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Media release

Tourism industry confident on year ahead, planning to hire

Tourism Industry Aotearoa's (TIA) annual workforce survey has shown that tourism business confidence remains high, with more tourism operators actively recruiting and an increased number of entry-level roles available across the industry.

Included in the results:

- 86% of tourism organisations who responded, say they feel confident about the year ahead
- 51% of tourism organisations are actively recruiting staff (up 4% from 2025), with 78% of respondents expecting to recruit at least one new role in the next 12 months – up significantly on last year.
- Entry level roles now make up 55% of tourism vacancies, up 10% from 2025, with mid-level roles sitting at 30% and senior roles (8+ years with specific qualifications) at 15%.
- Overall confidence in retention of staff has improved in recent years; only 22% of operators are concerned about their ability to retain team members.

TIA Chief Executive, Rebecca Ingram, says the results demonstrate that there is plenty of opportunity in tourism.

"Whether you're looking to start a career or build on existing skills, there is opportunity for employment in tourism - and it's great to see the industry optimistic about the year ahead," says Ingram.

One in nine jobs in New Zealand are enabled by tourism and hospitality, which is 327,888 jobs directly and indirectly supported by tourism. Workforce forecasts show that achieving the goal of doubling tourism exports by 2034 will require approximately 100,000 additional workers - around 10,000 to 13,000 new entrants each year.

Ingram says that the industry's Tourism 2050 strategy has 'Growing the Tourism Workforce' as a key action to support future industry needs.

"Delivering the workforce of the future will require co-ordinated action on many fronts, not least how we inspire young people to pick a career in tourism. The recent announcement that Tourism will be included as an industry-led secondary school subject in the refreshed curriculum for Years 12 and 13 is a very positive step and we are enthusiastic about the difference this will make.

"Alongside this, we need to be employers of choice and it's great to see the breadth of actions undertaken including flexible work hours, paying the living wage, opportunities to attend conferences, professional development, providing meals and in some cases accommodation," says Ingram.

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The survey notes that one quarter of tourism operators plan to hire Working Holiday Visa (WHV) holders over the summer period. The average WHV holder is estimated to contribute over $50,000 to the New Zealand economy during their stay.

"The number of Working Holiday Visa visitor arrivals to New Zealand have been steadily declining, but they play an important role in tourism and in other industries like horticulture; especially in the summer months when the industry needs surge workforce," says Ingram.

Read the 2026 annual workforce survey summary, undertaken by Angus & Associates on behalf of Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA), here.

231 tourism businesses responded to this survey from across the industry.

For more information, please contact TIA Communications Manager James Craw – james.craw@tia.org.nz or (021) 224 8056.

KEY FACTS

- Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA) is Aotearoa New Zealand tourism's peak industry body. We are the only independent association that represents all sectors of the country's large and diverse tourism industry.
- TIA has about 1,200 member businesses from across the industry, ranging from small owner/operators to large publicly listed tourism corporates and international hotel chains.
- TIA leads implementation of the industry's Tourism Sustainability Commitment, which aims to see every tourism business in Aotearoa New Zealand contributing positively to our people and cultures, our environment and our economy.
- TIA delivers a comprehensive range of industry events including TRENZ, New Zealand Tourism Awards, Discussing Tourism regional events and Tourism Summit Aotearoa.
- Visit www.tia.org.nz for more information.