

UPTEMPO

System Levers for Pasifika In-Work Progression

PART ONE

April 2023

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UPTEMPO

Learning how to grow Pasifika intergenerational wealth

Uptempo is a learning incubator for transformative systems change for Pasifika peoples in Aotearoa. Uptempo works directly with 80+ Pasifika 'aiga (families) and partners with government, community organisations and education providers to test ways to grow Pasifika intergenerational wealth and wellbeing.

A priority group for Uptempo is Pasifika low-income households¹ with members working long hours in low-paid jobs - and particularly families with children, for whom in-work poverty is especially pronounced (Plum & Pacheco 2019a).

A key means to shift Pasifika households out of financial struggle is to ensure working household members progress into higher paid work. This report focuses attention on this issue and identifies system levers to accelerate Pasifika in-work progression.

The report presents:

- Drivers of Pasifika income inequality and in-work poverty.
- The current support picture for Pasifika in-work progression.
- What Uptempo is learning about current system deficiencies, from supporting 'aiga with in-work progression.



- Key system levers for a transformative Pasifika in-work progression approach.

Appendix One gives an overview of how Uptempo 'aiga are progressing to date. Appendix Two provides a case study of one Uptempo 'aiga member's experience of in-work progression, via Uptempo support.

To inform this report we reviewed key literature, analysed evidence of shifts and learning emerging through our work with 'aiga and partners in South and West Auckland, and held learning sessions with our Uptempo team.

¹ StatsNZ estimates that 52.0% of Pasifika (237,000 people) are in the bottom two fifths of the country's disposable income distribution, which, by definition, should only cover 40.0% of the spread. i.e. Pasifika are heavily overrepresented at the bottom end of the income scale - e.g. by contrast only 38.8% of Pakeha households are in these two bottom income quintiles, slightly underrepresented.

Drivers of Pasifika income inequality and in-work poverty

The burden of Aotearoa New Zealand's income inequality is falling most markedly on Pasifika communities, who suffer the largest wage and wealth gaps among the country's key ethnic populations (Plum & Pacheco 2019a). In their empirical analysis of ethnic pay gaps in 2022, Cochrane and Pacheco found that:

For every \$1 a Pakeha man earns...



A Pasifika man earns
\$0.81c



A Pasifika woman earns
\$0.75c

This ratio of unequal pay is slow moving and hasn't changed for Pasifika versus NZ European in over a decade (Treasury 2018). In 2018, Pasifika had the highest rates of in-work poverty² nationally, with Pasifika children in particular heavily impacted (Plum & Pacheco 2019a):



in-work Pasifika households
below poverty line
(2018)



Pasifika children in working households
below poverty line
(2018)

This disparity has stemmed from government policy concentrating Pasifika in low-paid occupations. Aotearoa New Zealand's colonial labour migration policies actively imported Pasifika peoples into the working class from the 1950s, to fill a labour shortage for low-paid roles including shift work, factory work, assembly line production, processing and cleaning. When the 1973 global recession hit, Pasifika were scapegoated for rising unemployment, culminating in the 1974-1976 Dawn Raids³. Many Pasifika remain clustered in lower paid occupations, with Pasifika men most likely to work in the manufacturing industry, and Pasifika women in health care and social assistance (Cochrane & Pacheco 2022).

Pasifika paths to social mobility, particularly through home-ownership and the education system, were further restricted by neoliberal reforms from the late 1980s onwards. Most notably, the Pacific Pay Gap Inquiry found that while concentration in lower-wage industries, occupations and education attainment explain some of why Pacific people earn less than non-Pacific in Aotearoa New Zealand, the major drivers are discrimination (racism and sexism), unconscious bias and non-monetary preferences (Cochrane & Pacheco, 2022).

² The household poverty line is 60% or less of equivalised median household income (Plum & Pacheco 2019b). A household is 'in-work' if one or more adults aged 18-65 years is receiving wages or salary for seven or more months of the year.

³ See <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/culture/dawn-raids>. The New Zealand Government **formally apologised** to Pasifika peoples for the Dawn Raids in 2021.



