

29 September 2021

Official information request: 8140009138
(Please quote this in any correspondence)

By email: fyi-request-16625-0e88514b@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe Robert

Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA) and Privacy Act 2020

Re: Information on the Western Initiative

Thank you for your email, which we received on 5, September 2021, requesting information on The Western Initiative in relation to the Waitākere Ranges Local Board.

The specific details of your request and our response is below.

In 2018, Auckland Council allocated \$5 million over 10 years for the West Initiative.

- ***Is there a landing page, website, or sources for further information on the Western Initiative?***
- ***How much of the \$5 million has been spent or is planned on being spent in the Waitakere Ranges Local Board Area?***
- ***What outcomes are there for the Waitakere Ranges, and what has been done under the program so far to achieve those outcomes in the Waitakere Ranges Local Board Area?***

About The Western Initiative

The Western Initiative (TWI) was established in 2019 and is part of the Community and Social Innovation department of Auckland Council. TWI are the council's socio-economic innovation capacity in west Auckland. TWI is not a localised, service delivery or community development function; these are covered by other council departments.

Funding for TWI was first approved in the Long-term Plan beginning the 2018-19 financial year for \$500k per annum, for the following ten years. However, due to the impact of Covid-19, this was reduced to \$470k per annum. All of the staffing and project costs must be met within this TWI funding envelope. As a result, TWI must secure investment from external sources for scaling successful initiatives and has been highly successful in attracting additional resource into west Auckland that wouldn't otherwise have happened.

The purpose of TWI is to demonstrate innovative economic development initiatives that are just, inclusive, circular and regenerative across the west Auckland sub-region, namely the

geographical catchment of Whau, Henderson-Massey and Waitākere Ranges local board areas. TWI's remit is to focus on population groups most at risk of entrenched, poor economic outcomes.

TWI's activities do not focus on localised issues specific to a particular local board but rather on addressing macro-economic issues that affect west Auckland as a whole. TWI does not allocate its budget by local board; TWI's job is to take a strategic overview of economic challenges and opportunities across west Auckland and allocate budget accordingly.

TWI's objective is straightforward; to understand the most effective way, at scale, of increasing disposable incomes and wealth of west Aucklanders who face greatest disadvantage in the economy, through higher value and resilient employment and enterprise opportunities. TWI has a particular focus on Māori and Pasifika peoples, who collectively make up just under a quarter of residents in the Waitākere Ranges local board area.

TWI has three principles which guides its work:

- Build on west Auckland's strengths, such as its strong NGO sector and Eco City history.
- Maximise Auckland Council's leverage as a large organisation, such as being a purchaser of a wide range of goods, services and works, and a large employer etc.
- Look to the future, such as ensuring that skills, training and employment pipelines are responding to the changing nature of work and the mega-trend of increased use of technology.

TWI currently has three staff and a modest budget (in relation to the scale of the challenge) to deliver initiatives so it must be strategic and focussed on what it does and concentrate on those activities which create the most economic impact across the sub-region of west Auckland. Its activities are delivered through partnerships with colleagues across the Auckland Council family, central government, NGOs, community groups, education providers and businesses.

Is there a landing page, website or sources for further information on the Western Initiative?

TWI does not have a dedicated website as it has neither resource to build it or, most importantly, to maintain it. TWI is featured on The Southern Initiative's website in lieu of this and we are currently investigating how TWI might better utilise the TSI platform whilst still retaining a distinctive west Auckland brand and focus. (The Southern Initiative is the sister social innovation team covering south Auckland and is also part of the Community and Social Innovation department).

How much of the \$5 million has been spent or is planned on being spent in the Waitakere Ranges Local Board Area?

TWI does not allocate its budget specifically to any of the three local board areas in the catchment of TWI. Nor is the budget accounted for in that way. The purpose of TWI is to deliver sub-regional activities; activities that have an impact across the whole of west

Auckland. Exceptions are where we administer funding on behalf of local boards or when we are prototyping activity to determine its efficacy before being scaled across west Auckland.

Planning is done, within the context of our three principles, on a biannual basis for the broader strategy and the project plans are constantly reviewed. We work to this cycle, rather than a 10-year planning cycle, because the economic challenges and opportunities are constantly changing, for example, needing to adjust course due to Covid-19 or because important data comes to light.

What outcomes are there for the Waitakere Ranges, and what has been done under the program so far to achieve those outcomes in the Waitakere Ranges Local Board Area?

TWI administers funding on behalf of Waitākere Ranges Local Board for skills and training aimed at young people to improve their employment prospects.

