

OCTOBER 2022



# UPTEMPO

## Pasifika-centred adult learning to grow intergenerational wealth:

Uptempo insights and system implications

# What is Uptempo?

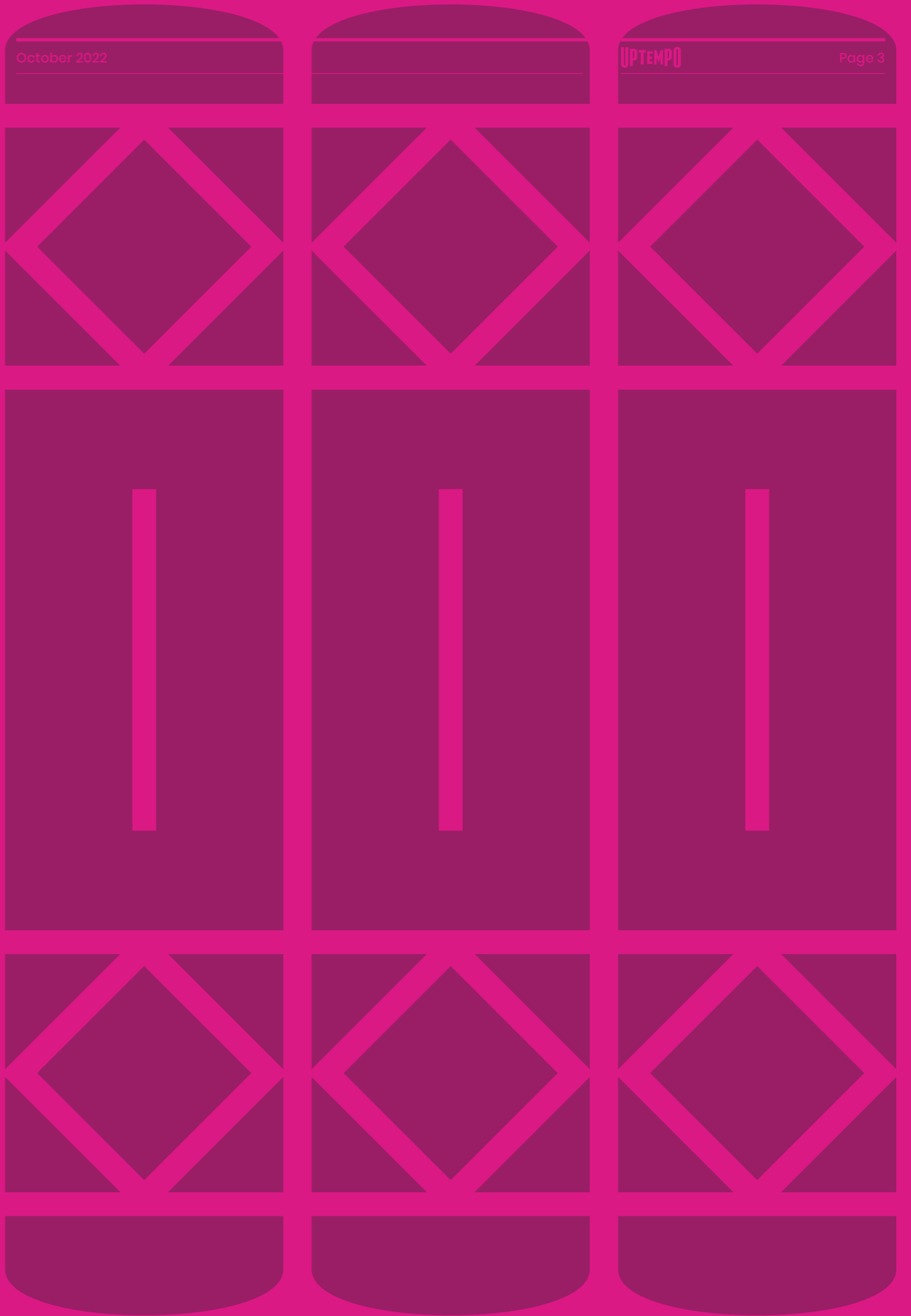
Uptempo is a learning incubator that is testing ways to grow intergenerational wealth and wellbeing for Pasifika people in Aotearoa. We work in South and West Auckland with Pasifika families ('aiga) and partner with government to support workforce-wide changes that deliver clear pathways to higher paid jobs.

