



# Jobs for Nature Evaluation

Year One Report

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## About Allen + Clarke

Allen and Clarke Regulatory and Policy Specialists Ltd (*Allen + Clarke*) is a consultancy that specialises in research and evaluation; policy; business change and optimisation; and governance, secretariat and programme support services. Founded in 2001, the company is led by two Managing Partners, Matthew Allen and Paul Houlston, who share ownership with 12 senior staff. We have approximately 120 other personnel including evaluation and research practitioners, policy professionals, organisational change experts, administrative support and an in-house designer. We have offices in Wellington, New Zealand and Melbourne, Australia.

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## Terms used in this report

What we mean	The word we use	Words other people might use for something similar	What it means in Jobs for Nature
An individual activity, funded or otherwise, part of a programme. Not all projects are part of wider programmes – they may be standalone or pilot activities	<b>Project</b>	Action Initiative	The projects contracted and funded by the individual agencies under the umbrella of Jobs for Nature
The set of activities managed together over a period of time that aims to achieve some sort of positive change for a person or group of people	<b>Programme</b>	Project Initiative Intervention	The overall set of activities funded through Jobs for Nature, including projects and their implementation by agencies
The government agencies who are contributing funds to invest in the Jobs for Nature programme	<b>National Stakeholder</b>	The Crown Government	Ministry of the Environment (MfE), Department of Conservation (DOC), Land Information New Zealand (LINZ), Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), Kānoa
Partnerships refer to relationships between central government, local government, community and Iwi/hapū and Māori	<b>Partnerships</b>	Partners Agreements Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Memorandum of Partnerships (MOP) Treaty Partnership Treaty settlements	Collectives and groups that have joined to deliver the Jobs for Nature programme. These may be formal alliances or informal networks
Nation of Indigenous people. A collection of political units unified by an eponymous ancestor	<b>Iwi</b>	Tribe	Jobs for Nature is intended to build delivery partnerships between central government, local government and Iwi/hapū/whānau The programme is intended to create jobs that address existing employment disparities for rangatahi/youth and Māori (From Investment)
Large kinship group and primary political unit of Māori society	<b>Hapū</b>	Subtribe Kinship group Clan	
Tangata whenua Indigenous people of Aotearoa	<b>Māori</b>	Tangata whenua	Jobs for Nature is intended to build delivery partnerships between central government, local government and Iwi/hapū/whānau The programme is intended to create jobs that address existing employment disparities for rangatahi/youth and Māori (From Investment)

		Indigenous people of Aotearoa	Framework - Employment Assessment 19/08/22)
The changes that are likely or achieved through delivering the programme in the short, medium, and long term	<b>Outcome</b>	Result Impact	The achievements of the programme for people and places, reflecting the various stakeholders' priorities and needs
The intervention doing the right things	<b>Relevance</b>	Alignment	The extent to which the programme is delivered in line with context and need, both nationally and regionally
The extent to which we have achieved the changes we set out to make for the people we work with and the places we work	<b>Effectiveness</b>	Success Efficacy	Whether the programme has achieved its overall objectives. Individual projects will have their own objectives and measures
How well the intervention fits with other strategies	<b>Coherence</b>	Alignment	Whether Jobs for Nature aligns with other regional and national employment and environmental strategies and interventions
Additional benefits the programme has created, that are over and above the original investment	<b>Additionality</b>	Added value	Whether Jobs for Nature added value beyond the investment of money
The extent to which the benefits are likely to last	<b>Sustainability</b>	Maintainable	Whether the employment and environmental initiatives are sustainable and ongoing

## Executive summary

Jobs for Nature ('J4N' or 'the programme') is a \$1.19 billion programme that manages funding across multiple government agencies to benefit the environment, people, and the regions. Its objectives are to create nature-related employment opportunities; realise enduring benefits for freshwater ecosystems and water quality, biodiversity, climate change and cultural values; and support sustainable land use and the implementation of new regulatory requirements.

## The evaluation

The Jobs for Nature Secretariat has commissioned an independent evaluation of the Jobs for Nature programme. The evaluation will take place over three years, and provide two interim reports, a Te Ao Māori-specific report, and a summative evaluation report. This document is the first interim report.

The purpose of the evaluation is to understand how effectively the programme has been implemented, and the extent to which it is on track to deliver its intended outcomes for participants and the environment. The evaluation frames its investigation of the implementation of the programme under six key themes: relevance, effectiveness, coherence, additionality, sustainability and learning and improvement.

The first year of data collection was primarily qualitative. The evaluation team conducted key informant interviews with ten stakeholders involved in the design, management, and/or governance of Jobs for Nature. The interviewees included national office representatives of government agencies and members of the Jobs for Nature advisory group. The key data collection method that has informed this year one interim report are three place-based case studies. The evaluation team undertook site visits to three regions to explore the 'on the ground' delivery of Jobs for Nature: Auckland, Manawatū-Whanganui, and Te Tau Ihu (Tasman-Nelson<sup>1</sup>). During the site visits, the evaluators interviewed a range of personnel from a selection of 6-7 projects being delivered in each region, to explore how Jobs for Nature is being delivered in those communities.

This report seeks to describe what is being delivered, who is involved, what is being experienced, what difference is it making. As this is the first year of a three-year evaluation, the report provides a narrative descriptive of the experience of interviewees and does not attempt to provide formal evaluation findings or judgements. Where relevant, participant views on areas that could be improved are provided, and the report offers suggestion on adjustments that could be made for the remainder of the programme.

## Emerging findings

The emerging findings from the first year of data collection are summarised against each evaluation theme below.

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<sup>1</sup> One of the J4N projects that was included in the Tasman-Nelson case study is in Marlborough, but was included as it is supported through the Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance which spans council boundaries across Te Tau Ihu.

### ***Relevance – Is the programme doing the right things?***

There was broad agreement from national stakeholders and regionally based project personnel that Jobs for Nature is doing the right things in terms of investing resources to improve the environment and increase employment. The three overarching policy objectives have remained relevant during the programme delivery period. The primary focus of the programme shifted from creating employment opportunities to the environmental benefits.

People and organisations delivering Jobs for Nature in the place-based case study regions told the evaluation team that the shift in emphasis to environmental benefits was not well reflected in the contract milestones and reporting. They stated that being expected to deliver employment start numbers that were not feasible, and struggled to secure contract variations when it became clear that employment targets were too high. The contracting arrangements also did not respond to the economic context of high inflation and living wage increases, with some projects reporting challenges as the cost to deliver their contracted employment and environmental targets rose, but the contracted funding did not.

### ***Effectiveness - Is the programme achieving its objectives?***

Projects across the regions provided examples of impactful environmental and employment outcomes for individuals, Iwi, and communities. While it is too early to conclusively comment on the achievement of environmental outcomes, project personnel described seeing more birds, bats, and native plants, and the discovery of populations of native species of frogs, snails, and insects that had not previously been present. Project personnel saw these as positive signs of Papatūānuku beginning to thrive.

Projects across all three regions have created new employment opportunities in line with the programme objectives. In Auckland and Manawatū-Whanganui, most projects were able to meet their employment output targets. A range of meaningful, nature-based work opportunities were created, including project management, project leadership or supervision and co-ordinator roles, through to on the ground roles in fencing and pest management. In Te Tau Ihu, it was much more difficult to meet employment objectives as unemployment had been much lower than expected in this region. Many of Jobs for Nature projects included in the case studies embedded a social wellbeing approach to job creation by targeting historically marginalised groups, providing pastoral care to their employees, and encouraging staff to complete formal qualifications.

Across the three regions, Jobs for Nature has contributed to increased capacity and capability of Iwi, hapū and Māori communities. The funding provided opportunities to carry out restoration activities on whenua returned through Treaty settlements. The programme supported Iwi to exercise kaitiakitanga, particularly in Manawatū-Whanganui region in which there was a concentration of Iwi- and Māori-led projects. However, there disparity was reported amongst Iwi groups, with some Iwi receiving substantial investment and other Iwi communities missing out on funding.

The cross-agency programme model meant effective partnerships were vital. Despite efforts to establish cross-agency processes, a high proportion of project personnel interviews in the case study regions stated that they had experienced inconsistencies in working with different

agencies. This included inconsistent reporting and administration requirements, and differing approaches to contract management and negotiating amendments.

### ***Coherence – How well does the programme fit?***

The Jobs for Nature programme is aligned with national strategies and priorities such as the national pest weed strategy, DOC's biodiversity programme and strategy, MfE's freshwater strategy, and job creation and employment support measures such as the Provincial Growth Fund. In Manawatū-Whanganui, the strong focus on funding Iwi projects meant that there was excellent alignment with Iwi priorities and values.

Cross-project coherence at the regional level was strongest in Te Tau Ihu, in which a pre-existing alliance, Kotahitanga mō te Taiao, created a collaborative environment. Interviewees in this region stated that the collective work in designing, selecting, and implementing the programme resulted in synergies between projects, reducing the risk of duplication and enhancing the overall effectiveness of the programme. In Auckland and Manawatū-Whanganui, Jobs for Nature project personnel stated that there were no formal regional mechanisms to communicate and collaborate. Projects in these regions operated in a self-contained way, and there were some concerns raised about potential duplication of effort.

### ***Additionality – What additional value does the programme provide beyond the individual funds?***

The year one evaluation of Jobs for Nature found several benefits over and above the investment in individual projects. Iwi representatives saw additional value in the programme's support for Iwi and hapū to reconnect with whenua and whakapapa. This reconnection has strengthened their Iwi, hapū and whānau identity and enabled them to provide care of their taonga tuku iho.

The programme funding has also left a legacy of new tools and new approaches that will have a life beyond the official programme timeframe. This includes investment in technology that has enhanced efficiencies in environmental work, the development of environmental solutions that integrate mātauranga Māori, and new workforce models that have potential for further roll out. The programme has also supported the development of partnerships that have brought new energy to environmental restoration activities.

Jobs for Nature has provided accessible employment to communities. This developed greater conservation capacity in communities for additional nature based contracts with other Crown agencies like Waka Kotahi, DOC, and local and regional councils for planting and maintenance programmes.

### ***Sustainability – Will the programme benefits last?***

While it is too early for firm findings regarding the sustainability of benefits, evaluation participants considered employment outcomes as 'partially sustainable'. There is evidence that some people employed through Jobs for Nature have transitioned to employment outside of funded projects, including running their own businesses (e.g., fencing contractors). In terms of the sustainability of environmental outcomes, the investment in physical infrastructure such as tracks and fencing will have lasting effects beyond Jobs for Nature. However, sustaining

environmental benefits will require ongoing investment to ensure longevity and gains made in areas like weed and pest control will not be undone.

There is variability in how much planning for sustainability beyond the programme's end in 2025 has occurred. Transition planning is a focus for government agencies, but some evaluation participants expressed concern that there are currently inadequate strategies in place to support projects beyond June 2025. At the regional level, some projects have sought other funding from entities such as councils, while others are beginning to wind down projects and shift focus to a maintenance level. However, many project personnel were worried about what will happen after the Jobs for Nature funding finishes.

### ***Learning and improvement***

Evaluation participants identified lessons associated with the programme's funding and reporting processes, and potential areas for improvement. These included:

- **Shared decision-making:** The speed with which the funding was deployed meant that Treaty obligations to share decision-making with tangata whenua were not always evident. There was recognition that government agencies need to move beyond 'consulting' and 'informing' to a partnership model of shared decision-making.
- **Transparent funding processes:** Some evaluation participants reported that the funding processes, including decision-making, were opaque. For future funding it would be beneficial to provide greater transparency about funding processes, including how costs are calculated and the rationale behind funding decisions.
- **Flexibility and adaptability:** The change in policy emphasis from employment to environmental outcomes at the national level was reported to be inconsistently reflected in project contracts, with some funded entities locked into what they considered were unrealistic employment outcomes.
- **Project reporting:** Requirements around reporting were said to be inconsistent between the five government agencies, and shifted over time. Having a single reporting system across the funds and agencies would help to streamline processes, easing the reporting burden and reducing the administrative overhead.
- **Cohesion and collaboration across government agencies:** The Jobs for Nature Secretariat helped to generate cohesion and collaboration across agencies. However, many government stakeholders reported a need for improved collaboration, and some project personnel reported inconsistency in their experience with different agencies, and confusion on who to contact for advice and support.
- **Visibility of project success:** There is an opportunity to raise the visibility of projects and strengthen connections through storytelling above and beyond the reporting of output data. This could help to communicate the differences the programme is making, to whom, and in what circumstances, and share what works with others.
- **Focus on the future:** There is a need to focus on legacy planning for Jobs for Nature, to enhance the likelihood of enduring environmental and social benefits. A suggested

improvement to enhance the likelihood of sustainability in future schemes, was to spread funding over a longer period (e.g., 10 years) as an alternative to more intensive investment over a shorter timeframe.

# 1 Context

This report presents the findings of the first year of a three-year independent evaluation of the Jobs for Nature programme.

## 1.1 The Jobs for Nature programme

Jobs for Nature is a \$1.19 billion programme that manages funding across multiple government agencies to benefit the environment, people and the regions. It is part of the COVID-19 recovery package. The objectives of the Jobs for Nature programme are to:

- create nature-related employment opportunities for people, at pace, in regions that need work the most
- realise enduring benefits for freshwater ecosystems and water quality, biodiversity, climate change and cultural values
- support sustainable land use and the implementation of new regulatory requirements, including for freshwater, biodiversity and climate change.

The initial focus of the programme was primarily on job creation, in line with Treasury's April 2020 forecasts that unemployment would peak between 13% and 26%. After an initial increase, the national unemployment rate peaked at 5.3% in the September 2020 quarter. As a result, in May 2021, the Sustainable Land Use (SLU) Ministers overseeing the programme agreed that agencies should place greater weight on environmental outcomes relative to employment outcomes.

The programme is delivered through 25 separate funds across the Department of Conservation (DOC), Ministry for the Environment (MfE), Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), Kānoa, and Land Information New Zealand (LINZ). Each agency has control over its area of the programme, with implementation design and decisions made within individual departments or ministries. A Secretariat has a coordinating function across the programme, supporting Ministers, providing consolidated reporting and programme-level insights, and acting as a conduit between the delivery agencies.

