



# UPTEMPO

## Increasing Pasifika 'aiga readiness for workforce progression:

Uptempo insights and system implications



Regist  
Master B

# What is Uptempo?

Uptempo is a learning incubator that is testing ways to grow intergenerational wealth and wellbeing for Pasifika people in Aotearoa. We work in South and West Auckland with Pasifika families ('aiga) and partner with government to support workforce-wide changes that deliver clear pathways to higher paid jobs.

Uptempo's focus is to learn about how Pasifika-centred workforce innovation can create solutions for Pasifika people to thrive. We bring together innovation practices and the lived experience of Pacific people to demonstrate changes that will make the biggest difference.

Uptempo is powered by **The Southern Initiative (TSI)**, a social innovation unit nested within Auckland Council. We currently work directly with 80+ 'aiga, **The Fono, Oceania Career Academy, First Union**, employers and adult education providers to develop compelling alternatives for Pasifika.

Uptempo is a part of the Alo Vaka, Pacific Skills Shift Programme funded through the **Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment** and is also funded by the **Peter McKenzie Project (JR McKenzie Trust)**.

We acknowledge our Uptempo 'aiga for their contribution to this report. Thank you for sharing so generously.



# Pu'apinga

## Our Values

Our values are the foundation for how we show up in our work, the mindsets we bring and our actions.

Transformative systems change is complex, messy, and uncertain. Our values help us stay true to our Kaupapa and guide us, as we carve a pathway forward and energise a community of support around the need for change.



### Tausi le va

SAMOAN

We honour our relationships and recognise that everything is connected. We are culturally grounded and through this, build trust, respect and impact.



### Loto to'a

TONGAN

We have the courage to do new things and not being afraid to make mistakes, accepting our failures and learning from them. We are brave enough to challenge the status quo and hold ourselves and other people accountable.



### Manākitanga

MĀORI

Our actions demonstrate our love and care for our people and our kaupapa.



### Halvae 'ag

ROTUMAN

We openly share and work together with others to achieve our goal of intergenerational wealth for all our people.



### Fakamōliaga

NIUEAN

Our culture is a superpower! We are unapologetically Pasifika and walk our talk every day.

# Growing readiness

## Our inquiries

In this insights report we explore the following questions:



# 01

How do we know if an 'aiga is ready or not for workforce progression?

# 02

What accelerates Pasifika 'aiga readiness to progress in work?

# 03

How can we make sure our systems are ready to enable Pasifika workforce progression, and intergenerational wealth and wellbeing?

Our early learning and system change implications emerging are shared. Over the next two years, we will delve deeper into these implications to sharpen the pathways to transformative change for our Pasifika communities.



# The long tail of inequity

*“Most of our people are scared to put ourselves out there. Growing up in the struggle made me want to do better and provide opportunities for my kids that I never got”.*

New Zealand's post-war labour migration policies led to Pasifika communities being directed into low paid work and sunset industries such as manufacturing (Spoonley 2015, Stead and Altman 2019). Combined with government policies and systems that have long marginalised and disadvantaged Pasifika (TSI and MBIE 2018, Treasury 2018), the result is high levels of Pasifika poverty and indebtedness, a low asset base and low social mobility.

The Pasifika community is the face of the low-paid working poor in Aotearoa, with many 'aiga working multiple jobs for minimal pay (Auckland Council, 2015; Cheung, 2007; Signal et al., 2012; Treasury, 2018). Pre-covid, there was a \$17,700 gap between Pasifika and non-Pasifika incomes in Auckland (Census 2018). People in low paid jobs also tend to miss out on social services and career support, which targets those not in work.

The social impacts of not having enough income are often masked and absorbed by Pasifika communities themselves, through strong social networks, mutual aid, unpaid work (Ministry of Pacific Peoples 2021), community redistribution and entrenching private debt.

Socioeconomic transformation for Pasifika will require many large and small structural shifts. Pasifika mindsets can also shift to become more self-determining: “It's in the Pacific culture to go with the flow, sometimes we just stay in places instead of looking for our next opportunity. There's a self-belief that we need to encourage”.



