

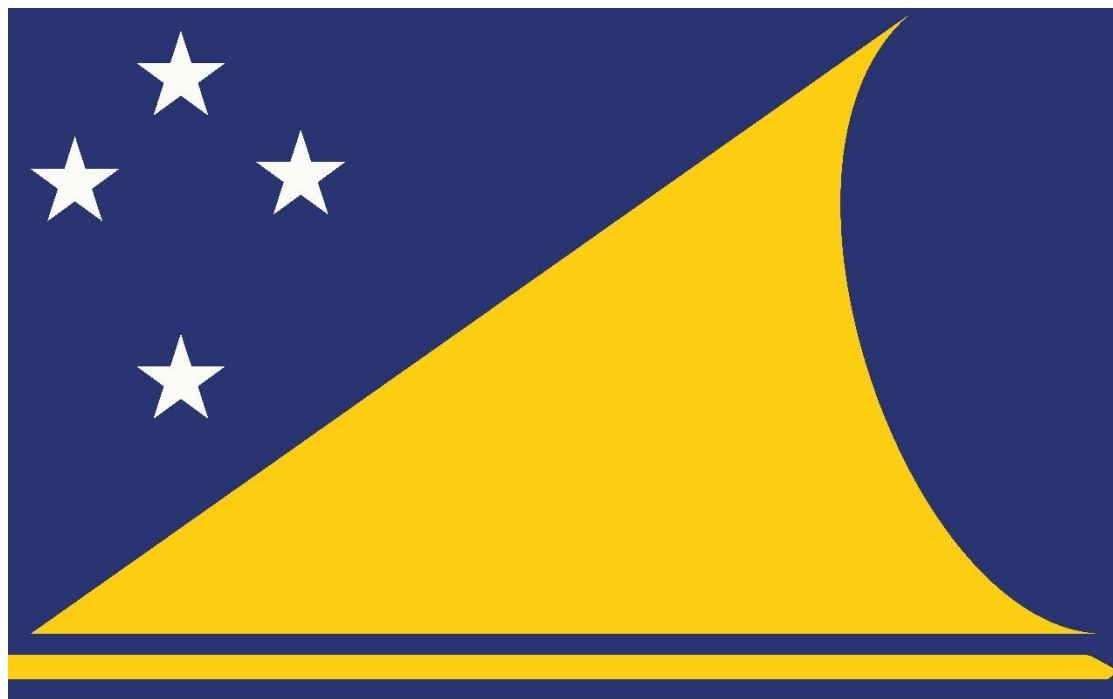
Industry-based Training models in Tokelau

The current state and potential for application

PREPARED FOR: NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

PREPARED BY: David Penney, Consultant, Skills Consulting Group
Martin Draper, Principal Consultant, Skills Consulting Group

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Introduction

This brief is a summary of the national findings for Tokelau from the *Construction Sector Industry-based Training in the Pacific* research commissioned by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and carried out by the Skills Consulting Group. The focus of the research was on the current state of industry training in 6 Pacific Island Countries (PICs) and its likely impact on the implementation of industry training in the Pacific construction sector.

The findings for Tokelau are summarised in four areas:

- The models of industry training currently being delivered in Tokelau and its construction sector.
- The level and scope of skills demand in Tokelau which drives the need for Industry Training.
- The barriers to implementation of industry training in Tokelau.
- The development needs for Tokelau to enable successful industry training models.

The research was carried out between May and August 2021 using a combination of desk-based and field research. Field research involved semi-structured interviews with stakeholders of industry training in the selected PICs. These included government representatives; education and training providers; employers and industry representatives; and community and voluntary organisations where appropriate.

Industry Training in Tokelau and its Construction Sector

Tokelau does not have a formal industry training, or work-based learning system in place. All learning in the workplace is informal and/or non-formal. Learners are commonly sent to New Zealand, Samoa, or Fiji for formal skills development.

In the past, schools in Tokelau had a TVET programme that catered for marginalised learners or those not engaging with the academic curriculum at secondary level. This was offered through USP distance learning modules offered through their facilities in each of three atolls. Tools and classrooms were set up but due to a lack of qualified trainers the programme came to an end. This programme has now been replaced with foundation literacy programmes through Te Kura School, New Zealand. Currently, there are no formal TVET providers in Tokelau.

INDUSTRY TRAINING

A mode of learning where learners develop competence mostly through the workplace, however, develop some complementary knowledge sets, skills, or competence outside of the workplace.