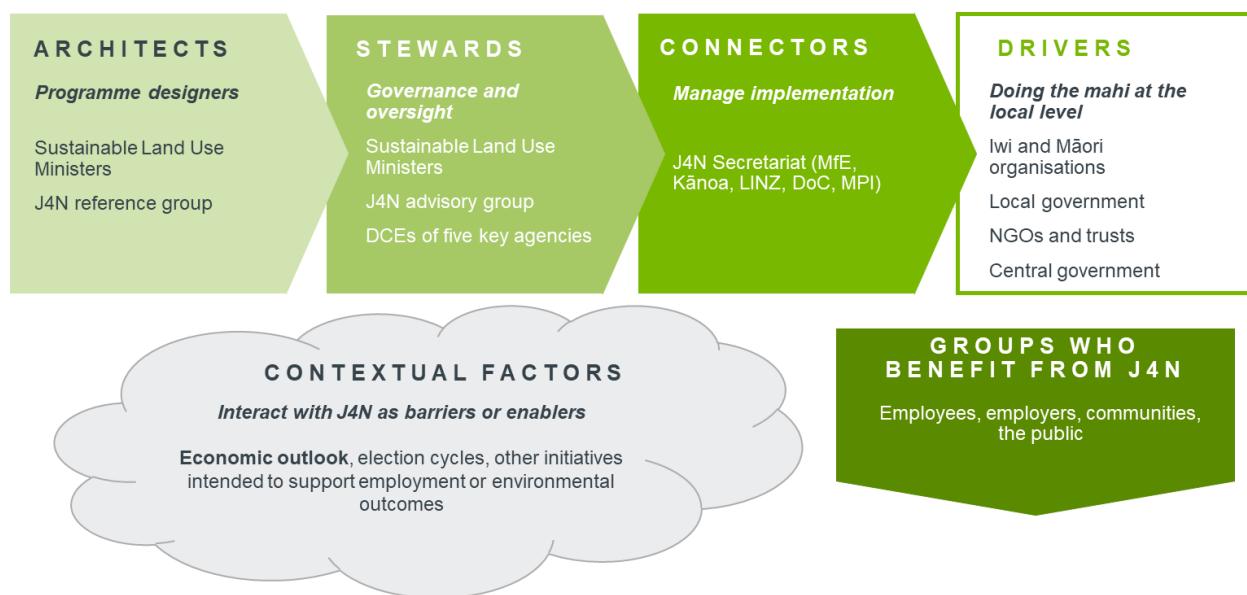
Projects funded through Jobs for Nature range from large scale regional or national initiatives to small community projects. The funding supports people into nature-based work. Specific activities include vegetation planting for freshwater and biodiversity restoration; fencing waterways; pest control (including predators, wilding pines and other pest plants); fish passage remediation; and skills training to support people into environmental careers. Organisations that have received funding include local government, Iwi, community groups, and private companies.

## 1.2 Jobs for Nature system ecology

The Jobs for Nature programme has a range of stakeholder groups that play various roles within its implementation. The *Allen + Clarke* evaluation team developed a system ecology map (Figure 1) which provides an overview of:

- the key stakeholder groups in the Jobs for Nature programme
- the roles of the various stakeholder groups
- the organisations, individuals, and groups within each category
- contextual factors that may shape implementation of the programme and the achievement of its expected outcomes.

**Figure 1: Jobs for Nature system ecology**



The system ecology map provided a framework for selecting the sample of stakeholders who participated in year one of the three-year evaluation of the Jobs for Nature programme. Year one of the evaluation focused on three place-based case studies and the connectors, drivers, and groups that benefit from Jobs for Nature.

## 2 The evaluation

### 2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is to understand how effectively the programme has been implemented and the extent to which it is on track to deliver its intended outcomes for participants and the environment. Specifically, the purpose of the evaluation is to:

1. Learn from the set-up, implementation, and results of the programme to inform future cross-government initiatives.
2. Assess the extent to which the potential future outcomes for the participants and the environment are likely to be achieved.

Year one of the evaluation was conducted as the programme was in delivery. Given the timing of data collection, it is too early to make robust judgements about programme outcomes. The year one evaluation, therefore, focuses on the first purpose, aiming to draw out lessons from the set-up, implementation, and initial results of the programme.

### 2.2 Evaluation design

The evaluation was designed through a collaborative process with the Jobs for Nature Secretariat. The evaluation team conducted a review of contextual documents, then conducted two engagements to test and refine the evaluation design:

- **An evaluation design workshop** with key stakeholders from the five Jobs for Nature government agencies and five members of the *Allen + Clarke* evaluation team to review evaluation questions and draft measures of success.
- **A co-design wānanga** with Māori stakeholders to get an understanding of Māori values and aspirations for, and understanding and experience of, the programme. Findings from this wānanga were then incorporated into the development of a Te Ao Māori evaluation plan. We also incorporated questions into the data collection tools (e.g., interview guides) to explore the extent that programme delivery reflects Māori values and aspirations.

The outputs of these engagements were used to develop an evaluation plan, including key evaluation questions, criteria, and data collection methods, which are presented below.

The evaluation includes three cycles of data collection:

1. Year one – three place-based case studies focusing on exploring the delivery of the Jobs for Nature programme in specific locations. The findings in this report pertain to the first cycle of data collection.
2. Year two – three ‘thematic’ case studies which will explore the delivery of the Jobs for Nature programme in relation to a specific theme or investment focus.

3. Te Ao Māori evaluation – this will be conducted during year two, in parallel with the full evaluation. This will review the programme through a Māori lens, based on the criteria of rangatiratanga, kawanatanga, īritetanga, and wairuatanga.
4. Year three – a final round of summative data collection and a synthesis of the evaluation findings across all data collection cycles, using the He Awa Whiria and Critical Tiriti Analysis (CTA) frameworks.

## 2.3 Key evaluation questions

The key evaluation questions (KEQs) that have framed the evaluation are listed in Table 1. The KEQs were initially identified by the Secretariat and refined in collaboration with *Allen + Clarke* through the evaluation design workshop held in September 2022.

**Table 1: Key evaluation questions and themes**

Theme	Questions
<b>Relevance</b>	<p>How well does the design and implementation of J4N align with the policy intent and objectives of the programme?</p> <p>To what extent are the initial objectives and scope still relevant and has the programme been able to adjust to changing circumstances over its lifetime?</p>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	<p>To what extent have the anticipated medium-term outcomes of the J4N programme been achieved?</p> <p>To what extent and in what ways is the programme working for regional communities, Māori and the environment?</p> <p>What factors may have supported or hindered successful implementation?</p> <p>To what extent is the programme on track to achieve its expected long-term outcomes?</p> <p>What unintended results have been generated (positive/negative)?</p>
<b>Coherence</b>	<p>To what extent was the J4N project selection approach coherent with regional/catchment and national needs?</p> <p>To what extent are there synergy effects between J4N projects?</p> <p>To what extent has the job creation element of the programme been coherent with other support measures?</p>
<b>Additionality</b>	<p>To what extent has J4N as a programme added value beyond the individual funds?</p> <p>How much of what has happened would have happened anyway or been funded through other mechanisms?</p> <p>What additional funding/resourcing has the J4N programme attracted towards reaching its objectives?</p>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<p>To what extent are the results of the projects likely to continue after the end of the programme?</p> <p>What factors influence the sustainability of the projects?</p> <p>What, if anything, has the programme contributed to structuring effects and how agencies work together?</p>

Theme	Questions
<b>Learning and improvement</b>	<p>What can be learnt from implementation and what might we do differently in future?</p> <p>Did the projects generate approaches that can be implemented elsewhere?</p> <p>Has the programme trialled innovative approaches and if so, what has been learned from them?</p>

## 2.4 Evaluation criteria

To answer the KEQs, the evaluation team developed a set of criteria, including standards of performance and measures of success, against which Jobs for Nature is being evaluated. The criteria articulate what good ‘looks like’ in regard to the programme’s relevance, effectiveness, additionality, coherence, and sustainability. The final theme is a descriptive theme and has been used to frame the conclusions of this report on the year one findings. The criteria framework is provided in Appendix A: Evaluation standards of performance and measures of success.

## 2.5 Year one data collection methods

The evaluation team collected a mix of qualitative and quantitative data through document review, key informant interviews, and case study fieldwork in three regions. Data was collected between November 2022 and May 2023.

### Contextual document review

The Jobs for Nature Secretariat provided a range of documents for the contextual document review. These included Parliamentary Commissioner of the Environment reports, the Jobs for Nature investment framework, the Advisory Group terms of reference and meeting minutes, programme dashboard reporting, Jobs for Nature annual reviews, and other relevant files. These documents were reviewed and summarised by the evaluators and shared across the evaluation team. The main purpose of this review was for the evaluation team to establish sufficient background on the Jobs for Nature programme to appropriately design the evaluation.

The document review has also been drawn on to contextualise the findings from the key informant interviews and place-based case studies. The information about Jobs for Nature policy and investment was also used to fact check information where relevant.

### Key informant interviews

The evaluation team conducted key informant interviews with 10 stakeholders involved in the design, management and/or governance of the Jobs for Nature programme. The interviewees were mainly national representatives of the participating government agencies, including MfE, DOC, LINZ, MPI, Kānoa, and members of the Jobs for Nature advisory group.

The interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide based on the KEQs and focus areas identified in the evaluation plan. The interviews sought national-level perspectives against the evaluation criteria.

Each interview was carried out by two members of the evaluation team (one to interview and one to take notes). Most interviews took place using Zoom or Microsoft Teams video conferencing software. The interviews took between 45 and 75 minutes. Participants were interviewed individually or in small groups, and informed consent was obtained prior to the start of each interview. Notes were developed from each interview, and all interviewees were invited to request a copy of those notes, which they could comment on and/or correct prior to returning.

The identity of participants remain confidential in this evaluation report and specific quotes have generic descriptors. The descriptor for these participants is 'national stakeholder'.

## Place-based case studies

A key data collection method for year one of the evaluation was case study visits to three regions. The evaluation team developed a selection framework for the place-based case studies, aiming to include urban and rural areas, geographic spread across Aotearoa, and a range of project types and funded organisations. The evaluation team used the framework illustrated in Table 2, to select the three sites. The suggested sites were confirmed by the Jobs for Nature Deputy Chief Executives group.

**Table 2: Place-based case studies selection framework**

Case study site	Geography	Approved funding as at March 2023 (\$m)	Place-based points of interest
Auckland	North Island Urban	\$36.5	Restoration projects in a metro city and on islands, employment and partnering.
Manawatū-Whanganui	North Island Predominantly rural	\$59.7	Diversity in project size and focus, high number of Iwi/Māori organisations as funding recipients
Te Tau Ihu (Tasman-Nelson)	South Island Predominantly rural	\$33.7 <sup>2</sup>	Range of funding recipients including local government, Iwi/Māori organisations and environmental NGOs

The evaluators selected a sample of Jobs for Nature projects delivered within each region. This included seven projects in Te Tau Ihu, seven in Manawatū-Whanganui, and six in Auckland. The selected projects were undertaking a range of environmental restoration activities, and the fund holders include Iwi, NGOs, and councils.

<sup>2</sup> This figure does not include the funding for one of the projects that was included in the case study (Te Hoiere Catchment Freshwater Restoration), which is in Marlborough (not Tasman-Nelson) but was included as it is supported by the Te Tau Ihu-wide Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance.

In May 2023, the evaluation team undertook site visits to each of the three regions. Teams of two evaluators were onsite for four or five days and completed interviews with a total of 48 participants. Interviewees included Iwi governance board members; regional stakeholders from environmental NGOs and local government; organisation CEOs; project managers; and project kaimahi. To retain anonymity, all quotes from these interviewees are described as 'J4N project personnel'.

Five online interviews were also conducted with Jobs for Nature project personnel who were unable to attend in-person, to ensure the evaluation gathered insights and information from the range of key stakeholders in each project within the case study regions.

The evaluation team conducted a desk-based review of available documentation related to the case study sites and the projects included in the sample. This included regional strategy documents and plans, project monitoring data (where available), and project planning and delivery documents.

## Quantitative data

The evaluation team received monitoring data on outputs delivered under the Jobs for Nature programme. This includes metrics related to the funding investment distribution, employment statistics (including employment starts, hours worked, people currently employed) and environmental outputs related to biodiversity, freshwater and pest control. This report has included these data where relevant.

The evaluation has not been able to access quantitative outcome data, as the programme does not collect national-level data on metrics such as the demographic characteristics of those who are employed by the funded projects, or the environmental changes or benefits realised through the projects.

## 2.6 Analysis of data

Qualitative data were sorted and analysed by case study region, participant group (e.g., government agency representative, Jobs for Nature project personnel); and by the organisation or sector they represent (e.g., central government, local government, NGO, Iwi/hapū). These data were analysed against a coding frame, based on the KEQs, criteria and standards of performance framework, to identify emerging themes and sub-themes.

The evaluation team reviewed the contextual and project documents against the coding frame used for the analysis of interview data. This enabled cross-referencing, integration, and synthesis of information from both the documents and the interviews to inform the development of findings.

Secondary data sources (i.e., monitoring data) were arranged under the KEQs and have been presented within the narrative as descriptive statistics. The quantitative data has primarily been used to triangulate and verify the qualitative data.

## 2.7 Methodological strengths and limitations

Year one of the evaluation of the Jobs for Nature programme has several strengths:

- The place-based case study method has provided context-rich qualitative information from stakeholders in various roles within the Jobs for Nature ecosystem, across a range of project types and fund holder organisations. The approach has enabled the evaluation team to explore how projects are delivered 'on the ground' and how they interact with the unique contextual features in the three case study regions.
- The key strength of the year one evaluation approach is the opportunity to hear directly from those involved in the delivery of funded projects. The evaluation centres the voices of Jobs for Nature project personnel, including using direct quotes in this report.
- The inclusion of interviews with national-level stakeholders, primarily representatives of the participating government departments, has allowed the evaluation to compare and contrast perspectives of those involved in the design and management of the programme, with those delivering Jobs for Nature projects in the regions.

Limitations of the evaluation methodology include:

- The use of quantitative data in year one of the evaluation has been minimal. While the programme collected monitoring data on employment and environmental outputs, there is a lack of coherent data on the broader impacts of the programme. This means that the findings related to the programme's achievements, as reported in this document, are based primarily on qualitative data which the team has not been able to triangulate with quantitative metrics.
- The evaluation team took a purposive sampling approach to select the place-based case study locations and the projects sampled at each site. The team included a cross-section of projects and interview participants. The non-random sampling technique means that findings are not necessarily generalisable.
- Most of the Jobs for Nature projects are still in delivery. While the delivery of environmental outputs is observable, the anticipated environmental outcomes are not likely to be realised until the medium-long term and may not be possible to capture within the timeframe of this evaluation.

## 2.8 Evaluative judgements

This is the first interim report of the three-year evaluation described in section 2.2. This document reports on findings from the first year of data collection, reporting primarily qualitative data from interviews with key informants and the three place-based case studies. Given there is still a substantial amount of data collection activities to be undertaken, this interim report does not attempt to make summative judgements.

