



Reach of Workplace Literacy and Numeracy Fund 2019 and impact of
the Employer-led strand

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Introduction

This report uses data education providers and employers supplied to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) on the uptake of the Workplace Literacy and Numeracy (WLN) Fund in 2019. This includes:

- quantitative data from 19 Tertiary Education Organisations (TEOs), [17 Private Training Establishments (PTEs) and two Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs)]. These TEOs ran 1540 programmes in 2019 with 5086 employees funded through the TEO-led strand
- quantitative and qualitative data from 34 of 56 employers who ran programmes for 1396 employees from mid-2018, and throughout 2019 and who submitted final reports prior to the middle of March 2020
- qualitative data from success stories written on EWLN programmes run during 2019.

This report follows five previous studies¹ on the WLN Fund and where possible comparisons are made to the findings from the report published in 2019 (Alkema & Murray, 2019).

Key point summary

- Programmes continue to reach people identified in the OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) as having the lowest literacy and numeracy skills.
- The literacy and numeracy practices of employees improve as they are provided with opportunities to use their skills to, for example, speak with others at meetings, write reports and fill out forms, and make calculations.
- It is not possible to ascertain literacy and numeracy proficiency gain as there is insufficient data supplied on statistically significant gain. However, gain is not expected from a 40-hour programme.
- In EWLN programmes value accrues to employees and employers
- There is evidence of wellbeing, social, and economic outcomes for employees
- In the COVID-19 environment consideration needs to be given to:
 - continuing to engage and support employers to run programmes for their employees
 - delivery methods that incorporate blended teaching and learning approaches (online combined with face-to-face).

The WLN Fund

According to the Funding Determination the purposes of the WLN Fund are to:

- a. Increase the literacy and numeracy skills of employees; and
- b. Contribute to workplace productivity through the provision and evaluation of literacy and numeracy learning in a workplace context.²

¹ Alkema, A. (2015). *Maximising the benefits of the workplace literacy fund*. Wellington: Tertiary Education Commission; Alkema, A. (2016). *Workplace literacy fund: Employer-led outcomes report 2013-2015*. Wellington: Industry Training Federation; Alkema, A. (2017). *Reach and impact of the workplace literacy and numeracy fund 2015/2016*. Wellington: Industry Training Federation. (Unpublished Report); Skills Highway. (2018). *Reach of workplace literacy and numeracy fund 2018 and impact of the employer-led strand*. Wellington: Industry Training Federation; Alkema, A., & Murray, N. (2019). *Reach of workplace literacy and numeracy fund 2019 and impact of employer-led strand*. Wellington: Industry Training Federation.

² From *Determination of design of Funding Mechanism: Literacy and Numeracy Provision*. Accessed at

As such, programmes run through this fund look to develop the knowledge and skills of lower-skilled workers so they are better able to do their current jobs and better placed to pursue qualifications and/or higher-level roles. Since 2017, all learners are eligible to receive between 25 and 80 hours of tuition.

The WLN Fund sits at around \$26 million a year. It has two strands.

- Strand One, TEO-led: whereby 19 TEOs are allocated 80 percent of the total fund 'on plan'.
- Strand Two, Employer-led (EVLN): whereby funding is contestable and available through applications from employers. Note this latter allocation can vary on a yearly basis depending on the availability of funding.

Reach of the WLN Fund

This section of the report describes to whom programme are delivered, where they are delivered, and in which regions and industries.

Size of programmes

During the period under consideration there were 1396 employees in 34 EVLN programmes. These programmes varied in size from 6-205³ employees with a median of 25 and an average of 42.

There were 5086 employees in TEO-led programmes. These employees came from approximately 1540 companies, with programmes being delivered to between 1-197 employees, 72 percent (1112) of which were delivered to one person in a company. This is the same result as in 2018. It is not clear from the data whether these employees self-refer or are referred by their employer. TEOs in the not-for profit sector catered to 87 percent of these individual employees. A further 206 programmes were delivered to between two-five employees in companies. This delivery is similar to 2017 and 2018.

The number of TEO-led programmes delivered to larger numbers in companies has increased over time. In 2019, 46 companies had programmes for between 20-99 employees. This is up from 38 in 2018 and 11 in 2017. As this number continues to increase the TEC might like to consider more comprehensive reporting than that which is supplied through the current template.

Ethnicity

As Figure One below shows, in EVLN programmes, NZ European made up the largest group of employees, (35 percent (490)); followed by Pacific Peoples at 25 percent (349) and Māori at 24 percent (341). For Māori this is an increase of seven percent over 2018 programmes. The other percentages are similar.

In TEO-led programmes delivery is more evenly spread across ethnicities, with the largest delivery (24 percent (1224) going to Asian people and 24 percent (1209) to Pacific People. Nineteen percent (951) are Māori employees. This represents an increase in delivery to Māori of five percent compared to 2018.

