops, advisory programmes)
- Refining the design of the next phase of the pilot

This next stage will focus on translating insights into measurable business change and outcomes.

The Discovery Phase has confirmed there is no shortage of ambition, innovation or opportunity within the Wairarapa primary sector.

What many businesses need is targeted capability support to help transform opportunity into action.

The pilot has successfully identified where that support is likely to have the greatest impact and is now informing the design of the next phase of capability development, with participating businesses currently providing feedback on priorities and future support requirements.

This programme is about accelerating high potential businesses by helping them make better decisions, build capability and unlock their next stage of growth. We've completed the discovery work, now we want to work with businesses to shape the next phase of support and ensure it delivers real, measurable impact.



WAIRARAPA WHANAUNGATANGA CAREERS EXPO

TUESDAY 18TH AUGUST 2026

FOR ALL YEAR 9 – YEAR 13 STUDENTS AT WAIRARAPA COLLEGE

9AM TO 3PM

Wairarapa College Hall

Giving rangatahi the opportunity to meet local employers, tertiary study providers, and career development groups, gain insights, and explore exciting career opportunities all in one place.

Year 9	Period 1 (9am to 9.55am)
Year 10	Period 2 (10.15am to 11.10am)
Year 11	Period 3 (11.30am to 12.25pm)
Year 13	Period 4 (12.25pm to 1.20pm)
Year 12	Period 5 (2.05pm to 3.00pm)

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY:





HOSTED BY:



WAIRARAPA COLLEGE
TE KARETI O WAIRARAPA

WAIRARAPA WHANAUNGATANGA CAREER EXPO

WEDNESDAY 19TH AUGUST 2026

Giving rangatahi the opportunity to meet local employers and career development groups, gain insights, and explore exciting career opportunities all in one place.

FOR ALL YEAR 11 – YEAR 13 STUDENTS AT COLLEGES ACROSS THE WAIRARAPA REGION

9AM TO 3PM

Wairarapa College Hall

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY:



Appendix 5: Quick Fire Connections (Health Industry) – held at Mākoura College, 18 June.

