



NZAGE

Summit and

Awards 2026



Programme (Provisional)
Thursday 29 & Friday 30 October 2026



nzage

NZAGE Summit

Thursday 29 & Friday 30 October 2026



Grand Millennium
Auckland
71 Mayoral Drive

Day 1:
9:30am - 4:00pm
Day 2:
9:00am - 3:45pm

Dress Code:
Smart Business Casual

Principal Summit
Partner



NZAGE Awards Evening

Thursday 29 October 2025



HI-SO Rooftop Bar
SO/ Auckland
Level 16
67 Customs Street
East

6:00pm - 10:00pm

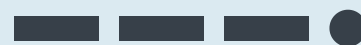
Dress Code:
Formal/Cocktail

Awards Evening
Partner



Summit Day 1 Agenda | 9.30am - 4:00pm

Thursday 29 October



9:30am	Registration, Morning Tea + Exhibitor Area Open
10:30am	Day 1 Mihi Whakatau (Welcome)
10:40am	NZAGE Board Co-Chairs Address Siobhan Warren & Shailan Patel
10:50am	Principal Summit Partner Address Seren Wilson, Talent Solutions
10:55am	Day 1 Keynote Maddie West, Arup
11:45am	From Campaign to Career Panel Kate Coley, University of Auckland Moderator: Andrena Corby
12:25am	What They Really Think: Student & Graduate Panel
1:05pm	Lunch + Exhibitor Area Open
1:50pm	Energiser Team Up
2:05pm	NZAGE Surveys 2026 Naomi Houston
2:35pm	Future-ready graduates: How the tertiary education and careers systems work together for employability Victoria Metcalf, Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)
3:15pm	Principal Summit Partner Session Talent Solutions
3:55pm	Day 1 Closing Remarks Shailan Patel
4:00pm	Summit Day 1 Concludes Free time before Awards Evening at 6pm



Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) Session

2:35pm - 3:15pm



Future-ready graduates: How the tertiary education and careers systems work together for employability

When we think about the pathway for young people from school to study or training and into employment, we often focus on the education system, from formal schooling to tertiary education. Graduate readiness and employability, however, depend on the combined contribution of both the tertiary education system and the careers system.

This session will provide an integrated view of the learner-to-employment pathway. We will demystify how the tertiary system works, including how the new Tertiary Education Strategy is intended to shape outcomes, and outline the role that learner success approaches in tertiary organisations play in supporting achievement and successful transitions. The New Zealand careers system provides careers education, information, advice, and guidance to equip people with the skills, knowledge, tools, support, and confidence they need to make career decisions and transitions throughout their lives.

We will explain what the careers system is and highlight its role as a key enabler of positive outcomes for individuals, employers, and New Zealand. We will highlight current labour market challenges and opportunities. Finally, we will showcase practical initiatives and tools such as Inspiring the Future events, Tahatū Career Navigator, and the Career Practice Hub, including new and upcoming features, that can support both graduates and employers as they navigate the rapidly evolving world of work.



Victoria Metcalf, Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)



**Tertiary Education
Commission**

Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua

The logo for nzage, featuring the word 'nzage' in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. The 'n' and 'z' are connected, and the 'a' is a simple circle. The 'g' has a small triangle above it. The 'e' is a simple circle.

Awards Evening Agenda | 6:00pm - 10:00pm

Thursday 29 October



6:00pm	Awards Evening Commences Registration
6:45pm	NZAGE Board Welcome Naomi Houston & Samantha McDiarmid
6:50pm	Awards Evening Partner Address Jum Lamont, Amberjack Global
7:00pm	NZAGE Awards Winners 2026 Announced <i>(throughout the evening)</i>
10:00pm	Awards Evening Concludes



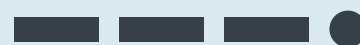
Awards Evening
Partner



amberjack

Summit Day 2 Agenda | 9:00am - 11:20am

Friday 30 October



9:00am	Morning Tea + Exhibitor Area Open		
9:45am	Day 2 Welcome Samantha McDiarmid		
9:50am	Awards Evening Partner Session Amberjack Global		
10:30am	Session Transition		
10:35am	Concurrent Workshop Sessions		
	Attraction Facilitated by Prosple & Rebecca Swanson Room: Millennium Ballroom	Selection Facilitated by SHL & Chelsea Thomson Room: Aucklander	Development Facilitated by Student Job Search & Trish Mouton Room: Coromandel
11:15am	Session Transition		

