

## **WAIRARAPA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (WEDS) QUARTERLY REPORTING**

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### **PURPOSE**

To update Councillors on quarterly reporting from the Wairarapa Economic Development Strategy (WEDS).

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report includes the Quarterly Economic Monitor Wairarapa report and the WellingtonNZ – Business and Innovation Wairarapa Activity Update.

### **BACKGROUND**

WellingtonNZ (The Regional Economic Development Agency). WEDS is an agreement to align effort and resources to grow economic advantage for the Wairarapa. The WEDS function is enacted by an MOU. For the 2024-2027 period, the WEDS MoU will focus on water resilience, workforce development and support for the Primary (Food & Fibre) sector.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Work Programme Quarterly Reporting**

Quarter 1 focused on advancing the WEDS Work Programme across its three priority areas, building on progress from the previous financial year. The WEDS Steering Group continues to provide strategic oversight, ensuring initiatives align with regional priorities and are progressed effectively.

**Food & Fibre:** The Future Options project is progressing, identifying pathways for producers to diversify, maximise land use, and implement resilient farming models. The Capability Boost Series is advancing, building operational and strategic skills across the sector and aligning with industry initiatives through early engagement with Beef + Lamb NZ, DairyNZ, and Horticulture NZ.

**Skills & Workforce Development:** The first Industry Big Day Out was delivered in August, with a second event planned for the first half of 2026. The Attract, Connect, Stay initiative has appointed a Strategic Connector, and planning is underway to deliver Wairarapa Workplace Visits in early 2026. Skill Wairarapa (formerly Wairarapa Skills Leadership Group) is reviewing opportunities and gaps to address this financial year through ongoing or new initiatives.

**Water Resilience:** The Waingawa Process Water Project is complete, and the Case for Action report is being translated into publicfacing communications collateral. FY25/26 Resilience Implementation Plan work is underway, with early project scoping progressing while Governance Group membership is refreshed. Future delivery will increasingly integrate Workforce & Skills and Food & Fibre initiatives.

#### **Wairarapa Economic Development Update (Appendix B)**

WellingtonNZ is advancing key projects to boost Wairarapa's economy and regional identity.

Highlights include the internationally recognised **Dark Sky Reserve**, which is driving astro-tourism and global promotion, and the **Five Towns Trail Network**, with new sections opening soon to enhance visitor experiences and local connectivity.

Business capability programmes, workforce development initiatives, and partnerships with Business Wairarapa are supporting SMEs and future talent. Destination marketing campaigns and film industry engagement further position Wairarapa as a premium visitor and investment destination. These efforts align with the Wellington Regional Economic Development Plan to deliver sustainable growth and community wellbeing.

Please refer to the appendices for the full reports from WEDS which includes: Q1 reports for WEDS; Q1 report for the wider WNZ Wairarapa activity.

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A - FY26 - Q1 Report - WEDS

Appendix B - WNZ Activity Report - September 2025

# 2025/26 Work Programme Quarterly Reporting

Quarter 1: 1 July to 30 September 2025

## 1. OVERVIEW

### 1.1 Summary

Quarter 1 focused on advancing the WEDS Work Programme across its three priority areas, building on progress from the previous financial year. The WEDS Steering Group continues to provide strategic oversight, ensuring initiatives align with regional priorities and are progressed effectively.

#### Food & Fibre

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#### Skills & Workforce Development

The first Industry Big Day Out was delivered in August, with a second event planned for the first half of 2026. The Attract, Connect, Stay initiative has appointed a Strategic Connector, and planning is underway to deliver Wairarapa Workplace Visits in early 2026. Skill Wairarapa (formerly Wairarapa Skills Leadership Group) is reviewing opportunities and gaps to address this financial year through ongoing or new initiatives.

#### Water Resilience

The Waingawa Process Water Project is complete, and the Case for Action report is being translated into public-facing communications collateral. FY25/26 Resilience Implementation Plan work is underway, with early project scoping progressing while Governance Group membership is refreshed. Future delivery will increasingly integrate Workforce & Skills and Food & Fibre initiatives.

