

Report 14.400  
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Committee Wellington Regional Strategy Committee  
Author Colin Drew, Project Leader

## Wellington Regional Strategy Office activities update

### 1. Purpose

To provide a progress update on other Wellington Regional Strategy (WRS) activities previously reported to the Wellington Regional Strategy Committee (the Committee). These are the migrant work, WRS evaluation project, business survey with Victoria University and broadband activities.

### 2. Background

The WRS Office undertakes a range of projects that take time to result in a final outcome to report to the Committee. However, there are milestones where information is shared and future actions discussed with stakeholders. This report provides an update on such activities and proposed timelines for a final product, where applicable.

These projects are:

- migrant work related to providing an evidence-base for a formal partnership agreement between the region and Government
- evaluation of progress on WRS objectives using a new methodology
- a project with Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) where students undertake business surveys as part of their course studies. This project is also designed to forge closer relationships between VUW and businesses; and
- promoting the uptake of digital technologies driven by the adoption of ultra-fast broadband services.

Further information on each of these is included below.

### **3. Comment**

#### **3.1 Skilled Migrants**

From 1 July 2014, the way that Immigration NZ supports regional migrant attraction and retention activities changed. This has been driven by Government's economic imperatives. Previously, regional migrant activities were largely delivered through the Migrant Settlement Strategy. There is now the opportunity to formalise an arrangement between the region and Government, though a regional partnership agreement (RPA). Such an arrangement is based on identifying Wellington's needs, aligning activities with the Business Growth Agenda and developing agreed operational requirements.

The Committee will be the signatory to any future agreement. The current work programme will result in a draft agreement completed for the December Committee meeting. In the interim, there will be a workshop involving stakeholders to agree on the key issues to be addressed and how these may be reflected in a RPA. There will also be on-going discussions with Immigration NZ.

To help inform this work, the WRS Office commissioned BERL to determine the level of migrant underemployment and identify the associated reasons for poor employment outcomes. This included qualitative information from workshops with migrant groups and the development of a tool using the 2013 Census to undertake detailed analysis of migrants based on location, employment status, time in New Zealand, country of origin, sector worked in, etc. This tool is available to councils and Grow Wellington.

Data analysis highlights the importance of ensuring good employment outcomes in the first two years of arrival, particularly for Asian migrants where the growth rate is highest.

#### **3.2 WRS Evaluation**

This project is tracking behind schedule as an interim evaluation report was due by 31 July 2014. The delay is a result of the time taken to extract detailed data from councils, research bodies and Grow Wellington. This necessary information has now been collated and an interim report looking at the impact specific activities will be completed in early September 2014.

Council officers were provided with a detailed progress report at the SORT meeting on 6 August 2014.

#### **3.3 Victoria University of Wellington project**

The 2013 business survey report *Wellington's Knowledge Economy*, was finalised in June 2014 and attached as **Attachment 1**. This report provides both quantitative and qualitative information on the nature of knowledge based businesses, why they are located in the region, barriers to growth and future skills requirements. Dr Richard Norman from VUW recently had several

articles published in the Dominion Post based on findings from this business survey.

For the second year of this project, the business survey will focus on understanding staff attraction and management practices. This collective information will help inform the sector and talent attraction activities of Grow Wellington and future work under the RPA with Government.

A website called *Working Capital* has been established and administered by VUW. This is designed to be a portal for sharing research information and opening communications channels with business.

### **3.4 Digital Technologies**

For many sectors of the economy, the adoption of digital technologies and responding to changing business models can be challenging. The WRS Office has been in the process of developing hard evidence at a sector and individual firm level to demonstrate the benefits to business of digital technologies.

By the end of this month, Network Strategies will have completed three case studies (based on actual Wellington businesses) demonstrating the tangible benefits of ultra-fast broadband (UFB) and the application of digital technologies. This is the final piece of collateral the WRS Office is developing prior to conducting a UFB uptake promotional exercise with business. The promotional activities will be conducted in partnership with Grow Wellington and the Chambers of Commerce, and will also use the results from the Digital Maturity survey and the Network Strategies Report on the regional benefits of UFB uptake.

## **4. The decision-making process and significance**

Officers recognise that the matters referenced in this report may have a high degree of importance to affected or interested parties.

The matters requiring decision in this report have been considered by officers against the requirements of Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act). Part 6 sets out the obligations of local authorities in relation to the making of decisions.

### **4.1 Significance of the decision**

Part 6 requires Greater Wellington Regional Council to consider the significance of the decision. The term ‘significance’ has a statutory definition set out in the Act.

Officers have considered the significance of the matter, taking the Council's significance policy and decision-making guidelines into account. Officers recommend that the matter be considered to have low significance.

Officers do not consider that a formal record outlining consideration of the decision-making process is required in this instance.

## 5. Recommendations

*That the Wellington Regional Strategy Committee:*

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*

Report prepared by:

**Colin Drew**  
Project Leader  
Wellington Regional Strategy  
Office

Report approved by:

**Nicola Shorten**  
Manager  
Strategic Planning

Report approved by:

**Jane Davis**  
General Manager  
Strategy & Community  
Engagement

Attachment 1: Wellington's Knowledge Economy, 1 June 2014