Pasifika children in New Zealand are especially affected by income deprivation and intergenerational inequality (Moana Connect 2023):



Pasifika children live in **material hardship**



Pasifika children live with **food insecurity**

One in six Pasifika young people aged 15-24 are not in work, training or education; twice the level than for non-Pasifika. While a quarter of this group are caring for children or elders, a significant number are not engaged in any activity (Moana Connect 2023).

Other contributors to Pasifika in-work poverty and financial hardship include (Plum & Pacheco 2019a; Families Commission 2012):



Larger household sizes



More one-income households with young children



More people **aged below 25 years** and **over 55 years** in Pasifika households



Lower rates of home ownership
- only 17.3% of in-work poor Pasifika households



Higher debt levels via high interest loan providers



Longer spells below the official **poverty line** for Pasifika households

All of this creates intergenerational ripple effects for Pasifika children and families in terms of health outcomes, education, social mobility, civic participation and participation in sports and arts (Moana Connect 2023). Breaking these cycles through lifting Pasifika household incomes and growing pathways to intergenerational wealth creation is Uptempo's focus.

Current government support for Pasifika in-work progression

Systematic barriers to job progression, promotion and upskilling perpetuate a low-income trap for many Pasifika households (Came et al., 2020; The Southern Initiative & Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, 2018; Uptempo, 2022a). Pasifika women are also promoted less than men (Cochrane & Pacheco 2022).

Government support around employment and training generally targets people who are not in work. Government investment in alleviating in-work poverty has focused on lifting household incomes above the poverty line through Working For Families⁴ payments and the Accommodation Supplement.

There are currently no systematic mechanisms to support low-waged employed people to transition into higher paid work, to lift their household out of financial struggle. Supplementing low-incomes through social support payments to stave off poverty is absolutely necessary, but is often not enough to meet basic household needs, especially given high housing costs, Covid-19 impacts, cost of living increases and the recent global inflation crisis. Government policy dependence on this approach alone, which ultimately subsidises a low wage economy and low wage employers, perpetuates inequality.

In terms of existing government support for low-income, working Pasifika households, while some Uptempo 'aiga do access this support, Uptempo is seeing that for many 'aiga:

1. they don't know what support they are entitled to
2. they have been rebuffed when seeking this support
3. they find this support hard to access in terms of where to start and how to navigate the process.

Many working 'aiga do not meet the criteria for government support, as they may have one member who earns well, but is the only person working in a large household.

Uptempo has found that Pasifika 'aiga uptake of existing government-supported workforce training is low, as the access barriers are too high (Uptempo October 2022b p22). For many Pasifika people stagnating in low-paid jobs, individual workforce progression feels challenging as:

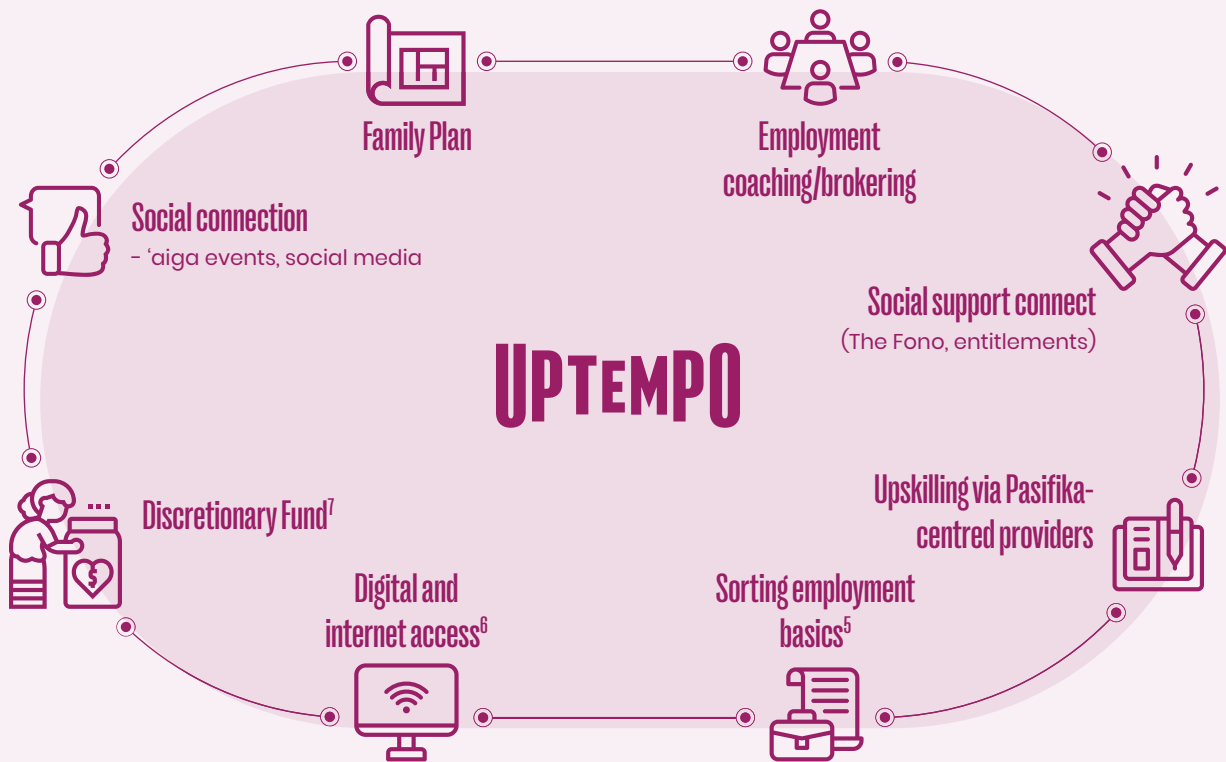
- Their job progression and upskilling pathways aren't made clear to them by employers. They may lack confidence or need encouragement and support to identify progression options independently.
- Their employer is not proactive and has no incentive to progress them or other low-paid staff; in fact their incentive is to pay low and to keep low-paid staff where they are.
- Working long hours provides little time for extra study or training, or there are concerns about losing income to upskill to transition into a new job.

