



# Project Uaki – Final Report

Shifting the Dial on Social Procurement

Prepared for  
**WellingtonNZ**

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# Executive Summary

The Uaki Strategic Planning Project presents a regional approach to strengthening social procurement in the Wellington region, with a focus on increasing equity of access for Māori, Pasifika and small businesses. Building on the foundational work of Phase 1, this report outlines a strategic framework and implementation plan co-developed through sustained engagement with councils, regional leaders, mana whenua, industry bodies, and the business community.

The key point of difference this strategic planning offers is its delivery of tangible, actionable solutions to well-understood barriers. Solutions that have been co-designed by and for people with lived experience. At its core, this is a system-level response to long-standing barriers in procurement. Many capable local businesses remain locked out of government opportunities due to opaque processes, fragmented support, and a lack of consistent buyer-supplier engagement. The cost of inaction is high, not only in lost economic opportunity, but in diminished community wealth-building, reduced innovation, and weakened regional resilience.

**Projects Ue and Uaki have responded to this by offering tangible solutions in the form of a targeted, scalable model of social procurement.**

## **This report delivers:**

- A Strategic Framework comprising five interconnected workstreams that align with the full procurement lifecycle: Tender Readiness, Warrant of Readiness, Market Engagement, Contract Performance, and Post-Contract Review.
- A set of nine implementation actions per stream, grounded in lived experience, user feedback, and sector-specific insight, including capability development, piloting opportunities, and digital enablement options.
- Clear opportunities for development, drawn from project learnings, to guide regional prioritisation and collaborative investment.
- A shared vision for procurement uplift as a mechanism for inclusive economic growth, relationship-based engagement, and outcomes-focused contracting.

The proposed interventions are supported by Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis, which shows that a \$1 million government contract awarded to Māori, Pasifika, or local businesses could yield an average return of \$4.60 for every \$1 invested, including:

- **22.8 FTE jobs created**, with a focus on equitable employment pathways.
- **\$540,000 in locally retained income**, supporting household and community wellbeing.
- **\$131,000 in reduced benefit dependency**, aligning with MSD and REDP indicators.
- **\$664,000 in GDP-relevant gains**, including productivity uplift and local business growth, equating to a projected **\$1.13 GDP per capita increase** when scaled across the Wellington region.

The framework is designed to be modular and adaptive — enabling regional councils, buyers, and ecosystem partners to engage with the areas most relevant to them while aligning to a common kaupapa. **A key insight is that procurement uplift cannot be delivered in silos:** it requires trusted partnerships, appropriate infrastructure, and aligned initiatives across the system.

This report closes with a recommended implementation planning roadmap, as well as an overview of related workstreams, to support continuity and delivery momentum.

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**In the spirit of kaupapa Māori, this strategy is an invitation to transform procurement from a compliance function to a platform for collective community wellbeing.**

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# Things That Will Shift the Dial

## Social Procurement Learnings

Project Ue identified that while many Māori, Pasifika and small businesses are technically capable, they continue to encounter systemic, cultural, and procedural barriers that limit their full participation in procurement processes. Several critical learnings have emerged:

### **Clear, Accessible, and Supported Supplier Readiness Pathways**

It is not enough to expect businesses to navigate complex procurement requirements independently. Tailored supplier readiness programmes, mentorship, and guided onboarding processes are essential, particularly for SMEs, Māori and Pasifika enterprises. These pathways must be designed to reflect varying levels of business maturity, sector specificity, and cultural intelligence to ensure genuine accessibility and sustained participation.

### **Early and Sustained Trust Based Buyer-Supplier Engagement**

Procurement success improves markedly when relationship-building precedes transactional processes. Buyers who invest early in whakawhānaungatanga (relationship-building) create space for open dialogue, capacity assessment, and mutual understanding of readiness and constraints. Consistent engagement throughout the procurement lifecycle allows for adaptive support, better contract outcomes, and fosters long-term partnerships rather than one-off transactions.