Uptempo's focus is to learn about how Pasifika-centred workforce innovation can create solutions for Pasifika people to thrive. We bring together innovation practices and the lived experience of Pacific people to demonstrate changes that will make the biggest difference.

Uptempo is powered by **The Southern Initiative (TSI)**, a social innovation unit nested within Auckland Council. We currently work directly with 80+ 'aiga, **The Fono, Oceania Career Academy, First Union**, employers and adult education providers to develop compelling alternatives for Pasifika.

Uptempo is a part of the Alo Vaka, Pacific Skills Shift Programme funded through the **Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment** and is also funded by the **Peter McKenzie Project (JR McKenzie Trust)**.

We acknowledge our Uptempo 'aiga and our learning provider partners for their contribution to this report.



# Pu'apinga

## Our Values

Our values are the foundation for how we show up in our work, the mindsets we bring and our actions.

Transformative systems change is complex, messy, and uncertain. Our values help us stay true to our Kaupapa and guide us, as we carve a pathway forward and energise a community of support around the need for change.



### Tausi le va

SAMOAN

We honour our relationships and recognise that everything is connected. We are culturally grounded and through this, build trust, respect and impact.



### Loto to'a

TONGAN

We have the courage to do new things and not being afraid to make mistakes, accepting our failures and learning from them. We are brave enough to challenge the status quo and hold ourselves and other people accountable.



### Manākitanga

MĀORI

Our actions demonstrate our love and care for our people and our kaupapa.



### Halvae 'ag

ROTUMAN

We openly share and work together with others to achieve our goal of intergenerational wealth for all our people.



### Fakamoliaga

NIUEAN

Our culture is a superpower! We are unapologetically Pasifika and walk our talk every day.

# Pasifika-centred adult learning

## Our Inquiries

Uptempo's focus is on supporting Pasifika workers in low paid jobs to progress. We want to understand how to transition people quickly from low skilled, low paid jobs into higher paid roles in sunrise industries (growth industries resilient to shocks), to grow intergenerational wealth and wellbeing. Engaging in adult learning is an important part of this transition for 'aiga.

In this insights report we explore the following questions:



# 01

How do Uptempo 'aiga experiences of adult learning align with literature on effective Pasifika-centred learning models?



# 02

How is adult learning best delivered for Pasifika, to support workforce progression? How can we harness Pasifika culture as a learning super power?



# 03

What system implications are emerging from Uptempo?

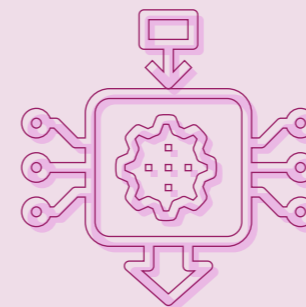
Our early learning is shared. Over the next two years, we will delve deeper into these implications to sharpen the pathways to transformative change for our Pasifika communities.



# Approach

Our Uptempo team has been exploring what effective Pasifika-centred adult learning looks like since August 2021 by:

Reviewing literature  
on effective  
Pasifika-centred  
learning models



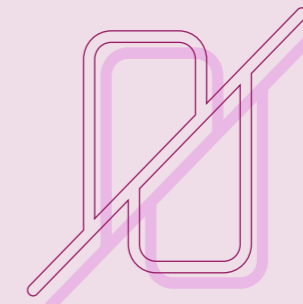
Interviews with  
4 of our learning  
provider  
partners

Zeducation, Mission Ready  
HQ, Rea, Literacy Aotearoa

Working directly with

80+  
'aiga

Uptempo  
data and team



reflections and  
learning sessions



# Key 'aiga learning needs and Uptempo provision

In our focus on adults who are already in work but stagnating on low pay, Uptempo is seeing the learning needs below emerge through talanoa with families, pathway planning, wellbeing assessments, employment coaching, and through our partners such as employers, First

Union and learning providers. We have supported 98 'aiga members August 2021 to end September 2022 into full time training, short courses or microcredentials in one or more of these areas identified by 'aiga, and have provided holistic employment coaching and support.