### 1.2 Top Highlights

- Opening ceremony for the Waingawa Process Water Project, marking its completion and emphasising the region's commitment to water security and future industrial growth.
- Appointment of the Strategic Connector under Attract, Connect, Stay.
- First Industry Big Day Out delivered, engaging 50 students from five schools and 10 local businesses.
- WEDS Website Refresh now live at [www.weds.nz](http://www.weds.nz)

### 1.3 Key Risks / Issues

- Lower North Island Seed Processing Facility awaiting decision on Central Government co-investment, due in November.

### 1.4 Upcoming Priorities

- Engage with newly elected councils.
- Work with the WWRS Programme Director to finalise Case for Action communications collateral scoping and delivery.
- Progress Future Options findings to inform the next phase of the workstream.
- Continue shaping the Food & Fibre Capability Boost pilot programme with industry partners.

## 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 <b>upskilling businesses to educate and grow their capability</b> to collectively lift the Sector.			
Lead	WEDS PMO			
Expected Outcome(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Businesses gain tools and insights to improve operational efficiency and value chain optimisation.</li> <li>Strengthened rural network and shared learning opportunities that drive sector-wide improvements.</li> <li>The sector is recognised for its innovation, sustainability, and high-value production, improving market access and investment confidence.</li> </ul>			
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	<p>Over this quarter, the PMO worked to directly build relationships with Beef + Lamb NZ, DairyNZ, and Horticulture New Zealand to understand existing capability offerings, identify gaps, and explore opportunities for collaboration. The aim is to ensure the regional programme complements—not duplicates—national and industry-led initiatives.</p> <p>Through this engagement, the PMO has been able to strengthen and refine the programme design to better align with producer needs and industry priorities. Insights confirmed that while there are many group-based training and extension activities available, local producers are seeking more targeted, one-on-one support to build strong business foundations and prepare for growth, diversification, or value-chain participation.</p> <p>The refined delivery model — the “Wairarapa Capability Boost” — focuses on bespoke advisory support delivered in collaboration with industry partners. An Industry Engagement Summary &amp; Draft Proposal has been prepared to test the concept and delivery model before implementation.</p>			
Progress Milestones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct engagement with major industry groups to identify regional capability gaps and opportunities.</li> <li>Strong support from industry for a collaborative, regionally coordinated approach.</li> <li>Development of the Wairarapa Capability Boost draft proposal and delivery framework, informed by sector input.</li> </ul>			
Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalise feedback from industry partners on the proposed approach, delivery model, and participant nomination process.</li> <li>Shape the pilot to reflect Wairarapa's farming profile (sheep &amp; beef, dairy) while ensuring horticulture and specialty producers are represented.</li> <li>Confirm preferred consultants and cost-sharing arrangements to enable pilot delivery.</li> <li>Progress preparatory work for initial discovery sessions as soon as practical.</li> </ul>			

## 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 <b>explore new products and opportunities</b> to build resilience and diversify income streams.			
Lead	Leftfield Innovation Limited			
Expected Outcome(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Businesses are better equipped to adapt to market changes and environmental challenges through diversifying income.</li> <li>Strengthened local infrastructure ensures businesses can connect with higher-value markets more effectively.</li> <li>Encourages innovation, attracting new business opportunities and partnerships across the sector.</li> </ul>			
Status	Progress		Funding	
WEDS PMO Intervention	Funder and co-lead of the future phases of this initiative.			
Progress Report	The WEDS PMO received the draft Leftfield Innovation Review at the end of September. This review revisits earlier work to advance diversification, innovation, and resilience in Wairarapa's food and fibre sector. It provides a refreshed evidence base, and outlines suggested next steps for the workstream.			
Progress Milestones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Updated report identifies realistic, high-potential diversification opportunities aligned with current market trends, environmental expectations, and regional priorities.</li> <li>Provides guidance for practical, future-focused pathways for value creation and resilience within the region's primary sector.</li> </ul>			
Next Steps	Finalise a proposed pathway and next steps for wider engagement to progress this workstream and support practical implementation across the sector.			