### **Pre-Qualification Tools to Balance Buyer Risk and Supplier Confidence**

Mechanisms such as a Warrant of Readiness (WoR) provide a shared assurance tool that helps de-risk procurement decisions for buyers while simultaneously validating the capability and preparedness of suppliers. When embedded into procurement frameworks, these tools offer a transparent, equitable platform that recognises diverse business models and lived experience alongside technical competency.

### **System Fragmentation Undermines Performance Visibility and Improvement**

A lack of alignment across procurement platforms, contract management systems, and reporting frameworks creates blind spots that inhibit real-time performance tracking and long-term evaluation. Streamlining data capture and integrating systems is critical to enable continuous improvement, support accountability, and track outcomes specific to Māori and Pasifika business participation.

### **Practical, Scaffolded, and Culturally Anchored Capability Development**

Capacity-building efforts must move beyond generic training to offer staged, sector-relevant, and culturally informed support. This is particularly crucial in industries with high-barriers to entry such as infrastructure, construction, and professional services, where regulatory compliance, health and safety, and scale requirements can easily exclude smaller providers. Tailored interventions, co-delivered with trusted Māori and Pasifika partners, can bridge these gaps more effectively.

Collectively, these insights have directly informed the five-stream framework that follows. They clarify not only the challenges to be addressed but also the types of interventions most likely to generate sustained systemic change. The emphasis shifts from short-term procurement outcomes to building a more resilient, inclusive, and equitable procurement ecosystem.

# Strategic Framework

The Strategic Framework has been designed to align at the highest level with the Wellington Regional Economic Development Plan (REDP) 2024 Refresh, Māori Economic Development Enabling Plan. It introduces five interconnected streams of work, each designed to address a specific stage of the procurement lifecycle.

These streams; Tender Readiness, Warrant of Readiness, Market Engagement, Contract Performance, and Post-Contract Review together form an integrated roadmap for uplifting local buyer and supplier capability, improving transparency, and creating a more inclusive procurement system.

## Wellington Regional Social Procurement Strategic Framework

Purpose: Build capacity and capability of Māori enterprises in social procurement processes

### Opportunity: Greater access to procurement contracts

A commitment to use procurement as a tool for building social and economic prosperity was signed by several councils across the region in 2021. Increasing the number of entities signed up will increase spending with diverse local suppliers, generate new employment, help to build local business capability, create a more agile and resilient supply chain, and grow our regional economy.

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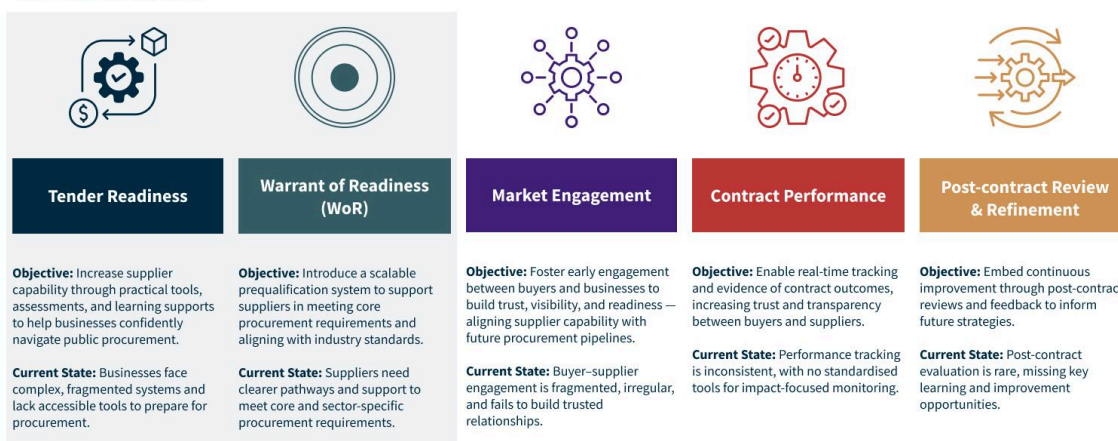


Figure 1: Note: This is a condensed version of the full diagram. The complete version can be found on pages 13–14 of this document.