# Challenged, but hopeful

**Covid has amplified an inadequate income situation and toxic stresses for many Pasifika 'aiga. This has been compounded by intense cost of living pressures, and especially housing costs, bills, childcare, food and petrol. Social services are stretched: "Often when we refer people there is a long lag to get support, as social services are over capacity too".**

The labour market is currently favouring job seekers, but this may change if future monetary policy reduces employment levels to curb inflation. Pasifika continue to be hampered by the structural issues already noted and by employer bias. Readiness for workforce progression is a two way street - while we are seeing growing employer openness and readiness to employ Pasifika, retention can be an issue as in-work support systems are not typically in place, especially for women, who tend to hold more family responsibilities.

Regardless, Uptempo 'aiga remain hopeful about their futures and are keen to bring forth their natural strengths and potential to grow intergenerational wealth.

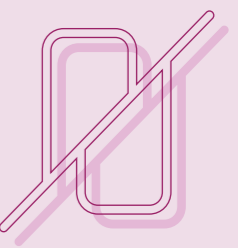


# Approach

Our Uptempo team has been exploring how to enable 'aiga readiness for workforce progression since August 2021 by:

Working directly with  
**80+**  
'aiga and key partners

Interviews with  
**10**  
'aiga about their readiness journey in August 2022

Uptempo data and team  
  
reflections and learning sessions



# The Uptempo 'aiga journey

## Connect with 'aiga

- 01 TSI
- The Fono
- First Union
- Word of mouth

Refer to other services if not ready for Uptempo.

## Onboard 02

Onboard 'aiga, identify all 'aiga needing Uptempo support, complete registration form over time, introduce to Uptempo Village (see next page).

## Family Plan 03

Is developed through Pathway Plans and Wellbeing Assessment.



## Career diagnosis and Upskill 04

Identify possible employment pathways, widen possibilities, upskill and grow confidence and sense of value in job market.

## 08 Support and Sustain

Provide post-employment support.

## 07 Prototype

Innovative ideas and opportunities with 'aiga.

## 06 Negotiate and Employ

Connect employees to 'Good Employers' and help negotiate higher pay, good working conditions and pathway to progression.

## 05 Job Brokering, Coaching, Mentoring

Through our Employment Innovator and Social Labour Supply.

## Sorting basics and wraparound support

Access to Discretionary Fund and wraparound support as needed (via The Fono). Laptop, 12 month internet access and internet support (with partner AskQ).

# The Uptempo village

New Zealand Government



**Innovation specialist**  
Uptempo

**Data & evidence**  
Uptempo

**Malatest and Sapere**  
(Research & evaluation)  
Partner

**Manager**  
Uptempo

**Aiga Facilitators**  
Uptempo



**Employment innovator**  
Uptempo

**Social Labour Supply**  
Partner

**Job Detective**  
Uptempo

**Business analyst**  
Uptempo

**Digital partner - AskQ**  
Partner

## Uptempo team



ANNA-JANE EDWARDS



FRANCIS VESETOLU



ANTONIA LILI'I



MOSESE RIGAMOTO



ARANUI TITIMANU



SETEUATI MAU



KITT ISIDRO



TZE MING MOK

# Learning about the Uptempo process

*“Many ‘aiga come with fear, anxiety, uncertainty. Through their stories we identify strengths”.*

It takes time to build a full picture of an ‘aiga through visits, phone calls and talanoa (this can take a year or more). The whole ‘aiga should be involved in the wellbeing assessment and pathway plan process.

We have learned that if core social needs aren't addressed then progressing in work is very challenging. Two common needs are housing and childcare:

*“Can someone get into work or training with no housing security? We are finding that you can't. Housing and childcare costs keep coming up as two major barriers to workforce progression”.*

Many ‘aiga are now coming to Uptempo via word of mouth and this can accelerate the process as some trust already exists. We are currently exploring potential to source ‘aiga via church networks and are looking for more employers to partner with.



*“Food parcels are a massive support to families, also the Discretionary Fund and connecting ‘aiga to support services”.*



The Discretionary Fund (up to \$2,000 per ‘aiga to help meet basic needs and address barriers) is a key attractor and valued support for ‘aiga.

To help our team gauge ‘aiga readiness, we have developed a traffic light system to indicate where an ‘aiga is at on their readiness journey.

# ‘Aiga readiness indicators



These indicators are not an assessment process – they just help to paint a picture to guide our team's thinking. Our Uptempo values guide our conversations with ‘aiga and sometimes an ‘aiga who is not initially ready can come back to us after a key need has been met, such as secure housing. Our partnership with The Fono plays an important role in meeting those key needs.