Action	Support producers to have local processing, distribution, and logistic facilities to <b>improve supply chain efficiency</b> and competition.			
Lead	Wairarapa Seed Project Leadership Team			
Expected Outcome(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Businesses are better equipped to adapt to market changes and environmental challenges through diversifying income.</li> <li>Strengthened local infrastructure ensures businesses can connect with higher-value markets more effectively.</li> <li>Encourages innovation, attracting new business opportunities and partnerships across the sector.</li> </ul>			
Status	Progress		Funding	
WEDS PMO Intervention	Co-funder.			
Progress Report	The Lower North Island Seed Processing and Storage Facility project has now been completed and submitted to Kānoa – Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit. WEDS co-funding enabled the full completion of the application, ensuring it is investment-ready for consideration by Minister Shane Jones in November.			
Progress Milestones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All supporting materials were prepared and collated to produce a complete, credible investment application.</li> </ul>			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project success has potential to increase confidence for other investors to commit equity to advance the facility.</li> <li>Supports broader WEDS Food &amp; Fibre objectives, including diversification, water-efficient land use, and sector resilience.</li> </ul>
<b>Next Steps</b>	Await decision from Minister Shane Jones in November to progress the project with Central Government co-investment, which will allow the project to progress beyond the feasibility-phase and into delivery.

## 2.3 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.

<b>Action</b>	Establish a local community managed <b>strategic connector</b> role to better identify and successfully attract, connect and retain the professional workforce in the Wairarapa		
<b>Lead</b>	Tū Hauoranga Trust		
<b>Expected Outcome(s)</b>	<p><b>Whole-of-community retention strategy:</b> 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.</p> <p><b>Cross-sector collaboration:</b> 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.</p> <p><b>Reduced silos and fragmentation:</b> 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.</p> <p><b>Enhanced regional reputation:</b> 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.</p>		
<b>Status</b>	<b>Progress</b>		<b>Funding</b>
<b>WEDS PMO Intervention</b>	Co-funder.		
<b>Progress Report</b>	This quarter, the initiative advanced with the appointment of the local strategic connector. The Tū Hauoranga website which includes the online portal Tūhono has also begun development. This website and online portal is designed to ensure individuals throughout the region are well-connected, well-informed, enabled, and effectively supported to access relevant services that enhance health.		
<b>Progress Milestones</b>	Significant progress was made in strengthening partnerships and expanding engagement across the district. A strong working relationship was established with UCOL, and Strategic Connector-led events continued to grow in reach and participation. Initial partnership discussions began with HealthPoint, while collaboration with health, community, and social agencies broadened district wide. The support role handover to Anna Lawrence was also completed smoothly, ensuring continuity.		
<b>Next Steps</b>	Launching the Tū Hauoranga website and progressing development of the Tūhono online directory. Work will also begin to define the strategic direction and establish communications and engagement priorities for 2026–2027.		

Action	Understand Wairarapa's <b>digital fluency</b> , packaged with tailored learning programme offerings and formal qualification opportunities for both students and the business community.			
Lead	Waitech Trust			
Expected Outcome(s)	<p><b>Future-ready workforces:</b> Students and workers gain the digital skills needed to thrive in modern jobs, education, and business environments.</p> <p><b>More competitive and resilient local businesses:</b> SMEs are better equipped to adopt digital tools, improve productivity, and adapt to market changes.</p> <p><b>Reduced digital inequality across the region:</b> Targeted delivery ensures equitable access to digital learning opportunities, especially in rural and under-served communities.</p>			
Status	Progress		Funding	
WEDS PMO Intervention	Funder. Provided administrative/logistical support to Waitech Trustees to set up for implementation of the project.			
Progress Report	The Digital Fluency Programme has faced a challenging journey, acknowledged by both the PMO and Waitech Trust. This quarter, the IC3 (digital fluency qualification and training) inventory was reacquired by its original owner (NZIQ) after the PSA Unions' unsuccessful management left Waitech without the support needed to advance the programme. Despite these setbacks, the trustees remain committed to progressing the initiative to ensure Wairarapa communities have access to future-ready digital skills.			
Progress Milestones	The NZIQ inventory has had a change of ownership, new owner is now willing to work with Waitech Trust on progressing the digital fluency programme.			
Next Steps	Waitech Trustees and Mākoura College staff will complete a "train the trainer" workshop and select students to pilot the Digital Fluency training, with Waitech Trust laptops provided to ensure they have regular internet access both at school and at home. The 13-week pilot will run during Trimester 2 in 2026.			