### Each stream includes the following and are detailed on Page 8:

- A defined strategic objective aligned with the Wellington REDP – 2024 Refresh.
- Current state challenge informed by the research and analysis of Project Ue.
- Recommended implementation actions developed using a theory of change approach including aligned capability building, engagement mechanisms, and piloting pathways.

# What Will Be Most Impactful

## Opportunities for Development

This kaupapa identifies several strategic levers capable of unlocking system-wide value, particularly when targeted at structural inequities in procurement access. These high-leverage opportunities are grounded in evidence from Project Ue and Uaki Phase 1 learnings, and are reinforced by the following social return on investment (SROI) analysis.

### Targeted initiatives for maximum impact include:

#### 1. Tender Readiness Learning Series

Targeted capability building for Māori and diverse SMEs to strengthen commercial readiness, increase bid success rates, and build foundational infrastructure. This includes support in navigating government systems, pricing models, and compliance obligations — especially for the construction sector.

#### 2. Warrant of Readiness (WoR) Pilot

A pre-qualification mechanism tailored to sector-specific standards. It offers a scalable way for buyers to identify ready suppliers while allowing suppliers to benchmark and improve their capability. A tiered WoR model ensures it is both inclusive and adaptable.

#### 3. Inclusive Market Engagement Pilots

Pilots in the construction sector and other key industries to foster early-stage buyer-supplier engagement. This creates greater visibility of procurement pipelines and supports more intentional alignment between council planning cycles and supplier capacity building.

#### 4. Contract Performance Tooling

Development of a streamlined and potentially standardised platform for contract monitoring and real-time impact tracking. The aim is to reduce fragmentation, support procurement teams with meaningful reporting, and increase accountability against social outcomes.

#### 5. Post-Contract Evaluation Systems

Embedding formalised review and feedback mechanisms into the contract lifecycle. These are essential for creating feedback loops that fuel improvement, enable supplier growth, and reinforce outcome-focused procurement practices.

### Projected Social Return on Investment

An SROI analysis of a \$1 million government contract awarded to a Māori, Pasifika, or local business aligned with REDP indicators, indicates an average return of \$4.60 for every \$1 invested. This has the potential to include:

- **22.8 FTE jobs created**, with a focus on equity employment pathways.
- **\$540,000 in income retained locally**, supporting financial wellbeing and household resilience.
- **\$131,000 reduction in benefit dependency**, aligned with MSD and REDP indicators.
- **\$664,000 in GDP-relevant gains**, including wages, productivity uplift, and local business profit — **equating to an estimated \$1.13 uplift in GDP per capita** from a single contract when spread across the Wellington region.

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**The systems-level insight is clear: procurement uplift requires shared ownership, practical tools, and adaptive processes. Strategic implementation is key to unlocking value.**

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# Recommended Strategic Implementation Planning

This section outlines the recommended actions under each of the five strategic streams. These are designed to progress over a phased delivery horizon, and are aligned with regional priorities and system capacity.

