

BUILDING CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY FOR RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Brocksopp. A^{1*}, Burt-Priddy. E¹, Highway. M^{1,2}, Wright. C¹,

¹ *Element Environmental, Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch*

² *New Zealand Association of Resource Management, PO Box 4315, Hamilton East, Hamilton*

*Email: adrian@element.org.nz

Abstract

A greater understanding of the number of advisors, their capabilities, and work locations is needed to assist landowners, and regional councils in ensuring the required expertise is on hand to complete Freshwater Farm Plans (FW-FPs) (Resource Management Act, No. 69, 1991) or risk assessments relating to the impact of land use on freshwater.

'The Capacity and Capability Builder for Resource Management Project' (the Project) commenced in July 2022. This three-year project, is being delivered in partnership with the Ministry for the Environment (MfE), Regional Councils, and the New Zealand Association of Resource Management (NZARM). These organisations are working collaboratively with stakeholders to deliver on capacity and capability building within the resource management sector to help landowners meet New Zealand's freshwater challenges.

The Project focuses on understanding the current capacity in the resource management sector to support the requirements for implementing FW-FP's, Catchment Action Plans (CAP's) and building capability across the wider environmental, social and cultural areas of natural resource management. Once current capacity and capability is understood, the Project will develop and implement processes for training and support, enabling the continual development of national capacity and capability in the sector. This understanding will better inform regional councils facilitation of on-farm environmental support for their communities. These communities will be supported by developing a highly competent professional workforce with specific skills, experience and knowledge in sustainable land and water management, both at a national and regional scale.

The Project aims to leave behind a legacy of training resources, formal qualification pathways, digital tools, and capable trainers, enabling future resource management professionals to position themselves well for the delivery of FW-FPs. This will be possible through the commitment provided by MfE, NZARM and regional councils.

Introduction

Forthcoming regulations require Catchment Action Plans (CAP) and Freshwater Farm Plans (FW-FP) to be rolled out nationally across pastoral and horticultural businesses. Regional councils have emphasised the need to increase capacity and capability within the land-based resource management sector, with a clear consensus on the implementation barriers affecting regional councils' ability to improve capacity and capability. Increased staff turnover in the public sector, the loss of institutional knowledge, and increased demand for resources in the environmental industry are all putting pressure on meeting the capacity and capability demands across regional councils.

Regional council senior staff have been facing increased strain through a need to meet their daily professional responsibilities, a need to fill resourcing gaps created by departing personnel, as well as a need to onboard new staff. Additionally, regional council staff have come under pressure to effectively and efficiently implement changes in national and regional policy. All these factors have contributed to reduced capacity in the regional sector.

Regional councils have historically depended on long-serving staff, generally coming from a Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry background to develop internal capability. However, as councils lose this intellectual property due to an ageing workforce or external career advancements, there is a need to retain this knowledge for future use, bring in new staff with similar skill sets, or use more external training resources to address skill gaps.

As the requirement for FW-FP's, CAPs and future central government policies become part of national expectations, there is a requirement to learn new skill sets, take current skills to a higher level of knowledge and understanding, and be able to articulate knowledge into a different environment for the same outcome (funding help vs best practice vs compliance expectation). NZARM has developed and is implementing the Capability and Capacity Builder for Resource Management Project, with support and funding from MfE and regional councils.

Collaboration

The Project's pillars are genuine collaboration and co-operation, with the backing of the regional councils' Land Management Group. This group is fundamental to the Project's long-term viability. The combined support of the councils is shown by the cash commitment, which surpasses \$160,000 over three years and also includes more than \$300,000 of in-kind contributions. With this contribution, regional councils will be able to remain actively involved in the Project, enabling them to co-develop solutions and offer national support, while also continuing to offer insightful information on the unique regional difficulties they are facing.

Additionally, support from the industry continues to be pivotal for providing direction for the Project, with the active involvement of industry representatives, including the Land Managers' Group, New Zealand Institute of Primary Industry Management (NZIPIM), Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), MfE, Te Uru Rākau, the Fertiliser Association, Kaipara Moana Remediation (KMR), Muka Tangata, Beef + Lamb NZ, DairyNZ, New Zealand Landcare, Fertilizer New Zealand, Rural Trust Support and Horticulture New Zealand.

Industry involvement positions the project for a co-operative working environment where information and resources are exchanged. This will foster a genuine interest in and engagement with the project, assisting in the project's proposed adoption by resource management professionals.

As a part of the collaboration, NZARM has developed Memoranda of Understanding with KMR and NZIPIM to facilitate partnership and co-operation in building capacity and capability. The joint commitment shown by these agreements demonstrates the willingness of these organisations to work together to support the development of a national network of freshwater farm planners.