As with 2017 and 2018 there are a greater percentage of Asian employees in the TEO-led strand than in EVLN. Two specialist language providers who do not deliver in the EVLN strand delivered to 42 percent of these employees. In addition, as with 2018, there is a higher percentage of NZ European

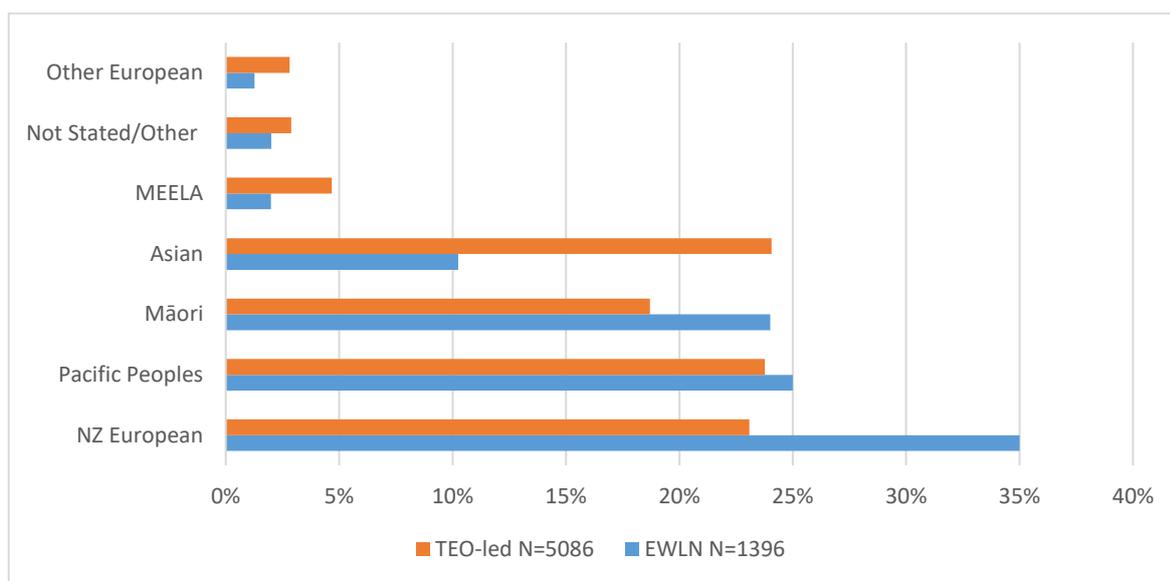
<http://www.tec.govt.nz/assets/Funding-mechanisms/2017-Literacy-and-Numeracy-funding-mechanism.pdf>

³ While EVLN programmes are funded for 20 employees, four employers during this time period were not able to meet this requirement.

employees in the EWLN strand. For 2019, this is likely driven by two large programmes which had high numbers of NZ Europeans.

Combined the ethnicity data show that overall Māori employees make up 20 percent of the total delivery and Pacific People 24 percent. In comparison delivery in the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy (ILN) Fund reached just over 3,300 people in 2019. Here, 42 percent were Māori, 17 percent were Pacific People, and 13 percent are Asian.

Figure One: Ethnicity Comparison



Other demographic data

Migrants make up 42 percent of employees in TEO-led programmes, with 115 from former refugee backgrounds.⁴ People born overseas make up 30 percent of New Zealand’s workforce,⁵ but the high percentage of migrants in WLN programmes can be expected given the OECD’s Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) results. These show those who are overseas born and have English as a second language have lower literacy, numeracy, and problem solving skills than New Zealand born or overseas born people who have English as a first language.⁶

In terms of gender, 52 percent of employees in TEO-led programmes identify as female. In EWLN, 33 employers provided gender data which show 40 percent of employees identify female. The gender data are similar to 2017 and 2018.

In relation to age there is a relatively even spread across the age ranges with little difference between the two strands of the fund. All these demographic data are similar to 2018.

Regional comparison

Just over 40 percent of the delivery is taking place in Auckland, which is similar to the delivery in 2017 and 2018. In the TEO-led programmes, 54 percent of the delivery in Auckland is in Auckland

⁴ Very few employers reported migrant data so it is not included in this analysis.

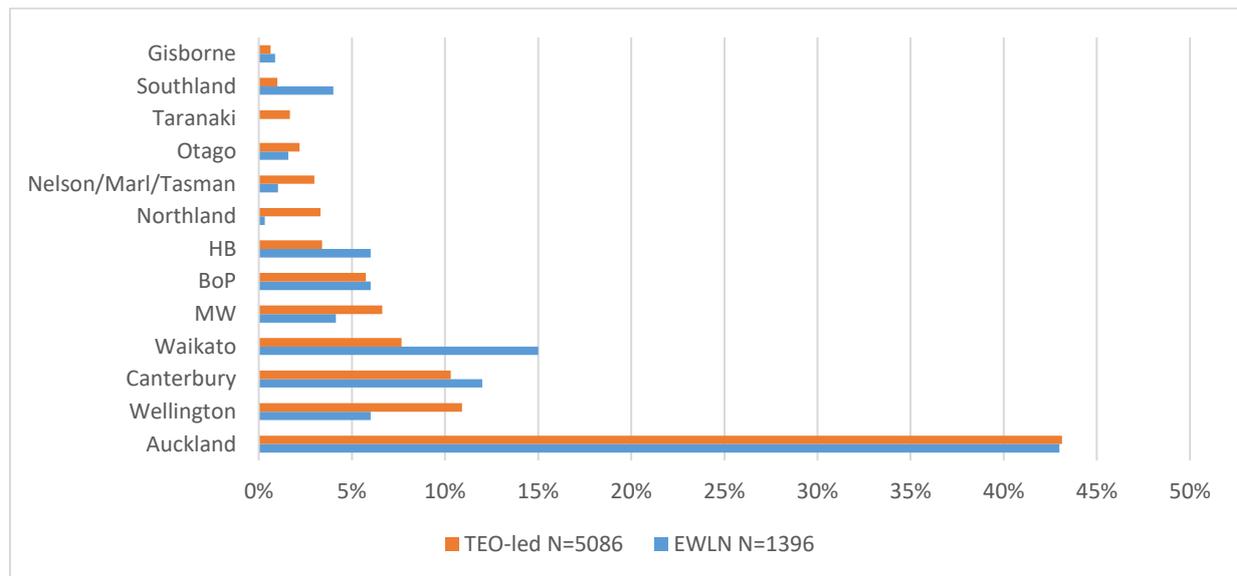
⁵ New Zealand Productivity Commission. (2020). *Training New Zealand’s workforce: Technological change and the future of work*. Draft Report 3. Wellington: Author.

