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Inaugural iwi-Māori data apprenticeship builds future capability

Eight apprentices from across the motu have embarked on a unique Māori data journey with the official start of a nine-month, full-time apprenticeship programme, He Ara Pūkeko.

He Ara Pūkeko is one of seven initiatives developed by Te Kāhui Raraunga as part of a programme to build Iwi Māori data capability and capacity – Te Mana Whakatipu.

It comes after the successful pilot of iwi-led data collection programmes during the 2023 Census, which saw Māori response rates increase more than 25 per cent in some areas.

The new apprenticeship programme will develop and extend apprentices' data analysis skills, their application of mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) in data, and their ability to exercise tirohanga Māori (Māori perspectives) within data.

Kirikowhai Mikaere, Data ILG Lead Technician, says the apprentices all come from different backgrounds and walks of life, but the care, respect and genuine interest they have in Māori data, and its potential for their iwi, is something they share.

"The apprentices are connected to their iwi and driven by their desire to contribute to their iwi and aid in decisions about educational, economic, social and environmental developments.

"Building Māori data capability is critical for iwi Māori moving forward. We need to play an active role in creating, nurturing and developing spaces where Māori people and perspectives can flourish.

"Our purpose with this programme is intentionally developing iwi-Māori data analysts who actively draw on our knowledge systems when analysing data, telling stories with data, or using data to make decisions. In the future, we hope to see them playing a pivotal role in supporting their iwi development aspirations," Ms Mikaere says.

The whakatakotoranga (structure) of the programme has three phases: Taha Māori, Taha Kāwanatanga and Rangahau.

Taha Māori (Māori aspect) will see apprentices working within Māori data organisation, Te Kāhui Raraunga, gaining exposure to the data lifecycle from an iwi Māori perspective.

Taha Kāwanatanga (government aspect) involves apprentices working within Statistics NZ or the Ministry of Education to gain experience in the application of data with a national lens.

Rangahau (research) is the final phase of the programme, where apprentices will use the tools and knowledge they've gained in the initial six months to undertake a research project for their iwi.

Apprentice, Rickii-Lee Parekura, Te Whānau Apanui, says she was prompted to apply for the programme after seeing the dramatic increase in response rates for her Iwi following 2023 Iwi Led Census. .

“Many of our whānau find it challenging to provide information in a digital form – our tradition is to capture information verbally, not digitally. I want to help people understand the importance of data to help our iwi move forward.

“Little steps are good steps, rather than our iwi staying in one place. Done properly, the collection of information and data can help enhance mana, not take it away,” she says.

Te Kāhui Raraunga Chair, Rahui Papa, says He Ara Pūkeko is the first programme of its kind in Aotearoa New Zealand, with a specific focus on iwi-Māori data capability building.

“Several mechanisms ensure this programme and the data analysis skills developed by apprentices remain grounded in their iwi’s context.

“Apprentices, who are endorsed by their iwi, link back to their iwi throughout the programme. They conclude their journey by producing a piece of research for and belonging to their iwi, ensuring skills aren’t just proficient but meaningful and relevant.

“They will graduate with a great depth of knowledge and hands-on experience that will be incredibly valuable to them personally and their iwi,” Mr Papa says.

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