

Re-energise: Ngā Mahi a Māui

Workforce Development Strategy

research project that supports

Government objectives to sustainably

meet growing energy demands



A decarbonised future for New Zealand's electricity supply industry (ESI) is one of the goals empowered by creating a coherent Energy Sector Workforce Development Strategy. Clients for this project were the industry training organisation (ITO) Connexis and Waihanga Ara Rau Workforce Development Council.

Assurity was referred through a project delivered to Energy Academy and selected to design and conduct specific research with industry leaders. Assurity was also given the task of combining their findings with two other research reports – one from Infometrics and another from Tokona Te Raki – to create a communication platform that prepares the way to deliver a 10-year workforce strategy.

This project harnessed Assurity's experience with planning, conducting, and analysing research and their ability to digest information and present it to a target audience in an engaging and motivating way. Additionally, Assurity's collaboration skills helped to ensure the other research partners were satisfied with the co-designed outcome.

Assurity provided Connexis/Waihanga Ara Rau with a turnkey experience that resulted in a vital component for the future of renewable energy supply in New Zealand.



Situation

Early in 2021, Mike Grumball - GM Learning Solutions for Connexis at the time - applied for project funding from the Tertiary Education Committee Covid Recovery Fund. His goal was to fund research that would drive a workforce development strategy document for the electricity supply industry.

Mike's application was successful, so he then sought experienced partners for a range of research projects. These projects encompassed collecting, slicing and dicing industry data, quantitative environmental scans and qualitative collective insights, and the unfiltered thoughts, perceptions and ambitions of industry insiders, employees, trainers, leaders, and young people rangitahi.

Infometrics were tasked with quantitative data research, Tokona Te Raki stepped up to research Māori workforce participation, and Assurity took charge of qualitative people research.

"Going in, we didn't quite know what our outcome would look like. We wanted a workforce development strategy document that would be of value to the industry, but we didn't have all the data we needed to populate that," said Mike.

Simon Holbrook, Head of Design & Innovation at Assurity, recognised the project's value to New Zealand's sustainable future.

"The electricity supply industry has an ageing workforce, and it's also facing the need to decarbonise fully. Helping to solve both problems with one strategy output was a compelling prospect.

"When we met Mike, his team were already receiving outputs from Infometrics, who had been doing a lot of workforce modelling to reveal the macro landscape unfolding for the electricity supply industry. It was exciting to have at least 50% of the industry already extensively analysed. And knowing that Tokona Te Raki would be involved with gathering insights to assist with engaging rangitahi really made this project appealing for us."

Simon Holbrook
Head of Innovation, Assurity Consulting

Solution

Simon Holbrook and Antoine Denis (Principal Consultant, Assurity) led Assurity's team through the multi-stage research, analysis and presentation project. Work kicked off with a project workshop involving leaders from key organisations in the ESI sector - Transpower, Genesis Energy, Orion Group and the Electricity Engineers Association (EEA).

"Assurity's experience working with industry training organisations prepared us well for this project, and we love to do really cool things with data. Our process is guided by design thinking, which drives us to challenge assumptions and redefine problems to identify better solutions."

"As an industry, ESI agrees to disruption and knows it's coming. But they're not sure what it will be. They're balancing long-term legacy assets with the opportunity for decarbonisation, possibly through initiatives like retail getting into generation. It's an exciting time to be involved," said Simon.

Discoveries from the initial workshop led to more than 20 qualitative interviews with industry executives, career consultants, and vocational trainers within electricity supply and distribution companies. Assurity also researched the retail side of electricity supply and the diversity of careers within it.

After presenting an interim report to the steering group for feedback, Assurity was given the go-ahead to blend their findings with discoveries and insights revealed by the other research partners - Tokona Te Raki and Infometrics. And rather than putting together a chunky PDF document, Assurity used its proficiency with digital communication to produce a website that presents the unified final outcome. You can see the result here www.reenergise.nz

"I thought, is a PDF really the answer here? The industry needed a shared vision of the future and a clearer career trajectory for people coming into it. We decided that a website would be a better vehicle – a nexus that would successfully glue the three research reports together in a more visual, user-friendly and engaging way. Sanjiv Menon from our team designed the site, and it's been live since mid-October."

"I certainly wouldn't have any hesitation in recommending Assurity to others. For this project, I think their adaptive approach was excellent. It was different from what I expected, but they were always confident that their ideas would work, and I think that's reflected in the success of the final product."

Mike Grumball
GM Assurance, Waihangara Ara Rau

Results

Mike Grumball is particularly pleased with the outcomes of this research project, especially Assurity's ability to work with other research partners and present a unified end product.

"Simon and his team have been excellent to work with. They've been able to bring in different people with the right expertise as we worked our way through the various parts of the project. This enabled a real journey to take place, with challenges and learning opportunities for everyone. Special mention goes to Sanjiv, who ended up doing the bulk of the workaround integrating the Maori context into the final report."

Already the information and insights presented on the Kohi Whakaaro website are having a positive impact on the electricity supply industry.

"The final product is fantastic, and every industry partner is now supportive. Previously this was not the case, so the Kohi Whakaaro website and its contents have managed to bring the partners together. Initially, they didn't want to be quoted in some of the planned media releases, but that has changed – now they do want to be quoted. I think there's a feeling that the report is a lot more inclusive than it was initially, which is fantastic. The integration of Maori research and the contextualisation of findings have made all the difference.

"I'm confident we have a well-researched and presented piece of work, which is the platform for the next stage. We have achieved what we wanted right at the beginning of the project, and we'll be able to build on it going forward."

The next step for Mike and his team will involve prototyping career pathways and engaging directly with youth audiences to understand which motivational messages will cut through.





At a glance

Company:

Connexis and Waihangara Ara Rau Workforce Development Council

Industry:

Public sector

Situation:

The industry training organisation Connexis obtained funding from the Tertiary Education Committee Covid Recovery Fund to finance research that would drive a workforce development strategy document for the future of the electricity supply industry. Three research partners were selected – Assurity, Tokona Te Raki (Māori workforce participation), Infometrics (data research) and Assurity Consulting (people research).

Services provided:

- Workshop facilitation
- Research design and planning
- Research facilitation
- Research analysis
- Unification of research findings from multiple sources
- Design and build of a website to present findings

Outcomes achieved:

- Integration of Maori research
- Contextualisation of findings from three research reports
- Online, public-facing digital presentation of outcomes
- Robust strategic platform to guide future decision-making
- Improved support from stakeholders