⁶ Ministry of Education & Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment. (2016a). *Skills in New Zealand and around the world: Survey of adult skills (PIAAC)*. Wellington: Author.

City and 33 percent is in Manukau City. The other regional data remains the same as in 2018. The higher percentage of delivery in Waikato in EWLN is accounted for by one large programme delivered to 128 employees in one company.

The regional analysis of the PIAAC data⁷ show people in South and East Auckland have the lowest literacy levels. These are followed by Waikato, West Auckland and Northland. The Ministry of Education has a regional and local profile tool that can be used to further investigate these results.⁸

Figure Two: Regional comparison



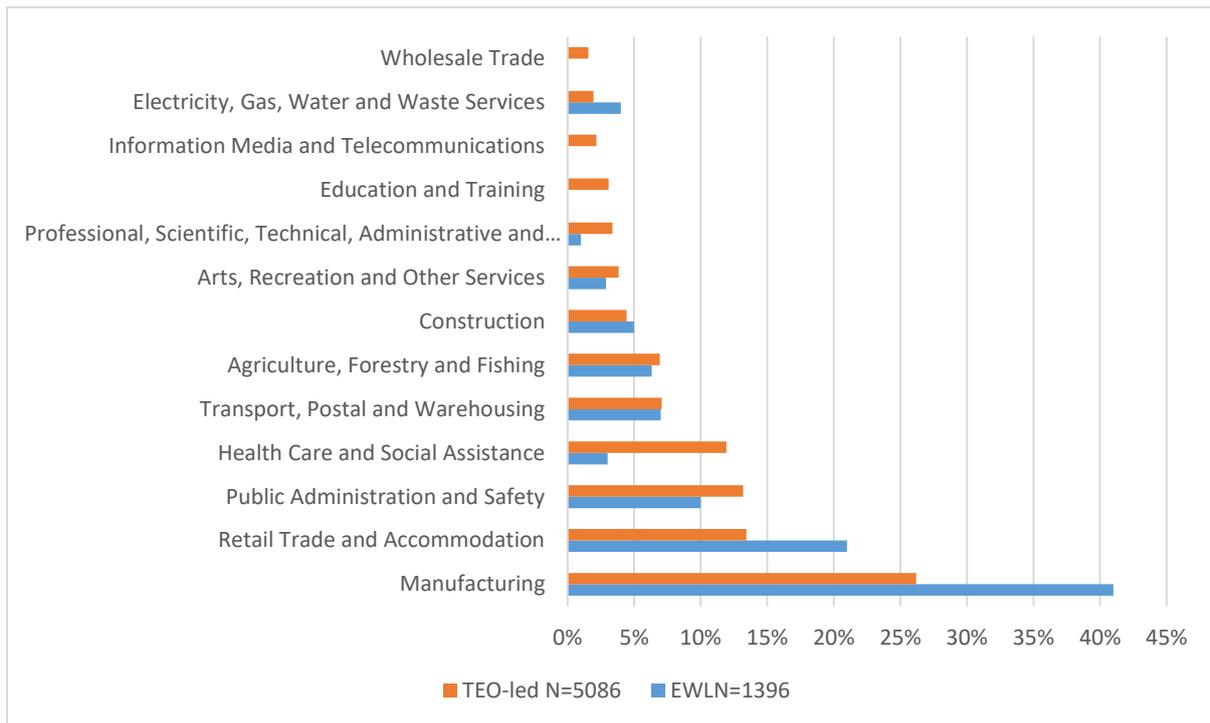
Industry comparison

The changes to the industry pattern that occurred between 2017 and 2018, which saw an increase in delivery in manufacturing and retail trade and accommodation, have held in 2019. In terms of the latter much of the delivery is going into supermarkets. The drop in delivery to the healthcare sector has been maintained, as has the drop in delivery in the construction sector. In 2019 there is more delivery in the public administration sector and this is accounted for by large programmes that have been delivered in both the TEO-led and EWLN strands to the security industry.

⁷ Earle, D. (2019). *Survey of adult skills: Regional and local profiles*. Accessed 16 April 2020 at https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/survey_of_adult_skills/piaac-regional-profiles

⁸ This can be found at: https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/survey_of_adult_skills/piaac-regional-profiles

Figure Three: Industry Comparison



Overall, what the data show is that in 2019 WLN programmes continue to reach the ‘right’ employees. This means the groups identified in PIAAC as having low literacy and numeracy skills (Ministry of Education & Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2016a).⁹ It also means it is reaching employees in industries also identified in PIAAC as having employees with low literacy and numeracy skills (Ministry of Education & Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2016b).¹⁰ In terms of regional reach, it is expected that most of the delivery would occur in Auckland given the size of the population, but for 2020 it is timely for attention to be given to improving reach in Waikato.