**Red**  
NOT YET READY

- High social needs e.g. housing, sickness, many dependents
- In crisis, living hand to mouth, can't plan ahead
- Heavily benefit dependent (especially sole parents)
- Mental health, addictions, family violence
- Convictions (judgement used here)
- Lack of transport, driver's license
- Disengaged, no motivation, not responding

**REFER TO THE FONO FOR SUPPORT**



**Orange**  
MAYBE READY

- Lack of ‘aiga support
- Juggling childcare or finding work that fits with family needs
- Have desire but don't know how to start or what to do
- Low confidence, hesitant
- Low expectations, not seeing potential or options
- Not speaking up, settling
- Not knowing their worth
- Putting the needs of others first

**TEAM DISCUSSION TO DECIDE WHETHER TO TAKE ON OR REFER TO THE FONO**



**Green**  
READY

- ‘Aiga support and shared goals
- Strong motivators – children, illness in household, needing money, supporting family in the islands, desire to contribute, seeing others succeed
- Setting goals and opening up to possibility, seeing potential
- Just need finer details e.g. CV, drivers license, interviewing skills

**GOOD TO GO ON UPTEMPO JOURNEY**



# What readiness looks like for 'aiga

'Aiga are telling us that these are things that help them to be ready to progress in work.



## Motivators and self-belief

- Wanting better for my kids/'aiga
- Seeing people like me who have great jobs
- Being open to new opportunities
- Knowing my strengths, passions and goals
- Being supported to assess our wellbeing as an 'aiga, tell our story and to dream.



## Skills and connections

- Upskilling:  
"Getting my degree was a game changer!"
- Training
- Broadening social networks:  
"Having people who knew the jobs and had contacts was great!"



## Knowledge and encouragement

- Understanding my options
- Actively looking for opportunities:  
"I have learned that I need to ask for help more. Sometimes I don't want to be a burden and that's why I don't ask for help much".
- Positive people in and out of my family who encourage and keep me on track.