⁴ See <https://www.ird.govt.nz/working-for-families/about>.

There are four types of Working for Families payments, including Best Start, for families supporting a new-born baby.

Uptempo learning from supporting 'aiga with in-work progression

Uptempo uses a range of tools that are missing in the current government support system, to progress 'aiga in low-paid work. These have been effective for supporting Uptempo 'aiga to advance (see Appendix One for Uptempo 'aiga progression), and include:



When working with 'aiga, Uptempo and its partners take a holistic 'village' approach. This approach creates bandwidth for the family by buffering stressors, reducing barriers to progression, and giving 'aiga space to think and plan. For an example of how Uptempo supports people to progress while they are in work, see Appendix Two for a case study.



5 Employment basics include a CV, driver's license, bank account, IRD number, language and interviewing skills.
 6 Uptempo provides each 'aiga with a computer, one year's internet access and computer training support.
 7 Flexible and accessible funding of up to \$2,000 to cover shortfalls and meet unexpected costs.

Uptempo is seeing that:

01



Pasifika who are ready to progress are often being overlooked and undervalued at work.

For complex reasons, often linked to intergenerational experience, some 'aiga may feel that it is safer to stay in a low-paid job, be risk averse, have low expectations of reward, lack self-confidence or place their hopes for better onto the next generation. This is compounded by employer reluctance and/or bias and access barriers to upskilling.

02



Complex family situations need tailored whole of 'aiga responses to lift household income, and integrated brokering and coaching models.

Uptempo works best with a collective case management or 'village' approach, when it connects 'aiga with Uptempo partners and with other 'aiga. This goes much further than the 'single navigator' approach typically used in Whānau Ora services.

03



Clear training and development pathways to progress in work, and digital, financial and coaching support to access them, are the missing piece.

Culturally aware, integrated, Pasifika-centred support is needed for people to upskill, including encouragement, mentoring, confidence building, and safe spaces to help people to move forward. Success in personal career journeys is not just 'getting a better job', but 'aiga independently managing their career path.

04



Pasifika social networks and community leaders can also promote in-work progression.

Uptempo is working on growing a movement for people to support themselves and each other, through:

- sharing 'aiga success stories of workforce progression
- promoting good employers, training opportunities and sunrise industries
- promoting the importance of union membership
- promoting adult education
- informing people about how to access government support for working families.

Church networks, community leaders and social media have key roles to play in this movement.

Key system levers for a transformative Pasifika in-work progression approach

Uptempo 'aiga journeys towards intergenerational wealth and wellbeing reflect a need in Aotearoa to **reintroduce greater income equality and social mobility as government investment priorities**, as part of the country's path towards a high wage, upskilled, highly productive and socially equitable economy.