In the third year of this evaluation, when all data collection activities have been completed, the evaluation will assess the data against the rubric below to assign a rating for each evaluation

theme (i.e., relevance, effectiveness, coherence, additionality, sustainability). The accompanying narrative for each performance criterion will profile the key areas of success and identify areas for change or further development.

**Table 3: Rubric for the evaluation of the Jobs for Nature programme**

Emerging	Enabled	Established	Embedded
<p>Evidence of emerging performance.</p> <p>Evidence is patchy or not clear overall. This may be because it cannot be seen yet (that is, has not yet had time to emerge) rather than the performance being unsatisfactory</p>	<p>Evidence of fair performance. Some positive achievements and some weaknesses but these are not 'deal breakers'. Heading in the right direction</p>	<p>Evidence of good performance overall. May have some weaknesses which are easily rectified</p>	<p>Evidence of very good to excellent performance on this aspect, which is embedded as business as usual. No weaknesses of any consequence. Some examples of exemplary performance</p>

## 3 Emerging findings

The emerging findings have been presented in terms of relevance, effectiveness, additionality, coherence, and sustainability. This section concludes with learning and improvements. Some of the findings apply to more than a single theme - for example, the responsiveness of the programme to local employment needs demonstrates relevance, which, also contributes to the effectiveness of the programme.

### 3.1 Relevance

This section presents emerging findings on the relevance of the Jobs for Nature programme, and the extent to which it adapted to remain relevant to changing circumstances.

This section addresses the following evaluation questions:

- How well does the design and implementation of Jobs for Nature align with the policy intent and objectives of the programme?
- To what extent are the initial objectives and scope still relevant and has the programme been able to adjust to changing circumstances over its lifetime?

#### Summary of findings

The interviews with national stakeholders and Jobs for Nature project personnel in the place-based case studies indicate that, overall, the programme is doing the 'right things' within its focus on employment and the environment. The overarching objectives have remained relevant throughout the programme, with the emphasis changing from the rapid creation of nature-based jobs to a greater focus on environmental restoration.

However, personnel delivering Jobs for Nature projects reported a disconnect between policy decisions at the national level and how these were operationalised at the regional project delivery level. Flexibility is required to adjust project contracts so that contracted employment outputs align with the policy pivot in response to a lower rate of unemployment than anticipated. To remain relevant, the programme also needs to recognise rising costs associated with inflation and increases in the minimum and living wage, which need to be reflected in amendments to contracts for project delivery.

#### Relevance of policy objectives

Jobs for Nature has clear objectives that include both employment and environmental outcomes. The three core objectives of the programme are to:

1. create employment opportunities in regions that need work the most

2. establish enduring benefits for healthy waterways, biodiversity, climate change and cultural values
3. support sustainable land use and the implementation of regulatory requirements, including for freshwater, biodiversity and climate change.

These objectives have strong endorsement and buy-in from all stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation. The five government agencies were broadly in agreement that the Jobs for Nature programme is doing the right things in terms of improving the environment and creating employment opportunities. The 'high level' nature of the objectives was beneficial in supporting the programme to remain relevant by providing scope to adjust programme delivery to changing national and regional circumstances, and agency, regional, Iwi and organisational priorities while still delivering on the broad policy goals.

*"The balance between the emphasis on objectives shifted, but all three remained relevant throughout the life of the programme." (National stakeholder)*

Similarly, evidence from the placed-based case study interviews indicated strong regional endorsement of the continuing relevancy of the policy objectives.

*"[It's] been a blend, balancing social outcomes for employment and training and raising the capacity and capability of conservation workforce along with achieving conservation outcomes." (J4N project personnel, Te Tau Ihu)*

### ***Manaaki whenua, manaaki tangata, haere whakamua – Care for the land, care for the people, go forward***

Project personnel described how they had implemented their projects according to Iwi and/or regional priorities. The implementation of Jobs for Nature varied between the regions, but the objectives remained relevant to each regional context, such as responding to employment needs, regeneration, climate events, holistic approaches, capability building and existing alliances.

In Auckland two of the NGOs spoke about the creation of employment opportunities where they were needed most.

*"The focus is on people, planet, then profit. For this larger project, we took out a loan to start the business. Ka whakatipu ki te whenua, ka ora ki te iwi (nurture the land and give life to the people). We are growing people's opportunities, one tree at a time." (J4N project personnel, Auckland)*

Jobs for Nature investment has helped build resilience and capacity to respond to climate change-related events for some Iwi based projects, whose services were holistic rather than singular weed or pest species focused.

*"We have developed capacity within the Iwi to have an emergency response team to flooding, because we have people who can drive the diggers, who know what they do... With weather events these days, with our marae, and a crew with a digger, rather than waiting for someone to do something. We are now ready." (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

*“There is new legislation coming about climate adaption. There is going to be time when we have to look at managed retreat and climate adaption. We are interested in wetland development as climate adaption. Planting, digger work, fencing. We want to learn about building wetlands. That could be a speciality line of work” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

In the Manawatū-Whanganui there was a strong focus on Iwi capacity building, with a high proportion of funded projects led by Iwi and hapū based organisations.

*“This had been a stunning and transformative programme, of an ilk and magnitude which is difficult to express...This project gives us the flexibility to be able to do what we wanted to do...To be trusted and left to do the work that is needed. Jobs for Nature is one of the first meaningful and authentic partnership, with the funding to be able to do anything.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

Collaboration and planning in Te Tau Ihu provided for that had an ecosystem focus, under the Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance. Te Tau Ihu has a large conservation estate, with significance DOC reserves and national parks and an existing alliance of Iwi, Crown Agencies, Territorial Authorities and environmental NGOs dedicated to enduring benefits of environmental restoration on a landscape scale.

*“The right alignment occurred when the Jobs for Nature funding was announced in terms of our regional shared values and outcomes for the community and the environment.” (J4N project personnel, Te Tau Ihu)*

***Te tino rangatiratanga o ratou whenua o ratou kāinga me o ratou taonga katoa – The unqualified exercise of their chieftainship over their lands, villages and all their treasures***

In Auckland and Manawatū-Whanganui, Iwi and hapū representatives spoke about the relevance of the programme objectives to their aspirations.

*“It’s assisted us to reconfirm our mana whenua status ... and has helped with our goals around revitalisation and reconnection, and our taiao aspirations of removing these nasty weeds from the motu.” (J4N project personnel, Auckland)*

*“[We] are an ancient Iwi from Tāmaki and our rohe is all through Hauraki up into Aotearoa. The islands are sacred and ancient taonga for us. So, this project on Motutapu is helping us restore the mauri.” (J4N project personnel, Auckland)*

A common theme amongst Iwi in the Manawatū-Whanganui region was the realisation of the rights guaranteed in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

*“Jobs for Nature enabled the Crown to invest in a tangible way, post settlement stage. We are now able to get a workforce and the ability to implement the work needed.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

*“The project was designed around [the Iwi] exercising Tino Rangatiratanga with a focus on the Iwi being on their whenua, connecting with their waterways and getting their young Uri involved” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

In Manawatū-Whanganui, one Iwi spoke about the culture, language, land and the essence of knowledge returning as people returned to the whenua.

*“Marae are libraries of information about how places used to be. Jobs for Nature helps our people reconnect, and as their memories return, they remember what they used to do in these places, and what used to grow. He kōrero whenua, he kōrero tangata. The whenua, the waterways and what they find, interacts with what they know, and mātauranga becomes restored.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

In Te Tau Ihu, Iwi were involved in regional level governance and operations through the Kotahitanga mō te Taiao alliance and through individual projects.

For Iwi and Māori communities that received Jobs for Nature funding, the investment enabled Māori to have influence (Auckland, Manawatū-Whanganui) and in some cases to have authority over processes of decision making and funding (Te Tau Ihu) in regard to their taonga tuku iho such as fisheries, forests, lands and water, as guaranteed under Article Two of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

#### ***Adjustments to remain relevant to the economic context***

Interviews with the five government agencies involved in Jobs for Nature indicated that the programme remained relevant by adjusting to changing circumstances. This adjustment involved shifting from a focus on creating employment opportunities to environmental benefits.

The initial policy objectives of the programme placed emphasis on job creation. The programme was tailored to address the rising unemployment rate that was forecast as a result of the anticipated economic slowdown associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews with national level stakeholders indicated that the environmental benefits were seen as important, but secondary, objectives. The effects of COVID-19 did not result in the economic contraction that had been forecast; after an initial increase, the national unemployment rate peaked at 5.3% in the September 2020 quarter, and by the December 2021 quarter was lower than pre-COVID levels at 3.2%.

Representatives from the agencies interviewed reported that they advised Ministers to reshape the focus of the programme. In May 2021, the Sustainable Land Use (SLU) Ministers agreed that agencies should place greater weight on environmental outcomes. The broad policy objectives did not change, and the overall Cabinet Investment Principles and Direction for Actions remained the same, but the environmental outcomes were accorded greater emphasis relative to employment outcomes.

*“It was all about jobs at first. Then pivoted funding towards capacity and capability building in terms of delivering nature-based opportunities and biodiversity outcomes. It enabled Iwi Māori to build capacity in terms of building ability to deliver on kaitiaki for future generations.” (National stakeholder)*

### **Relevance of programme to agency priorities**

The shift in focus to environmental outcomes was implemented in different ways by the five agencies, ranging from adapting the funding criteria to increasing flexibility for individual projects. The shift across the government agencies was not uniform and reflects the different mandates and issues they were attempting to address at an agency level.

Both Kānoa and LINZ retained a strong focus on employment. For Kānoa, this was in line with the agency focus on 'surge regions' which were overrepresented by Māori with a lower socio-economic profile. Although LINZ only had 3% of the funding, its goals remained on employment opportunities in response to some industries shutting down, such as tourism. This included looking to create opportunities for people to retrain and to help promote the work that was occurring within the Predator Free 2050 strategy. Representatives from LINZ stated that the delivery of Jobs for Nature had adapted to different challenges at a regional level. For example, LINZ needed to adjust the type and/or timing of work in response to the unavailability of necessary resources due to supply chain issues. When this occurred, LINZ pivoted by taking steps such as 'frontloading' training, and adapting contract milestones in line with available resources. Over time, LINZ developed a stronger focus on biodiversity, such as providing apps that people could use to help monitor and collect data related to environmental activities such as native planting. LINZ interviewees reported that the organisation had benefitted directly with an improved profile in relation to looking after the environment, including rare and endangered species, especially in braided rivers.

For MPI, the shift to a greater focus on environmental outcomes came over time. Initially, the programme focused on employment; but shifted to supporting government and communities with environmental outcomes. For MPI there was a particular focus on freshwater and biodiversity.

Although DOC had a focus on both employment and the environment, programme implementation varied across the different regions. For example, in one region, the focus of the funding was on a mix of restoring and protecting indigenous biodiversity and supporting kaimahi to gain additional skills and qualifications. In another region, the focus remained on creating work opportunities for industries such as tourism and hospitality, which had been impacted by COVID restrictions and border closures.

MfE interviewees emphasised the need for the programme to both support economic recovery and create enduring improvements in the natural environment. As part of ensuring its investment had been in the right things, MfE identified that it was important to measure the 'real benefits'. Interviewees noted that measures currently focused on outputs, not the difference the programme made in terms of enabling workers to put kai on the table. MfE wanted to get to:

*"The real people type of KPI, the real stories, because fences can get washed away, but people, well they endure." (National stakeholder)*

### **Challenges with fixed contracts regarding employment FTEs**

Some interviewees in the case study regions stated that changes in orientation by the government agency national offices were not reflected at a regional level. They identified an 'implementation gap' between policy decisions made in the national office, and how this was communicated to regional offices.

*"Sometimes there's a disconnect between [agency] head office and [agency] in [area]. Jobs for Nature makes decisions and there's no detail about why they're doing that. A real disconnect and not a lot of communication between the head offices directly to those on the ground." (J4N project personnel, Te Tau Ihu).*

This created challenges for those delivering Jobs for Nature projects. Some interviewees reported administrative difficulties, such as adjusting contracted outputs related to job creation when it became clear that employment targets were too high. This was particularly challenging in the Te Tau Ihu region. Project personnel in this region reported that in some cases, their contract was not adjusted with lower employment targets in response to changes in the delivery context. They reported that milestone payments were withheld when forecast numbers were not met.

*"There are employment barriers here, there aren't a lot of people to employ." (J4N project personnel, Te Tau Ihu)*

*"There is no clear information around why payments are being withheld. The objectives shift – so we might not report everything but just because we don't report it doesn't mean it's not happening." (J4N project personnel, Te Tau Ihu).*

An interviewee who was involved in coordinating the work regionally suggested reducing FTE targets so that projects can adapt to the economic context.

*"There's only so much squeeze left for employment. Changing the [contracted] FTE from 87 to 85 would be a relief. Things are tight." (J4N project personnel, Te Tau Ihu)*

Interviewees reported that withholding payments without clear information had negative impacts on their communities.

### **Living wage and inflation**

Project personnel in the regions also noted that rising inflation and increases to the minimum and living wage rise had impacted organisations delivering the Jobs for Nature projects.

*"The living wage will rise from \$23 to \$26 [an hour] in September 2023. Where will the project get the money to pay the wage increase?" (J4N project personnel, Te Tau Ihu)*

The impact of inflation was also raised as a concern, with projects seeing increases in the cost of materials and equipment needed to carry out environmental restoration activities. Some interviewees considered that the Jobs for Nature programme had not adequately recognised the impact of inflation on project delivery.



*“[There has been] massive inflation – budgets too tight – delivery is challenging, especially with 7% inflation.” (J4N project personnel, Te Tau Ihu)*

There were similar experiences in relation to the environmental targets. Jobs for Nature project personnel from across the three regions reported that there were instances of overestimation of pest and weed management targets and/or fencing requirements. While the original goals designed to address environmental restoration were still relevant, projects would have liked more flexibility to ensure output delivery matched the reality of what was possible.

## 3.2 Effectiveness of the programme

This section presents emerging findings on the effectiveness of the Jobs for Nature programme. The findings are presented in terms of achieving government policy outcomes and contributing to the aspirations of the regions and Iwi/Māori to care for taonga tuku iho of ancestral lands and waterways.

This section addresses the following evaluation questions:

- To what extent have the anticipated medium-term outcomes of the Jobs for Nature programme been achieved?
- To what extent and in what ways is the programme working for regional communities, Māori and the environment?

### Summary of findings

There are early signs that Jobs for Nature is making a tangible difference to environmental and employment outcomes.

Environmental restoration activities were improving nature's resilience to human development. In all regions there were reports of project kaimahi and the public seeing more birds, bats, and native plants. Evidence was provided by projects of mapped weed and pest management regimes protecting large regional landscapes.