## Recommended Strategic Implementation Planning

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Tender Readiness	Warrant of Readiness (WoR)	Market Engagement	Contract Performance	Post-contract Review & Refinement
<p><b>Identify and onboard suppliers</b> to support programme delivery and help shape training materials.</p> <p><b>Activate communications channels</b> to attract pakihī Māori partners into the capability-building stream.</p> <p><b>Series of Lunch n Learn's:</b> 1. Contingency Liability Learning 2. Building a sales pipeline 3. Tendering 101</p> <p><b>Deliver a Tari Basics learning series</b> covering NZBN, GST, insurance, governance, and legal essentials.</p> <p><b>Roll out a construction focused capacity programme</b> addressing sector-specific gaps (e.g., H&amp;S, quals, workforce roles).</p> <p><b>Showcase supplier capability</b> through a demonstration series to build visibility and buyer confidence.</p> <p><b>Harness lessons learned to inform future steps in building sustained supplier presence</b> in the construction ecosystem through wrap around support and repeat engagement.</p> <p><b>Have built a presence in the construction industry.</b> Built trust, built readiness in the ecosystem.</p>	<p><b>Co-design a modular WoR framework</b> with sector-specific requirements.</p> <p><b>Define baseline and optional criteria</b> aligned with procurement expectations.</p> <p><b>Map supplier journey</b> to identify key support and intervention points.</p> <p><b>Pilot the WoR tool in the construction sector</b> with targeted businesses.</p> <p><b>Develop a digital tool or workbook</b> to support self-assessment.</p> <p><b>Train procurement teams to use the WoR as part of RFP evaluation.</b></p> <p><b>Refine based on user feedback</b> and procurement team input.</p> <p><b>Develop business case</b> to further evaluate benefits of broader sector and regional adoption.</p>	<p><b>Co-design a market engagement strategy</b> focused on the construction sector with iwi/hapu, councils, and buyer reps.</p> <p><b>Map construction procurement pipelines</b> and identify key entry points for supplier engagement.</p> <p><b>Identify and onboard construction-aligned buyer advocates</b> to support early supplier interaction.</p> <p><b>Launch "Meet the Market Construction" pilot events</b> in partnership with two local authorities.</p> <p><b>Develop buyer guidance</b> for inclusive pre-market engagement (tailored to construction).</p> <p><b>Evaluate pilot effectiveness</b> and supplier/buyer satisfaction in construction context.</p> <p><b>Refine strategy and expand engagement model</b> into a second sector (e.g., hospitality, professional services).</p> <p>Suppliers are visible, trusted, and actively engaged in upcoming procurement pipelines across diverse sectors.</p>	<p><b>Co-develop minimum contract performance standards</b> for the construction sector.</p> <p><b>Audit contract performance tracking practices</b> across key construction tenders.</p> <p><b>Prototype a simplified reporting template/tool</b> for construction contracts.</p> <p><b>Pilot with two councils and construction suppliers</b> (SMEs, subs, primes).</p> <p><b>Provide targeted onboarding for construction suppliers</b> on reporting expectations.</p> <p><b>Evaluate pilot data for contract compliance, delivery, and broader outcomes.</b></p> <p><b>Adapt tool for wider use</b> and prepare for rollout to a second sector.</p> <p>Procurement contracts are transparently tracked against performance and impact measures through consistent systems.</p>	<p><b>Co-design a construction-focused post contract evaluation process.</b></p> <p><b>Pilot the review process</b> with 3 completed construction tenders.</p> <p><b>Conduct feedback interviews</b> with suppliers (solo, sub, prime) and buyers.</p> <p><b>Extract key learnings</b> and compile anonymised construction case studies.</p> <p><b>Introduce feedback milestones</b> into construction contract closure schedules.</p> <p><b>Present insights in a workshop</b> to council infrastructure and procurement leads.</p> <p><b>Test cross-sector applicability</b> and prepare revised framework for broader adoption.</p> <p>Post-contract insights inform better strategies, improve supplier capability, and strengthen procurement practice.</p>

Figure 2: Note: This is a condensed version of the full diagram. The complete version can be found on pages 13–14 of this document.

Each action is prioritised based on impact, readiness, and scalability. A modular approach allows councils and regional eco-system stakeholders to activate specific streams as appropriate, while maintaining alignment to the shared framework.

**Adopting this strategic approach to procurement uplift will gain a number of long-term and practical benefits that support both internal capability and regional wellbeing:**

### 1. Increased Contracting Confidence and Risk Management

By engaging with pre-qualified suppliers through tools like the Warrant of Readiness and targeted capability building, councils reduce procurement risk and improve contract delivery

confidence — particularly in high-barrier sectors like infrastructure and construction.

### 2. More Competitive and Inclusive Supplier Markets

This framework enables councils to access a broader, more diverse pool of ready suppliers, improving competition, encouraging innovation, and addressing supplier concentration risks in regional procurement.

### 3. Clearer Accountability and Outcome Tracking

With enhanced contract performance tooling and post-contract evaluation built into the model, councils can better measure and report on the social and economic impact of their procurement activity — aligning with REDP and long-term plan (LTP) reporting expectations.