Summit Day 2 Agenda | 11:20am - 1:50pm

Friday 30 October



11:20am	Concurrent Sessions 1		
	From Classroom to Career: Rethinking Early Talent Strategy Alexcia Dellabarca, Fonterra Room: Millennium Ballroom	From Viable to Optimal: Unlocking Potential with the Early Careers Maturity Model Kelly Pfeffer, Suncorp Room: Aucklander	External secondments for development Naomi Houston, Watercare Room: Coromandel
12:00pm	Lunch + Exhibitor Area Open		
12:50pm	Energiser Team Up		
1:05pm	Session Transition		
1:10pm	Concurrent Sessions 2		
	Beyond the Starting Salary: AI, Remuneration and the Early Talent EVP Seren Wilson, Talent Solutions and John Bradbury, Strategic Pay Room: Millennium Ballroom	What Actually Makes an Early Talent Program Work? A boardroom simulation on investment, trade-offs and impact Jum Lamont, Amberjack Global Room: Aucklander	Beyond Onboarding: Designing Graduate Cohorts That Connect Faster Tracey Rowe and Sam Clapham, Team Up Room: Coromandel



Summit Day 2 Agenda | 1:50pm - 3:45pm

Friday 30 October



1:50pm	<i>Session Transition</i>		
1:55pm	Concurrent Sessions 3		
	Thinking Beyond the Capability Gap Ashley Jones, Beca Room: Millennium Ballroom	Designing In, Not Bolting On Sarah Todd, Workbridge - Propel People Room: Aucklander	Rethinking Early Talent: A Unified, AI-Enabled Approach to Recruiting and Developing Early Talent David Cvetkovski and Paula Gepp, Tectoniq Room: Coromandel
2:35pm	<i>Session Transition</i>		
2:40pm	Day 2 keynote Sally Wenley, Freelance Journalist and Author		
3:30pm	Closing Remarks, Prizes + Karakia Shailan Patel & Naomi Houston		
3:45pm	<i>Summit Concludes</i>		



Concurrent Sessions 1 | 11:20am - 12:00pm

Stream 1 (Room: Millennium Ballroom): From Classroom to Career: Rethinking Early Talent Strategy

We recognise that building a future-ready talent pipeline starts well before graduate recruitment. Fonterra's Careers in Dairy strategy takes a long-term, ecosystem-based approach connecting rangatahi with meaningful STEM (Science Technology, Engineering and Math) and career pathways across our Co-operative and the wider industry.

Our workshop will explore how we have shifted from traditional early careers attraction to a multi-layered, partnership model. Working alongside organisations such as Pahoro, The Wonder Project, Growing Future Farmers, Agribusiness in Schools etc we are increasing awareness, accessibility, and aspiration in schools and communities across Aotearoa. Additionally, our School Ambassador Programme helps bring this to life by showcasing the breadth of careers within dairy - helping students see themselves in roles spanning science, engineering, business, sustainability, and digital.

Participants will gain insight into how we are strengthening the education-to-employment pathway, including the development of a Digital Hub to support students, educators, and whanau in career decision-making.

There will be an interactive element where attendees are encouraged to go away and map their future talent ecosystem, identify gaps in their pipeline, and explore practical ways to build influence earlier - through schools, communities, and partnerships. We'll also bring to life our Digital Hub and careers resources used in schools to spark creativity, helping members reimagine how similar approaches could support their own teams and future talent pipelines

Ultimately, this workshop is about shifting mindset - from short-term hiring to long-term impact - helping organisations not only secure future talent but actively shape the workforce of tomorrow.

Alexcia Dellabarca, Fonterra

Stream 2 (Room: Aucklander): From Viable to Optimal: Unlocking Potential with the Early Careers Maturity Model

Early careers programmes play a critical role in building future capability, yet many organisations struggle to understand where their programme sits today and where to focus their efforts for maximum impact. This interactive workshop introduces the Early Career Maturity Model, a practical diagnostic framework designed to help organisations assess the maturity of their early career's strategy, programmes, and practices.

Participants will work through the model in real time, using a guided self-assessment to evaluate their organisation across key dimensions of early careers attraction, recruitment, development, and programme delivery. Through facilitated discussion and peer learning, attendees will identify strengths, uncover gaps, and explore opportunities to move their programmes from viable to optimal.

Whether you are building a new programme, refining an established approach, or looking for ways to demonstrate greater strategic value, the workshop will provide a structured framework for assessing current practices and prioritising future improvements. Suitable for early careers programme practitioners, attendees will leave with a completed assessment and a prioritised set of opportunities to take back to their organisation.