The case study data collection identified that Jobs for Nature has had positive outcomes for tangata whenua, including opportunities for some Iwi to exercise kaitiakitanga alongside Crown agencies, receive funding to progress restoration activities on whenua, and to build capability and capacity for the Iwi.

The programme has reached its employment starts target, with new employment initiatives designed to improve waterways and protect biodiversity and support more people living in New Zealand with skills, knowledge, and capability to carry out environmental work. For some communities, the programme was viewed as a ‘life saver’ for creating employment opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic. In other communities, however, the tighter than anticipated employment market made achieving employment targets difficult.

The creation of employment opportunities for people who need them most was evident in the regions. Creating employment pathways was as important as the work that was done on the ground. Important aspects of the employment pathways included investment in

teams to build capability, encouraging the pursuit of formal qualifications, and supporting wellbeing through the provision of pastoral care.

Partnerships have improved across agencies and in communities where Jobs for Nature funding is received, and new ways of working together are evident. Funded Iwi and hapū based organisations report positive progress in partnerships with the crown while acknowledging there is room for improvement.

### 3.2.1 Environmental outcomes

It is challenging to assess the effectiveness of the programme in achieving its intended environmental outcomes for two key reasons. Firstly, environmental restoration and resilience are medium- to long-term goals, and it is too early to make judgements on the extent to which these anticipated environmental outcomes have been achieved. The second challenge is the data available on programme outcomes focused on environmental outputs, rather than outcomes. Despite this, there is early evidence that Jobs for Nature is making a tangible difference in this space.

#### ***Delivery of environmental outputs***

Jobs for Nature monitoring data from March 2023, displayed in Table 4, shows that the programme has delivered a range of environmental outputs. Pest control outputs are closest to completion, while freshwater and biodiversity outputs show mixed performance in respect to their anticipated outputs. It is reasonable to assume that the delivery of tangible environmental outputs over the life of the programme will contribute to the programme's expected long-term environmental outcomes; but the absence of outcome data means it is challenging to demonstrate achievements.

**Table 4: Jobs for Nature environmental outputs as at March 2023**

Area	Metric	End of programme target	Achieved	Complete
Biodiversity	Area of ecosystem restoration (ha)	10,513	6,113	43%
	Number of plants planted in terrestrial areas	4,886,554	2,762,926	50%
	Number of tracks maintained (km)	2,593	2,364	78%
	Number of assets maintained (incl. huts)	340	355	127%
Fresh water	Area of freshwater restoration (ha)	1,332	1,318	93%
	Area of riparian/lake/wetland plantings (ha)	5,498	3,338	52%

Area	Metric	End of programme target	Achieved	Complete
	Number of plants planted in riparian/lake/wetland areas	11,115,709	4,977,539	36%
	Length of fencing constructed (km)	9,929	6,842	65%
	Number of fish passages remediated	1,752	430	24%
Pest control	Area of wildling conifer control (ha)	2,192,160	1,778,627	81%
	Area of pest plant control (ha)	275,260	531,480	189%
	Area of wallabies control (ha)	1,627,306	1,243,840	76%
	Area of other animal pest control (ha)	2,198,637	2,299,555	101%

*Note: Some environmental outputs achieved have inflated percentages due to some projects not reporting annual/project lifetime plans*

### ***Observed environmental changes***

National representatives from the participating government agencies were generally confident that the investment had led to the establishment of systems and processes that would lay the foundation for future change. This included increased organisational, community, and workforce capacity to undertake environmental restoration activities, and increased community awareness of and participation in environmental activities.

*“We are hearing about increased number of volunteers turning up to events, and projects getting members from tramping and biking clubs to service trap networks. We feel that this has succeeded in upskilling people and making communities aware of environmental outcomes.” (National stakeholder)*

A Jobs for Nature project in the Auckland case study reported that the landscape approach to the restoration of a waterway had enabled Auckland city dwellers to reconnect to the environment. This was leading to an improved awareness of the waterways in a New Zealand metro city. As the stream travelled through the city, this could potentially result in a much wider impact.

*“People need to reconnect to nature, so that they care about what happens to our planet. They need to understand there is something they can do about it.” (J4N project personnel, Auckland)*

An Auckland-based project safeguarding a rare ecosystem on a popular offshore island described the tangible environmental benefits they were delivering, with maps showing they had exceeded their environmental targets.

*“That whole catchment has national and regional significance...the whole island, this has high ecological value. It’s got Kauri, Tinikaha, Kohekohe, Tawa, Puriri Taraire, Karaka, Mahoe and Nikau. It adds to the ecological values of*

*the place. If this wasn't done, there would be a loss [of forests]." (J4N project personnel, Auckland)*

Iwi interviewees provided anecdotal observations of environmental recovery.

*"The air smells fresher...We are hearing more Kererū at Kitchener Park." (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

In all regions there were reports of project kaimahi and the public seeing more birds, bats, and native plants, and there were discoveries of new species. An Iwi-led freshwater restoration and freshwater pest control project in Manawatū-Whanganui noted:

*"[The Jobs for Nature team] have found species of tadpoles. [This is the] second only recorded population in the North Island, [as well as] a native snail population found in a reserve that shouldn't have snails, and giant centipedes which thought to only found exist in the Coromandel." (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

An Iwi-led project in Manawatū-Whanganui described some environmental challenges with a degraded waterway in the Manawatū-Oroua. Tangata whenua Jobs for Nature kaimahi spoke of how they had loved learning about and utilising mātauranga Māori to measure water quality. They could see how the environment was impacted by pollution, how to measure it, and what their people knew about the environment when it was pristine.

*"We set a hinaki way up the river at Apiti, we caught about 10 tuna. Then we set them down the river and catch up tuna. When I was a kid we used to eat from there. There were freshwater mussels. Little black mussels. We hear the stories about the whānau. They remember about mussels. Water system, fresh water koura, ..but not the Mangone, it bubbles." (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

### ***Acceleration of existing environmental restoration activities***

Jobs for Nature provided the opportunity to extend and connect environmental activities to scale up the potential gains. Interviewees from government agencies noted that Jobs for Nature appeared most effective when delivered by organisations that were already involved in undertaking environmental protection work and used the Jobs for Nature funding to accelerate activities.

*"It worked best in projects that focused on growing what was already working. Organisations that had established systems and processes in place were able to get up and running quicker. Ones starting fresh struggled to gain traction. We were maybe a bit optimistic about fresh starters being able to deliver environmental outcomes." (National stakeholder)*

This aligned with the experiences of projects in the case study regions. Organisations that had previously undertaken similar work discussed using the Jobs for Nature funding to extend their existing environmental activities. These organisations had typically received funding from other government programmes, such as MPI's One Billion Trees, which had enabled them to build organisational infrastructure. Jobs for Nature activities were delivered through this existing infrastructure, with an expanded workforce. These established organisations were generally meeting their contract milestones. For example, in Manawatū-Whanganui region, an

Iwi organisation that accelerated their tree planting activities had achieved their goal of 10,000 trees planted in the first year, despite having only 6 months for planting due to a late contract signing (government agency delays). Another experienced hapū provider used the Jobs for Nature funding to extend trapping networks across a steep set of mountain ranges.

*“We have put out in 16,000 traps over 20,000 hectares. Every single site of significance for hapū has been trapped.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

In Te Tau Ihu, the funding enabled what was described as “weed and pest management on steroids.” Increased pest control work in the region had created regional-scale ecological corridors which connect with DOC estates.

*“The Jobs for Nature funding further expanded our initial work in wildling control. It has fast tracked pine control, with the promise to keep it held back into an area that can actually be maintained.” (J4N project personnel, Te Tau Ihu)*

*“It has accelerated [organisation’s] rate of achieving our goals of controlling invasive weeds for all [area] to a manageable zero-density level.” (J4N project personnel, Te Tau Ihu)*

### ***Ahakoa he iti he pounamu – Although it is small it is precious***

Interviewees from projects that had to establish new service lines discussed challenges with establishing new systems of training, recruitment, and activity delivery, and noted that the contracting model often did not allocate adequate ‘lead in’ time for infrastructure building to occur. For example, environmental targets for weed and pest management regimes were not able to be met until training had occurred. This does not mean that new organisations should not be invested in - interviewees in government departments and in the case study regions emphasised the value of increasing regional capacity in environmental restoration. Jobs for Nature investments build the capacity of communities to engage in the taiao space.

## **3.2.2 Te Tiriti o Waitangi**

### ***Tino rangatiratanga***

In Manawatū-Whanganui, a high proportion of the funded projects were Iwi based, and Iwi identified Jobs for Nature as an important way of delivering on Treaty relationships.

*“This has been one of the most realist ways to manifest Treaty relations. Being able to determine what is important, and not have this determined by someone else. The benefits of this are widespread. (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

Some personnel from Iwi-led projects noted that Jobs for Nature had enabled them to carry out much needed work on lands returned through Treaty settlements. The programme had funded the restoration of lakes, wetlands and walkways which were perceived to have been neglected by Crown agencies.

*“[The] Treaty settlement brought 17 sites back, the J4N projects helped to start the work that needed to be done in these places... J4N enabled the Crown to invest in a tangible way in the post settlement stage.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

In Te Tau Ihu, the Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance includes representation of eight Iwi on the governance board, which ensures that the regional environmental restoration approach is co-governed and co-managed. This approach is beginning to be reflected in the delivery of individual projects in the region.

*“[Project] is our first co governed, designed, and implemented project with Iwi. Even though council holds the money, they aren’t the only decision maker. They have used different approaches to how they do restoration. (J4N project personnel, Te Tau Ihu)*

Jobs for Nature has enabled new ways of investing that deliberately hold space for tangata whenua in Te Tau Ihu. This model has resulted in the development of an integrated catchment plan for a river, based on Iwi values.

*“[The planning team] started off with respecting all knowledge, one of the four founding aspirations. They have a whakataukī that is leading them on their journey – about walking a path together and taking up the challenge to strengthen their love for Papatūānuku. This guides their way of doing things. Iwi are acknowledged as kaitiaki.” (J4N project personnel, Te Tau Ihu)*

### ***Kaitiakitanga***

The Jobs for Nature programme created opportunities for Iwi to exercise kaitiakitanga alongside Crown agencies.

*“We were able to use J4N goals to be able to finally do work that we wanted to do for 25 years. Working with DOC and those that already knew us to be able to co-create this project to give the flexibility to be able to do what we wanted to do. [We] already had relationship with DOC but this J4N is one of the first meaningful and authentic partnership with the funding to be able to do anything.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

The Jobs for Nature programme was identified as a catalyst for changing the way central and local government agencies work with Iwi in Auckland. Local government representatives reflected on how the programme had provided an opportunity to ‘reset’ the approach to managing the health of taonga plant species, moving to a model in which Iwi kaitiakitanga was valued.

*“We had rather poor communication with mana whenua initially, and over time [Iwi] got frustrated... there was tension between Iwi and council. Jobs for Nature has enabled us to be much more responsive and be clear and do what we say we’re gonna do with Iwi.” (J4N project personnel, Auckland)*

### ***Kua takoto te manuka – Lay down the challenge***

There was feedback from a national stakeholder that some Iwi communities had missed out on the Jobs for Nature programme funding. The national stakeholder identified barriers to

sharing power, through the Crown holding on to decision-making powers, and defining the terms of reference about ‘what counts’ when selecting projects. The speed of decision-making was at the cost of building trust, and making sure the funding was evenly distributed.

*“There has been a little window to act, a closing funding window, a ngangara, that prevented us from making decisions to devolve, to build trust, to build confidence, to work with Iwi, hapū and Māori to see what solution may suit. We invite people to the table – but it’s always on our terms.” (National stakeholder)*

The Iwi communities that received funding appeared to be smaller Iwi and hapū; larger Iwi groups had applied for but had not received funding in two of the case study regions.

*“We need to check if we are trusted and where we are trusted? This could be by Māori for Māori. Some mechanisms to distribute funding is needed so we don’t double up and some Iwi miss out. How do we identify who needs support? Who is not at the table and why?” (National stakeholder)*

The Iwi and hapū based organisations that received Jobs for Nature funding found it to be a remarkable opportunity to change the relationship between the Crown and Iwi or hapū. The challenge would be to address the unintended consequences of inequity caused unintentionally by not developing or investing in Iwi within a region.

### 3.2.3 Employment in the environment

#### *Performance against job creation targets*

Monitoring data on the Jobs for Nature programme shows that the objective of 11,000 employment opportunities has been met. As at March 2023, there had been a total of 11,495 employment starts throughout the life of the programme. However, this measurement of success has not been straightforward. While the five government agencies established full-time equivalent (FTE) targets, there were no consistent metrics for employment reporting at the start of the programme. Consistent metrics were confirmed by the end of 2020, and subsequently rolled out across Jobs for Nature projects for programme reporting.

Auckland projects that were located in urban areas generally found meeting the contracted employment numbers relatively easy. One Auckland project had hubs based across the greater Auckland-Waikato area, including Rāhui Pokeka (Hunly), Pūkorokoro (Miranda), Puketāpapa (Mt Roskill), and Panmure (Kaiahiku), as well as office-based staff in the central city. Recruitment was relatively easy for this project.

*“We’ve employed 48 and transitioned 22 in the environmental skills, now they’ve transitioned into the community into employment, they go into data processing, nursery skills.” (J4N project personnel, Auckland)*

The project interviewees described using holistic models to retain staff, focusing on their overall wellbeing.

*“Because of the pastoral care elements (whangai). This is a way of giving our people a legacy – intergenerational sustainability. This was about manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga and whanaungatanga. We adopt a whare tapa*

*whā approach. It's 40 hours a week, we pick them up and they have kai here."*  
 (J4N project personnel, Auckland)

Two projects located in remote offshore island areas struggled to recruit and retain staff. An Iwi project identified the Jobs for Nature wage as insufficient for workers on the project, who had to bring in their own food on to a remote island. The island was not serviced by public transport, and therefore transport for workers was difficult. The only accommodation available was poorly maintained DOC huts. Kaimahi on the island needed to learn skills of pest and weed management, but the Grow Safe course was not easily accessible, and staff found it quite difficult to pass.

*"We have six working. We engaged a team leader who trained the others, but recruitment was not easy and the main issue was the housing on the [remote island]."* (J4N project personnel, Auckland)

In the Manawatū-Whanganui, the Iwi organisations interviewed reported that Jobs for Nature had generated a range of employment opportunities which span from project management, project leadership or supervision, and co-ordinator roles, through to on the ground roles such as fencing, and weed and animal pest management.