## Confidence building

(through soft-skills, assertiveness and leadership courses)



## Financial literacy training

(in preparation for an increase in money into the household)



## Driver licensing

(learner's, restricted, full, and technical grades)



## ESOL and English language skills



## Literacy and numeracy training



## Technical skills training

(e.g. IT, crane operation, security)

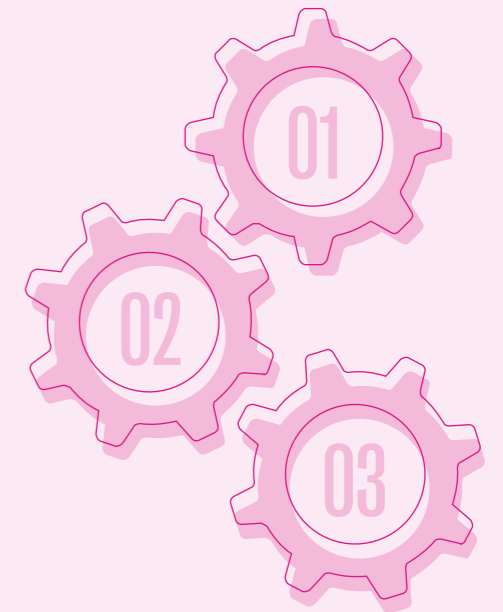


## Practical employment coaching

researching potential employers, CV development, interview skills, bringing forth past experience, understanding and valuing own skills (including soft skills as a strength), negotiating skills, understanding pathways and what progression can look like.

# Three things work for Pasifika 'aiga

Uptempo 'aiga experience aligns strongly with three clear elements in the research evidence as to what works for Pasifika who are upskilling through adult education.



# 01

## Remove financial barriers and stress

Enough money and bandwidth to be able to access learning and upskill

# 02

## Culturally competent engagement

To build aspirations, confidence, soft skills, readiness for learning and support to access learning!

# 03

## System capability

To deliver culturally competent education for Pasifika that provides concrete pathways to higher paid jobs



# 01 Remove financial barriers and stress

Practice-based evidence from our partners and our work with 'aiga identifies a lack of money and stress about money as the greatest barrier to engaging in adult education.

As well as simply not having enough money to cover household costs, Uptempo has found that insecure housing, childcare costs, petrol/transport and unexpected costs or crises, are common causes of financial stress.

As a result, it is common for Pasifika adults in education to work full time while studying, which is challenging on multiple fronts.

## A vicious circle

- **Course costs unaffordable**
- **Can't afford opportunity-cost of non-earning hours to access free training**
- **Leads to working full-time while studying/training:**
  - Lower ability to consistently attend
  - Work unsociable hours to suit study timetable, compounding stress on household
  - Ability to learn compromised due to overwork and lack of sleep
  - Falling behind creates more stress
  - Stress from expectations to succeed and household needs
  - Stress reduces bandwidth for learning, student falls behind, is judged by the institution or self as unable to cope, and disengages.

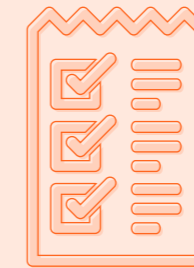


# 01 Remove financial barriers and stress

Uptempo has been able to reduce stress and increase bandwidth for 'aiga to engage in training through:



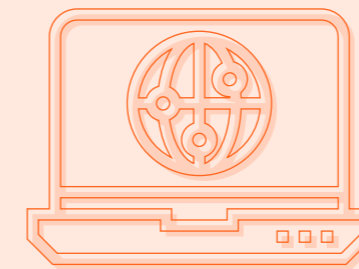
Covering fees



Direct discretionary funding to cover costs



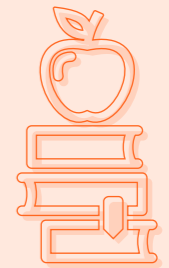
Pastoral care to connect individuals and 'aiga with social support to address barriers



Digital access - provision of laptop plus 12 month internet access and IT support



Petrol vouchers to get to class



Food provision in class



Food parcels for 'aiga

See Vinnie's story on page 18 for an example of this in action.