Action	Provide our people with a clear understanding of <b>local pathways</b> by directly engaging with local businesses and industries.			
Lead	REAP Wairarapa			
Expected Outcome(s)	<p><b>Increased awareness of local pathways:</b> Our young people (and those who influence them) have a clearer understanding of opportunities available in Wairarapa, helping to inform education and training decisions.</p> <p><b>Stronger connections between schools and industry:</b> Direct engagement fosters relationships that support work-based learning, future employment, and regional talent pipelines.</p> <p><b>Improved youth retention in the region:</b> By showcasing meaningful local opportunities, the initiative contributes to reducing youth outmigration and building a more sustainable regional workforce.</p>			
Status	Progress		Funding	
WEDS PMO Intervention	Funder.			
Progress Report	The first (of two) Industry Big Day Out event (formally Umanga Tūmatarau) was delivered on Thursday 14 August 2025.			
Progress Milestones	A total of 50 students from Wairarapa College, Mākoura College, Chanel College, Kuranui College, and Tararua College participated, alongside nine teachers or adult mentors. The event also involved ten local businesses, including Transit Coachlines, Masterton District Council,			



	Tunnickliffe Builders, Westpac Bank Ltd, BCITO, Jennian Homes, HelloWorld Travel, Coca Cola, and Select Signs.
Next Steps	Plan and deliver another Industry Big Day Out event in the first half of the 2026 school year.

Action	Provide improved <b>service, supervision, management training</b> and skill development across local sectors.			
Lead	Business Wairarapa			
Expected Outcome(s)	<p><b>A more resilient, future-ready workforce:</b> 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.</p> <p><b>Enhanced business performance and retention:</b> 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.</p>			
Status	Progress		Funding	
WEDS PMO Intervention	Co-funder.			
Progress Report	The third event in the WaiHost series of capability workshops, Train the Trainer, was delivered on 29 July and had 19 participants.			
Progress Milestones	The workshop developed participants' skills to deliver effective on-the-job training, apply adult learning principles, reinforce safety, assess performance and integrate learning into daily work. Feedback from participants indicates the workshops are boosting service confidence and practical skills, supporting WEDS workforce development objectives. Employers have shown strong engagement, with repeat attendance and a growing emphasis on workforce development as a strategic business priority.			
Next Steps	Deliver the last funded workshop 'Outstanding Customer Experience' on 29 October.			

## 2.4 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 <b>public-facing communications collateral based on the A Case for Action</b> 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)	<p><b>Enhances collaboration</b> to implement sustainable water solutions.</p> <p>Strengthens Wairarapa's <b>ability to build resilience</b>, ensuring long-term viability of water-reliant sectors.</p> <p>Positions the region for <b>future funding and infrastructure investment</b> through well-defined project priorities that support regional growth</p>			
Status	Progress		Funding	
WEDS PMO Intervention	The WEDS PMO continues to act as an observer and advisor to ensure the water resilience programme aligns with and supports Wairarapa's broader economic development priorities, in particular for Food & Fibre. The PMO is also working alongside the Programme Director to			