*"[It is] not hard to fill these numbers as people want to do this mahi on their own whenua. [There are] no issues to meet employment outcomes."* (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)

*"The Iwi called, we responded. They put out the karanga, we answered."* (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)

In Te Tau Ihu, a minority of projects (two out of the seven included in the case study) stated that it had been relatively easy to meet contracted employment start numbers. The other five projects reported that it had been challenging to recruit and retain staff to meet employment outputs. This aligned with the views of a representative from an organisation that works across the region, who noted that achieving the expected Jobs for Nature FTE employment outputs was challenging due to the employment level being higher than anticipated in the region.

*"[The region] didn't have as many anticipated employment issues as expected. Being a tourism region, they expected high unemployment numbers but actually the employment market was tight."* (J4N project personnel, Te Tau Ihu).

### **Manaakitanga - Accessible employment**

The ability to accurately assess whether Jobs for Nature is reaching the populations it was intended to support is limited by a lack of data. While monitoring data has been collected on the number of employment starts, there is no available demographic data that would enable an analysis of employment outcomes by ethnicity, gender or age.

As noted earlier, Kānoa focused its investment on 'surge regions' that had high Māori populations and a lower socio-economic profile. They noted that 70% of its Jobs for Nature contracts were directed to Māori economic development and Māori land trusts. Kānoa considered this investment had contributed to lower levels of COVID-related job displacement than expected. Māori land trusts had used the contracts to employ staff, gather tools and

equipment, and standup projects which lifted employment. Work linked with the contracts included fencing waterways and planting natives in waterways.

MfE considered that the speed of the delivery of the Jobs for Nature programme had limited its ability to target the investment to priority populations, with the immediate priority being to get funding into communities. More time to scope the programme may have allowed for better understanding of community needs, and the building of an investment framework to support the funding to reach communities that needed the investment most.

*“Changing the outlook for a community, is about investing not just in a job but about putting money back into that economy. We need to look at an enduring programme of social benefit; ‘people for nature’ versus ‘jobs for nature’.”*  
*(National stakeholder)*

Some projects in Manawatū-Whanganui and Auckland focused on recruiting people that had experienced unemployment, or unstable employment.

*“We started [organisation] because we had appalling social statistics. We had people on the benefit with no hope or help for the future, and we decided to get in there and make a change. Our people and our trainees on Jobs for Nature are our greatest treasure, our greatest asset.”* (J4N project personnel, Auckland)

*“The goals fit...our people were either unemployed or doing hard work that was seasonal. Other team members were on parole so faced barriers to getting employment but wanted to work and would do anything for a job”* (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)

*“Trees are a means to grow our people. 90% of people that we employed were Māori and Pasifika. These people come from the university of life, they are the best people to transition because of their experience and resilience. We learn from their needs how to facilitate the journey.”* (J4N project personnel, Auckland)

Interviewees in these projects noted that wrap around support was vital to success. Accessible employment meant reducing the barriers of transport, food and accommodation, and the provision of unconditional care.

*“[This organisation] is about caring and nurturing...it’s all about pastoral care.”*  
*(J4N project personnel, Auckland)*

*“Pastoral care is provided by the Taiwhenua and was part of what made this successful”* (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)

Providing employment in rural areas was a priority for projects across all three case study sites. Project personnel stated that the lack of year-round, stable employment options in rural areas often made it easy to recruit staff, although broader infrastructure issues, such as lack of accommodation and transport, were challenging.

*“Employment, being rural means limited job opportunities. Freezing works, fruit picking, and shearing being main work options. [We are now] able to provide different employment opportunities, and create a workforce that is connected*

*and valued, and where their input is encouraged.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

In Te Tau Ihu, while difficulties were experienced at a regional level in meeting employment targets, interviewees from projects based in rural areas did not have difficulty meeting their contracted employment starts. Similarly, Auckland projects in rural areas stated that recruiting staff was straightforward.

Organisations that targeted recruitment towards historically disadvantaged populations also noted their appreciation for being able to offer mana enhancing roles through the Jobs for Nature programme. Interviewees from one hapū based Jobs for Nature project spoke about improved whānau wellbeing due to steady income and being able to feed families.

*“Most [of] our team had been doing hard mahi/seasonal labouring and had no control over that work and nothing mana enhancing. This work is meaningful.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

### **Pūkengatanga – capacity building and the pursuit of excellence**

*Te manu e kai ana i te miro, nōna te ngahere; te manu e kai ana i te mātauranga nōna te ao. The bird who partakes of the miro berry owns the forest; the bird who partakes of education owns the world.*

Government agency representatives reported that the Jobs for Nature programme embedded a specific focus on delivering training and qualifications. Interviewees from DOC noted that there had been a requirement for formal and informal training of workers to ensure they were safe to work in outdoor environments. Similarly, LINZ commented that many people had gained Grow Safe certificates which meant they could now work in agriculture or conservation. In addition, LINZ representatives noted that the programme had supported workers to gain qualifications in areas such as diving and biosecurity.

All government agency representatives commented that the investment in skills had broadened people’s employment opportunities, including transferable skills that could be used to work for district councils, nurseries, and/or support cyclone recovery needs.

*“There are a lot of people who may not have thought about environmental jobs who have now been trained across a range of skills. This has helped get them into broader job market. People can move into other jobs based on the skills and qualifications they got through Jobs for Nature.” (National stakeholder)*

Given that the programme has been running for just three years, it is too early to determine the effectiveness of training and the extent to which the training and qualifications will have an impact on sustainable employment outcomes. However, it is likely that the uplift in skills and training in environmental work, as well as broader skills, will bring long-term benefits to both regional and urban communities.

Place-based case study interviews reflected these findings. For most of the Jobs for Nature projects that were included in the case studies, creating sustainable employment pathways was as important as the mahi that was done on the ground. An important aspect of creating these employment pathways involved providing training and encouraging kaimahi to gain formal certifications and qualifications.

*“We had our kaimahi complete Level 4 NCEA, which was a pretty big deal for people who had not completed any formal education. When they graduated, we celebrated and had a graduation for them at the marae.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

There were many examples throughout the case study regions in which project kaimahi had begun work with few or no qualifications and had gained certifications such as Grow Safe, first aid certification, and heavy vehicle licencing. In some instances, this had enabled staff to secure new income sources through contracts with councils or government agencies.

In Manawatū-Whanganui, the investment in Iwi and Māori organisations has led to an increased number of kaimahi with skills, knowledge and capacity to work in the environment. A strength of this approach was the opportunity it created for kaimahi to reconnect with their Iwi and whenua.

*“Unforeseen benefits have included strengthening the connection of rangatahi and pakeke with their whakapapa and Iwi, learning about their history including sites of significance, reconnecting with old practices such as hunting and fishing, and developing an ability to combine mātauranga Māori with Western ecological science practices.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

The investment in training has improved regional capacity and capability in environmental restoration in hard-to-reach places. An eco-sanctuary identified that the Jobs for Nature project enabled them to undertake restoration activities in places that their volunteers found too challenging.

*“[Under Jobs for Nature we have] a weeding team that could tackle steep challenging environments. We are restoring at pace.” (J4N project personnel, Te Tau Ihu)*

*“Jobs for Nature created opportunities to get work done that [organisation] wanted to do, get to hard-to-reach places in the country.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

Jobs for Nature also offered the opportunity to re-train staff in industries that had experienced a downturn due to COVID-19. For example, a Jobs for Nature project in Auckland had employed workers from a nature-based tourism business that had closed because of the COVID-19 lockdown. The arrangement enabled the employees to develop new skills and capabilities, which were then providing work opportunities for the tourism business employees during the off-peak season. Similarly, in Manawatū-Whanganui, a nature-based tourism solo operator who’s business had been impacted by COVID-19 was on a Jobs for Nature team, securing an income. She linked up with her Iwi, stayed close to the maunga, and was happy not to have to move from the district.

### ***Gaps and variability in training and capability building***

In the three case study regions, evaluators noted there were no organisations that had received Jobs for Nature investment towards the development of policy capacity to respond to issues such as those associated with the Resource Management Act (RMA) and the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPSFM).

Iwi organisations had different experiences of the training and capacity building support they received. Some Iwi organisations described receiving council and/or government support, while others sought assistance with training, but found that this was not readily available. Less tangible results were achieved when Iwi organisations received inadequate training, support, and supervision to deliver activities such as weed and pest control programmes; particularly in isolated areas, such as offshore islands. For these projects, difficulty accessing training, such as Grow Safe and other relevant courses, impacted on service delivery.

*“Though it’s not funded there is a requirement that we do a level of training. But because it’s quite difficult to access, that’s been quite expensive. The staff have found it difficult and have been struggling, they’ve expressed that it’s made work less enjoyable.” (J4N project personnel, Auckland)*

### 3.2.4 Effectiveness of partnerships

#### ***Partnerships between government agencies***

Partnerships are vital to the effectiveness of Jobs for Nature, given the cross-agency context within which the programme operates. The programme funding is divided across five agencies, each of whom have their own priorities, structures, and systems.

The programme infrastructure included mechanisms to support cross-agency partnership and coordination. This included joint decision-making by SLU Ministers on funding for projects above \$1 million, and the establishment of a reference group that provided advice on programme design and implementation.

At the programme delivery level, a Deputy Chief Executives' (DCE) group with representation from all five government agencies oversaw the management of Jobs for Nature. The DCEs group was reported to have done a lot of the 'heavy lifting' in the early phases of the programme, meeting regularly to agree protocols for decision-making and to enhance coordination of the 25 funding streams. Several interviewees from national stakeholder organisations stated that an important mechanism to support a coherent partnership approach was the establishment of the Secretariat that worked across the programme. The inter-agency Secretariat provides a coordination function, including overseeing programme reporting.

Interviewees from the five government agencies reported that there had been some initial challenges in working in a cross-agency partnership. This was apparent at the Ministerial level, with one interviewee noting some confusion around ministerial announcements on Jobs for Nature project funding.

*“What can be challenging is when there are different Ministers over different portfolios who want to make announcements about funding of their agency. Sometimes ministers don’t recognise other agencies involved, which is an issue with the piecemeal funding. Who tells the stories?” (National stakeholder)*

Interviewees from government agencies that were involved in programme delivery (such as in principal advisor roles) reported that initially, there was not strong awareness of what other agencies were doing, and there were varying levels of collaboration between agencies. Interviewees provided examples of productive interagency discussions about which funding stream projects would best fit, but also noted instances of agencies 'doing their own thing' and

not appearing well connected to the other agencies. Several interviewees stated that over time the Secretariat had led improvements in process and communication and had “done a great job of corraling lots of diverse projects”.

Despite these efforts to establish effective cross-agency processes, a high proportion of project personnel interviews in the case study regions reported that they had experienced inconsistencies in working with different agencies. Project personnel stated that the agencies had inconsistent reporting and administration requirements, and differing approaches to contract management and negotiating amendments.

*“[Project] worked with three agencies. They are all quite different in terms of how they operate. [Agency] was pragmatic and connected to what happens on the ground, whereas [other agency] was restrictive and had a one size fits all approach. We had to deal with multiple reporting requirements with various levels of complexity.” (J4N project personnel, Te Tau Ihu)*

*“What was needed was good connections locally, changing of funding agreements, good relationships to do this, and feeding back up to the system. They needed a single point of contact rather than people on the ground needing to go to lots of agencies for help.” (National stakeholder)*

### ***Kawanatanga mechanisms – partnerships with Iwi/Māori communities***

Jobs for Nature provides the government with a mechanism to invest in Iwi/ Māori communities, enabling the Crown and Iwi to work together for employment creation and environmental restoration. In all three regions, interviewees from Iwi organisations stated that Jobs for Nature had contributed to helping restore Iwi-Crown relationships by providing funding and investment to Iwi. In Auckland, Te Tau Ihu, and Manawatū-Whanganui, there were examples where the programme had contributed to building partnerships between local government, Iwi/Māori and communities. In Auckland, a project to protect and restore taonga tree species involved strong partnership between local council and Iwi, including the development of a management plan that embedded Iwi values. In Te Tau Ihu, the governance board of the Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance included representatives from eight Iwi entities, ensuring that Iwi voices are strongly represented in decision-making in the region. In Manawatū-Whanganui, the strong focus on investing in Iwi organisations to deliver Jobs for Nature had created opportunities for Iwi entities to build their capacity and employ their own people to work on lands and waterways.

These partnerships were described as mutually beneficial. For local councils and NGOs, working with Iwi had the benefit of ensuring the inclusion of mātauranga Māori as a component of the training that was delivered to project staff. This had contributed to an uplift in understanding of mātauranga Māori. Iwi representatives discussed the benefits of being funded and trusted to lead taiao restoration activities in their rohe.

*“Jobs for Nature is one of the best projects that DOC has funded in its entire existence, because what it’s done has specifically been designed to work with Iwi and with hapū in a way that they have control over the destiny. We have control of what the project was developed to be like, how its implemented, and how it’s going to add value to us as a tribe.” (J4N project personnel. Manawatū-Whanganui)*

Despite these positive experiences, some challenges remained in the case study regions. In Auckland, one Iwi-led project had reached out to the council for support in training and capability building, but this had not eventuated. In the Manawatū-Whanganui region, the five Iwi organisations interviewed considered local and regional councils as too siloed in their practice and stated that most councils in the region could better leverage off the programme investment in Iwi. Another Iwi in the Manawatū-Whanganui region described Jobs for Nature as a small contribution to tino rangatiratanga, considering their Iwi estate was once 1.6 million hectares.

*“A small attempt at meeting tino rangatiratanga by the Crown. A subtle approach, a drop in the ocean of what needs to be done.” (Iwi representative, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

Policy setting and decision making, resourcing, and evaluation of the Jobs for Nature policy process remains with the Crown agencies. Māori values have influenced the investment framework criteria; but Iwi/Māori do not hold authority over the Jobs for Nature process. Evidence of Māori equity through the policy is achieved for those who receive funding and have capacity to meet and work with Crown agencies on environmental matters.

### 3.2.5 Effectiveness in terms of Te Whare Tapa Whā

Tangata whenua interviewees spoke about what ‘good’ looks like in the context of Te Whare Tapa Whā model – Taha Wairua, Taha Tinana, Taha Hinengaro and Taha Whānau.

#### ***Te Taha Wairua – Spiritual wellbeing***

All Iwi agreed ‘good’ is improvement to the mauri of people and place, provides for connections that lift the wairua, reconnects the spirit back to the ngahere, rongoā, and is a space to work with wāhi tapu. Iwi placed great value on reconnecting “back home”, and the opportunity to restore places that are a taonga.

*“There is healing outcomes from this work for those involved. Being able to maintain traditional knowledge.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

*“The expansion of trapping line, Ruahine, she’s our dominant force, from the top of her spine to the bottom of the spine, she’s our tupuna maunga, the reconnection to her, our obligations and responsibility to her, because that’s the healing process for us, to reconnect.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

#### ***Te Taha Tinana – Physical wellbeing***

Personnel from Iwi/Māori Jobs for Nature projects identified the physical health benefits experienced by kaimahi.