Value and impact of EWLN programmes

This section describes the outcomes from the EWLN programmes. Thirty-four employers provided narrative data to the TEC on what has happened in their workplaces and for their employees who attended programmes. Additional information is taken from four success stories written in 2019.¹¹ TEO-led providers are not required to submit narrative data so it is not possible to describe the outcomes from their programmes or the extent to which similar outcomes have been achieved, especially at the company level given that over 1000 employees were the only person in their company to receive training.

⁹ Ministry of Education & Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment. (2016a). *Skills in New Zealand and around the world: Survey of adult skills (PIAAC)*. Wellington: Author.

¹⁰ Ministry of Education & Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment. (2016b). *Skills at work: Survey of adult skills (PIAAC)*. Wellington: Author.

¹¹ These stories can be accessed at <https://www.skillshighway.govt.nz/success-stories>

EWLN programmes – a workforce development focus

The New Zealand Productivity Commission (NZPC) talks about an education system that, “prepares people to adapt and manage change for the future of work” (2020, p, 8).¹² This sees people developing their confidence and self-efficacy in relation to learning and ultimately developing a learning disposition. Learning in workplaces and in work time provides such an opportunity. Training in work time also, “removes access barriers, provides a safe, whānau-like learning environment, and builds on the knowledge and skills they already have as workers” (Kerehoma, Alkema, Murray & Ripley, 2019).¹³

EWLN programmes are bespoke and tailored to the needs of individual employees and their workplaces. The programmes are not ‘sold’ to employees as literacy and numeracy programmes. Rather they are marketed as workforce development programmes with names such as, “Inspiring Great People”, “Skilled Up”, “Transformer” and “Step-Up”. They equip people to do their current jobs better along with upskilling them to cope with the future demands of New Zealand workplaces, changing labour market needs, and also in their wider whānau and community lives. From employers’ perspectives these programmes also help them to more successfully adopt new technologies or new ways of working.

In keeping with this thinking, Kerehoma et al., (2019, p.4) report:

... the ethos of the fund is around development rather than ‘fixing’ employees. The approach is intended to lead to the transformation of both employees and their workplaces through taking an expansive view of approaches to learning that is contextualised to the workplace and to the wider needs and interests of the employees.¹⁴

As with previous years, programmes continue to be designed with input from employers along with some task analyses undertaken by providers.

Because the tutors had taken the TC induction, they understood the terminology and distances and requirements out on site and understood what the participants needed. (EWLN report: Employer, Transport, Postal and Warehousing)

Programmes focus on what employees need to know and be able to do in order to do their jobs more effectively and efficiently. This includes some technical skills related to, for example, health and safety, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), company forms, and digital technology. Companies also continue to be very interested in developing employees’ employability skills such as communication (oral and written), problem-solving, and teamwork. Some programmes also include aspects of personal goal setting such as healthier living and improving financial behaviours.

X’s individual training plan revolves around planning for her future both at work and in her personal life. She lacked confidence when communicating with her supervisors and managers but through the programme has gained confidence in being able to communicate assertively at work. X has reported that

¹² New Zealand Productivity Commission. (2020). *Training New Zealand’s workforce: Technological change and the future of work*. Draft Report 3. Wellington: Author.

¹³ Kerehoma, C., Alkema, A., Murray, N., Ripley, L. (2019). *Hinātore: Empowering Māori and Pacific people through workplace learning*. Wellington: Ako Aotearoa.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

her team members are now closer and work more effectively as a group, with the outcome of improved productivity. This has also helped her in her relationships with her whānau. As part of the training, X completed a budget and gained competency in budgeting and goal setting for herself and her family. This included setting up a savings plan, understanding how to manage her Kiwisaver funds and setting herself a goal of home ownership. (EVLN report: Employer)

The workplace context of the programmes carries the literacy and numeracy skill development, which is explicitly integrated into what is taught. This approach works in adult learning environments where employees become engaged with learning once they recognise its relevance and subsequent application to their work and home lives. This is in keeping with the thinking that literacy and numeracy are social practices rather than stand-alone proficiencies to be gained without context.

Wellbeing, social, and economic outcomes for employees

In 2019 Alkema and Murray outlined the case for reporting on wellbeing, social and economic outcomes.¹⁵ This report takes the same approach and also considers the value of these outcomes for individual employees and their employers/workplaces. This approach encompasses, some of the thinking in the Treasury's Living Standards Framework (LSF) around social and human capital, along with the wellbeing domains of knowledge and skills, jobs and earning, social connections, and subjective wellbeing.¹⁶

For this report 'wellbeing' is what the LSF refers to as subjective wellbeing. This incorporates confidence, self-efficacy, self-esteem, trust, hope for the future, cultural identity, and resilience that occur when learners develop new knowledge and skills (Alkema & McDonald, 2018).¹⁷ It also includes thinking from Vorhaus et al. (2011)¹⁸ who incorporated concepts of self-assurance, happiness, more assertive behaviour, and independence into their list of wellbeing outcomes. All of these contribute to how people feel about themselves and the extent to which they are generally satisfied with their lives.