There are no private construction companies in Tokelau, instead, all construction on the Island is managed under three village-based councils of elders (Taupulega). Men who have the required skills are assigned to construction projects from these groups (Aumaga). In Nukunonu, the Mayor decides on who will be part of the construction group; in Fakaofu and Atafu, the president of the Aumaga works with the Mayor and leading men of the Aumaga to determine this. Recently,

however, overseas construction contractors have been brought into Tokelau for significant infrastructure development activities and when there has been a lack of locally available skills. Using international workers excludes local workers from gaining skills through the work, though, in some instances the Aumaga has assisted international contractors. These experiences are ad hoc and unstructured. The system of industry training across Tokelau, and in the construction sector, is therefore highly flexible but, it lacks scale and there is little attention given to formal skills development.

In addition, Tokelau has no formal assessment systems for workplace learning which limits the opportunities for Aumaga members to obtain formal and higher-level qualifications. Leading men from the Aumaga all have overseas qualifications, which provides a potential assessor base for industry training in construction trades. Those who do have overseas training in construction will often demonstrate required skills ad hoc to the Aumaga, however, most of the workers' skills are transferred informally through family and community members. In addition, as there are no formal construction standards in Tokelau, there is reduced incentive to formalise skills learning and accreditation around construction processes and outcomes.

Finally, due to the lack of formal assessment capacity, Tokelau does not have the capacity to recognise current competence – a key part of building an effective industry training system and formalising the skills within the Aumaga.

Construction Skills Landscape

In Tokelau, any demand for private construction is severely limited as the government-managed construction groups capture most construction activities in the country. A small minority of citizens might choose to hire workers from the government construction groups after-hours to construct private residences, however, there are no private construction companies in Tokelau. For this reason, Tokelau's circumstances are unique in the countries that were focused on in this research.

More information is needed regarding the demand for skills within the government working groups; importantly, a quantitative assessment of skills demand. Undersupplied and oversupplied skills identified by stakeholders are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Identified undersupplied and oversupplied construction skills in Tokelau.

SKILLS UNDERSUPPLIED	SKILLS OVERSUPPLIED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders noted significant skills gaps across the construction groups. Construction groups include: Building construction group (this group is responsible for both residential, hospital and school building, Government office construction); Water & sanitation; Sea wall construction; Plumbing; Electrical wiring; Repair & Maintenance; and Welding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No oversupplied skills identified.

Barriers to the Successful Implementation of Industry Training Models in Tokelau

Key barriers to establishing industry training in Tokelau are limited capacity, resources, quality standards, and coordination of working groups.

Limited Capacity and Resources

Of critical importance to establishing effective industry training in Tokelau is establishing the scale necessary to support effective training systems, crucially, in workplace learning opportunities. As identified above, there are no private construction companies. Private construction is informally organised through the Aumaga, and the more complex construction projects are carried out by contractors who bring in their labour.

Sustaining industry training in Tokelau, therefore, will require the close participation of Aumaga as the central construction workplace provider of skills and competence. There is also potential to attain workplace competence through international contractor operations in Tokelau.

In addition, Tokelau does not have a formal training system. Formal education in Tokelau is limited to the three schools providing comprehensive general education to the secondary level. There is no formal or structured regulation, recognition, or assessment of competence occurring in the industry and there are no providers to offer supplementary competencies. Without formal structures in place to support the establishment of industry training systems, implementation and assigning capacity to perform these new functions will be a challenge. It will also require sufficient levels of funding.

Further, there is a lack of accredited trainers/assessors in the Aumaga required to support the development and accreditation of off-job competence. Leading men within the group will perform ad hoc non-formal learning activities where needed, however, it is often seen as easier for the skilled individuals to simply perform the task to get the job completed. There are also cultural barriers to delivering skills training. Elders within the Aumaga are given leading roles and are expected to deliver training. This means that sometimes younger, but more skilled, workers are unable to fill training roles or are unwilling to be in a position of training their elders.

Limited Presence and Application of Quality Standards

It is the responsibility of the Taupulega to ensure quality construction outcomes, however, there are no formal construction standards or building codes in Tokelau to base these on. This had led to varied construction outcomes which have cross-sectoral impacts on health, wellbeing, and disaster resilience. Beyond outcomes, there are also no standards for construction practice, including health and safety policies, which can result in unsafe working conditions and outcomes of variable quality.

The quality of outcomes is also dependent on the availability of resources. As travel and shipping to Tokelau are infrequent, procurement of materials can be a challenge. It is difficult to bring supplies into Tokelau and to distribute them to construction sites and between atolls. Construction materials are limited to what is available at the local bulk store, there is one per atoll, and this often delays and/or materially changes construction plans. Further, workers who have trained overseas and return to Tokelau often do not have experience working with the materials that Tokelau has available so further skills development is needed locally with these.