# 02 Culturally competent engagement

## 'aiga attitudes and dynamics



**We are finding that Pasifika family attitudes to upskilling or progression can 'make or break' decisions to engage in adult learning, often involving attitudes towards risk and fear of failure.**

While 'aiga motivation to earn more is usually very clear, to provide for children, family needs and cover costs, a range of attitudes can create hesitancy, for example putting children first: "A lot of our families put aside their dreams to make sure their kids dreams are being progressed", or a sense that education is only for younger people: "There is a strong, embedded stereotype that education is for young people, not for them [Pasifika adults]. We talk this through with our learners and support them to realise that education is for everyone, at any time" (Zeducation). Former negative experiences of school can also affect willingness to engage in adult learning.

Risk-averse family or individual attitudes to change, disruption, or unfamiliar aspirations, seem connected to self-protectiveness amid household and community precarity and uncertainty, and fear of rocking the boat to seek more (Mok et al., 2020; The Southern Initiative and Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, 2018).

Family support can supercharge aspirations and engagement, but a lack of support or negative attitudes from family tends to collapse engagement (Mok et al., 2020; The Southern Initiative, 2021). Uptempo is finding that positive family dynamics and at least one driver in the family who pushes progression, and who can set the example, are markers of success in attaching Pasifika 'aiga to learning. Understanding and working well with family dynamics and attitudes takes time, trust and skill.



# 02 Culturally competent engagement

## connecting adult learning to culture and aspirations

Best practice engagement and onboarding of Pasifika 'aiga in adult learning (ACE Aotearoa, 2014; Faleafa et al., 2012; Rose, 2014, 2015; Te Pūkenga, 2021) is affirmed by Uptempo's experience. 'Aiga engagement needs to be grounded in Pasifika culture and communities, otherwise there is a high risk of repeating patterns of exclusion, and failing to engage and retain Pasifika adult learners.

Connecting adult learning opportunities with Pasifika aspirations and values of uplifting family and community, and caring for others, is a powerful motivator for encouraging Pasifika 'aiga to explore new learning options (ACE Aotearoa, 2014; Benseman, 2014; Spiller, 2012).

Connecting 'aiga aspirations to concrete career pathways by providing real-life examples, role models, and peer support from those who have gone before, makes the career pathway feel real and more attainable (Rose, 2015).



## 02 Culturally competent engagement

community endorsement



Evidence emphasises the importance of learning providers partnering with community stakeholders and Pasifika knowledge-holders face-to-face, to foster 'aiga trust and engagement in adult learning (Rose, 2014; Siilata, 2014). Uptempo is an example of a Pasifika intermediary acting as a trusted bridge between Pasifika communities and learning providers and employers. We find that once we have established the vā with an 'aiga member, that there is more openness and willingness to pursue adult learning:

**“Aiga rely on our recommendations for training providers because they trust us and don't know what they don't know”**

(Uptempo facilitator).

Community trust in learning pathways, providers or intermediaries is often spread via word of mouth from family or community networks such as churches. Uptempo is increasingly being approached by 'aiga who are connected with

existing Uptempo 'aiga. A positive introduction and first experience of adult learning is crucial, and can be a make or break: “If their first learning experience as an adult is a good one, their likelihood of continuing to engage in learning is higher” (Uptempo team). Uptempo is also observing 'aiga who have had a good experience of courses actively encouraging others to do the same.

**“Two of the men in our Uptempo men's group on Saturday encouraged other men to take up the training on offer. As a result, we've had four men ask for ESOL support”.**

Through the Pasifika super power of strong social networks, as more and more 'aiga have great experiences of adult learning and move into higher paid roles, the impact of effective Pasifika-centred adult learning engagement and provision is likely to be fast and significant.