Project purpose

The Project's overarching goal is to provide a solution to capability and capacity challenges, with a focus on addressing regional capability and capacity gaps. The Project takes a broad

lens that includes FW-FP regulations as well as the skills and knowledge needed for the implementation of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM).

Resource management professionals will be able to,

- Gain a clear understanding of the current capability of individuals within regions.
- Understand each region’s capability and capacity needs through working with regional councils, community groups and Iwi organisations.
- Provide targeted, context-based training and qualifications to build capability to match the regional needs and support career development.
- Provide a nationally supported register of capability that allows councils, catchment groups and farmers to connect to the right expertise.

In addition to assisting the public sector, this project will also supply the private sector with the technical resources and direction needed to advance the degree of competence and professional development within a range of businesses.

The central objectives which will aid in achieving this purpose are also what contributes to setting this project aside from other upskilling and certification projects,

- Objective 1: Build a register of capability that can be used by resource management professionals.
- Objective 2: Understand capability gaps and design a capability building programme.
- Objective 3: Design a formal qualification programme with a private training provider.
- Objective 4: Continuous development and career pathways for resource management professionals.
- Objective 5: Provide training programmes at both national and regional levels.

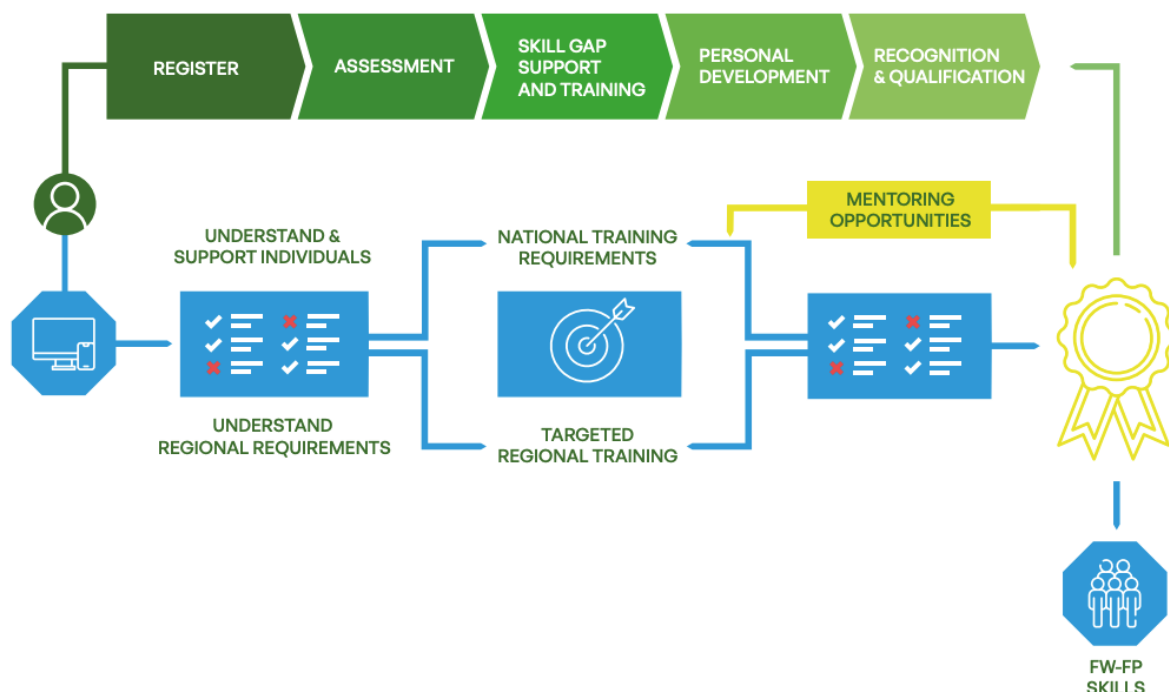


Figure 1. A overview of the capability builder process from the users perspective.

National Register

The Project's main focus is developing and implementing a national capability register. Using a portal, the register will be updated with each person's current knowledge and experience,

emphasising any capability gaps that may be necessary to satisfy FW-FPs or CAPs demands. As the register's development moves forward, skill sets and knowledge will be evaluated against formalised criteria based on standards necessary to meet the prerequisites for supporting key freshwater implementation requirements. The register will assess an individual's capability based on various factors, including overall years of experience and levels of in-house training, formal qualification and education.