*“Getting the kaumātua moving where they might not have been before. With the younger team members, seeing them make better life and health choices. [We] also have families who join in this space, meeting their hauora outcomes.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

The Jobs for Nature programme kept a steady income flow for some households. In some cases, it shifted people from the welfare system, and provided food.

*“The community have benefitted too with deer caught through hunting processed locally and then shared with the pātaka run by the Iwi; the community can access kai from the pātaka twice a week.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

Iwi spoke about capacity and capability building for additional income streams and work opportunities.

*“The additional capacity and capability developed through the project has put the Iwi in a better place to win commercial opportunities as they now have a workforce with the necessary certificates, access to the right equipment and their reputation has grown.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

Fishing has always helped supplement the diet of Iwi members and provides for traditional food. Kaimahi in one Iwi-led Jobs for Nature project had begun to test for water quality and express concerns about the environment. They shared stories about a lake at which kaimahi had to pick up thousands of poisoned birds and tuna (eels), who had died due to a botulism outbreak. The quality of water in this shallow coastal lake was described as very poor, with a trophic level of five. The Jobs for Nature project has helped the Iwi begin to address some of the pollution; however, it remains significant challenge.

*“We have had to address two major botulism outbreaks within the lake – about 5000 birds died in the lake, and about 1000 fish lost as well. Who steps up in the community or government to claim responsibility or to support and address this? The team and kaumātua stepped in and went out to clear this up. Where was the support from outside? The lake needs to be maintained, and [the Iwi] is worried about the work continuing after the funding ends.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

On a river that feeds into the Manawatū, kaimahi spoke about their kaumātua telling them stories about the kai that used to be in those places when the river was clean, including freshwater mussels, kakahi, flounder, tuna, and whitebait. The river is a major tributary of the Manawatū River and flows through prime agricultural land. The river's water quality is impacted by both agricultural and urban pressures in the catchment. Once kaimahi realised the poor quality of the water through testing of the river and streams, they were concerned about their whānau members who were still harvesting food for family consumption.

*“The Mangaone, it bubbles, there is black fungi, it's toxic for dogs. The Mangaone doesn't look like it moves. They put a pump in there, but nah, it's got silt. Man, I see the cuzzies eeling off it.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

*“Our water monitoring is based on the outcomes of Te Whakarauora te Taiao, Te Whakarauora tāngata. Our values in our water monitoring programme is based on the spiritual values, the impact of pollution on our tikanga. Looking after the waterways is part of look after our integrity. Looking after waterways was also linked to our nutrition, and of course these all reside in the domains of atua. We look for kai we used to eat, what is missing and what is now present though tuna and fish counts.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

Jobs for Nature is delivered in both pristine and polluted environments. Māori are still harvesting food in quite degraded waterways. Jobs for Nature has been effective in facilitating a relationship for Iwi members back to their waterways. The restoration of those waterways requires an investment of time beyond the current Jobs for Nature contract.

### ***Te Taha Hinengaro – Mental health wellbeing***

Iwi representatives discussed observing broader wellbeing benefits that whānau had experienced through working in nature restoration and the taiao. As well as the physical health of people improving, interviewees reported that people's connection to nature had made them feel proud to be involved in these projects and contributed to their general sense of wellbeing.

*"Building confidence in their team members, giving them a sense of purpose and the ability to be strong in themselves." (J4N project personnel, Auckland)*

*"The feeling of belonging and creating consistency which some have not felt before." (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

Jobs for Nature facilitates people wanting to be involved in restoring nature. The work contributes to a sense of pride and a desire to learn more about the environment from kaimahi in the programme.

*"We want to go on to learn more. We would like to start our own team for managing our own whenua. We could go to university. We are learning about plants when we do weeding too. We really like it. Yes, we would love to learn more, go to Massey, start our own business." (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

One group of men spoke about the vision they have for the future.

*"The work we do, we definitely feel proud. This stuff makes us feel proud. Our dreams about the quality of water. Our kids being able to catch eels. Our kids about to swim. It's changed dramatically, we used to catch eels, koura. Our kids, they have never been to the park, to the river, they have never turned over a rock." (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

### ***Te Taha Whānau – Whānau wellbeing***

Jobs for Nature has provided a broader platform to increase opportunities to provide for educational scholarships and the development of whānau capacity and capability.

*"We had developed a holiday programme for the rangatahi and the team take them out to spread the knowledge and opportunities. [Council] had an idea for a scholarship, approached by the Iwi. They developed five scholarships, resulting in being able to produce the next round of ecologists. We are creating pathways that are woven with government programmes." (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

Interviewees from Iwi organisations spoke of kaitiakitanga; the value in care and connection to the whenua.



*“The take aways from this project for the team are the certifications, the kōrero they have been a part of with kaumātua, and the connection to the whenua. Iwi showcasing their capability to do this mahi, and the opportunity to build the reputation to do this.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

Working in Jobs for Nature projects delivered in environments that Iwi and hapū once owned and lived in, began a deep process of reconnection shared by the wider whānau. Kaimahi spoke about the idea of sharing knowledge and helping their communities restore the taiao.

*“We are going to courses to upskill and to ensure a paper trail to build skillsets and capacity …but also to carry on the journey by passing knowledge down to others. We are making a big difference with animal pest control, and are hoping to share what we are doing with schools, to share the stories of restoring the taiao.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

### 3.3 Coherence

This section presents emerging findings on the coherency of the Jobs for Nature programme.

This section addresses the following evaluation questions:

- To what extent was the Jobs for Nature project selection approach coherent with regional/catchment and national needs?
- To what extent are there synergy effects between Jobs for Nature projects?
- To what extent has the job creation element of the programme been coherent with other support measures?

#### Summary of findings

Government agencies sought to reflect a mixture of regional, catchment and national needs when selecting projects. In some instances, projects aligned well with national strategies and priorities such as the national pest weed strategy, DOC's biodiversity programme and strategy, and MfE's freshwater strategy. These strategies and programmes were seen as complementary to Jobs for Nature and the work was carried out in parallel.

At the regional level, coherence was supported by pre-existing mechanisms, such as a regional alliance. This acted as a clearing house for projects and generated high levels of transparency, which reduced the likelihood of duplication between projects, and ensured that the projects selected would effectively contribute to regional priorities and objectives.

There was a lack of coherence in regions that did not have formal ways of connecting projects across the region, presenting a risk of duplication.

### ***Coherence with national goals and strategies***

Interviews with the five government agencies indicated that when selecting projects, they sought to reflect a mixture of regional, catchment, and national environmental needs. Examples included selecting projects that complemented a whenua Māori project designed to make Māori land more productive; building on climate resilience projects; and bringing work forward that LINZ was planning as part of managing land and rivers.

*“Jobs for Nature just made sense of what we had begun under MPI restoring our Māori lands.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

Across the three regions, Jobs for Nature projects reflected national and regional needs for employment without replicating other job creation or employment support measures. Some job creation aligned with and built on other job creation and employment support measures such as the MPI One Billion Trees programme and the Provincial Growth Fund. There were no reported displacement or duplication of other training support programmes.

Evidence from the place-based interviews indicated that some projects' environmental outcomes aligned well with national strategies and priorities such as the national pest weed strategy, DOC's biodiversity programme and strategy, or MfE's freshwater strategy. These strategies and programmes were seen as complementary to Jobs for Nature and the work was carried out in parallel. For example, MPI noted that there was a lot of alignment between Jobs for Nature and essential catchment work for freshwater quality. Similarly, DOC and MfE considered that Jobs for Nature had contributed to New Zealand freshwater reforms designed to improve quality of freshwater, climate change response priorities, and DOC's national strategy for biodiversity. Some funding was relabelled, which led to the same activities completed in freshwater, but with Jobs for Nature funding.

There were also a range of examples of projects that aligned well with regional strategies and priorities. For example, in Auckland, the Tiakina Kauri project was implementing the national plan for Kauri management in collaboration with Iwi, councils and DOC. The project aimed to manage Kauri forests in coherence with Iwi priorities, ensuring the guidelines for forest visits have Iwi values at the heart of the protocols, reflecting tikanga and kawa. Similarly, in Manawatū-Whanganui, the strong focus on funding Iwi projects meant that there was excellent alignment with Iwi priorities and values. It also created an opportunity for Iwi organisations to build on funding they had received from other sources.

### ***Ma te kotahitanga e whai kaha ai tātau – In unity we have strength***

A pre-existing alliance in Te Tau Ihu, Kotahitanga mō te Taiao, created an environment which supported collaboration and project synergies. The alliance planned the delivery of Jobs for Nature on a landscape scale, and applied criteria to assess the benefits and importance of proposed projects against a suite of outcomes and objectives. Iwi were actively involved in the selection process and delivery of projects in the form of co-governance.

Interviewees in this region stated that the collective work in designing, selecting, and implementing the programme resulted in synergies between projects, reducing the risk of duplication and enhancing the overall effectiveness of the programme.. For example, one NGO had created and nearly finished setting up a trapping network around a reserve, and had

plans to expand it to a landscape scale by collaborating with complementary work that MPI and councils were undertaking.

*“[Organisations] are leading collaborative planning for marine and terrestrial environments to deliver ecosystem services. These ecosystem services deliver tangible benefits, there should be a way to recognise that, there should be a way to monetise that, to operationalise that in our country as a cost that goes into the budget for conservation.” (J4N project personnel, Te Tau Ihu)*

Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance Project Dashboard<sup>3</sup> showcases the work undertaken across 3.4 million hectares at the top of the South Island by 13 projects. It is based on the philosophy of coming together to make change, with one purpose, and one vision. Iwi, Crown, local government, and NGO agencies are committed to care and respect for Papatūānuku earth mother and Ranginui sky father, and everything in between. The Alliance’s goal is to restore the Taiao, to protect species and support economic, social, community and environmental resilience of communities.

*“There was lots of whanaungatanga. It has successfully allowed people to move on and up into other environmental jobs. Bit too early to say we have achieved coherence.” (J4N project personnel, Te Tau Ihu)*

In Auckland and Manawatū-Whanganui there was some evidence of synergies between projects at the individual level. This generally occurred when organisations contracted to deliver Jobs for Nature projects had used existing networks with local Iwi and community organisations to develop informal collaborations to align their nature-based work. However, in both Auckland and Manawatū-Whanganui, funding recipients reported insufficient opportunities to communicate and support each other. The qualitative interviews indicated there were no regional forums to coordinate Jobs for Nature work in these areas. One representative from a Jobs for Nature project in Manawatū-Whanganui contrasted the lack of regional coherence with a neighbouring region:

*“We work along three regions. Hawkes Bay meets very regularly, and it is very transparent about who got what, and people meet regularly and help each other. Not so much in the other regions.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

In Manawatū-Whanganui, Horizons Regional Council and DOC working together in the region was seen as a key enabler for coherence that was not yet functioning as effectively as it could be. Auckland Regional Council was also perceived as a regional enabler in the past for environmental specialists when it was a separate entity. Funding recipients commented that the coordination and technical expertise that the Auckland Regional Council used to provide was sorely missed.

*“[The] regional council was bloody good. There is a loss of focus on the environment, with all the councils collapsing into one. The urban issues have*

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/asia-pacific/new-zealand/stories-in-new-zealand/kmtt-alliance-projects/>

*taken over, and there is no longer clean waterways and flora and fauna." (J4N project personnel, Auckland)*

A consequence of the lack of coordination at a regional level was that projects operated in a self-contained way. In both Manawatū-Whanganui and Auckland regions, concerns were raised about potential duplication of effort. In Auckland there was a suggestion that there was a lack of coherent planning around native plant nursery development, while in the Manawatū-Whanganui funding recipients raised concerns about duplication of pest management activities.

*"If we are crossing paths, we could be setting the same trap lines. It would be good to know about what others are doing. You could be duplicating another trapline, and you might not know" (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

### ***Ki te kahore he whakakitenga ka ngaro te iwi – Without foresight or vision the people will be lost***

There was variance in experiences between the place-based case study sites concerning transparency of decision-making, which interviewees considered to have had an impact on the coherence of the programme. For example, in the Auckland region, the decision-making process regarding which projects were funded was described as opaque. Similarly, interviewees in the Manawatū-Whanganui region identified decision-making about the funding and implementation of the programme as unclear.

Having a regional leadership group alliance which acted as a clearing house for projects was an enabler of transparency. In Te Tau Ihu, the Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance created transparency around the funding and how projects could be linked through members of the alliance working closely together. The high level of transparency created an opportunity to scale the benefits from conservation work and conservation-based employment throughout the region. Examples of alignment between projects included the contribution made by NGO groups such as the eco-sanctuary and their work on Mahi Tahi and sophisticated data mapping of weed and pest control sites across Te Tau Ihu. However, it is not known how Iwi have experienced the initiative; this will be a focus of part of Te Ao Māori case studies in year two of the evaluation.

## 3.4 Additionality

This section presents emerging findings on the additionality of the Jobs for Nature programme, including the additional value Jobs for Nature projects provide beyond the funded activities.

This section addresses the following evaluation questions:

- To what extent has Jobs for Nature as a programme added value beyond the individual funds?
- How much of what has happened would have happened anyway or been funded through other mechanisms?
- What additional funding/resourcing has the Jobs for Nature programme attracted towards reaching its objectives?

### Summary of findings

In all three place-based case study sites, the Jobs for Nature programme was reported to have created additional benefits beyond individual projects. The programme had supported the development of new partnerships, that had supported organisations to deliver their Jobs for Nature projects while enhancing overall organisational capacity.

Organisations and regions will access additional ongoing benefits through investment in technology that enables more efficient processes, the opportunity to develop nature-based solutions that integrate mātauranga Māori, and to develop and test new workforce models such as tourism-conservation employee sharing.

### ***Additional value in environmental restoration through partnering***

Organisations involved in environmental restoration reported greater effectiveness in the work they are doing through partnering in new ways. A representative from a national NGO identified that Jobs for Nature funding had enabled the development of a partnerships with community organisations working on nature regeneration projects throughout New Zealand. They had to learn how to support training, contracting and recruitment at pace. Although challenging, this new approach to partnering enabled the national NGO to support funding to a network of people already doing the work, but who may not have received the funding if they had applied on their own.

*“We were experienced and ready. We had a network of people already. Nationwide, we selected 12 partners, a good mix of Iwi and hapū organisations who [if] solo wouldn’t be successful for funding. We were doing quality control for reporting and helping organisations from the ground up. We would meet regularly, and DOC was happy with our progress and outcomes.” (J4N project personnel, Auckland)*

Another Jobs for Nature project spoke about working with mana whenua, the rangatahi-focused organisation Te Pu-a-Nga Maara, Auckland Council, and other local partners and businesses, plus funders including DOC, Milford Foundation and Z Energy. Their broader strategy was based on a collaborative partnership between Māori authorities, Eke Panuku and the Auckland Council Healthy Waters team.