This requires **mindset and policy shifts from individuals to families, from short term to intergenerational**, and to **prioritising in-work progression as a longer-term solution to poverty and cyclical unemployment**.

Uptempo's wraparound support, including financial support, creates **bandwidth** for struggling 'aiga to lift their gaze **beyond survival**, drawing on **collective dreams** to plan and take steps **towards intergenerational prosperity**. In a similar vein, Uptempo seeks to lift the government's gaze **beyond the now** of income supplements for poor households, **towards making social mobility for intergenerational equity the collective goal** of social and economic agencies.

Recommendations: Six system levers to accelerate Pasifika in-work progression

- 1. Broaden access to the Flexi wage and Training Incentive Allowance, student allowances and other existing upskilling support mechanisms to help progress Pasifika in low-paid work.** When setting eligibility criteria, take household circumstances into account. Consider raising these allowances for those supporting children and elders (See System Levers Part 2 report).
- 2. Government investment in holistic 'aiga work brokers targeting Pasifika in low-paid work, to make supported transitions to higher paid work.** These culturally-centred brokers would work in a team-based way with social service and wellbeing providers, providing 'aiga path planning, connection to entitlements, upskilling, digital access, flexible financial support, pastoral care, placement in higher paid roles and pathways to home ownership and intergenerational wealth creation. This will require:
 - 2a.** Coordination of cross-government funding streams to culturally competent providers, currently best represented by Whānau Ora services such as The Fono and Pasifika Futures.
 - 2b.** These wellbeing providers partner with community-based, culturally competent workforce intermediaries as part of the 'village' approach, or incorporate similar services.
 - 2c.** Prioritising areas with high Pasifika populations such as South and West Auckland and targeting industries and employers with high concentrations of Pasifika in low-paid roles.
 - 2d.** Wrapping evaluation and learning partnerships around this holistic, 'aiga based approach.

3. Promote and incentivise employer adoption of the **Great Employer Matrix⁸, to develop and spread good practice on Pasifika workplace equity in recruitment and progression.**

4. Resource a lead agency to coordinate the plugging of skills gaps and take a collective approach to progressing Pasifika in key industries. This would include providing more real world, relevant industry training, and bringing together all the pieces of the pipeline, from schools, to culturally competent training providers, Workforce Development Councils, government agencies, large employers and industry bodies.

5. Implement mandatory pay transparency reporting. Uptempo endorses the strong and growing calls for this to occur⁹ (Mind the Gap 2022, Pacific Pay Gap Inquiry 2022, Moana Connect 2023), to address persistent pay gaps and income inequalities, by spotlighting ongoing racism and systemic bias in pay decisions (Moana Connect 2023).

6. Invest in peer-to-peer initiatives leveraging Pasifika social networks and social capital to embed intergenerational mindset shifts around career progression. Learning from Covid-19 campaigns, these initiatives would utilise social media, churches and community leaders to reinforce messages about upskilling and in-work progression models that work for Pasifika.



Additional structural changes to improve Pasifika intergenerational wealth generation and wellbeing include lifting the minimum wage to the living wage; raising income support for working families (for example by increasing Working for Families payments); and introducing a universal basic income.

⁸ The Great Employer Matrix (GEM) initial testing version was provided to employer partners in February 2023, and is available on request from Uptempo. GEM targets are currently being tested with partners, and case studies arising from this will form part of a GEM toolkit to be released in late 2023.

⁹ See for example <https://www.mindthegap.nz/>.

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Uptempo 'aiga progress snapshot

Uptempo draws on The Southern Initiative's Hautū Waka methodology to signpost progress in learning and innovation. Hautū Waka was developed by TSI mātauranga Māori innovators' Roimata Taniwha-Paoa and Ayla Hoeta, alongside Matua Rereata Makiha¹⁰. The same methodology has been adapted for this rapid retrospective snapshot of Uptempo individual and 'aiga progress in their career progression journeys.

While mātauranga Māori-based, the Hautū Waka navigational techniques and metaphors have roots in the wider seafaring Pasifika culture of Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa.