This Project is unique as the national register will be able to provide organisations with information on the number of advisers, their qualifications, and their place of employment upon request. It will be possible for councils, resource managers, consultancies, catchment groups, and farmers to utilise the register, which will help identify the competency and capacity levels of people across New Zealand and link them with landowners to help them achieve the upcoming resource management requirements.

The platform will allow you to search by location, skill, and experience based on the type of farms you manage or are involved in. The user will be able to use the register to help:

- Assess their own individual skill gaps.
- Match training currently available in the marketplace to support learning.
- Use as a compendium of evidence for career development and work opportunities.
- Determine what additional requirements they will need to meet specifics for FW-FPs (national and regional).
- Allows councils, resource managers, consultants, catchment groups, and farmers to connect to the right expertise.
- Farmers or growers will be able to access the portal to find the right capability to match their farm system, landscape, or specific issues.

The register will be a part of the NZARM website rebuild. The website will have a variety of resources contained in a knowledge hub that will hold articles, webinars, videos, and training materials on subjects pertinent to those working in the resource management sector.

Formal Training

The register platform will offer the opportunity to customise context-based training and improve competence to match regional requirements and highlight career development prospects. The formal education and training component will allow an individual to fine-tune where their future emphasis should be by identifying the skill gaps needed for professional growth.

The formal training component of the Project will aim to deliver at least three sizable national training packages over the course of three years, comprising 18–30 events. The events' content will be carefully chosen to provide in-depth knowledge on specialised topics such as intensive winter grazing, hill country erosion, and farm system considerations, along with training materials that include custom e-learning modules, self-directed exploration, and the development of practical skills. The training package will also include a national approach to training, with a roadshow of events intended to develop competence across several disciplines.

The training programme is being created in collaboration with regional councils, industry groups, and the central government to establish the following:

- Desired learning outcomes.
- A training framework that defines the scope of delivery, training components, and learner progression.

- Evaluation of learning outcomes.
- A framework for moderation and evaluation.

Training delivery is anticipated to be undertaken with a mix of expertise from professional training providers, councils, Iwi organisations and through consultancy services.

Individuals' ability to receive recognition for the completion of upskilling and training will be a central part of the formal training framework, accessed via a centralised online portal. The register will streamline the capability assessment process and provide the user with a compendium of evidence that they can update as they add to their formal (recognised courses and training) or informal experience and feedback in the field (time in the role, feedback, mentoring support).

Recognised industry training providers and Muka Tangata are contributing to the development of an appropriate vocational training system and qualification structure for the Project. The proposed establishment of micro-credentials will support the active involvement and recognition of individuals undertaking formal training within the Project. This process will need to recognise not only a final destination on the journey but also where recipients are currently on their development journey.

Regional and Online Events

There will be the opportunity for informal training and events as part of the Project to assist the continuous professional development of resource management professionals. Using online webinars or localised in-person events, the Project hopes to offer training that is region specific. Throughout the Project's three years, 18–20 webinars and nationally delivered informal training events with a regional focus will be scheduled. Event material will be specifically designed to fill knowledge gaps and give attendees access to specialist expertise from resource management professionals. Each online event will be recorded and added to the knowledge hub on the NZARM website, so that they may be used as teaching tools in the future.

As of March 2023, four webinars covering a range of subjects, including hill-country erosion and whole-farm systems, have been completed with the help of experts. These webinars will provide experts with an informal setting to discuss issues, expertise, and ideas with the larger resource management community.

Mentoring

NZARM is passionate about mentorship, learning, and organisational development through knowledge transfer. It is envisaged that increasing capability in this area will promote ethical behaviour, technical competence, and effective resource management techniques. It will also make it simpler for resource management professionals to communicate effectively through a structured mentoring programme.

The Project aims to discover mentors with high levels of expertise who are willing to give back to the professional community. Each potential mentor will be evaluated to see if they are interested in mentoring and have the required abilities and commitment. Moreover, the NZARM website will give mentors the chance to connect with and network with rising professionals.

Conclusion

A high level of capability and capacity is needed now, more than ever, amongst resource management professionals. With this in mind, central government, regional councils, professional bodies and non-governmental organisations have responded to the call to collaborate to achieve this alongside NZARM. The challenge and the opportunity now are to deliver training opportunities that are relevant, timely, accessible, and provide the recognition needed to support professional needs and fill the gaps across existing training providers.

Resource management professionals will soon have access to a one-stop shop (online national register) to map their career progression and training pathway and find relevant learning opportunities. The register will be a key tool in understanding capability gaps at an individual and regional level and deploying training opportunities to fill these gaps.

These new opportunities to identify and track capability and capacity needs and directly target training will be an important and lasting part of the solution to New Zealand/Aotearoa's environmental challenges.

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