The Jobs for Nature funding had also created an opportunity to build broader community engagement, such as engaging tramping and biking clubs to service trap networks, or voluntary groups taking over native planting areas. In Auckland, investments in pest eradication programmes had resulted in the employment of local community members. This had enabled the advancement of pest management strategies that were previously limited by a dwindling number of older volunteers.

Jobs for Nature projects are beginning to build partnerships with farmers that add value to restoration. An Iwi organisation described a farmer contributing to the fencing of the shared lake. Other Iwi are planting their own lands and fencing waterways and are providing farmers with fencing and planting to restore waterways that flow into Iwi whenua.

*“[We are] building good partnerships with farmers. Farmers are recognising the work and showing gratitude.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

Representatives from Iwi identified that Jobs for Nature added value to partnerships with the Crown.

*“Understanding the natural value of each area and the biodiversity and can only find this out by working collectively. Good to see DOC is willing to work with Iwi and hand over the responsibility.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

Partnership opportunities have added value to the resources available to deliver Jobs for Nature projects. Companies such as NZ Steel, Datacom, Microsoft, Foundation North, Sky City, Toyota New Zealand and companies that make pesticides have provided financial or in-kind support to the Jobs for Nature work. For some projects, Whānau Ora providers offer pastoral care to kaimahi, and Iwi have been subsidising the Jobs for Nature funding so that kaimahi have 40 hours a week wages.

### **New tools, new resources and employment models**

*Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi – With your food basket and my food basket the tribe will benefit*

The Jobs for Nature investment has generated additional benefits by leaving a legacy of new tools, new approaches to working with nature, and new ways of doing things.

*“We have discovered more effective ways to manage the moth plant that could lead to eradication.” (J4N project personnel, Auckland)*

This has included investment in tools which have directly benefited the Jobs for Nature programme and have offered additional benefits at the regional level. For example, an environmental NGO in Te Tau Ihu has upgraded its technology to collate all regional field data

into a central computer to track current and forecast outputs in the management of plant and animal pests. The NGO noted that this had current benefits for Te Tau Ihu Jobs for Nature projects, as it has the capability to file large amounts of data easily, supporting timely and accurate reporting. The system's mapping capabilities have supported efficiencies in working approach, allowing the field team to track output delivery, map wilding pine locations and create "fences" which send an alert to staff phones when they crossed into areas that are not part of the current work programme. Interviewees from the NGO also saw substantial additional benefit in that the database can be used for years to come for a variety of purposes, including for mapping future work and generating landowner reports.

An additional benefit of the Jobs for Nature programme has been the opportunity to develop nature-based solutions that integrate mātauranga Māori. Three government agency representatives spoke about an Iwi-led project that used woven design mats to suppress weeds that were choking lakes. In Auckland, a project worked with Iwi to co-design kaitiakitanga activities to manage tikanga for a rāhui put in place to protect Kauri in the Waitākere Regional Park. This has supported the creation of new resources, which provide for tikanga to guide forest visits, and educate visitors about how to protect the mauri of the forest.

*"We are working on a ngahere management plan, the idea is to create a mauri sink. Right from the start we made sure mātauranga and tikanga expertise was paid for." (J4N project personnel, Auckland)*

An ecosanctuary spoke about the value the Iwi rangers brought to the quality of education, now provided as part of the nature tourism experience in Te Tau Ihu.

There was evidence of additional benefits in the development of new workforce models. In the Auckland region, one of the projects included in the evaluation case study had partnered with a nature-based tourism company under a shared workforce model. During the tourism downturn caused by border closures during the pandemic, workers of the tourism business were employed in the Jobs for Nature project. This had created business resilience for the tourism company. Skills developed through the programme meant that people working in the tourism business can pivot between tourism and environmental work in response to a slowdown in tourism and/or unforeseen weather events. Interviewees noted that the workforce sharing model offers strong potential to roll out further as a method to address the seasonal nature of tourism and conservation work.

## 3.5 Sustainability

This section presents emerging findings on the sustainability of the results from the Jobs for Nature programme. It is important to iterate the interim nature of the findings summarised here. These questions will be a focus for year two and year three of the evaluation.

This section addresses the following evaluation questions:

- To what extent are the results of the projects likely to continue after the end of the programme?
- What factors influence the sustainability of the projects?
- What, if anything, has the programme contributed to structuring effects and how agencies work together?

### Summary of findings

Interviews with government agencies indicated that Jobs for Nature stakeholders are still considering how to ensure that the benefits of the programme continue after Jobs for Nature funding ceases.

In all three place-based case study sites, the evaluation found that Jobs for Nature projects are grappling with the issue of sustainability. Some projects have sought ongoing funding from entities such as councils, with mixed success. Other projects are beginning to wind down and shift focus to a maintenance level. However, many project personnel were worried about what will happen after the Jobs for Nature funding finishes and reported concerns about the lack of transition plans in place to support employers and those employed by Jobs for Nature. They also reported an absence of long-term strategies to maintain the ongoing sustainability of the projects' environmental outcomes.

### 3.5.1 Evidence of sustainability

At this stage of the evaluation, limited evidence has been gathered about the sustainability of projects and project benefits funded under the Jobs for Nature programme. However, there is some evidence, along with perspectives on the likelihood that benefits will be sustained beyond the programme.

Interviewees described employment opportunities provided by Jobs for Nature as 'partially sustainable'. There is evidence that some people employed through Jobs for Nature had transitioned to employment outside of funded projects, including as project managers, educators, supervisors, operational managers, administrators, and taking up contracting opportunities, including running their own businesses (e.g., fencing contractors).

In terms of the sustainability of environmental outcomes, some projects are delivering activities that are likely to sustain benefits beyond the lifespan of the Jobs for Nature programme. In all three case study regions, projects have invested in physical infrastructure that will have lasting effects beyond Jobs for Nature, including fencing, plantings, and walkways. Examples include walkways around the lakes restored in Manawatū Whanganui, the plantings and trapline of the Te Korowai o Wainuiārua, Lake Punahau, and the Ōroua river. Iwi and NGOs spoke about contributing to Papatūānuku thriving. The restoration projects that have fencing and planting will be sustained beyond the timeframe of the contracts.

However, participants in the evaluation also reported that while they expected positive environmental outcomes from such projects beyond the lifespan of the Jobs for Nature funding, infrastructure requires ongoing maintenance to ensure longevity. They pointed out that gains made in areas like weed and pest control will be undone over the longer term without ongoing investment.

### 3.5.2 Planning for sustainability

There is no Jobs for Nature funding available after June 2025. There is variability in how much planning for sustainability has occurred; where this is happening, planning is still at early stages.

Stakeholders from government agencies expressed concerns about what is in place to sustain the projects and identified a need for planning. MfE interviewees stated that planning for sustainability had begun, with a focus on developing a transition strategy to support projects. LINZ and DOC representatives reported that they were building their familiarity of groups and organisations funded under Jobs for Nature, as well as considering what opportunities there were for these groups to secure other work from agencies. LINZ personnel noted that there were a range of projects in which the work was now shifting to planning maintenance requirements.

MPI's approach involves working with leaders of projects to understand what future requirements are, including baselining the level of funding needed to future proof projects. MPI has held conversations about the scale of ongoing funding and have been trying to get project leads to identify alternative sources and forms of funding. More broadly, government agencies were exploring potential future funding options such as looking at green bonds and the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS).

At the regional level, some projects are beginning to plan for sustainability. Some projects have, reportedly, sought other funding from entities, such as councils. Other project personnel spoke about beginning to wind down projects and shift focus to maintenance level.

*"We are beginning to scale back plantings – so that maintaining the plantings will be easier for [council] parks and recreation crew to maintain. Too many plants, can be neglected and fail to thrive." (J4N project personnel, Te Tau Ihu)*

However, many project personnel were worried about what will happen after the Jobs for Nature funding finishes. They reported that there were no transition plans in place to support employers and those employed by Jobs for Nature. They also reported an absence of long-term strategies to maintain the ongoing sustainability of the projects' environmental outcomes.

### 3.5.3 Factors influencing sustainability

The evaluation has identified a number of factors influencing the sustainability of project outcomes.

#### **Pollution**

It is challenging for Jobs for Nature projects to sustain the gains they had made in areas in which pollution remains an ongoing issue. This issue was particularly concerning to Iwi-led Jobs for Nature project in the Manawatū-Whanganui region. As was discussed in 3.2.5, there are Jobs for Nature projects aiming to restore polluted waterways where Māori are still gathering kai. The Iwi placed a rāhui until further notice on the lake, after Jobs for Nature kaimahi responded to a botulism outbreak that poisoned birds and tuna in February 2023. On a river that feeds into the Manawatū, another Iwi described their concerns about the waterways which bubbles, black with fungus, where people are gathering tuna.

Jobs for Nature project personnel in this region expressed concerns about their ability to sustain environmental gains in highly polluted areas. Gains are likely to be easier to sustain in the streams and rivers in Te Tau Ihu, whose natural estate includes large DOC reserves, and a small human population.

#### **Historical low investment in nature**

One of the barriers to sustainability was the starting point for projects with a long history of low investment. In Auckland, a national NGO identified the challenge of the Jobs for Nature funding in the context of a sector that had experienced underinvestment.

*“Scale of the funding was a blessing and a curse because we got used to building systems with that level of funding, but then we got brought back to reality where we had to compete for those small contracts.” (J4N project personnel, Auckland)*

At the same time, projects that were already established in this line of work before Jobs for Nature were considered to have a greater likelihood of sustainability. These organisations were able to build on existing taiao work, and to continue to invest in upskilling themselves, which has increased their ability to pursue additional contracts to sustain the mahi they are involved in.

*“Key aims of the project have been to significantly increase the capacity of the environmental arm of [the Iwi], and create better working opportunities for their rangatahi and pakeke.” (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)*

Conversely, sustainability of projects was seen as a challenge by organisations and communities who had never undertaken environmental restoration before and were still developing the delivery of these services and activities.

#### **Longevity**

The above points relate to a third factor influencing the likelihood of sustainability – the longevity of funding for projects. Building the sustainability of projects and their outcomes

takes time. For some Iwi, who are just beginning to develop Taiao units, longer term support is needed to build capacity, especially given the future role of tangata whenua in the RMA, NPSFM, and other environmental policy and regulations. Other projects identified the need for a further round of funding to get on top of pest plants and animal management, consolidate other environmental gains, and to ensure project results would be lasting. For example, in Auckland, one project was tackling invasive weeds to save native bush including Mahoe, Karaka, Kauri, Puriri, Taraire, Kohekohe, Tawa, and Kanuka. Interviewees reported that one more round of funding was required to get on top of weed management.

*“This whole catchment is of regional and national significance, it has high ecological value, it’s got original bush, … it will need more funding, it needs to be cut once more, and sprayed twice, you have to be doggedly determined.”*  
(J4N project personnel, Auckland)

An Iwi spoke about the enormous challenge of the work to be done and considered that the Jobs for Nature funding period was too short to complete it.

*“The lake needs to be maintained, and [we are] worried about the work continuing after the funding ends. [We are] addressing sea spurge, which is a recent arrival. Ideally, we are wanting more time and funding to focus on the front tier of the Tararua Ranges and have a responsibility to continue work on the back.”* (J4N project personnel, Manawatū-Whanganui)

Jobs for Nature project personnel in Te Tau Ihu similarly reported that one more round of funding was needed to reach a threshold or tipping point of the project outcomes being self-sustaining or requiring significantly lower maintenance.

In terms of funding sustainability, some agency funding streams existed before and will continue beyond Jobs for Nature (e.g., MPI wilding pine control funding, Kānoa regional investment, and One Billion Trees). It is also worth noting that some projects funded under Jobs for Nature have other large contracts and revenue sources, for example:

*“[Project] has an annual turnover of \$3 million from supplying plants to organisations such as the Department of Conservation, Waikato Regional Council, Auckland Council and Panuku Development Auckland.”* (J4N project personnel, Auckland)

However, many Jobs for Nature projects had not been successful in attracting alternative funding beyond Jobs for Nature, despite organisations reporting that they were taking proactive steps to secure additional funding. For example, some organisation had sought funding from philanthropic sources, while others were exploring ways to commercialise their skills and operations.

### **Networks and alliances**

Interviews conducted with Jobs for Nature project personnel in the case study regions indicated that projects feel more confident about the sustainability of their work where they had connected to existing regional and council work programmes. Connecting projects with each other was also considered important and the Secretariat was looking to develop a national community of practice which would create visibility of projects and partners. The aim

was to enable projects to share resources and to provide greater visibility of future funding streams. The platform is under development and is due to be delivered in mid-2023.

### ***Capability building***

Investment in skills development, training and qualifications has the potential to enhance sustainable employment outcomes for Jobs for Nature staff. For example, Kānoa reported adopting a social procurement approach, which involved the provision of broader support, such as pastoral care; supporting people to get their driver's license; and providing career development to people who were unemployed and under skilled. The investment in career development gave people a trade set which is expected to help them beyond the lifetime of the programme.

More generally, the broad nature of the training which included developing health and safety skills, risk awareness, administration skills and field skills, is expected to enable a wider range of work opportunities. Investing in people was also undertaken to sustain projects, through building capability to successfully access other funding contracts, and to strengthen organisations' reputations.



## 3.6 Learning and improvement

This section presents emerging findings in relation to evaluation questions on learning and improvement. It is important to iterate the interim nature of the findings summarised here. These questions will be a focus for year two and year three of the evaluation.

This section addresses the following evaluation questions:

- The Jobs for Nature programme has contributed to learning about ways to partner to achieve outcomes for employment and conservation.
- What can be learnt from implementation and what might we do differently in future?
- Did the projects generate approaches that can be implemented elsewhere?
- Has the programme trialled innovative approaches and if so, what has been learned from them?

### Summary of findings

As part of the COVID-19 recovery package, the Jobs for Nature programme was established and implemented at pace. This has influenced the emerging lessons and potential improvements.

Suggested improvements for the Jobs for Nature programme, or similar programmes into the future, included a great emphasis on shared decision-making with tangata whenua; greater transparency about funding processes; more flexibility built into contracts to remain relevant to economic contexts; more streamlined reporting requirements; improved consistency across government agency partners; and a focus on telling the story of Jobs for Nature beyond reporting on project outputs. An immediate focus is the need for legacy planning and the likelihood of enduring environmental and social benefits.