	ensure clear connections between the regional water resilience work and the WEDS focus on food and fibre workstreams.
<b>Progress Report</b>	<p>The Wairarapa Water Resilience Governance Group is in the process of onboarding new members following the recent local body elections. In the interim, the Programme Director is progressing preparatory work to enable key projects within the 2025/26 Work Programme to commence early in Quarter 2.</p> <p>The Case for Action project, funded by WEDS in the previous financial year, has now been completed. The report provides a compelling economic rationale for investment in regional water resilience and has been endorsed by the WEDS Steering Group. The PMO is now collaborating with the WWRS Programme Director to develop public-facing collateral to communicate these findings and strengthen regional advocacy for long-term solutions.</p>
<b>Progress Milestones</b>	Completion of the Case for Action report, outlining the economic benefits of water resilience investment.
<b>Next Steps</b>	The PMO will continue to work with the WWRS Programme Director to produce and release communications materials based on the Case for Action report, supporting greater stakeholder engagement and advocacy for water resilience investment across the region.

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

<b>Action</b>	Deliver a <b>Water Resilience Education &amp; Networking Series</b> , 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.			
<b>Lead</b>	Wairarapa Water Users Society Incorporated (WWUS)			
<b>Expected Outcome(s)</b>	<p>Improves water use efficiency and sustainability by inspiring the adoption of efficient practices and adaptive technologies.</p> <p>Strengthens collaboration and trust across diverse water stakeholders, fostering informed, collective water management.</p> <p>Shifts culture from compliance-focused to relationship-focused, reducing conflict and enabling cooperative problem-solving.</p>			
<b>Status</b>	<b>Progress</b>		<b>Funding</b>	
<b>WEDS PMO Intervention</b>	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.			
<b>Progress Report</b>	The 2025/26 contract has been executed, and planning for the three-event summer series is well underway. The first event is scheduled for 20 November, at a Kokotau farm, where participants will see different irrigation methods in action and discuss how they're being applied to local conditions. The PMO has worked closely with the WWUS to maintain continuity from previous years while expanding the focus on practical, on-farm water management solutions.			
<b>Progress Milestones</b>	The initiative continues to strengthen water resilience knowledge across Wairarapa's farming community by showcasing practical, real-world examples on farm. The upcoming 2025/26 series builds on previous success by promoting peer learning, sharing innovative approaches to water use, and demonstrating the economic and environmental benefits of proactive water management.			
<b>Next Steps</b>	The 2025/26 series will be promoted region-wide, with invitations issued to previous participants and interested landowners. The first event will be held on 20 November. The WEDS PMO has coordinated a feature in the Wairarapa Times-Age for early November to raise awareness and encourage participation in this season's events.			

### 3. BUDGET

#### 3.1 Overview

The total budget available (outside of people resources) for the financial year is just over \$369,000.

Of this, \$319,000 will support initiatives in the work programme. The majority has been allocated to Food & Fibre sector development initiatives (\$187,000) as our major focus for the year, and we will continue to support ongoing Skills and Workforce Development initiatives and some potential new ones (\$116,500). The budget allocated to Water Resilience is reduced (\$16,000) as it follows two years of comparatively higher investment in water as an enabler of economic development.

The remaining amount has been allocated to programme and PMO overheads (\$30,000) and to the development of a strategic investment portfolio (\$20,000) to support the overall work programme.

A further \$215,000 covers people resources, through the Wairarapa-based WellingtonNZ PMO.

#### 3.2 Expenditure as at 30 September 2025

As at the end of the first quarter, total expenditure (outside of people resources) for the WEDS work programme was \$56,273, representing around 15% of the annual operational budget.

Expenditure has primarily been incurred in Food & Fibre initiatives, which is in line with the focus of the work programme. Spending on Workforce Development and Water Resilience initiatives is expected to accelerate in the second quarter as contracting is completed for projects including the Strategic Connector role and water resilience education and communication. Other initiatives budget remains committed, with delivery milestones scheduled across quarters 3-4.

The people resources budget reflects \$54,901 in staff costs for programme delivery and management, with people time largely allocated to supporting Food & Fibre and Workforce Development initiatives, further reinforcing the programme's focus areas.

Overall expenditure remains within target and the forecast in line with the annual budget.