- TWI's role is to identify projects that align with the local board's priorities and, if agreed by the local board, administers the funding on behalf of the local board. TWI provides support to the grantee organisations, writes and manages the funding agreements and reports back to the local board on progress etc. This involves TWI staff time (met by our budget, not covered by local board funding).
- Since 2019, four community organisations have been funded to deliver education and skill building programmes with young people resident in the Waitākere Ranges local board.
- Examples include vocational educational pathways whilst students are still studying at secondary school (e.g. achieve credits and experience in trades prior to going into an apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship trades training) and working with young people and their families to develop skills in digital literacy and in making and managing investment decisions
- To date, 109 end users have been engaged in the projects and more than \$83,000 in funding has been administered to community organisations to do so. A further \$20,000 has yet to be administered for this financial year.
- In addition to these activities funded by the Waitākere Local Board, TWI staff have also supported other youth employment outcomes including: brokering three young people from the Waitākere Ranges local board area into employment; supporting Vertical Horizons, a private training establishment, and the wellknown NGO VisionWest, to recruit and support trainees from the Waitākere Ranges local board area for their Pae Aronui training; and are exploring the possibility of an employment programme with the Glenora Rugby League Club for their members.

TWI is delivering a programme to transition Pasifika workers into higher paid roles in more resilient occupations.

- In relation to the labour market and employment, TWI focuses on under-utilisation (as defined by the ILO). Under-utilisation is a far greater issue than unemployment.

- In July this year, TWI and The Southern Initiative started a four-year project across south and west Auckland to transition Pasifika workers stuck in low paid work in vulnerable sectors into higher paid occupations in more resilient industries. It is delivered in partnership with a key Pasifika NGO based in west Auckland.
- The project, called Uptempo, doesn't just focus on individuals, but on the whole household, recognising that rewards and failures in the labour market are born collectively and that the primary economic unit is the household.
- In just three months of establishing the project, four west Auckland families have been recruited. The families in Uptempo have an average of 6.7 members. More families are being recruited.
- This major initiative is externally funded and again illustrates how TWI's innovation approach is attracting resources into west Auckland that would not have happened otherwise.

TWI established the country's supplier diversity intermediary to increase engagement of Māori and Pasifika owned businesses in supply chains.

- Māori and Pasifika entrepreneurship is an important economic pathway and an area of the economy that has yet to reach its full potential. Māori who own their own businesses and employ others, for example, have income earnings on par with non-Māori employers which is not the case with employment. In addition, Māori and Pasifika owned businesses disproportionately employ significantly more Māori and Pasifika peoples than non-Māori and Pasifika owned businesses.
- In 2019, TWI established Amotai (formerly He Waka Eke Noa) to connect public and private sector buyers with Māori and Pasifika businesses. Supplier diversity and development is a procurement practice which connects large buyers (such as the council family) to underused businesses. This is known as business-to-business procurement (which is different from the business-to-consumer market with 'bricks-and-mortar' shops). Auckland Council is a significant purchaser of goods, services and works in Auckland and this is a good example of the principle of TWI leveraging a strength of the council.
- To date, 750 Māori and Pasifika owned businesses are registered with Amotai, 500 of which are Auckland based. Collectively, the Auckland based businesses employ more than 7,000 staff, the majority of whom are Māori and/or Pasifika peoples. Of the Auckland based businesses, 65 are based in West Auckland, 12 of which are based in the Waitākere Ranges local board area. Their services span construction to professional services. It is free for the businesses to register, as is support from Amotai. There are also 65 public and private sector buyers subscribed to Amotai.
- Growing supplier diversity and Amotai was TWI's focus in 2020, particularly once the pandemic reached NZ's shores. Media articles about Amotai's work during the first lockdown are available [here](#) and [here](#).
- More than \$150 million worth of contracts have been awarded to Amotai businesses to date. Successes of west Auckland businesses include a large deconstruction contract and a large residential construction contract in Gisborne; opportunities that are enabling business growth of west Auckland enterprises.

- This is a good example of TWI's influence in both supply and demand. TWI directly influenced central government's policy on procurement. It also has deep connections to Māori and Pasifika businesses. Amotai attracted significant central government funding and now operates nationally, with its own dedicated team, meaning that TWI could turn its attention to other endeavours. Amotai is also an excellent illustration of TWI's purpose – to demonstrate impactful economic initiatives that can then be scaled up and spun out.

TWI's next big flagship project is a portfolio of work, designed and delivered with external partners, aimed at closing the tech and digital equity divide.