## 03 System capability

Pasifika-led provision

In terms of adult education provision that work for Pasifika, Uptempo's experience strongly reflects 'the essentials' relating to provider organisations identified in research evidence (Rose, 2014, 2015; Te Pūkenga, 2021):

- Pasifika representation and influence in organisational governance and leadership
- Pasifika staff with cultural competence who are rewarded, supported and empowered (e.g. with status, power and money, not just with 'thanks') to lead the upskilling and cultural competency support of other staff
- Organisational performance measures that are meaningful for Pasifika trainees
- “What is the structure of the organisation? Where are your Kaumatua? Where are your Cultural Advisors? Who's at the door welcoming the stakeholder in? How do you share the work? How do you empower your communities?” (Rose, 2015)

The presence of Pasifika staff with good cultural competency and community embeddness creates a sense of safety when onboarding 'aiga, which is important to overcoming an intimidation barrier to engaging with courses (Benseman, 2014; Benseman et al., 2006; Rose, 2014, 2015; Te Pūkenga, 2021).







## 03 System capability

### Pasifika-led provision

*“Aiga relate to Pasifika providers, understand them better – if you see a brown face you are already connected”.*

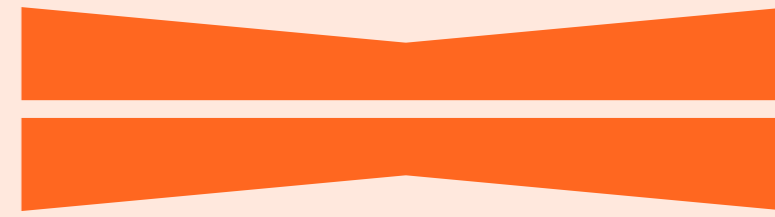
Uptempo learners respond positively to Pasifika learning environments with a Pasifika provider, nourished by Pasifika values, expressed for example through:

- a focus on connection, mentoring and ‘aiga, within a common understanding of Pasifika cultures and community
- the presence of Pasifika peers and Pasifika languages
- ‘aiga-friendly classrooms with food included: “Kids allowed in class, laughing is compulsory!”

These insights align with research evidence that Pasifika students are best served when their educators connect with Pasifika ways of learning and communicating, including active, social, ‘noisy’, inquiry-based and relational learning that promotes learner agency (Siilata, 2014; Spiller, 2012). Crucially, this must also reject deficit views and low expectations of Pasifika learners (Benseman et al., 2006; Bruce Ferguson et al., 2008; Chu et al., 2013; Coxon et al., 2002), instead harnessing Pasifika culture as a learning superpower.

Research evidence supports nourishing the vā for Pasifika learners through emphasising relationships in learning, including peer-learning, Tuakana-Teina models, intergenerational learning, having a ‘matua’ or ‘aunty’ to hold the vā of the learning group, and having strong Pasifika peer-support networks (Benseman, 2014; Siilata, 2014; The Southern Initiative and Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, 2018; Towner et al., 2017; Vaioleti and Morrison, 2015).

*“Pasifika adult learners are motivated, they often have responsibilities at home, so are less tolerant of mucking around, whereas younger ones are still figuring things out. It’s nice to have a mix of adults and younger people in class together as you often see a tuakana-teina model organically emerge (Oceania Careers Academy)”.*



## 03 System capability

### Flexible Provision

It is critical that we do not set up Pasifika learners to fail, by providing training in ways that don’t reflect the realities of having to work, manage children and households and train at the same time. Uptempo learners emphasise the importance of:

- Flexibility to learn face to face, online or both – increased interest is being shown in online training that allows for more flexibility as to when learning occurs, as classes can be accessed later
- Bite sized learning in manageable timeframes: “Adult learners have massive responsibilities in our ‘aiga”
- Easy to understand course materials and real world learning experiences
- Low conditions of entry – for example not starting with huge criteria, or asking people to come with a CV or undertake tests to enrol in courses, especially for free courses. Many providers need to review their entry requirements to be more accessible to Pasifika adult learners.
- As noted in our report on ‘aiga readiness for workforce progression, intermediaries supporting people into training should take time to understand an individual, so they can broker them into an appropriate course.



In general, adults with an unsupportive or overburdened family life, and especially women, can find supportive social structures and a new lease on life in adult education. This can be a motivator of engagement (Prins et al., 2009) but these spaces need to be created with intent and well supported if targeting Pasifika.

