

# COMBINED REPORT ON SKILLS SURVEY AND POTENTIAL WEBSITE SOLUTION FOR GREAT BARRIER ISLAND

**Note:** As there have been different papers compiled on the survey, summarising its results, and presenting possible solutions, this is a compilation of these, to accompany the report to the Local Board on 17 October.

## GREAT BARRIER ISLAND SKILLS (SHORTAGE) SURVEY – 2017



**Background:** the Board said it was keen to quantify the “skills shortage” problem on the island, which is talked about a lot and generally put down to remoteness, isolation and population size. Previously, knowledge has been limited to anecdotal evidence and gripes from local businesses. Ideally we are able to properly identify the issue and any patterns. Where skills gaps exist, they are a source of frustration for local businesses and a hand- break on the local economy. Also, if there are Barrier residents (in particular youth) wishing to but unable to access skills, training and work experience, and if so, what could the Board do to help.

**Objective:** To confirm if and where skills gaps exist on Great Barrier and to scope potential ideas to address identified issues.

**Method:** Over January/ February/ March, about 46 local businesses (plus a few voluntary organisations such as Coastguard, Awana Rural Women and Aotea Ora Trust) were approached with a short survey by email, phone or in some cases in person.

**Results:** 34 businesses and organisations replied/ filled out the survey. Some (eg- Glenfern) had nothing to add; others did not respond. 62% said they had experienced problems recruiting people with the right skills.

**21 out of 34 respondents (62%) reported having problems  
recruiting people with the necessary skills**

**Summary:** A problem does exist, but the “missing skills” are quite particular to each business/ industry. A lot also seemed to depend on the quality of the employer and how dedicated the employer was to nurturing new staff.

There are gaps in training available for locals wanting to upskill. Some businesses came up with good ideas about what could be done to fix the problem. These are outlined below.

Two common themes were:

- i. gaps in on-island training available for upskilling and need to explore how these can be filled
- ii. need for employers to invest time into training up workers

A further common theme running through responses was a problem with work ethic and reliability among workers.

*“There are plenty of skilled workers here, but it can be hard finding people that are willing to show up every day even if the surfs good or there's been a big party” / “I struggle to fill positions for roles which are self-driven” / “The challenge is not with finding someone with the qualification – it’s the right person that is compatible with your business, personality to work with the team, people that are reliable, people that will work for the wages that are on offer.”*

**Notable skill gaps:**

- people with funding application experience
- project management/ organisation
- qualified/experienced project supervisors.
- baristas
- marketing skills
- builders/ maintenance people/ plumbers willing to do small jobs
- Licensed operators, for plant, machinery, equipment. (both Fulton Hogan and Aotea Contractors reported this)
- Health & safety (H&S) experienced/qualified field staff.

A couple of businesses mentioned skill gaps that are not particular to Great Barrier, but are nationwide, for instance outdoor instructors and chefs.

**Solutions put forward by local businesses:**

Investing time (and in some cases money) into workers/ training people up yourself seems to reap benefits. Examples:

**ITM:** “[skill gaps] mean you have to invest a lot more in training costs to bring people up to the required skill level, which means you have to compensate by starting people on lower rates until you have recouped the extra costs.”

**My Fat Puku:** “We don’t really have a problem recruiting - we do all our own training.”

**Aotea Contractors** had a range of suggestions:

- 1) Licensing – enable practical driving assessments to be undertaken on island, for Class 1,2,3,4,5, W.T.R, forklifts, etc
- 2) Utilise on island H&S experienced/qualified people to train upskill employees from local companies.
- 3) Implement a government role for on island H&S professionals, to facilitate H&S plans and training at subsidised rates for local businesses.
- 4) Make a role for an on-island professional in H&S to be the go between for island based companies and Auckland councils, government agencies, large contractors. To act as a bridge between entities to ensure local body requirements are met, by working with island based companies to facilitate compliance.
- 5) Create an action plan for on-island builder, trade, contracting apprentices and unskilled employees, to ensure they have the support and tools they need to get qualified and upskill. i.e, more facilitator visits, more support either online or face to face to ensure apprentices have what they need to complete task’s assignments and block courses.
- 6) On island short courses in T.T.M, Chainsaw Use, manual handling, forklift use, machinery & equipment maintenance to help unskilled employees.
- 7) Training initiatives for on-island residents to upskill or train for contracting, trade, or roading services at a subsidised rate, to help on-island companies find the recruits they need.

**Fulton Hogan** said it would be happy to allow its heavy machinery to be used for training (not just for its own workers) “as long as a trainer was brought over from town to train a few guys at one time. At the moment, FH has to pay for one person to go to town for a week. Would be much more cost effective to get 5-6 guys together on the island and bring a trainer over”.

**Barrier Air:** Council could look at partnering with employers in Auckland to provide work experience for unemployed GBI residents who require upskilling/work experience/cv credentials.