### 3.3 Budget and Actual Expenditure as at 30 September 2025

Priority Focus Area	Initiative	Budget	Action	Actual as at 30 Sep
Food & Fibre (Primary Sector)	Increase <b>productivity and resilience</b> by equipping businesses with knowledge, skills, and support.	\$187,000	Collaboratively deliver a series focused on <b>upskilling businesses to educate and grow their capability</b> .	\$-
			Engage with <b>frontier firms</b> to explore implementing best practices.	\$-
	Strengthen resilience and growth potential by supporting <b>diversification</b> , fostering <b>innovation</b> , and enhancing market access.		Deliver resources to help the sector to explore <b>new products and opportunities</b> .	\$16,000
			Support producers to have local processing to improve <b>supply chain efficiency and competition</b> .	\$30,000
	Develop a <b>shared narrative</b> for the Sector that fosters collaboration, enhances awareness, and elevates profile.		Create opportunities to <b>profile our local producers and a sense of regional narrative</b> .	\$-
	Strengthen <b>workforce capability</b> and resilience by aligning training and development initiatives.		To be determined.	\$-
Skills & Workforce Development	Strengthen Wairarapa’s workforce by implementing the <b>Wairarapa Skills &amp; Workforce Action Plan</b> , ensuring local businesses have access to skilled talent and our people have clear pathways into sustainable employment.	\$116,500	Establish a local community-managed <b>strategic connector role</b> .	\$-
			Understand Wairarapa's <b>digital fluency</b> , packaged with tailored learning programmes.	\$-
			Provide our people with a clear understanding of <b>local pathways</b> .	\$-
			Provide improved <b>service, supervision, management training</b> .	\$5,500
			Other initiatives TBD.	\$-
Water Resilience	Identify and advance key economic development projects within the <b>FY25/26 WWRS Work Programme</b> .	\$16,000	Develop and deliver <b>public-facing communications collateral based on the A Case for Action</b> report.	\$-
	Facilitate <b>collaboration and knowledge-sharing</b> to build water resilience across Wairarapa industries.		Deliver a <b>Water Resilience Education &amp; Networking Series</b> .	\$-
PMO Operations	Strategic Investment Portfolio	\$20,000	Develop portfolio	\$-
	WEDS and Skill Wairarapa	\$20,000	Work Programme operations	\$3,716
		\$9,770	WNZ PMO overheads	\$1,057
		\$215,000	WNZ People Resources	\$54,901
		\$584,270	TOTAL WEDS EXPENDITURE	\$111,173

## Appendix: 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
<b>Food &amp; Fibre (Primary Sector):</b> 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 <b>frontier firms</b> to explore implementing best practices in <b>efficiencies, value-add production,</b> 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.
<b>Food &amp; Fibre (Primary Sector):</b> Develop a strong, <b>shared narrative</b> for the Sector that fosters collaboration, enhances regional awareness, and elevates the profile of local businesses.	Create opportunities to profile our local producers and a <b>sense of regional identity</b> , growing awareness of the diverse food and fibre offerings.	This workstream is not scheduled to commence until Q3.
<b>Food &amp; Fibre (Primary Sector):</b> Strengthen <b>workforce capability</b> and resilience in the food & fibre sector by aligning training and development initiatives with the Wairarapa Skills & Workforce Action Plan.	To be determined.	The actions to be delivered under this initiative are to be determined with industry as capacity allows.
<b>Skills &amp; Workforce Development:</b> Strengthen Wairarapa's workforce by implementing the <b>Wairarapa Skills &amp; Workforce Action Plan</b> , ensuring local businesses have access to skilled talent and our people have clear pathways into sustainable employment.	Other initiatives to be determined.	Skill Wairarapa are currently undertaking an assessment of potential actions based on a review of opportunities and gaps. It is proposed any new actions could be initiated in Q3.
<b>PMO Operations:</b> Strategic Investment Portfolio.	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.	This workstream is not scheduled to commence until Q3.