The self- assessment of wellbeing at the end of the programme showed 85% felt happier; 71% felt more relaxed; 71% felt able to get involved with new things; 85% can make better choices. (EVLN report: Employer, Professional, Scientific, Technical, Administrative and Support Services)

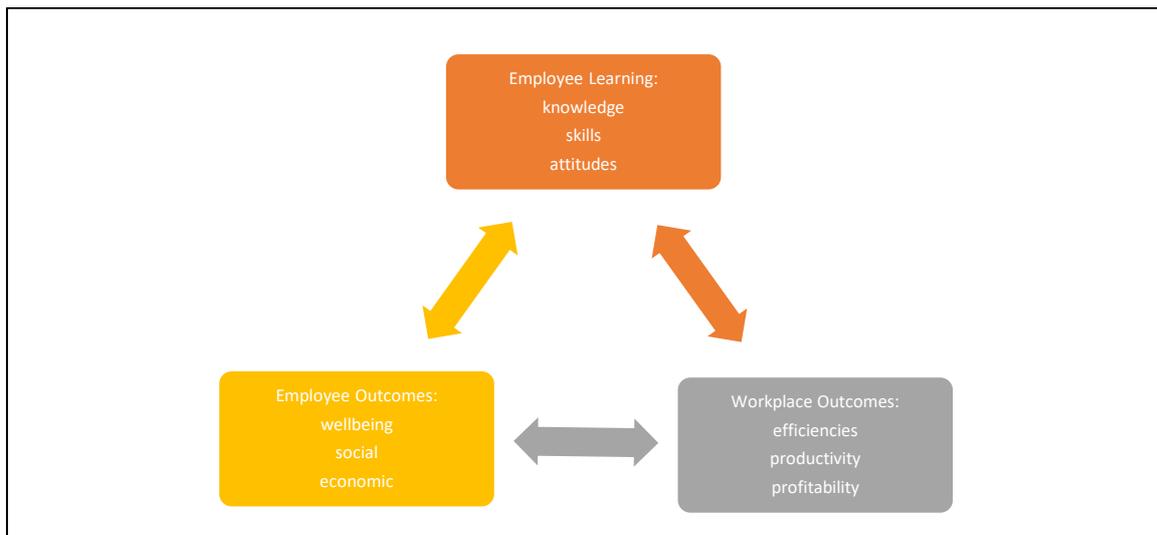
¹⁵ Detailed information on what is encompassed in these outcomes can be found in this report.

¹⁶ The Treasury. (2019). *Our future, our people: The living standards framework: Dashboard update*. Wellington: Author.

¹⁷ Alkema, A., & McDonald, H. (2018). *Outcomes for foundation level learners: A report to the Tertiary Education Commission on outcomes, indicators and measures for adult literacy and numeracy learners*. Unpublished Report to the Tertiary Education Commission.

¹⁸ Vorhaus, J., Litster, J., Frearson, M., & Johnson, S. (2011). *Review of Research and Evaluation on Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills: RESEARCH PAPER NUMBER 61*. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Figure Four: Outcomes from Workplace Literacy and Numeracy Programmes



Wellbeing outcomes from EWLN

As with previous years, the most reported wellbeing outcome is confidence. This is valued by both employees and employers. For employees it is valued because feeling more confident about themselves and what they are able to do leads them to being able contribute differently at work and in their home and community lives. This translates to employees being able and prepared to:

- contribute at meetings
- raise workplace issues e.g., around health and safety
- offer improvements to work processes and practices
- speak more confidently to management and to customers
- complete paperwork
- try new things
- understand how to be assertive (rather than aggressive)
- think about possibilities for career development and recognise their potential to take on leadership roles
- seek new work and/or training opportunities
- start using digital technology
- join libraries
- speak at community events

The value for employers comes when employees feel sufficiently confident in themselves and their new knowledge and skills to take more responsibility, speak up when they see things are not working as they should be, and problem solve at work. For some this has resulted in increased trust in their employees.

Overall, the programme has led to increased self-awareness, positive employee self-concept, increased confidence levels. They take pride in reporting and fixing issues as and when they happen. (EWLN report: Employer, Manufacturing)

There's been improved confidence and they able to look at problem solving from perspectives other than their own. [They have] confidence to run team meetings, there's improved goal setting and a better approach to staff and team engagement, and importantly to their ability to lead. (EWLN report: Employer, Manufacturing)

Before I never speak during pre-start and planning with management team. Now I can do the pre-start talk in front of everyone. I can do planning with the management team and the workers. (EWLN report: Employee, Construction)

Increased wellbeing also comes from feeling more valued at work. This starts with being asked or given the opportunity to attend the programme. It continues when they recognise they have a voice at work and that what they say has an impact. And while not overtly stated, it is likely to contribute to less stress at work as shown in the Canadian UPSKILL project.¹⁹

The key result has been the improvement in collective and individual self-confidence, particularly for employees who also suffer from depression and anxiety etc. (EWLN report: Employer, Transport, Postal and Warehousing)

While the above can be seen as contributors to mental health, the ability to speak up about health and safety and better understand and comply with health and safety policies also relates to physical health. Here the wearing of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and the following of Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) are the most reported practices. There are also examples of increases in lead rather than lag reporting. As the comment below shows, the programmes have provided the space for employees to talk about and gain wider knowledge about health and safety and this then translates into what they do at work.

A regular feature of sessions was catching up with what had been happening at work during the week – a conversation which would typically be guided to Health and Safety hazards and ideas for minimising the hazard safely, and constructively were brainstormed and eventually generated by learners. Notes from these sessions eventually became part of the senior staff meeting, where Health and Safety concerns from the factory floor were previously not able to be voiced. Learners were also able to formulate their own descriptions and posters highlighting hazards and relevant signage based on a factory walk through. (EWLN report: Employer, Transport, Postal and Warehousing)

Social outcomes from EWLN

As previous reports on WLN programmes have stated, it is not clear whether it is an improvement in confidence or skills that come first. But with the confidence to speak up and speak out comes improved communication skills which in turn means people build better relationships at work, strengthen their approach to teamwork and feel more connected to others. The latter is particularly the case for those who have English as second language.