**Barrier Automotive:** Training programmes/ incentives with clear goal pathways. Careers advisor to see people from beginning to end of chosen career.

**Coles equipment:** Better role models for young people on the Island. Emphasis on work ethic.

**Envirokiwi:** A good child minding service. There are some people out there who I think would consider working more if there were childminding facilities and they have a lot to offer.

**Hooked on Barrier** - Possibly an agency that registers workers with their skills and matches them with job opportunities. Training courses in basic skills like customer service and hospitality roles.

**Orama** - Incentives for business to “apprentice” skills. Appropriate training via correspondence courses and block courses in city.

Two main solutions identified were:

- i. Develop a set of actions, preferably collaborative, around training, upskilling or apprenticeship opportunities
- ii. Explore the feasibility of an online skills directory/website for matching businesses/employers with those looking for work or training opportunities

## **ONE POSSIBLE SOLUTION – A SKILLS REGISTER**

One of the key suggestions to emerge from the survey and subsequent discussions has been the concept of a Barrier skills register/directory with two key purposes.

1) To capture talent and skills that exists on the island but are currently under-utilised. There are many highly talented and skilled people on the Barrier, but these talents and skills often go unnoticed and unrecognised. For some, this is just how they like it; they’ve come to the island to retire or take time out from work, and don’t wish to participate in the local workforce. But others might welcome doing the occasional job, sharing what they know with the next generation, or earning a bit of extra money. It may just be that they don’t know how to get the word out and don’t wish to advertise, but wouldn’t mind their name and line of work being listed in an online directory.

2) To help local businesses find workers and skills. Local businesses often struggle to fill roles. In some cases, the right worker may exist on the island, but the business doesn’t know about them or can’t link up with them with ease. The directory/ skill bank will help with this, matching businesses with workers, and offering businesses a full list of people who might meet their criteria.

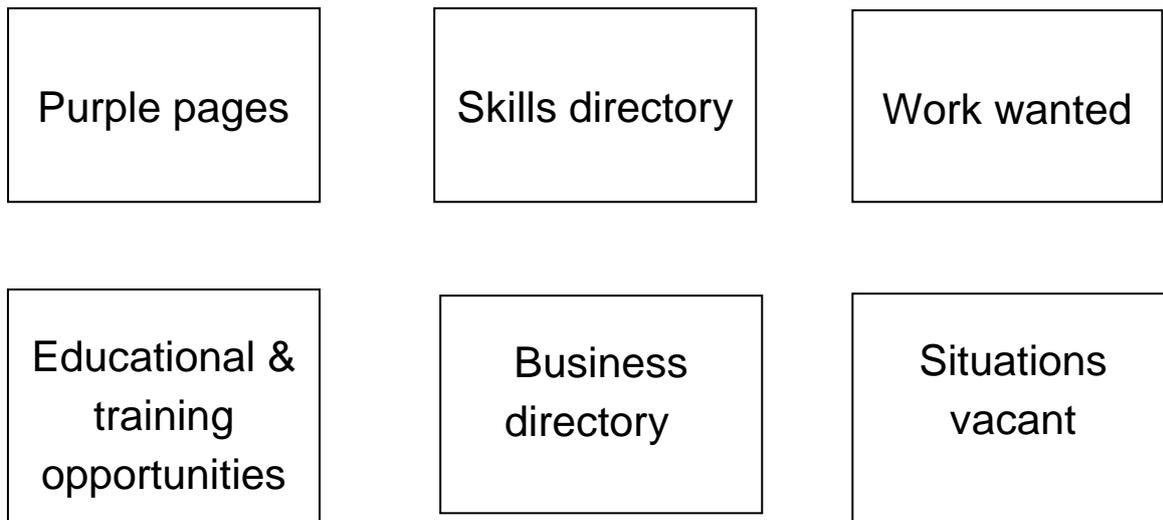
Once register has been started people can then be shoulder-tapped to be involved in such roles as mentoring, being a guest speaker at a school or at a workshop, helping out on a specific activity or event, becoming a tutor or trainer, and/or finally being a local specialist or expert to be called from time to time or some specialist help.

The register will be on line and accessible to other community members and groups. It will be an organic list which will be updated annually to capture new talents/skills and/or to retire those who leave the island or who really just want to put their feet up.

From further discussion the following elements for the website concept have been identified.

### **Key elements of an online Skills Register/Website:**

- i) Landing page - to consist of six buttons:



- Administration:
  - Essential that there is an ongoing administrator to maintain the content of the website to be relevant, user-friendly, up-to-date etc, overseeing the new listings, updating or refreshing data, and attending to maintenance.
  - Flag function to be incorporated, indicating when information (eg. re a vacancy no longer being available, someone no longer seeking work) is out-of-date and needs attention by the administrator.

*Survey conducted by Kathy Cumming, Strategic Brokers, and additional material added from subsequent documents by Mary Dawson, Manager Strategic Brokers.*