## WellingtonNZ – Wairarapa Activity Update

September 2025

This activity report is provided to the three Wairarapa District Councils to give visibility on activities that are being delivered by WellingtonNZ in Wairarapa, that sit outside the Wairarapa Economic Development Strategy (WEDS) Work Programme.

### 1. Wellington Regional Economic Development Plan (REDP) Activities

*The REDP exists to guide the long-term direction of the economy and is helping to drive high-impact economic initiatives over the next 10 years. It is about futureproofing the region and making sure it thrives economically, ensuring that our region is a great place for everyone to live, including our Māori and Pasifika communities, and improving wellbeing and quality of life. WellingtonNZ is the lead organisation for implementation of the REDP, which is governed by the Wellington Regional Leadership Committee (WRLC). The WRLC membership includes mana whenua and local authority members (Mayors). As well as region-wide initiatives, there are five Wairarapa initiatives included in the REDP, these are: Food & Fibre (Primary) Sector, Wairarapa Workforce Development, Wairarapa Water Resilience Strategy, Five Towns Trail Network, and Dark Sky.*

#### **Dark Sky**

The Wairarapa has been recognised by Lonely Planet's Best in Travel 2026 list for its stargazing, food, and wine experiences — a significant international endorsement of the region's natural assets and emerging astro-tourism offering. This recognition coincides with strong local momentum, with more than 40 businesses now having completed the Dark Sky Business Capability Course supported under the REDP - designed to build understanding of the Dark Sky Reserve's potential and strengthen the visitor experience.

Planning is now underway for a follow-up programme to support participating businesses to turn ideas into market-ready experiences. This next phase will focus on activating new tourism products, packaging experiences, and promoting the region's Dark Sky identity to domestic and international audiences in collaboration with Destination Wairarapa and the wider Dark Sky Steering Group membership.

#### **Five Towns Trail Network**

The Five Towns Trail Network continues to gain traction, supported by strengthened relationships with local trusts and stakeholders driving progress across multiple trail sections. The Featherston–Greytown section is about to be opened as the first completed part of the network, providing an early opportunity to showcase the region's connected outdoor recreation offering and the project's long-term vision.

Further work is underway to support the Carterton District Trail Trust with the construction of the Waiohine River Bridge (part of Section 2) and to assist the Moana Trails Trust in developing a new loop experience linking Featherston to Lake Wairarapa. The next focus will be on securing a new generation of strategic trustees to guide the project's expansion and ensure continued coordination and delivery momentum across the network. WellingtonNZ continues to support the Trust's work through the REDP, including the upcoming new website.

#### **Girls who Grow**

The Girls Who Grow initiative continues to empower young women across the region to explore pathways and leadership in environmental sustainability, agri-innovation, and primary industries. This quarter, the project supported a Wairarapa student to secure sponsorship to attend and speak at the national WaterNZ Conference in Christchurch, where they presented regional environmental solutions alongside other emerging leaders.

To date, ten students from across the region have participated in one-on-one professional career sessions with a Wairarapa-based advisor, receiving tailored guidance on study and career pathways. Students also connected with mentors from Federated Farmers, Rewiring Aotearoa, Mahinga Kai, and other organisations, with feedback highlighting the value of the experience in expanding their awareness of future opportunities and practical pathways. This programme has been brought to the region and continues to be enabled by the REDP.

## 2. Business Growth & Innovation Activities

*At WellingtonNZ, our role is to support businesses to grow and innovate, and build a stronger, more connected regional business community. WellingtonNZ's Business Growth and Innovation team works with businesses right across the Wellington region. The team work to connect businesses with the right people, advice and resources they need to grow and innovate. The team administer the Regional Business Partners Network Programme, on behalf of Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment for the region, and connect businesses to innovation and development opportunities through Callaghan Innovation. Through partnership with Business Wairarapa, the team collaborates to deliver targeted capability training informed by local business insights, ensuring Wairarapa enterprises can access tailored support and development opportunities that reflect the needs of the region's business community.*