#### 4. Stronger Partnerships and Alignment

By working through a shared regional model, councils benefit from aligned priorities, co-investment opportunities, and ecosystem partnerships that lift the effectiveness of collective procurement initiatives.

#### 5. Economic Uplift with Direct Community Benefit

Targeted procurement uplift has a demonstrated economic multiplier effect. By increasing spend with local and under-utilised suppliers,

councils contribute directly to job creation, household wellbeing, and local GDP — all while delivering their existing capital and service programmes.

#### 6. Futureproofing Procurement Practice

As the public and the private sector continue to embed sustainability, equity, and transparency into procurement policy, councils that adopt these principles early are better positioned to meet evolving expectations and lead the shift toward purpose-led spending.

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**“Ko ngā pae tawhiti whāia kia tata, ko ngā pae tata, whakamaia kia tina.”**

*Pursue distant horizons so they may become close; hold fast to those already near.*

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## Conclusion

The Project Uaki strategy represents a decisive step toward building a more inclusive and outcomes-focused procurement system in the Wellington region. It reflects the lessons of past engagement, and a future-oriented vision for what is possible when we design procurement for people and place.

**At its heart, the proposed model seeks to develop system capability in three key areas:**

- 1. Supplier capability**, by enabling Māori, Pasifika and small businesses to better navigate procurement processes and grow into government pipelines
- 2. Buyer capability**, by supporting councils and agencies to build confidence in engaging and contracting with new suppliers
- 3. System capability**, by aligning processes, infrastructure, and partnerships across the ecosystem to deliver shared value and impact.

**Together, these capabilities lay the groundwork for enduring change. But capability without coordination is not enough. The strength of the proposed approach lies in its collaborative DNA and the next phase will require active partnership, resourcing, and leadership from across the region.**

We invite councils, iwi, economic development agencies, and industry partners to adopt the framework, trial its workstreams, and contribute to refining and scaling the model. This is not intended to be a static strategy; it is a living kaupapa designed to evolve with the needs of the communities it serves.

Now is the time to commit to action that will shift the dial. By embedding these strategies in real-world delivery, we can evolve procurement into a powerful lever for equity, resilience, and collective prosperity.





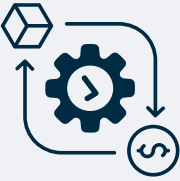

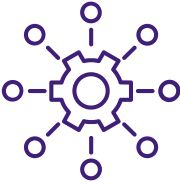

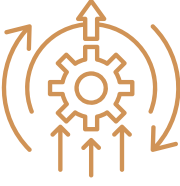
# Appendices

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<b>Tender Readiness</b>	<b>Warrant of Readiness (WoR)</b>	<b>Market Engagement</b>	<b>Contract Performance</b>	<b>Post-contract Review &amp; Refinement</b>
<b>Objective:</b> Increase supplier capability through practical tools, assessments, and learning supports to help businesses confidently navigate public procurement.	<b>Objective:</b> Introduce a scalable prequalification system to support suppliers in meeting core procurement requirements and aligning with industry standards.	<b>Objective:</b> Foster early engagement between buyers and businesses to build trust, visibility, and readiness — aligning supplier capability with future procurement pipelines.	<b>Objective:</b> Enable real-time tracking and evidence of contract outcomes, increasing trust and transparency between buyers and suppliers.	<b>Objective:</b> Embed continuous improvement through post-contract reviews and feedback to inform future strategies.
<b>Current State:</b> Businesses face complex, fragmented systems and lack accessible tools to prepare for procurement.	<b>Current State:</b> Suppliers need clearer pathways and support to meet core and sector-specific procurement requirements.	<b>Current State:</b> Buyer–supplier engagement is fragmented, irregular, and fails to build trusted relationships.	<b>Current State:</b> Performance tracking is inconsistent, with no standardised tools for impact-focused monitoring.	<b>Current State:</b> Post-contract evaluation is rare, missing key learning and improvement opportunities.

# Recommended Strategic Implementation Planning

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Tender Readiness		Warrant of Readiness (WoR)		Market Engagement		Contract Performance		Post-contract Review & Refinement	
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Whakapā mai - join the kōrero:

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