

# **Council Survey:** **COVID-19 Recovery Plans**

Mayors Taskforce for Jobs (MTFJ)

May 2020

## Introduction

MTFJ recently conducted a short survey for councils to share how young people are being included within their COVID-19 Recovery Plans. As a result of COVID-19, many of New Zealand's key industries have been affected by the pause of tourism and domestic spending, causing economic uncertainty and mass unemployment. Like many crises before us, young people will be disproportionately affected by the impact of COVID-19 which will create an increase in unemployment, working poverty and underemployment.

MTFJ is a nationwide network of New Zealand's mayors all striving towards zero youth unemployment. MTFJ, chaired by Ōtorohanga District Councils Mayor, Max Baxter, is governed by a Core Group of 19 mayors who meet quarterly in Wellington. A focus of the Taskforce is to share what works differently between councils regarding youth employability, with the aim of sparking ideas, removing silos and to learn from one another. Comparing different councils responses to COVID-19 allows us to work together to find innovative solutions.

MTFJ has a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Government outlining our commitment to work together to achieve better employment outcomes for young New Zealanders. At the last MTFJ Core Group meeting on 16 April 2020, the Taskforce met with the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and it was noted that a "granular approach" was needed for councils to respond to the economic challenges that are presented during a pandemic. MTFJ and MSD are currently working on a pilot with four rural councils (population of 20,000 or less) to assist small to medium sized enterprises (SME) with recruitment, training, transport related costs to support social distancing and potential subsidies to employ young people. The pilot has a specific focus on targeting NEETs (young people not in employment, education or training) into meaningful employment. The Community Recovery pilot has the intention to expand nationally, more information regarding this will be announced in the near future.

The survey collected 16 qualitative data responses from councils across the country.

### 1. How are young people being impacted by the economic and social implications following COVID-19?

All councils noted an expected increase in youth unemployment statistics, due to a decline in key industries including hospitality, tourism and retail which tend to be accessible for young people as they require little job experience or qualifications. An expected increase in youth unemployment will result in house hold incomes starting to fall and therefore creating additional social pressures for families. Ensuring young people stay connected to the workforce is increasingly important, as they are likely to be laid off work during times of economic uncertainty. Communities are considering new approaches to create local skill building hubs to keep young people connected to the workforce and to ensure that they can continue to be work ready. For example, activating Marae as a central hub for young people (or the jobless) to gain employment related skills as they look to re-enter the workforce. This could be delivered in partnership with iwi and community providers.

There is also concern from councils that Māori and Pasifika will be disproportionately represented in negative social and economic statistics post COVID-19. Data before and after the Global Financial Crisis 2008 (GFC) shows that Māori and Pasifika people in the workforce were more likely to lose their jobs and took a longer period of time to recovery from the crisis. According to 2006 and 2013

census data, the unemployment rate for young Māori in 2006 was at 20.5 per cent and rose to 28.3 per cent in 2013, which was nearly double the rate for non-Māori and Pasifika youth.

### What are councils saying?

- *“We are in the early stages of our recovery planning. But we are discussing disruption to school programmes which may affect learning outcomes. We are expecting an increase in youth unemployment, NEET and people who become long term unemployed. We are thinking about long term unemployed youth being drawn in crime and nuisance activities.”*
- *“From previous experience unemployment may be issues that young people will experience. We are keeping connected via our Youth Council, Wai Youth and our Youth Network. Social some of the areas we have notified areas of family violence, mental health, access to health services, suicide prevention, alcohol and drug harm, social isolation, poverty, crime, education and unemployment. Our draft Recovery Plan is considering these items and how collectively we can address them.”*

## 2. How are young people being included within the councils COVID-19 Recovery Plans?

Many councils indicated that they are at different stages of their Recovery Plans and that all sectors and demographics will be included, including young people specifically. Some councils are working with young people directly to allow them to contribute their ideas and innovations for recovery planning, by engaging with community providers, iwi, school groups or youth councils. MTFJ recommends this approach by taking a youth friendly perspective to recovery planning by consulting young people themselves about their ideas for the future. As our communities plan for the post COVID-19 future, nurturing the talents, aspirations and skills of our young people needs to be top of the agenda.

Social procurement policy frameworks are also being established for council contracts with large providers to ensure that young people are specifically being included within future projects for employment opportunities and training. Social procurement can place a youth employability lens on large projects, while matching workforce supply and demand and also social outcomes. Trade and service careers tend to be accessible for young people, while providing “earn-and-learn” pathways and strong career progression. Within Budget 2020, the Government announced that targeted vocational training courses will be free for all ages and targeted to sectors such as building and construction, agriculture and manufacturing.