Limited Coordination of Construction Activities and Skills Development

Coordination of construction activities is a challenge. Most construction activities have no architectural plans, and the leading man will describe what the structure will look like to the Aumaga, rather than providing plans. When plans do exist there are often many workers without the training required to read and interpret them. Different trades activities are also not coordinated through the course of a construction project, leading to rework such as needing to destroy and remake walls to install electrical wiring.

Crucially, workforce competencies are not effectively mapped and managed. Participants in the research stated that skilled workers returning from overseas often were not assigned to their areas of specialism. While some people assigned to construction programmes will have limited or no skills in the skills required to carry out the assignment effectively. Workers were also assigned to multiple construction projects without the knowledge of the different construction standards for each structure. International contractors who have been brought in to do work in Tokelau were sometimes found not to have the requisite competencies to perform the work they were responsible for. There is a need for workforce planning to be improved so that competent workers are assigned to the right areas and can develop less-skilled workers in the process.

The Development Needs for Industry Training Models in Tokelau

Based upon the availability of resources; the status and capacity of Industry Training; and the current approach to skills formation, Tokelau was classified in the research as an ‘Adaptive and Informal Training System’. These types of systems were found to have basic work-based learning systems and limited availability of formal training, generally limited to secondary school. This meant that they were reliant on the informal sector for industry skills formation.

No tertiary work-based learning is occurring in Tokelau, and no secondary school work-based learning pathways are offered. The latter was trialled but could not be maintained due to a lack of skilled trainers. Informal learning in the construction industry is also complicated by the arrangements of the local construction working groups. The working groups do not consistently or systematically provide skills training to their members, and skills formation can exclude women as skills are traditionally passed down father to son. This has the effect of blocking the entry of women and younger more skilled workers in general into the industrial training system.

The development priorities for these types of training systems are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Development Priorities for Adaptive and Informal Training Systems.

DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES FOR ‘ADAPTIVE AND INFORMAL TRAINING SYSTEMS’
<p>Policy and Coordination</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with local education ministries to develop flexible regional Work-Based Learning and Industry Training policies. 2. Bring community (including employers) and informal sector perspectives formally into policy formation and evaluation.

Regulation

3. Develop partnerships with regional dual training frameworks and systems to gain economies of scale and to;
4. access regulatory expertise in the monitoring and evaluation of local provision and the implementation of regional industry training frameworks and systems.

Workforce Development

5. Identify local skills development needs to enable the alignment of local and regional modular programmes and qualifications to the local labour market.

Financing

6. Provide financial aid for local skills-based training (which means accepting dependency in the longer term).

Delivery

7. Support and build on new technologies such as new and cheaper satellite communications, online learning, and massive open online courses to build blended learning solutions.

A crucial early step in this process will be to establish what capacity and capability exist locally to perform each of the areas shown above in Table 2. It is likely, given the relatively small labour force, that Tokelau will need to access international capacity and capability to fulfil some roles within its local industry training system. These might be in the areas of finance, regulation, or delivery and could be at a regional, national, or sub-national level. Extant regional supports, such as the Pacific Quality Assurance Framework from The Pacific Community (SPC, 2015), offer opportunities for Tokelau but more specific national or sub-national arrangements may offer more relevance to the Tokelauan system. Determining what functions can be performed locally and what support may be needed externally will lead to decisions about the structure of foundational elements of the industry training system.

Another aspect of this will be monitoring the workforce to identify skills needs and to understand whether the workforce can sustain workplace training over the long term. Tokelau is unique among the countries in this research due to its government working groups which may be an opportunity in this context. These working groups may be able to efficiently monitor their skill demands over time without the establishment of onerous structures or processes as they are relatively small and centrally monitored.

Beyond workforce monitoring, effectively utilising and developing the capacity and capability within the working groups will be key to any industry training reforms. They represent most of the construction industry activity in Tokelau and will therefore have a significant role to play in the design, delivery, and regulation of industry training activities.

Due to the limited capacity and capability within Tokelau, highly flexible approaches to skills development may be needed. These approaches should account for the potentially limited skills development opportunities available locally as well as the limited formal skills development opportunities. Lifelong learning, modular, and scalable learning approaches could be explored.

Significant geographic isolation also means that bringing in physical supports to assist with sustaining these delivery methods, such as trainers or materials, will be a challenge. Intangible support, however, may provide an effective and sustainable solution. Whether these are online resources, external quality assurance and moderation functions, or others.

References

SPC. (2015). *The Pacific Quality Assurance Framework*. Suva, Fiji.: Secretariat of the Pacific Community.