

Initiative promotes extractives work experience

Colin Williscroft - Thu, 2 May 2024

A Waikato work experience initiative that's raising awareness of mining and quarrying careers has the potential to be run in other parts of the country.

The programme has the backing of MinEx, the Aggregate and Quarry Association and Bathurst Resources – which was involved in the pilot and has indicated it's interested in getting involved again.

MITO worked with Waikato-Tainui, workforce consultancy Whatukura and the Ministry of Social Development on Te Waharoa, which means entrance or gateway, to provide eight iwi members with work experience in the extractives sector.

The initiative provides an opportunity for an iwi member to experience an industry they see themselves having a career in, MITO executive director Verna Niao says. First held late last year, it begins with four weeks of "work readiness" preparation, followed by six weeks of paid work experience at quarries or mines.

The companies involved in the initial programme were Bathurst, Stevenson Aggregates and J Swap Contractors.

Half of those taking part were offered work following completion of the programme.

"The idea is that it turns into a 90-day trial," Niao says.

"You have six weeks for the iwi member and employer to get to work together and confirm whether it is a good fit – with the intention that you prove yourself, that you could be an asset with further training and opportunity".

Support

The initiative has the support of MinEx, the health and safety council for the extractives sector, and the AQA.

Chief executive Wayne Scott says the extractives sector struggles to attract workers in some parts of the country and the programme helps introduce unemployed people to local job opportunities in mining and quarrying sectors.

"Without a structured programme like this these people may not ever consider a job in our sector."

He says the cultural support and that of whānau help to support participants through the programme.

"The sector finds this support crucial to the success of the programme and transitioning participants to full-time employment."

Business benefits

Niao says it's a relationship that supports the aspirations of emerging talent, local business and iwi through a dedicated programme that's focused on sustainable career pathways.

She says the initiative provides employers with the comfort that those involved have completed a full induction programme that prepares them for the mining and quarrying environment.

With its iwi partners MITO seeks out the candidates for them, with careful matching to make sure the fit is as good as possible to the workplace.

Whānau

To take part in the programme participants had to apply – just as they would for a job.

They needed a driver's licence and at the interview they had to bring a whānau member for support.

"Whether it's mum or dad, an aunty, uncle, sister, brother or good friend, they're going to be along on the journey with you as you're going through the programme and into work. We want to involve whānau so that they are part of the journey," MITO kaikōkiri ōritetanga – workforce development advisor – Ardi Tawha says.

Programme

The initial four weeks of work readiness includes developing soft skills such as time management, budgeting and what employers are looking for in employees.

Participants also do formal training in areas such as worksite safety, including the MITO Rock-up programme.

"The site visits to workplaces were amazing," Tawha says.

The participants got to see what happens in quarries and mines, how the machinery operates, how it's maintained and repaired and where quarry products can end up getting used.

"We wanted them to see the whole supply chain. They now have that understanding."

He says it provides an awareness of the importance of the sector to the country and the environmental work – including rehabilitation – that's involved.

Potential

It's hoped a second programme can be run in Waikato later in the year.

The aim is to have Te Waharoa running in different regions around the country, to help iwi and industry.