## What are councils saying?

- *“We have Kaipara Mayor's Taskforce for Economic Support and Recovery <https://www.kaipara.govt.nz/taskforce> which brings a local focus to support and engagement. Two industry sector clusters in Kaipara are being developed, including Light Manufacturing (eg furniture) and Construction. Plans are in place for a Youth-targeted project inside the Kaipara Taskforce, but this is still emerging.”*
- *“Recovery plans across the region will look to respond to the growing need of mental health services that are appropriate. We have not had the opportunity to understand the full effect on young people but our Youth Council has been operating throughout Alert Level 4 and will be key in developing our response to recovery. Our local iwi has also been involved in working with our communities most vulnerable and will be key informing our recovery response for rangatahi. Council's approach has included re-shaping funding streams for our organisations that work with young people to enable focus on being responsiveness to COVID.”*
- *“We are including youth in our local industry taskforce. We are asking our Youth Action Network to participate as well. Pathways which include earn-while-you-learn are a priority for us and council is developing a social procurement policy which will increase cadets and apprentices across all our core services and contractors”*

### 3. What skill development pathways are needed for young people within your district/city to thrive in the world of work post COVID-19?

COVID-19 will undoubtedly change the landscape of our economy; it will change the way that we work and how we trade with others. Some industries must change their business models to adapt to the new norm, where some industries will be less affected than others. The primary industry for example, should remain steady over this time, offering promising career prospects for New Zealanders and exciting career development opportunities. The primary sector contributes over \$46b a year in exports to our economy and employs hundreds of thousands of workers. Hon Damien O'Connor, Minister of Agriculture, noted that it is estimated that 50,000 workers are needed within the primary sector for a post COVID-19 world.

Councils have told us that they are in the process of creating clusters of employers under key industries within their district. These clusters work to inform a central body (usually a council or economic development agency) with key insight around skills shortages and future projects planning. These clusters create a good opportunity for young people to engage with employers for work experience and exploration in a range of industries.

Councils have mentioned that the development of soft skill acquisition will remain a critical factor for young people being employable in a post COVID-19 world. The likes of the MTFJ Outward Bound scholarship is recommended for councils to utilise, which provides a scholarship opportunity for young people to attend the course which is worth \$3,600. Outward Bound increases participant's resilience, team work, communication and confidence, which helps them out in the long run for job applications.

## What are councils saying?

- *“Science, ecology, biodiversity and other environmental health knowledge and skills. Entrepreneurship, driver licences, digital skills. And importantly, there are agricultural trades like fencing and tractor driving which are a huge opportunity for both physical work, but also at decent hourly rates with the prospect of self-employment or even developing contracting business.”*
- *“Via the IST, ensuring there is capacity and relevance. Many sector will continue to thrive post-COVID, so ensuring there is awareness, but more importantly ensuring there is communication so that there can be the connection with these range of providers.”*
- *“We would like to retain polytechnic training within our district. Stakeholders in our city are currently working on a Skills Hub concept and encouraging local procurement with employers to improve employment opportunities for youth particularly in our growth areas. But this will become clearer as we work through our recovery planning.”*
- *“Construction sector work, forestry work, farming work dominate here. Apprenticeships and embedded training would be helpful. Uncertain about what shape the economy will take and how best to encourage skills for an unknown world.”*

## 4. What changes has your council considered to its approach in supporting young people’s transitions into further employment or training?

- *“Our focus for the future will consider looking at a range of opportunities to support our young people, this may include supporting at job creation projects though iwi development, working with social agencies like MSD or working with local our organisations such as Maoriland Hub or Kapiti Youth Support and Zeal Kapiti. Working with our local colleges to support their approach for gateway programmes etc. A clear plan on our approach will be formed in the coming weeks.”*
- *“Our business as usual is covering this anyway where education and employment is one of our youth development focuses for the year and was in place prior to Covid19 and remains. Council has a Youth Development Coordinator taking the lead in this area. In the Recovery Plan we are working with CCO Enterprise North Canterbury to support local businesses which will positively impact our community including young people.”*
- *“Established the Kaipara Mayor's Taskforce for Economic Support and Recovery in the last month. Engaging with young people is specifically a target for support, though this 'sector' of society is small in Kaipara demographics. Specific programmes by other agencies yet to be identified.”*
- *“A more targeted approach with stronger connections to industry Increased pastoral care with a level of place based focus in high needs areas.”*

### Useful resources to utilise:

- [MTFJ Outward Bound scholarships](#) for young people in your district valued at \$3,600 each (get in touch with Taskforce Coordinator Noa Woolloff for more information);
- Dave Turners [Work Exploration Continuum](#), developed with support from the Todd Foundation, Bay of Plenty Education Trust and Toi EDA. This framework introduces how Work Exposure, Work Exploration and Work Experience are important components for vocational education pathways;
- [Mana in Mahi](#), a government initiative that provides funding and on-the-job support for employers that take on MSD candidates for employment.
- [Ministry of Social Development quarterly main benefit data](#), broken down to territorial authority level (open the 'Territorial Authorities TA data tables – March 2020' excel spreadsheet to access).

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Taskforce Coordinator, Noa Woolloff.

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