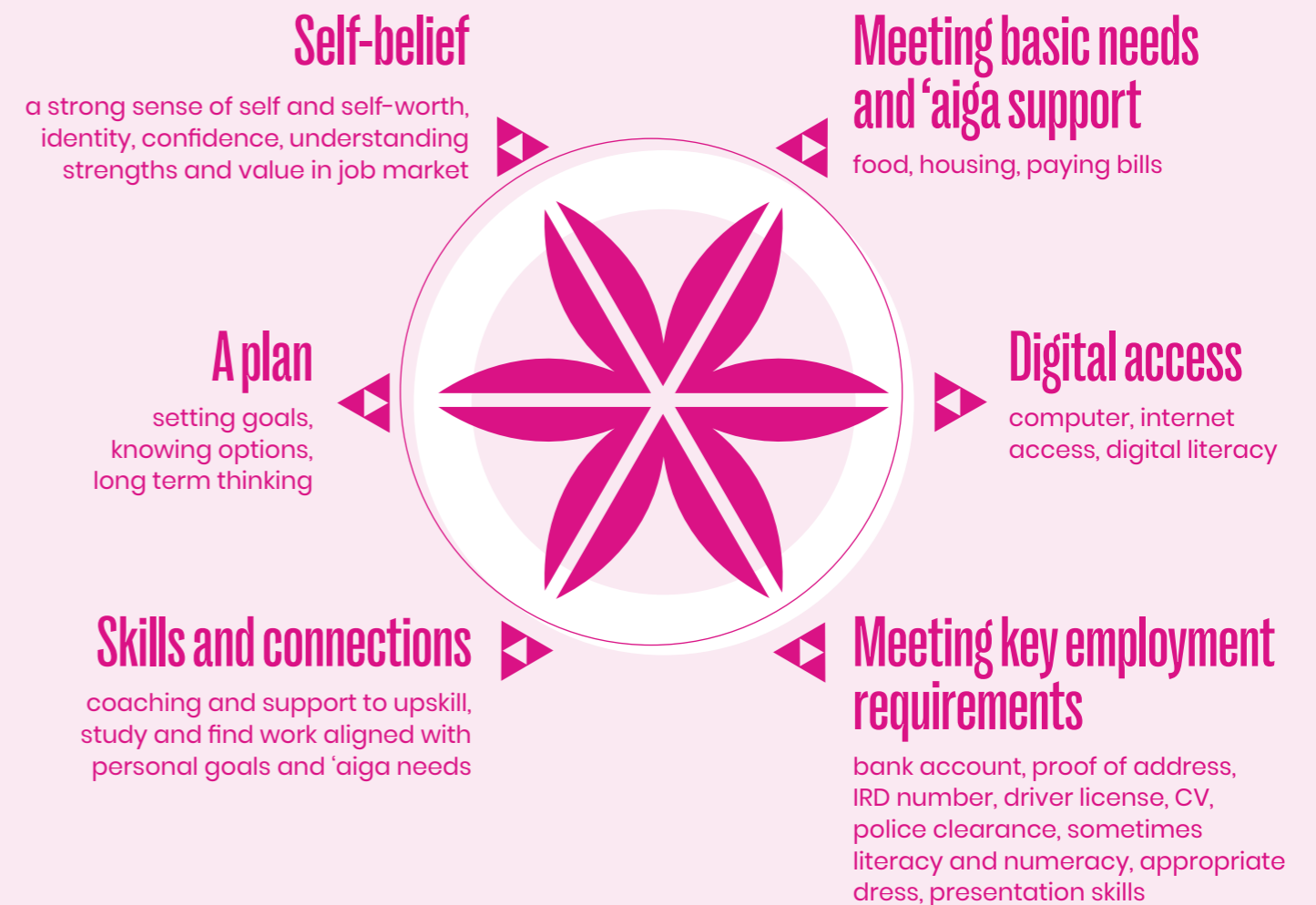


## Practical and material support

- Driver licensing
- CV and job applications
- A computer
- Internet access
- Help to pay a bill or meet a basic need.

# Readiness accelerators

These are the key elements we are seeing that accelerate 'aiga readiness for workforce progression.



"Uptempo was able to help with path plans which allowed me to put my goals on paper for the first time".

# Learning – how to support readiness

*“Aiga hold their own solutions”*

## ‘Aiga can...

- Be open to possibility
- Identify their strengths, aspirations and what holds them back
- Work to get basic needs met and out of crisis before seeking to progress in work
- Grow their networks of support (e.g. join union)
- Seek personal and professional development opportunities and take appropriate opportunities offered
- Encourage, support and push each other to have the courage to try

## Intermediaries can ...

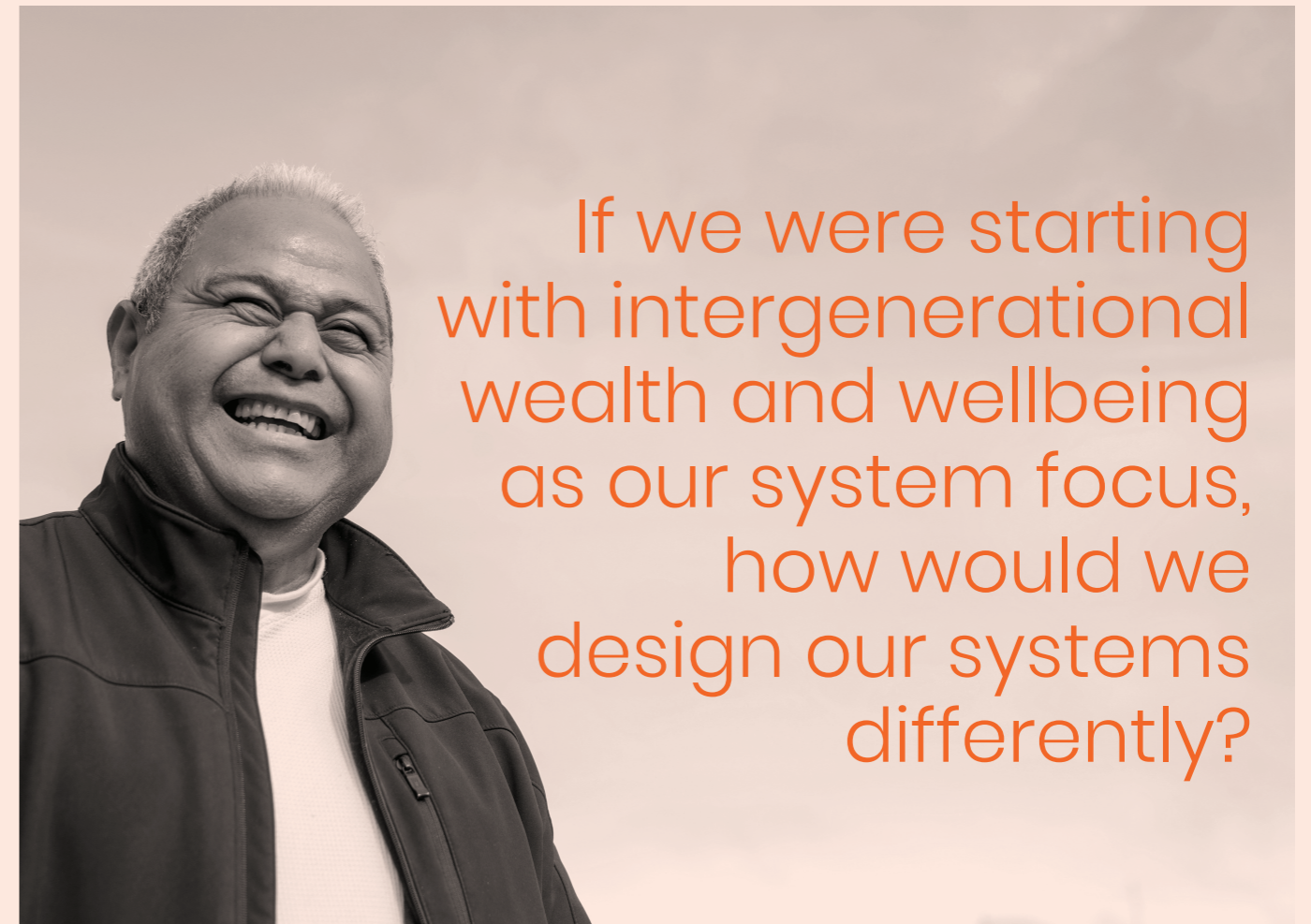
- Identify aspirations and match employment pathways to them
- Help ‘aiga unlearn years of conditioning about self-worth, strengths, value, self-limiting beliefs
- Give heads-up to employers about what is happening for ‘aiga
- Provide more coaching on how to talk about money and negotiate pay
- Continue mentoring and support post placement
- Be straight up about what can/should happen, push people
- Check our own bias and assumptions
- Walk alongside ‘aiga for the long haul