Learners have commented that, “these skills help me look after my team and to lead my team really well and to show the great communication” and that they “can understand what to do now and do my job better.” (EWLN report: Employer, Healthcare and Social Assistance)

Some who had never communicated with supervisors before were making regular contact and efforts to connect – this is especially true for those in the deaf group. (EWLN report: Employer, Manufacturing)

¹⁹ Smith Fowler, H., Mák, G., Brennan, K., Hui, T., & Gyarmati, D. (2016). *UPSKILL health – technical report on worker and business outcomes*. Ottawa: Social Research and Demonstration Corporation.

One of the most cited social outcomes is participation at work, for example, in tool box meetings, health and safety meetings or speaking up about health and safety generally.

Before, I found it hard at times to speak up against some of the older guys at site. If it is unsafe or a better quicker way to do things, I speak up much more often to anyone now. (EWLN report: Employee, Construction)

These newly developed connecting skills transfer over to whānau and community lives where there are examples, as in previous years, of people having the courage to speak up in community settings or to join libraries. Kerehoma et al., (2019) report this transfer happens because the learning is relevant to both work and personal lives and because the employees are proud of what they are achieving.

I have 7 brothers who often speak on our behalf at family hui and I normally don't talk because others speak on my behalf. Now I feel more confident to speak up at family hui but also to take charge at work and speak more openly. (EWLN report: Employee, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing)

The increased interaction with families is something of a 'two-way street'. Employees take their new learning home and engage more with family members. In turn whānau are proud of their family members' achievements and supportive, encouraged and inspired by them.

Taking the learning home to have different conversations at home ... I talk about some of the stuff we learn with my wife and have conversations which have been really good – so the benefits are wide ranging, not just in the workplace. (Employee) (Kerehoma et al., 2019, pp. 31)

Changes? So much more confidence in himself. Decision-making. The way he speaks; how he expresses himself to not only me and to other people. It's made a lot of change. He's more understanding. And my side, I understand him more. My children understand him more. He's learnt to sit down, listen, go through all his work before he starts making decisions... That's a massive change. (Whānau) (Kerehoma et al., 2019, p. 30)

Every time I come home and I see her [mum], she's always got a bright glow on her face. That always tells me that she's had a nice, productive day at work. Recently, it's been a more happier glow because she's been at this course and she's learnt many skills that help improve not only her vocabulary, but her passion and her personality towards others. To me, I find that very amazing, cos my mother still wants to learn, and she's still teaching me a lot of things. But to find that she can also learn new things to make her better just makes me wanna do better as well. (Whānau) (Kerehoma et al., 2019, p. 31)

The value for employees is in the increased connectedness and engagement they develop with both work and whānau. Learning new skills for work, and practising them in wider settings continues to improve their skills. Employers value this as they see the opportunity they have provided for their employees to become more active participants in their everyday lives.

The minimum I was hoping that they'd be able to fill out forms, plant check sheets ... to make sure that the place is safe to work in and they understand their tasks... We were hoping that would be achieved, but it was all that, a lot more and then even more going home to the whānau, which is the stories I mentioned earlier. ... (Employer) (Kerehoma et al., 2019, p. 32)

Many employers genuinely appreciate the outcomes that occur for their employees. Here the value is in seeing the outcomes for the individuals and also recognising that this impacts on the businesses

... the skills learned from these classes have provided a great platform for individuals to not only support their personal growth while at work but also take the learnings home to family and friends. It has also been very rewarding for us as a leadership team to see the joy of learning across so many of

the team but also reminding us of our role in supporting individuals to reach their potential and in doing so gives benefit to the wider team and business as a whole. (EWLN report: Employer, Manufacturing)

In the 33 years I have been in charge of this organisation, this is the best thing we have ever done. The growth in the staff has been incredible – it makes me quite emotional to talk about it. (EWLN report: Employer, Retail Trade and Accommodation)

As I have toured the region over the last month, I have had people make comments about how they are developing and gaining confidence with technology and are seeing ways to become more efficient not only at work but in their private lives using technology. My people are commenting this is the best training we have going in the business; it's adding real value. I was lucky enough to join [a training session] ... I saw people fully engaged in the training openly sharing and supporting each other. The room was full of real energy and optimism. (EWLN report: Employer, Retail Trade and Accommodation)

Economic outcomes from EWLN

These outcomes are less reported on in comparison to social and wellbeing outcomes. As previous WLN reports have noted, this is not surprising in that around 40 hours of learning is not likely to result in economic gains for employees in terms of higher pay for the same job. However, what does happen for some is progression on to qualifications at Levels 2 or 3; or to specific workplace qualifications such as Class 2 drivers' licences; and preparation for promotion to higher paying roles such as team leaders or supervisors. One company with 32 employees reported 31 of them had engaged in a formal career conversation with their manager and half of them had applied for roles.

[It] gave me an insight to jobs that I never would have thought about, helps me to weigh up the pros and cons of my role in [X company] and see if I can actually go down another career path in house. (EWLN report: Employee, Healthcare and Social Assistance)

While these programmes took place in a time of high employment and we are heading into a time higher unemployment in the COVID-19 environment, it is worth noting these programmes can help employees to think about future employment opportunities. In 2019, one company had a branch of its operation close down and employees had to look elsewhere for work. Here the employer noted that the programme had given them the skills to do this – not that this was an intention of the programme at the outset.