### 3.6.1 Funding and reporting processes

Stakeholders identified lessons associated with the programme's funding and reporting processes, and potential areas for improvement. These included:

#### ***Shared decision-making***

Job for Nature funding has made a difference for Iwi and hapū. However, the speed with which the funding needed to be deployed meant that Treaty obligations for shared decision-making with tangata whenua were not always evident. The focus of tangata whenua involvement was at the contract services level. Interviewees reported challenges about government agencies' willingness and ability to share decision-making with hapū, Iwi, and Māori. The speed at which funding was deployed created challenges for working with hapū, Iwi, Māori as the opportunity to act within the funding window – a ngangara – closed too quickly, leaving little opportunity to

devolve decision-making. Interviewees also noted that there was insufficient time to build trust and confidence with hapū, Iwi, Māori and to work with them to see what solution may work best from their perspective.

There was some recognition that government agencies need to move beyond 'consultation and informing' towards identifying strategic partners that deliver on shared objectives. Agencies also need to develop a better understanding of whether and where they are trusted and to take this into account, particularly with regards to allowing time to build trusted partnerships.

### ***Transparent funding processes***

The evaluation found that some communities had not received any information on Jobs for Nature programme while other stakeholders reported that the funding processes, including decision-making, were opaque. For future funding it would be beneficial to provide greater transparency about funding processes, including how costs are calculated. It would also be beneficial to understand why some communities did not receive information about the funding.

### ***Flexibility and adaptability***

As discussed in Section 3.1, the emphasis of the Jobs for Nature programme shifted from a focus on employment outcomes to more weight applied to environmental outcomes. This flexibility was valued. However, some providers reported that this did not always translate to funding contracts and outputs with some providers locked into, what they considered, were unrealistic employment outcomes.

### ***Project reporting***

Most government agencies spoke about challenges with reporting under Jobs for Nature. For example, Kānoa found that its reporting templates didn't work well for recipients, while LINZ noted that reporting had shifted over time, which led to a lot of inconsistencies. MPI described wider issues around the demand on reporting, including the resource intensive nature of reporting, the constant demand for reporting, and a lack of clarity about reporting demands from Ministers. A key concern was that the requirements for monitoring and reporting required more resource which took funding away from the project delivery.

Reporting issues were potentially exacerbated by having 25 different funds and five funding agencies, which the fund recipients found hard to understand. Having a single reporting system across the funds and agencies would help to streamline processes, easing the reporting burden and reducing the administrative overhead.

## **3.6.2 Cohesion and collaboration across government agencies**

The complexity of restoring environmental ecosystems and the multiple stakeholder groups in the Jobs for Nature system ecology presents significant challenges. Stakeholders reported that the only way to address these challenges was to work collaboratively.

The Jobs for Nature Secretariat helped to generate cohesion and collaboration across agencies. However, Kānoa considered it difficult to bring the different agencies together, especially within the timeframe. Many other stakeholders reported a need for improved collaboration across different forms. For example, DOC and MfE indicated there was a need to explore a joint allocation funding model with a single point of contact. The evaluation team found that there were no contact details available to the Secretariat of the J4N providers. Greater information sharing between agencies, would support national coordination activities such as an independent evaluation.

For collaboration to improve between agencies, there may be a need to develop concepts of active sacrifice. This is likely to involve agencies identifying common objectives and a willingness to 'sacrifice' their own priorities for the greater/collective good.

### **3.6.3 Visibility of project success**

Agencies spoke about various ways of creating more visibility of projects, such as media articles and newsletters. There was a sense of cautiousness about celebrating success, while at the same time recognising that more visibility would be beneficial as it would help agencies and organisations connect beyond their own projects.

The opportunity to raise the visibility of projects and strengthen connections through storytelling was seen as important. Storytelling, using both quantitative and qualitative information, could help to communicate some of the benefits of projects in ways that are non-measurable and currently not reported. These stories could help to communicate the differences the projects make to, for example, whānau wellbeing and about building people's connection to place and purpose. This was considered important in terms of inspiring the next generation.

### **3.6.4 Focus on the future**

As discussed in Section 3.5, the evaluation found that government agencies were aware of the need to strengthen the focus on considering the sustainability of projects and project benefits, and that legacy planning was currently lacking. Stakeholders reported that legacy planning needed to enhance the likelihood of enduring social benefits, and not only environmental benefits. People described this as 'people for nature' as opposed to 'jobs for nature', identifying the wider social benefits beyond jobs.

In terms of the legacy of the Jobs for Nature programme, a suggested improvement to enhance the likelihood of sustainability in future schemes was to spread funding over a longer period (e.g., 10 years) as an alternative to more intensive investment over a shorter timeframe. Adjusting the pace of funding was seen as particularly important for projects that were at an earlier starting point in terms of organisational capability and maturity, and environmental capital (e.g., where significant restoration work was required). Longer lead in times were also important for projects requiring infrastructure development which were affected by delays associated with, for example, poor weather and supply chains for materials.

## 4 Conclusion

The purpose of the evaluation of the Jobs for Nature programme is to understand how effectively the programme has been implemented and the extent to which it is on track to deliver its intended outcomes for participants and the environment. Year one of the three-year evaluation focused on identifying emerging findings from national stakeholder interviews and three place-based case studies. The next evaluation cycle will undertake thematic case studies, and further Te Ao Māori perceptions of the Jobs for Nature programme.

Overall, the Jobs for Nature programme is doing the right things in terms of its focus on supporting improvements to environmental and employment outcomes. It also demonstrated flexibility in shifting focus from employment outcomes to environmental outcomes to ensure it remained relevant to needs. However, this shift has not always been reflected in adjustments to contracts and reporting in regions, where the work is delivered. Economic challenges, including inflation and wage rises, were not reflected in adjustments to delivery contracts. This suggests a need for stronger collaboration between central and regional programme stakeholders, and a willingness to adapt contracts to contextual changes.

The job creation aspect of Jobs for Nature aligns with other job creation and employment support measures. There is also some evidence that the programme aligns with priority populations for employment interventions, for example, through projects that target young people and rangatahi Māori. The programme has contributed to the development of the nature-based workforce; however, a direct contribution to environmental policy capability was not evident. This capability is important for enabling participation in policy and regulatory processes, such as those associated with the RMA and the NPSFM.

There is evidence that Job for Nature projects are aligned with national strategies and priorities such as the national pest weed strategy, DOC's biodiversity programme and strategy, and MfE's freshwater strategy. There is less coherency in the implementation of Jobs for Nature across government agencies at the national level, suggesting a need for stronger interagency communication and planning to streamline implementation processes, create clarity, and reduce project administrative burden.

There is emerging evidence that Jobs for Nature is making a difference in achieving tangible results in employment and environmental restoration. Moreover, Jobs for Nature is contributing to increased skills, knowledge, and capability in environmental improvement and restoration. Ecosystem restoration projects report progress against targets to achieve weed and pest control, land revegetation, wetland and waterway restoration, riparian planting, and fencing. These are leading to reported benefits of, for example, increased bird, frog, snail, and bat numbers from Jobs for Nature projects.

Importantly, there is evidence of a synergistic relationship between employment and environmental outcomes and wider benefits. For example, Jobs for Nature has supported Iwi, hapū and whānau to employ their own people in the restoration of recreational, historic, and cultural assets, such as lakes, mountain ranges, and sites of cultural redress. In turn, this has supported stronger community and cultural connection, identity, and resilience.

Jobs for Nature is contributing to stronger partnerships to improve employment and environmental outcomes. Partnerships between central/local government, Iwi/Māori and communities are improving under Jobs for Nature. However, for Iwi/Māori and communities not funded under Jobs for Nature, there is, reportedly evidence of unintended consequences in deepening disparity and loss of capacity and capability in environmental management. This indicates a need to apply an equity lens to funding decisions to ensure programme impacts reach populations who have historically been disadvantaged, including rural communities, Māori, and young people.

There is some evidence that Jobs for Nature has attracted additional funding and/or in-kind resourcing beyond its direct funding allocation. Some Jobs for Nature projects and individual employees have also been able to leverage off the employment opportunities the programme has provided, applying this capability to secure other business opportunities and funding. Projects have also been able to invest in new technology, partnering models and enhanced environmental management processes, all of which will continue to deliver benefits beyond the Jobs for Nature programme. There is a need to improve understanding of additionality of Jobs for Nature in subsequent evaluation cycles.

It is too early to make conclusions about the sustainability of Jobs for Nature projects and results beyond the lifespan of the programme. Sustaining gains made under the programme, and planning for this, has been identified as a key priority. Without this, there is concern that gains made will be undone. Some project stakeholders described that they needed more support before reaching a tipping point of being able to sustain gains made. Investing in capability building adopting holistic system level approaches to catchment and ecosystem management were seen as critical to sustaining the results of Jobs for Nature. Again, strengthening understanding about what is required to sustain outcomes is a priority for subsequent evaluation cycles.

At this early stage of the evaluation, there are lessons emerging about what works and what should be done differently to drive further improvements. Further understanding lessons and improvements will be a key focus of year two and year three of the evaluation.

# Appendix A: Evaluation standards of performance and measures of success

Theme	Standard of performance	Measures of success
Relevance	The J4N programme's policy goals are clear and well understood.	<p>Key stakeholder groups are aware of and understand the goals of the J4N programme.</p> <p>The J4N objectives and scope have adjusted to remain relevant to changing circumstances.</p> <p>Funding recipients can describe the relevance of their initiative to the overall goals of the programme.</p>
	The J4N programme made appropriate adjustment in response to changing circumstances.	<p>The J4N programme adjusted its objectives, goals, targets and/or delivery mechanisms in response to changes in its delivery context.</p>
Effectiveness	The J4N programme is achieving tangible results.	<p>New employment initiatives have been created through the J4N programme.</p> <p>New Zealanders have more the skills, knowledge, capability, and incentive to effectively improve our environment.</p> <p>J4N has created benefits for healthy waterways, biodiversity, climate change and cultural values.</p> <p>Freshwater, biodiversity, and climate change projects have contributed to improved environmental wellbeing.</p>
	The J4N programme is effective in reaching its target audience	<p>The J4N programme participants include populations who have historically experienced disadvantage, including regional communities, Māori, and young people.</p>
	The J4N programme delivery is characterised by partnerships and synergies.	<p>The five government agencies have a cohesive and joined-up approach to programme delivery.</p>

Theme	Standard of performance	Measures of success
		<p>The programme contributes to building partnerships between central/local government, Iwi/Māori, and communities.</p> <p>Partnerships are healthy and contributing to the effectiveness of the programme.</p> <p>There are synergies between projects, reducing duplication and enhancing the overall effectiveness of the programme.</p>
	<p>The programme is on track to achieve its expected long-term outcomes.</p>	<p>Nature has improved resilience to human development needs through riparian planting, restored wetlands and repaired ecosystems.</p> <p>There is evidence that J4N will lead to enduring benefits in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Natural Capital, e.g. number of ecosystem restoration projects, number of pest control and land revegetation.</li> <li>b) Human Capital, e.g. number of recreational, historic and cultural assets restored, number of people who gained training and skills.</li> <li>c) Social Capital, e.g. the number of Iwi, hapū and whānau whose capacity to employ their own people has occurred, value of nature, strength of environment regulations, and community identity.</li> <li>d) Financial and Physical Capital, e.g. the number of infrastructural projects achieved (fencing and maintenance), the number of jobs created and any new ways of doing things or new technology.</li> </ul>
Additionality	<p>The J4N programme has added value to the community beyond the sum of the individual funds.</p>	<p>Organisations involved in environmental restoration report greater efficiencies and have learned more about their community through partnering.</p> <p>Communities have learnt about creating employment opportunities in a collaborative way.</p> <p>J4N created new resources, new tools, and new ways of doing things that adds value to the way ecosystems are restored.</p> <p>J4N has created new business opportunities for employment.</p> <p>J4N has prevented some industries from losing staff through alternative employment.</p>

Theme	Standard of performance	Measures of success
	The J4N programme has created additional benefits beyond business as usual.	<p>There is evidence that J4N has created new activities or brought the timing of planned activities forward.</p> <p>The J4N programme has not displaced resources or funding from other initiatives.</p> <p>There is evidence that J4N has attracted additional funding and/or in-kind resourcing beyond its direct funding allocation</p>
Coherence	The J4N project selection approach reflected the regional and national needs for employment and restoration of ecosystems.	<p>J4N has selected projects that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>align with the long-term outcomes sought</li> <li>address existing employment disparities for youth and rangatahi Māori</li> <li>create a trained conservation workforce</li> <li>develop policy capacity to respond to issues such as the RMA, NPSFM and environmental policy and regulations.</li> </ul> <p>Training and capability building is available that improve employment outcomes or ecosystem health.</p> <p>J4N projects are delivering outcomes that reflect regional and national priorities for the environment and employment.</p>
	The job creation element of J4N is coherent with other support measures	<p>The job creation aspect of the J4N programme aligns with and builds on other job creation and employment support measures.</p> <p>The J4N programme does not displace or duplicate other employment support measures.</p>
Sustainability	The employment opportunities provided by J4N are sustainable and ongoing.	<p>Jobs created through J4N lead to careers that fill known capacity and capability gaps.</p> <p>People have transitioned to permanent employment in roles they enjoy doing.</p> <p>There is a transition plan in place to support employers and those employed by J4N.</p>

Theme	Standard of performance	Measures of success
	The environmental impacts of the J4N programme are sustainable and ongoing.	<p>Communities are sustainably contributing to Papatuanuku thriving.</p> <p>Projects and initiatives have been funded based on a holistic system view of catchments and ecosystems.</p> <p>Projects deliver interventions known to have a strong influence on environmental outcomes, beyond the life of the funding.</p> <p>There are processes in place to maintain environmental interventions delivered under J4N such as planting, fencing, weed and pest control</p> <p>There is a long-term strategy in place to maintain the ongoing sustainability of the projects and employment opportunities that have been created.</p>
	The J4N programme has provided a sustainable platform for collaboration and partnerships between communities and government agencies.	<p>The connections that have been established through the J4N programme provide a foundation for ongoing collaboration.</p> <p>Government agencies and communities continue to work together beyond the life of the programme.</p>
Learning and improvement	The J4N programme has contributed to learning about ways to partner to achieve outcomes for employment and conservation.	<p>Connection to places and purpose are enhanced, wellbeing is improved.</p> <p>People have a sense of pride about what they have achieved.</p> <p>Innovative approaches were trialled to employment and ecosystem restoration.</p> <p>Projects increased the quality of knowledge and data used to design and evaluate projects.</p> <p>Knowledge has been captured and transferred to other initiatives aiming to enhance employment or environmental outcomes.</p> <p>Knowledge has been captured regarding good practice for central government on when designing and implementing cross-agency, integrated programmes.</p>



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