- Covid-19 laid bare the digital and technology divide in communities. As a result, TWI is working with a range of partners to develop a large-scale plan to tackle: physical access to technology (devices and broadband) of households; technological literacy of households; training and employment opportunities in tech and digital occupations (the highest paid roles in NZ); preparing workers for the changing nature of work (tech capability is becoming increasingly mainstream across all industries); and entrepreneurial opportunities offered by increased and improved use of technology.
- TWI is leading the development of the West Auckland Digital Equity Strategy (WADES). The portfolio will include programmes and projects for all different ages (i.e. not just young people). It aligns to our third principle of look to the future by ensuring that west Auckland is adequately prepared for the fourth (and fifth) industrial revolution, rather than being further alienated by it.
- One of the first prototypes was with a decile two primary school in the Waitākere Ranges local board area. The project, West Tech, engages students in recycling broken Chrome books into fixed and useable devices. They learn how the technology works, how the device is built and how to work together to problem solve. Once repaired, the children are allowed to keep the devices. It was tested with 20 children and 14 Chrome books were assembled/repaired. Valuable resources were diverted from landfill. There were positive responses from parents and teachers. In the latest lockdown, eight families in the school were supplied with devices from this project.
- As a result of the West Tech prototype, TWI has recently gained \$200,000 worth of external funding to scale up the project within the current primary school and to reach more schools across west Auckland, and is exploring whether this could be an opportunity for local social enterprise. This is another example of TWI's approach of trialling, scaling and spinning out.
- The second activity of the WADES portfolio is supporting the west Auckland Pasifika Collective to establish a multi-use platform to facilitate economic, social and health engagement in the Pasifika community. TWI was able to build on previous support provided to the Collective by a philanthropy to enable the Collective to take the platform to the next level.
- A number of other projects are in development including a major project, led by TWI but working with community groups, NGOs, education facilities, community facilities, entrepreneurs and local businesses to improve access to tech and digital infrastructure. Other projects being developed include tech and digital training with a guaranteed job interview and/or paid work experience upon successful graduation.

TWI is about to embark on a programme of skills, employment and enterprise in the emerging ‘green’ economy.

- Earlier this month TWI recruited the country’s first Intrapreneur Green New Deal. This role will focus on growing productivity in the circular and regenerative economies. This includes supporting business ventures at all scales, using council’s size and position to create new markets in the ‘green’ economy, and using The Southern Initiative’s status as a tertiary education organisation and lead of a Māori and Pasifika Trades Training consortium to develop new curriculum, training courses and accreditations in ‘green skills’ to ensure there is a skilled workforce to develop growth.
- TWI played a critical role in growing demand for deconstruction and salvage services; this market didn’t exist four years’ ago and now it is worth more than \$100 million per annum. TWI has supported a west Auckland, Amotai businesses to enter this market to great success, and is now supporting their development of accredited training in this field. As a result, more than 150 *new* jobs have been created.
- TWI has identified other areas with similar accelerator opportunities and is investing heavily in creating transformative green economy opportunities in the next 12 months. This is of interest to all the west Auckland local boards but Waitākere Ranges in particular.
- This is another area where TWI has influence in both demand and supply. It also aligns to TWI’s principles of building on the strengths and history of west Auckland (the Eco City legacy), leveraging council’s strengths (as a major procurer) and looking to the future (the need to radically decarbonise the economy).

TWI plays an important role in facilitating the west Auckland NGO and community sector so it can achieve more than the sum of its parts.

- West Auckland’s NGO and community sector is a major asset. It has a long and strong history of community-led development and TWI supports the continuation of this into the future. This aligns to TWI’s principle of building on west Auckland’s strengths.
- West Auckland Together (WAT) brings together NGO and community organisations from across all three local boards in the TWI area to work collectively for greater impact across west Auckland as a sub-region. This will become even more critical in the advent of a Covid-19-induced recession.
- TWI has been a supporter of WAT since its inception. As a bipartisan supporter outside of the NGO/community sector (and therefore, not a competitor), TWI has played a key role in facilitating the formation of WAT into a collective with a clearly defined purpose and end goal, and has supported WAT to obtain external funding to support its efforts.
- TWI is also involved with several other networks including localised ones such as the Glen Eden Youth Providers Network and the Youth Future Focus Collective which includes providers and schools from the Waitākere Ranges local board area.

TWI plays an important role in advising west Auckland local government elected representatives about central government economic policy, and in advocating for west Auckland to central government.

- One of TWI's important roles is advising local board members and councillors of the latest economic policies and economic data about the west Auckland sub-region. TWI undertakes a lot of policy, strategy and research work to ensure that decision makers have robust information to help them in their decision making.
- TWI are also engaged with the central government civil service on active labour market policies, small and medium sized businesses, vocational education and procurement practices. Part of TWI's job is to ensure that west Auckland is fairly represented in central government policy and funding. TWI also has good relationships with local MPs.
- TWI and The Southern Initiative are well regarded for their knowledge of and practical experience in economic innovation and sit on several national boards and is the only local government representative to do so.

The decision by Auckland Council to release the information contained in this response was made by Tania Pouwhare, Acting General Manager, Community and Social Innovation.

Should you believe Auckland Council has not responded appropriately to your request, you have the right to seek an investigation and review of this response by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you have any further queries, please contact me on 09 301 0101 quoting official information request number 8140009138.

Ngā mihi.



Elaine Tunai-Po
Privacy & Official Information Business Partner