As with previous years, where financial literacy has been part of the programme, employees have learnt about budgeting and how to better manage their incomes.

I need to stop procrastinating and start saving and take advantage of investments such as Kiwisaver. Saving and making money isn't as difficult as I first thought. (EWLN report: Employee, Retail Trade and Accommodation).

While there is value for employees in terms of opportunities for further development and potential for wage increases with promotion to higher paying roles, there is also value for employers. Although most don't measure this value in terms of hard data related profitability, they do mention changes that have happened in their workplaces that can contribute to profitability. Such changes include:

- employees' improved health and safety practices can contribute to a reduction in lost time injuries
- reduction in absenteeism or staff turnover can contribute to increased productivity

- improved understanding of measurement and improvements in quality checking can contribute to less wastage
- improved ratings in customer experience surveys can contribute to repeat business
- the ability to use digital systems at work means less time spent by management on this.

There's been a decrease in accidents/near misses/incidents (23% fewer than 2018) and we've had fewer quality issues as they understand H&S better. Learners are prepared to speak up about quality issues. All of this has resulted in less time spent on checking jobs, reworking jobs or fixing mistakes, and the increased productivity levels have translated to improved efficiencies and profitability with our financial results. (EWLN report: Employer, Manufacturing)

Literacy and numeracy outcomes

One of the intents of the fund is to increase the literacy and numeracy skills of the employees. At a formal, quantitative level assessment is through the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool (LNAAT). As with previous years it is not possible to report overall statistically significant gain as not all employers report on this. Where this is reported, the numbers are very small. This is to be expected given the number of hours of delivery in the programmes and the timeframe within which they are delivered. What the data do show though, is that employees on these programmes do have skills at the lower end of the Adult Learning Progressions. In the main these fall between Steps 2-4, with the majority being in the Steps 2-3 and these skill levels fall within the parameters of the learner eligibility criteria of the fund.

While literacy and numeracy proficiency levels are related to social and economic outcomes as shown in PIAAC, research has shown there is also a relationship between literacy and numeracy practices and social and economic outcomes. The data from employers show they are observing practice change in their employees. This comes about as employees feel more confident in the knowledge and skills they are developing and when they are afforded the opportunity to practise these. Examples of these practices are provided below.

Speaking is one of the most reported practice changes. This is about having the courage to speak up about issues, at meetings, with team members and in community situations. For all employees it has been about increasing their vocabulary. For ESOL speakers this has been of huge importance as has been improvements to their pronunciation.

Writing in the workplace usually relates to form-filling and there is sufficient data to show that there have been improvements in this, especially in relation to health and safety reporting.

I was happy because we spoke English. That's what I want to know. How to speak, to learn some new words, to fill out forms. (EWLN report: Employee, Manufacturing)

The final writing assessment has shown that all learners improved their writing. They filled the accident form correctly and provided necessary details. They told me they didn't know that an accident form becomes a legal document and weren't aware that someone else has to understand the situation completely how the incident/accident happened. (EWLN report: Tutor, Manufacturing)

Opened my eyes up to how I write and how specific I need to be when I write, as union delegate I will try to remember who my audience is and remember to write using language that they can understand a lot better. I want to be a quality writer ... (EWLN report: Employee, Healthcare and Social Assistance)

Numeracy practices usually relate to calculations, measurement and weighing. Here examples of employees' practices are work related and include:

- working out how many cones to load on the roading truck by calculating the number of cones needed according to the distance that needed to be covered
- learning how to use a tape measure, “I’ve never used a tape measure and got a better idea now.”
- understanding rosters and time sheets as a result of learning about the 24 hour clock, “Timesheets make much more sense now, I always had troubles with quick conversions using the 24-hour clock.”
- Working out percentages for discounts.

Where **digital literacy** has been included in programmes the new practices have included, writing emails and sending attachments, using the calendar to book appointments, and accessing payslips through the company’s online systems.

Employee Vignettes

These two vignette provided examples of changes that occur for employees and the literacy and numeracy practices that have developed and contributed to employees’ achievements and ways of working.

C used to work around the literacy demands of his role at [Company]. As a trusted 2IC and Business Unit Instructor (BUI), [he] would steer away from tasks that required him to fully engage with workplace literacy skills. C holds significant mana in his organisation, running motivating Toolbox meetings (often in Te Reo Māori and English). These keep his team engaged and importantly safe. When it came to taking part in the programme, he was unsure if it was for him. .. C embodied the principles of ako in his workplace and this has paid off for him and his colleagues. ... C fully embraced the programme. He developed a passion for contributing to the development of a consistent system that would raise the bar for Business Unit Instructors across the country by putting into place things learnt during the course, for example, practising giving and receiving feedback. (EWLN report: Employer, Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste services)

M, who has been with [Company] for 26 years. During this time he has really struggled with writing and reading, and believed himself to be illiterate. Due to his lack of confidence M was extremely anxious to take part in our [programme] as he did not believe in himself. The progress he has made is remarkable. M has grown from someone who once refused to read and write, to someone who has earned 48 NZQA credits. But his success is not just measured by numbers. M is very conscious to deliver work at a higher standard than what is expected, and manages to achieve great results whilst balancing his work in the factory. M is more than willing to help others and coaches them in a quiet and supportive way, without realising he is doing it. M has also started to take on more responsibility in our food department, and has become a right-hand man to his supervisor ... (EWLN report: Employer, Manufacturing)

Challenges

While the programmes are funded by the TEC there is still a cost to the employer of allowing employees to attend in paid work time. Here there is a cost for both release time and lost productivity. Employers do not overtly complain about this, they do talk about the challenges of scheduling and this is exacerbated when employees are working across different sites or cannot be released because of busy periods of work.