# Vinnie's story



*“Being able to shower our kids with what we didn't get, because of the work that we have put in... He is now doing something he is passionate about”.*

When Vinnie's 'aiga came to Uptempo he was working long hours in the warehouse industry for low pay. He didn't see his five young children much which was hard on the family and made him unhappy. Uptempo discovered that Vinnie loves tech and put him onto **Mission Ready HQ**. He left his job to do full time study, supported by the Discretionary Fund and an Uptempo learning scholarship. He moved to advanced training and now has a better paid job he is passionate about that allows him to spend more time with his family.

See more on Vinnie's story here:



# Oceania Career Academy (OCA)

Mangere-based Oceania Careers Academy is a subsidiary of The Fono, governed by its own board of Directors. Pasifika-led and run, OCA takes pride in delivering Pasifika-centred learning programmes and is a prime example of what works for 'aiga. OCA believes that their success is due to:

## 01



Being Pasifika-led at all levels - experienced Pasifika governors, management, teaching and ancillary staff

## 02



Providing wraparound support for learners through Navigators (funded for two years for 200 families through Pasifika Futures, similar to the Uptempo model of 'Aiga Facilitators), who know the families and are able to help address anything getting in the way of 'aiga meeting their learning goals

## 03



Pasifika-centred pedagogy and learning models, based on Pasifika values

## 04



Evidence-based learning methods. This includes having no pass/fail, being able to have multiple attempts over time to complete assessments and demonstrate understanding of learning via practical application.

# Rea Coach



**Rea** is a newly established, Māori owned education provider supporting learners into the technology sector. Rea has created an 18-week part-time programme followed by a three-month internship with employers. Uptempo supported six Pasifika learners in the first cohort, which started in February 2022. Five out of these six learners have gone on to full-time IT jobs in Deloitte, The Warehouse Group, Auckland Council, and Watercare and are thriving.

Rea's connection to the IT sector and employer's needs, combined with flexible learning and an accelerated pathway, have produced real success for Uptempo' aiga involved. With a strong focus on wellbeing and a coach lead approach to pastoral care 'aiga is set up for success. On-the-job training and on-demand support also provide a safe and nurtured environment during the internship with continued support available after employment placement.

Rea weaves Māori principles and pedagogy into their learner experience, which has also resonated with 'aiga'

*"I just finished my first day in my permanent job today with The Warehouse Group. I couldn't have imagined this for myself six months ago. Now, I see a whole career in tech in front of me"*

(Uptempo 'aiga, recent graduate of inaugural Rea course).

# System implications

Five system change recommendations are emerging, to engage Pasifika adults in learning/training for workforce progression:

01



Provide financial assistance and pastoral care

02



Ensure digital access

03



Invest in Pasifika-led adult learning provision

04



Invest in grounding mainstream vocational training provision in indigenous (Māori and Pasifika) values and world views

05



Prioritise investment in quality short courses aimed at supporting Pasifika to transition quickly into higher paid work in sunrise industries, followed by regular short courses once in the job to keep building up skills. Ensure technical training courses are driven by the needs of the industry and have a pipeline of quality jobs available

# 01. Provide financial assistance and pastoral care

*“We would love to trial a living wage for adults studying, so people don’t have to work and study at the same time”*

**(Oceania Careers Academy).**

Culturally competent adult learning provision and design innovation cannot alone compensate for the root structural causes of in-work poverty. What is required is a substantial increase in direct funds to Pasifika families that supports uptake and participation in courses on an equal footing with others. This can include:

- Free or subsidised training provision or providing scholarships
- Providing a weekly grant or other financial support to help with family costs while training
- Provision of wraparound support and pastoral care to address barriers getting the way of accessing training

Uptempo is testing some of these methods (Discretionary Fund, weekly grant, household internet packages) and will keep prototyping to demonstrate scalable approaches.



# 02. Ensure digital access

Increasingly, access to adult education and training opportunities requires computer and internet access and digital literacy.

Training and learning is increasingly provided online or through a hybrid model of in-person and online. Training often requires completion of some kind of computer based testing, or at the very least completion online of an application and enrolment process.

None of our 80+ Uptempo 'aiga had adequate digital devices in the household to use for training and job searching. Through Uptempo they have been given at least one laptop, 12 months free internet access and IT support to become computer literate.