Due to disruption from Covid lockdowns in 2020 and 2021, there were limitations on baseline data gathering for Uptempo's earliest cohorts. As such, this snapshot is based on a summary of qualitative retrospective assessment by Uptempo's 'aiga facilitators using the Hautū Waka journey stages, until more self-reported data is systematically gathered from 'aiga. The Hautū Waka scale will also be used with 'aiga when they complete their Uptempo support.

A visual snapshot of the overall progress of the 2021 Uptempo cohort is provided, as assessed by their Uptempo family facilitators and mapped against the Hautū Waka navigational signposts. All individual cases registered in 2021 are represented, whether retained or not in the Uptempo programme.

As we can see, the vast majority of 'aiga who were registered in 2021 have made progress in their journeys towards prosperity. A majority moved from a place of very low bandwidth and confidence towards personal transformation and meaningful refocusing of their life-plans.

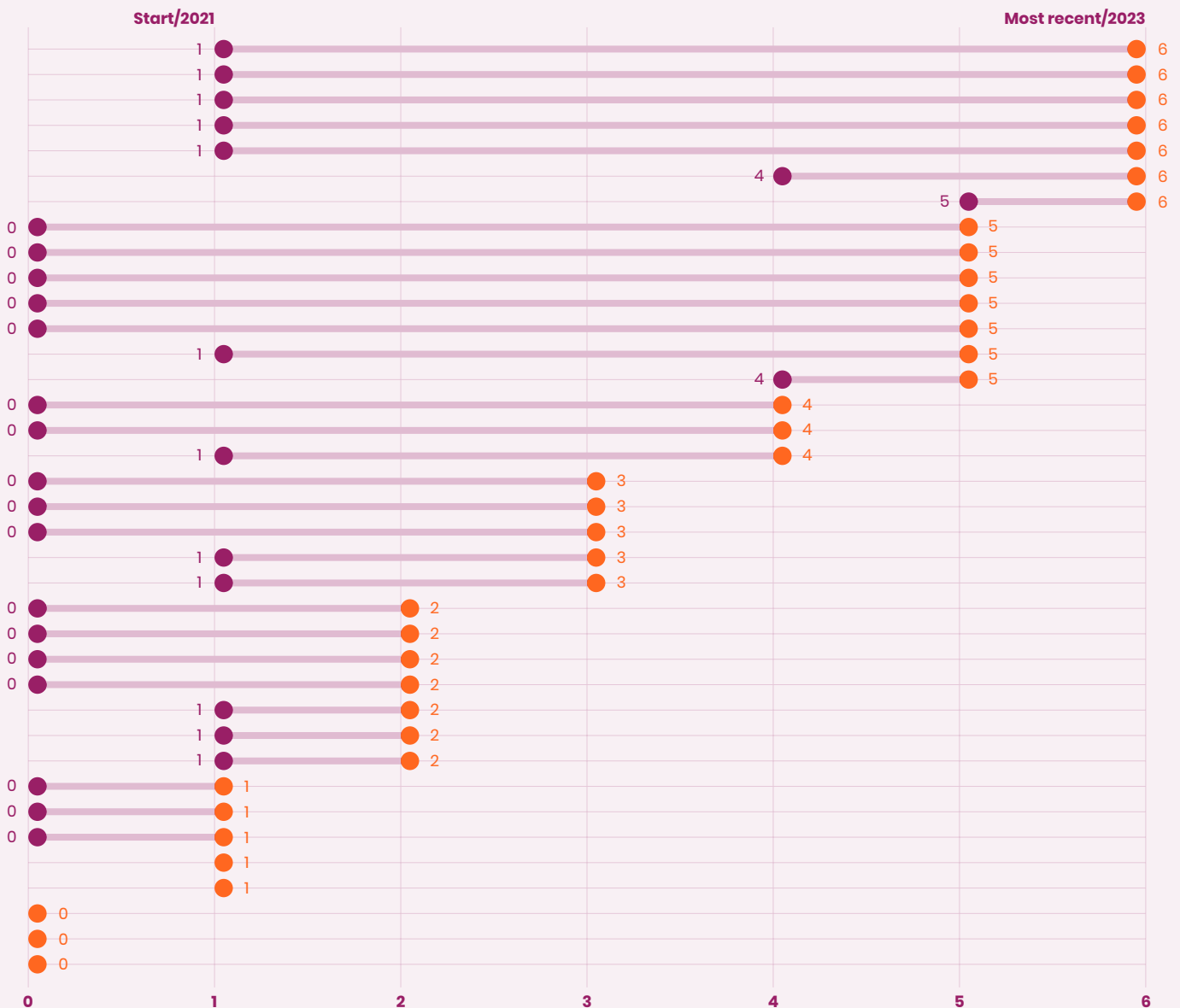


¹⁰ See <https://www.aucklandco-lab.nz/resources-summary/hautu-waka>

Uptempo 2021 cohort:

Distance travelled in 2 years

'Aiga facilitators drew on their deep knowledge of their 'aiga, including family plan progress, to estimate where individuals were at in their Hautū Waka journeys at their first contact with Uptempo, and at their most recent contact.



Case study: Francis' journey

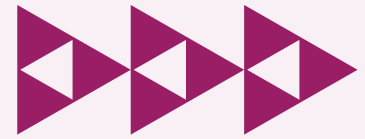
This case study from the 2021 cohort demonstrates in more detail the use of the Hautū Waka methodology to understand 'aiga progress. It also summarises insights and implications for how the wider system needs to change. Francis is a pseudonym and personally identifying details have been removed for this anonymous case study. **Read across both pages.**

HAUTŪ WAKA STAGES

WHAKARITERITE:
Getting ready for the voyage

TE RAPUNGA:
Venturing into the unknown

FOCUS FOR 'AIGA	INERTIA	BANDWIDTH	BRAVERY
FRANCIS' JOURNEY	<p>Strong work foundations, but not confident to shift out of his job.</p> <p>He felt secure staying put, but tried to maintain the relationship with Uptempo by referring his older children, who didn't actually need support.</p>	<p>New stressors at home meant low bandwidth for talking about or planning for change. He had to move house, and his wife was on ACC after an injury in an unsupportive workplace. Francis was working a second job to bring in more money.</p>	<p>Push factors/change motivators: When the status quo gets disturbed/unsettled.</p> <p>Following a firearms incident, Francis was spooked and wanted out of Security.</p>
WHAT UPTEMPO DID AND LEARNED	<p>The goal of the Uptempo team was to lift Francis' aspirations to higher paid work and more senior roles, to achieve intergenerational prosperity. Enrolled in an upskilling course and engaged Francis with 'aiga nights focused on career progression.</p>	<p>Team coordination over discretionary fund to support the home shift, to create some bandwidth for preparatory training – rather than pushing into work plans straight away. Uptempo team also was able to support Francis's wife with union advice about her employment situation, give a lot of moral support, and include her in the job support service.</p>	<p>Team and Francis identified that he lacked the confidence to jump into a new industry straight away, and they worked on his confidence by encouraging him into some foundational financial courses with a culturally competent Pasifika provider.</p>
COMPARE: Likely outcome of typical system response	<p>No action typically taken for someone in work on minimum wage. No service for this.</p>	<p>Likely no extra support for someone in work. Whole of family support approach around work, housing, workplace disputes, and career advancement does not exist.</p>	<p>Likely no extra support. No supported service for career change and progression for low-income working families.</p>
KEY INSIGHTS	<p>Pasifika with potential to progress are being overlooked and undervalued at work, including by themselves. Recurring themes mirroring prior research: safety, risk aversion, low expectations of reward, and hopes displaced onto the next generation (without asking them).</p>	<p>Creating bandwidth for 'aiga is effective through a team or 'village' approach. Nurturing the vā collectively of relationships with 'aiga, the team reflected that "we are the bandwidth"; acting as a buffer for the burden of daily stressors and giving 'aiga space to think and plan.</p>	<p>Realisation that risk is everywhere: 'Aiga prioritise safety over risk-taking, but may not be as safe as they thought when the unexpected happens, tipping the balance when weighing the risks of change now vs the potential of future security. This can prompt the risk-averse to make changes.</p>



TE KITENGA:

Sighting tohu, using different perspectives to give an indication of direction

TE WHĀINGA:

Digging deeper into meaning of tohu for true understanding, and confidence in direction