This issue has remained persistent over the years and requires good will on the part of providers, employers and employees to make it work. It also relies on the understanding supervisors or team leaders have about the programme as they are the ones who have to release staff.

We often experience challenges in releasing factory staff to participate in training, such as staff availability on certain days of the week, shift patterns, production requirements, leave, sickness and

absenteeism. The team worked hard to accommodate the cohort, by running smaller groups and being flexible with the delivery times to blend in with shift patterns. (EWLN report: Employer, Manufacturing)

Another challenge faced in these programmes is the inability of non-permanent residents to access funded programmes. This gets worked around when providers accept small numbers of these employees into their programmes and do not put them into the head count for the purposes of reporting to the TEC.

Getting engagement at the start of programmes also continues to be a problem. Here a few employers pointed out that some employees did not think they had an issue or were too embarrassed to go along to programmes. In consortia or in companies where there are multiple branches there has been an issue getting the numbers of employees expected. This happens when there is lack of buy-in from the different companies of facilities and when there are changes in workplaces.

Successes

While there are challenges, these are balanced by successes. Many of these are described above in terms of value for employees and employers. But in addition to these, employers have variously reported on: changes made in their workplaces; the development of career and qualification pathways for employees; the continuation of improvement projects started during the programmes; improved understanding of workplace systems and processes; the development of learning cultures in workplaces; and the ways in which employees have been prepared for future work.

Organisationally, through the Programme we have recognised the literacy and numeracy levels of our workforce and begun to modify our internal processes and documentation relating to induction and training accordingly. (EWLN report: Employer, Manufacturing)

PPE posters put in designated areas ... Participants were very much encouraged by this as it is a low cost to the business and sends explicit messages throughout site about required PPE for different roles within the business. (EWLN report: Employer, Transport, Postal and Warehousing)

Next steps for employers

Employers have a variety of ways of carrying on the work started during programmes. This involves any or all of the following:

- continuing with work on improvement projects that look at different – more efficient or safer ways of working
- continuing to improve workplace efficiencies such as ways of reducing waste, looking at the cost of rework and errors
- pathwaying employees to level 2 or 3 qualifications
- upskilling staff to continue with learning and development in-house
- applying for further EWLN funding for new employees or to further develop those who have already accessed a programme.

Our Health and Safety Advisor and Administrator are both completing the NZ Certificate in Adult Education and Training Level 4 qualification ... This will enable [the Company] in becoming sustainable in the future ... (EWLN report: Employer, Manufacturing)

Conclusion

The findings described in this report on the outcomes of 2019 EWLN programmes are the same as those reported in previous years. Again this is about the wellbeing, social, and economic outcomes

for employees and the ways in which these impact on how they think about themselves, how they work, and how they operate in the whānau and community lives. It is also about what happens in workplaces and the value to employers when employees develop and engage with literacy and numeracy practices in the context of their work.

But what does the future hold? These programmes ran in 2019 when there was a healthy labour market. In December 2019, the unemployment rate sat at four percent.²⁰ Over the next few years as New Zealand operates in the COVID-19 environment, there will be a downturn in the labour market. Predictions in mid-May show the unemployment rate for the June quarter 2020 is 8.3 percent (and will approach 10 percent by September), followed by 7.6 percent in 2021 with recovery to 4.8 percent not expected until 2024.²¹ However, private sector economists see these predictions as optimistic and expect the unemployment rate to stay higher for longer.

While the retail, hospitality, and accommodation sectors will be hit hard given the reliance on tourism, healthcare and social services, agriculture and fisheries, and construction (including infrastructure) are likely to maintain numbers, with the latter being supported by government investment in 'shovel ready' projects. The impact on the manufacturing sector is unknown. These are all target industries given the low levels of literacy and numeracy of employees as identified in PIAAC.

Given the value of programmes to employees and employers it is paramount the TEC continues to support providers and employers to run programmes in what will be challenging times. This may require a rethink of the delivery model away from just face-to-face. The information from employers shows the logistics of scheduling programmes is the biggest issue for them. As there is lost productivity in the short term, employers may not be as willing or able to release staff as they have been in previous years. Therefore it is timely in 2020/2021 to consider online delivery modes that support face-to-face tuition so that programmes can run and continue to deliver outcomes for employees and employers.

In summary, this programme and the [provider] have been significant transformational factors for our business and our people. We have made some incredible progress in improving the lives of our people and their families. At the same time we have gone beyond what we thought was possible operationally and culturally. This is a journey we would love to continue and it will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the wider community we live in. (EVLN report: Employer, Manufacturing)

²⁰ Stats NZ. (2020). *Labour market statistics: December 2019 quarter*. Accessed 16 April 2020 at <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/labour-market-statistics-december-2019-quarter>

²¹ The Treasury. (2020). *Budget economic and fiscal update 2020*. Wellington: Author. Accessed 27 May 2020 at https://treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2020-05/befu20_1.pdf