Ensuring digital access is key to Pasifika workforce progression. Providing a digital access package for households would also be a highly attractive incentive for Pasifika 'aiga to upskill, and potentially have multiple positive ripple effects for the whole 'aiga.



## 03. Invest in Pasifika-led PTE provision

*“We understand the lived experience of our learners because it is ours”*

**(Zeducation).**

The best teachers for Pasifika are Pasifika who are supported by Pasifika-run organisations. Kaupapa Māori providers such as Rea are also proving to be effective for Uptempo 'aiga. TSI and Uptempo's practice-based evidence has found that Pasifika-owned and run organisations are already delivering something akin to a 'gold standard' in culturally connected education and wraparound support that those providers believe cannot be replicated by mainstream vocational providers.

Research evidence on what works best for Pasifika learners suggests that the cultural competency delivery shift needed for many mainstream PTE providers will take a lot of work to get to a best practice level, despite substantial progress happening in some large public institutions. This suggests that Pasifika-led providers should be prioritised when funding Pasifika outcomes, and investment increased in supporting Pasifika PTE provider growth beyond traditional trades into high-tech and professional skills training.

The inadequacy of investment in developing a Pasifika educational workforce has been long acknowledged (Morrison & Vaiolleti, 2008). However, providers who are most effective for Pasifika are often least supported by government:

*“How do you support great providers for our communities who don't meet all the requirements government has set for what a provider should look like?”*

*“How can the criteria for nimble community based providers be changed? Let's test this out with providers like Zeducation, Rea and others”.*



## 04. Invest in mainstream PTE practice shifts

As well as prioritising investment in Pasifika-led organisations to deliver to Pasifika, mainstream adult education providers can learn from Pasifika providers on how to model delivery shifts for Pasifika (resourcing this appropriately). Grounding vocational training provision in Pasifika and Māori values and world views will be increasingly important as our workforce demographics change.

Although not a PTE, MIT claims high Pasifika retention despite a majority of staff not being Pasifika. It attributes this to a strong Pasifika learning approach that is Pasifika-overseen and structurally entrenched, motivated by the reality of its heavily Pasifika student body (Rose, 2014; Te Pūkenga, 2021).

Understanding 'Pasifika values' or cultural competency in teaching can be complex and misapplied (Spiller, 2012), especially if not Pasifika-led. Government can invest in Pasifika PTE providers, and in those who can lead a change platform to upskill mainstream PTEs. This can include matching a small gold standard provider with a large institution who wants to up their game by learning how to shift practice. It can also include co-delivery of courses through a co-designed learning experiment approach.

Changing demographics in Aotearoa will mean a growing presence of Pasifika people in adult education and in the workforce. PTEs and other adult learning institutions will need to adapt to this changing landscape and those who front foot this will be better off.

*“PTEs that have a commercial approach don't have the same cut-through with 'aiga as they don't come from their values, this is picked up quickly by 'aiga on entry”.*



# 05. Prioritise investment in quality short courses

*“A fast, effective transition into higher paid work is the most important thing”*

(Uptempo team).

We are seeing the importance of investing in short courses that can provide bridges into higher paid work in sunrise industries. These courses can take a ‘Minimum Viable Product’ approach to meet fundamental needs getting in the way of workforce progression (see p8 on common needs Uptempo is seeing).