## Employers can...

- Promote from within their existing Pasifika workforce (often better for productivity and acceptance)
- Recruit differently - talanoa style interview process, with culturally competent and relational people conducting the screening and interview process
- Provide guidance on interview process and questions, so people can prepare well
- Seek to know more about potential Pasifika employees coming to them, including their strengths, challenges and backstory
- Check their bias and assumptions, using tools like the Uptempo Good Employer Matrix.

# System implications

*“When people are in crisis we automatically pivot to helping them to survive. We need to get past that frame of survival to an intentional frame of growing intergenerational wealth and wellbeing”.*

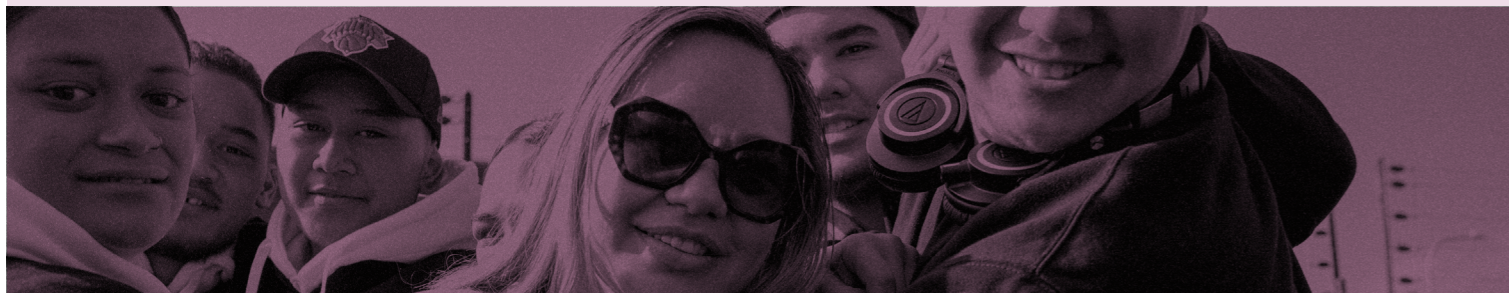


If we were starting with intergenerational wealth and wellbeing as our system focus, how would we design our systems differently?