### **No. of businesses and type of businesses supported by One:Some (small group) funding and Management Capability Funding (one-on-one) in the period July to September 2025:**

3x Construction	3x Retail Trade
3x Manufacturing	1x Winery
1x Real Estate Management Service	1x Other Services
5x Professional, Scientific, and Technical Service	1x Wholesale Trade
4x Accommodation & Food Service	

### **D/srupt Growth Navigation Programme**

A Wairarapa-focused One:Some on Growth planning has commenced in partnership with D/srupt. The workshop series centres on data-driven growth planning through the bespoke D/srupt platform, covering essential areas in business backed by market insights. Having started on 24 September, the workshop will run for 5 weeks, with 1x hour training sessions per week. 11 attendees from 10 Wairarapa business are currently participating in this workshop, including some that participated in the Dark Sky Business Capability courses.

### **Leadership Accelerator**

Two Leadership Accelerator One:Some workshops were run by LeadershipNZ in partnership with Business Wairarapa. There were 14 participants from 9 businesses that attended. This workshop covers essential skills in self-leadership, resilience, prioritisation, and goal setting for SMEs.

### **One:One**

A business in Clothing retail received co-funding to improve their digital marketing skills and online presence. A business in Management Consultancy received co-funding to improve their social media strategy capability.

### **Callaghan Innovation**

A wheelchair design and manufacturing business was referred to R&D experienced grant and RDTI. A social enterprise in science education was referred to R&D experienced grant.

### **Other engagement**

Activities by Growth Managers to network and promote business support in the region:

- Gold Sponsorship for Wairarapa Business Summit in July.
- Sharing a monthly calendar of upcoming One:Some with Business Wairarapa and WEDS team (ongoing).

### 3. Screen Wellington (Film Office) Activities

*Wellington UNESCO City of Film offers a diverse range of unique locations and local expertise, all within easy reach of award-winning production facilities. Screen Wellington (part of WellingtonNZ) work closely across the region to support productions to find the perfect locations, connect to support business, keep crews and communities safe and issuing permits to film in public spaces.*

The Screen team continues to provide support to incoming productions, upcoming notable film activities in Wairarapa include “A Dog’s Show” and a sequel to “Black Sheep”.

Work is also continuing updating the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with district councils across the region to ensure it reflects current filming practices, regional priorities, and the introduction of new district-level permit fee structures. This process has required additional consultation and coordination but remains a key focus for the Screen Wellington team to ensure consistency and clarity for both councils and production companies.

### 4. Destination Marketing

*WellingtonNZ’s Destination, Marketing and Communications team plays a vital role in positioning the Wellington region as a vibrant, world-class destination. Their work drives growth in the visitor economy by promoting Wellington’s unique experiences, supporting tourism operators, and delivering targeted marketing and media campaigns. Through strategic partnerships - including close collaboration with Destination Wairarapa - the team ensures Wellington remains top of mind for domestic and international travellers, contributing to economic growth across accommodation, hospitality, retail, and attractions. This work strengthens the region’s brand, boosts regional pride, and supports sustainable tourism development.*

Key highlights of this quarter include:

- Inclusion in Classic New Zealand Wine Trail funding application, submitted for the second round of Regional Tourism Boost funding from MBIE. Focus on attracting Australian audiences interested in food and wine to visit during the 2026 harvest season.
- 11 new Wairarapa-focused articles published on WellingtonNZ.com - <https://www.wellingtonnz.com/visit/wairarapa>
- Continued promotion of Wairarapa trails through the always-on Wellington Regional Trails marketing activity - <https://www.instagram.com/findyourwildnz/#>
- Assisted with content review for the Wellington Economic Development Strategy (WEDS) website refresh.
- Message development and media pitching for the Waingawa Process Water Plant story.
- Media release prepared for the Dark Sky economic development story, aligned with the Lonely Planet announcement.
- Consumer media pitching of the Dark Sky story to support the Lonely Planet feature.
- Integration of the Dark Sky tourism offering into MiNDFOOD magazine’s October 2025 editorial.