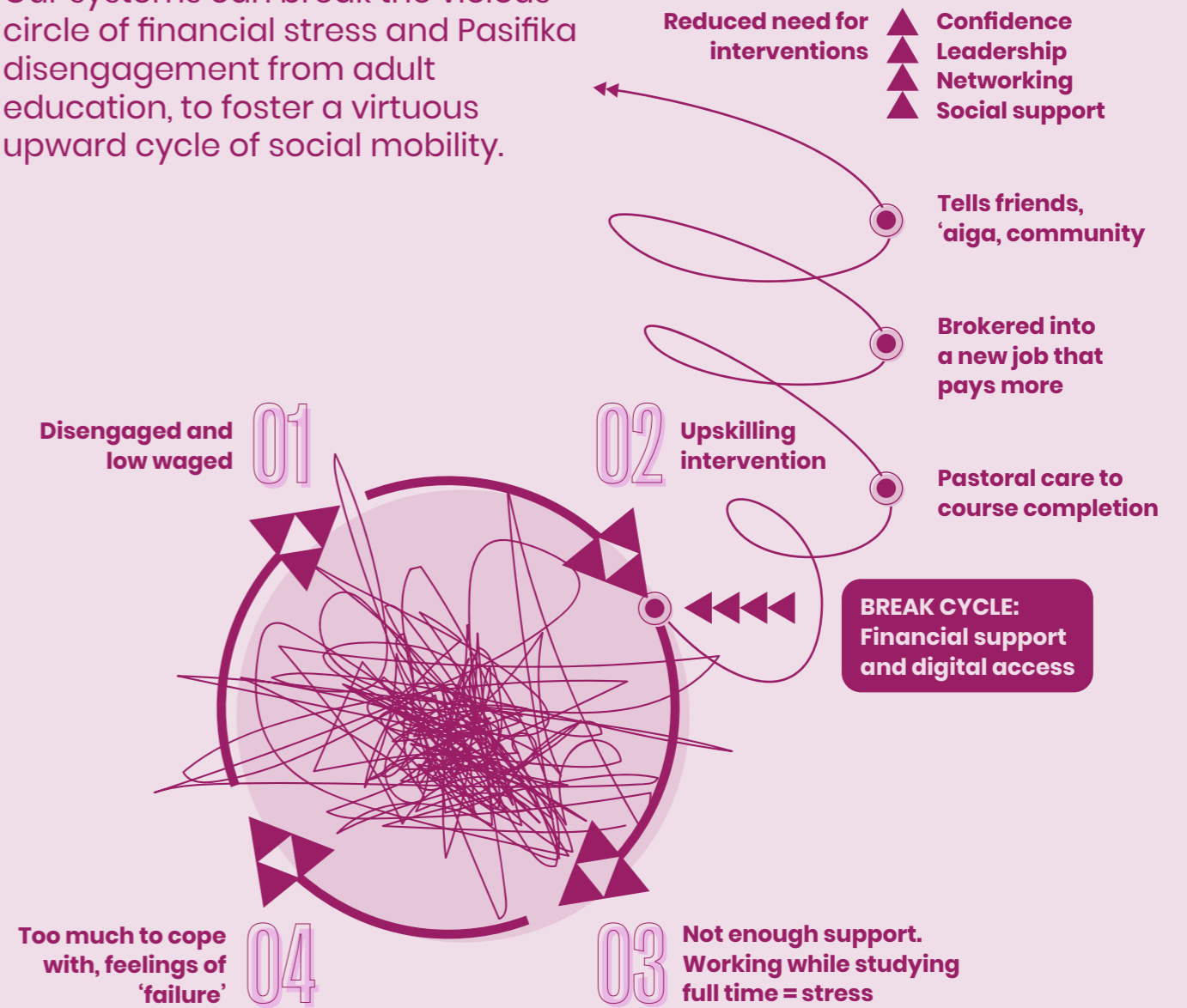
This requires effective ‘aiga and employment coaching to understand aspirations and what is required to support each person to make this shift, assistance to overcome financial, digital and other barriers, and pastoral care as needed to see the training through.

Once in a higher paid role, ongoing connection to upskilling opportunities will support continued progression and income growth.



# Vicious to virtuous cycle

Our systems can break the vicious circle of financial stress and Pasifika disengagement from adult education, to foster a virtuous upward cycle of social mobility.



We are seeing that when Pasifika adults are properly supported into lifelong learning, this lifts not only their own aspirations, but those of their whole ‘aiga and eventually their wider community as word of mouth spreads. Activating the Pasifika superpowers of relational ways of being and learning, and strong social

connections can drive not just engagement, but Pasifika community leadership and ownership of their own upskilling, workforce progression and intergenerational wealth-building. Uptempo will continue to test these early findings and learn more about what it takes to cultivate this virtuous cycle.

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**UPTempo**

[www.tsi.nz/uptempo](http://www.tsi.nz/uptempo)