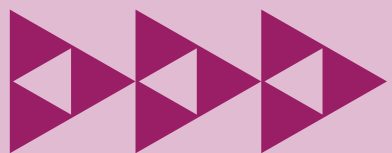
TE WHIWHINGA:

Closer look at tohu, goal in sight, a lot of work to be done to verify and confirm knowledge

TE RAWENGA!:

Celebrate, reflect, acknowledge tohu

GOALS	TRANSFORMATION	LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCING	VALIDATION
<p>Pull factors: Shifting horizons</p> <p>The 'path to homeownership' course connected with his aspirations, as owning a home is associated with a secure future. It clicked for Francis during the course that it was better to have one job than two, due to secondary income tax, so it made more sense for him to look for a higher paid job.</p>	<p>Francis became inspired at the Uptempo 'aiga meetup by collective aspirations – he decided he wanted to become an advocate for Māori and Pasifika progression.</p> <p>He was also inspired by the collective Pasifika learning approach in the trainings, which gave him the confidence to aspire higher and take concrete action, through mutual support, learning, solidarity and accountability.</p>	<p>He went through recruitment processes for two jobs at significantly higher pay, but pulled out at very late stages for both, including after actually landing one job. It was only through the process of interviewing and learning more about these jobs, that he realised that they were not what he really wanted. Experiencing the recruitment processes gave him the confidence to make these choices for himself.</p>	<p>Becoming a self-starter: Francis realised after he went for other jobs, that he wanted to stay in the security industry, but progress to senior roles. He applied on his own steam for a more senior job with his current employer. Uptempo supported him through the process, and he landed the job. He said he would never have considered applying for senior roles without his Uptempo experiences.</p> <p>His pay has gone up by nearly \$10 an hour.</p>
<p>Uptempo continued focusing on building Francis' confidence and expanding his horizons through foundational courses and engaging him more in the Uptempo 'village' such as through 'aiga events organised by Uptempo. Culturally competent Pasifika training providers were particularly effective with 'aiga.</p>	<p>All 'aiga and the support team are part of the Uptempo 'village'. Uptempo found it worked best with strong collective case management, compared with the single 'navigator' approach – there are a wider range of supports to coordinate than in typical Whānau Ora services. Uptempo also saw that 'aiga events are strong opportunities for collective learning and workshops.</p>	<p>Uptempo maintained contact and the relationship, encouraging honest conversations about the reasons behind his withdrawal, and continuing to support his 'aiga. Trust continued to build. Maintaining the relationship without judgement or punitive response meant that the Uptempo team eventually fully understood and supported his choices and pathway.</p>	<p>Uptempo learned from Francis' experience. The job innovator revised his view of the potential of security industry pathways into higher paid work, and the team is adapting to investigate and assess 'aiga-led career choices with good progression pathways, to complement Uptempo priority pathways.</p>
<p>Likely no extra support. No supported service for moving into home-ownership for low-income working families, such as a focus on career progression to boost income and savings.</p>	<p>No universal services of this nature for those already in work. Those for unemployed would likely take an individualistic approach to motivational courses, and might not refer to providers with Pasifika cultural competence, meaning greater risk of disengagement and low completion/effectiveness.</p>	<p>No universal services of this nature for those already in work. Government work brokerage for unemployed people may have responded with a punitive or negative response, due to being seen as 'ghosting', disengagement or non-compliance.</p>	<p>Realistically, he would still be on minimum wage in his previous job/s as he would not have been supported to make any changes. If he had been offered job brokerage and was pushed into one of the other roles instead of the one he went for himself, his pay would still be around five dollars less.</p>
<p>Concrete motivation</p> <p>Homeownership is often identified by 'aiga as a marker of future security. Getting exposure to the details of how to get on that pathway to security is a lever for change.</p> <p>Exposure to new ideas at the right time has impact.</p>	<p>Key to empowering 'aiga-led change is getting inspired by collective aspirations as a community, for the community, and supported by a community – the Uptempo 'village'.</p>	<p>Supporting and trusting 'aiga on a learning journey means building in allowances for trial and error, false starts or 'mistakes' – as a valuable part of the learning journey for 'aiga as they get exposure to new ideas. This is the value of 'loose on delivery'.</p>	<p>Strong indication of success in personal career journeys is not just 'getting a better job' but arriving at the state where 'aiga are able to independently manage their career trajectory.</p>



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