# 01. Centre Pasifika values in system responses

Promote and prioritise Pasifika cultural values in our system responses to support intergenerational wealth and wellbeing through these values shifts:

Individual self-interest	▶▶▶▶	Whole 'aiga, community and collective interest
Individual wealth	▶▶▶▶	Shared wealth
Leading from services and 'experts'	▶▶▶▶	Leading from families and co-creating solutions
Deficit and needs based	▶▶▶▶	Strengths and aspiration based
Short term	▶▶▶▶	Intergenerational
Fragmented services	▶▶▶▶	More holistic support
Measuring what matters to system	▶▶▶▶	Measuring what matters to 'aiga



# 02. Commission differently

Revise specific government agency commissioning criteria for investment and procurement of employment support for Pasifika 'aiga to prioritise:



- Pasifika-led providers, while building cultural capacity of mainstream organisations at the same time – a 'twin track' approach while Pasifika-led provision strengthens
- Provision of quality work and progression opportunities for Pasifika rather than 'any job'
- Whole of 'aiga and strengths based approaches
- Ground to system approaches where 'aiga voice is driving service design
- More integrated and faster family/'aiga, learning and employment support (prototyping this with The Fono and Uptempo)
- Readiness accelerators (see below)
- Capabilities and incentives across the ecosystem to support these criteria

Changing commissioning in line with the above is an urgent need: our future workforce is increasingly brown and we have a growing retirement age population creating skill gaps which our young people need to fill. One way to address this is to quickly transition Pasifika working poor and young people into quality work in sunrise industries (these are growth industries that are resilient to shocks, see Uptempo's Pasifika-centred learning insights report for more on this). Uptempo partners, such as MBIE and MSD, have an important role to play in leading new ways of commissioning.



## 03. Resource accelerators of 'aiga readiness

Pasifika uptake of much existing social support and workforce training is low as the access barriers are too high. For Pasifika working in low-paid roles, increase investment in:



- Short term, fast, easily accessible discretionary support options to address basic needs getting in the way of accessing employment, that are designed with and work for Pasifika families (prototype these with The Fono and Uptempo)
- Pathway planning, which includes whole 'aiga and career planning
- Computer and internet access and digital training
- 'Aiga and employment coaches working in tandem, that link 'aiga to social and employment support, including flexible childcare and work options
- Support to upskill while in work:  
*"I'm going to get all the training I can so I'm an asset to the business I'm working for and they want to pay me more"*



## 04. Immediate opportunities

The Uptempo team is learning what it takes to support Pasifika to progress in work. Here are some opportunities that existing programmes can explore, that are likely to make a big difference:



- Actively support Pasifika people into higher paid work who have been in their roles for a long time, have multiple jobs and/or are working 60-70 hour weeks for low pay
- Provide Uptempo type employment support for 'aiga that have identified the economic domain as their priority through Whanau Ora
- Promote Uptempo's Good Employer Matrix standards to employers and identify employers willing to proactively employ more Pasifika people
- Not every job is a good job. Leverage key growth industries that are resilient to shocks (what Uptempo calls 'sunrise industries') to support Pasifika into higher paid roles and work with employers that meet the Uptempo Good Employer Matrix standards



# 05. Pasifika learning platform

Continue to invest in culturally grounded, coordinated learning about what it takes to grow Pasifika intergenerational wealth and wellbeing

What does it look like to put Pasifika intergenerational wealth and wellbeing at the centre of system responses?

How might we grow an ecosystem of integrated Pasifika providers?



How might we develop more holistic approaches to accelerating 'aiga readiness in and across localities, involving employers, 'aiga, government, service providers and intermediaries/partners?

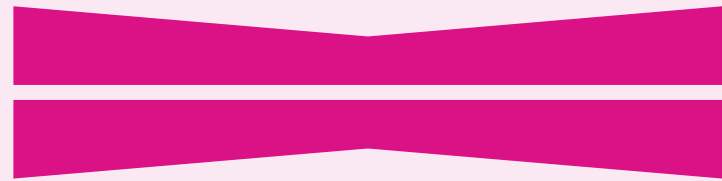
How do we shift what is valued and measured by funders of employment programmes to ensure they track and measure the right things?

# Summary - System Shifts Required

Centre intergenerational wealth and wellbeing as the purpose of our systems, especially in the design and commissioning of Active Labour Market Interventions.



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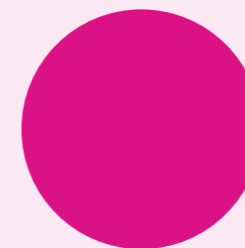
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