Kelly Pfeffer, Suncorp

Stream 3 (Room: Coromandel): External secondments for development

External secondments are a valuable development tool for graduates and early-career professionals, providing experience across organisations while strengthening collaboration across a sector. By placing participants in another organisation for a defined period, secondments broaden skills, build professional networks, and develop a deeper understanding of how organisations work together to achieve shared outcomes.

Drawing on Watercare's experience, this workshop will explore how external secondments are designed and delivered. It will cover the role of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), secondment agreements, liability and privacy considerations, and approaches to performance management. Participants will gain practical guidance on the governance, planning, and communication required to establish and support successful secondment programs.

The session will also explore the key benefits and common pitfalls of external secondments. While they require strong communication, aligned organisational cultures, and a willingness to invest in broader sector capability rather than focusing solely on individual organisational benefit, they can deliver significant value through improved safety in design, better operability and documentation, stronger cross-sector relationships, the development of well-rounded professionals, and improved talent retention. Participants will leave with a clear understanding of what makes external secondments successful and how to maximise outcomes for both individuals and participating organisations.

This session will also include a table discussion with other organisations interested in setting up some kind of external secondment programme.

Naomi Houston, Watercare

Concurrent Sessions 2 | 1:10pm - 1:50pm

Stream 1 (Room: Millennium Ballroom): Beyond the Starting Salary: AI, Remuneration and the Early Talent EVP

Graduate and intern remuneration has always been a challenging topic. Early talent programmes often sit outside an organisation's standard remuneration framework, creating questions around starting salaries, pay progression, internal equity and the transition from graduate programmes into permanent roles. Finding the right balance between staying competitive and maintaining a fair, sustainable approach to remuneration is something many employers continue to grapple with.

At the same time, salary conversations are becoming more transparent. Graduates are increasingly willing to discuss pay with peers, compare opportunities across employers and challenge remuneration decisions. The rise of AI has accelerated this trend, giving candidates instant access to salary information, market data and remuneration advice that frequently finds its way into recruitment and salary discussions. So what does a competitive early talent offer really look like in today's market? And how can organisations communicate remuneration in a way that is clear, credible and aligned with their broader employee value proposition?

In this practical and insight-led session, Talent Solutions and Strategic Pay will combine New Zealand's largest early talent research dataset with the country's most comprehensive remuneration database to explore emerging trends in graduate and intern remuneration. Participants will gain insights into what students and graduates value, how AI is influencing remuneration expectations, and how organisations can confidently respond when candidates arrive armed with salary data and benchmarks sourced online. The session goes beyond salary benchmarking to explore remuneration as an important part of the employee value proposition. Attendees will leave with current market insights, practical ideas and evidence-based strategies to strengthen attraction, engagement and retention outcomes for early talent.

Seren Wilson, Talent Solutions and John Bradbury, Strategic Pay

Stream 2 (Room: Aucklander): What Actually Makes an Early Talent Program Work? A boardroom simulation on investment, trade-offs and impact

Early talent teams are under more pressure than ever. You're expected to attract great talent, improve diversity, build capability, support managers, retain graduates and prove impact - often all at the same time. But if you couldn't invest equally in everything, what would you prioritise?

In this interactive workshop, you'll step into the role of an executive leadership team responsible for a national early talent program. Working through a boardroom-style simulation, you'll make investment decisions, navigate real-world challenges and defend the choices you make under pressure. Along the way, we'll explore what we're seeing across the market, where organisations are commonly over-investing and under-investing, and what the strongest programs tend to have in common. This isn't about finding the perfect model or the "right" answer. It's about challenging assumptions, exploring trade-offs and thinking differently about what actually drives impact.

Key Takeaways You'll leave with:

- A fresh perspective on what drives successful early talent programs.
- Practical ideas you can apply to your own program.
- Insight into common investment blind spots and trade-offs.
- A simple framework for evaluating program decisions.
- Greater confidence connecting investment decisions to outcomes.
- New perspectives from peers facing similar challenges.

Most importantly, you'll leave with a clearer view of what actually makes an early talent program work.

Jum Lamont, Amberjack Global

Stream 3 (Room: Coromandel): Beyond Onboarding: Designing Graduate Cohorts That Connect Faster

Graduate programs are often measured by what people learn during induction, but their long-term success is determined by the relationships graduates build afterwards. Information helps graduates understand an organisation; connection helps them become part of it. Beyond Onboarding: Designing Graduate Cohorts That Connect Faster explores why connection - not just content - is the missing driver of graduate success, and how organisations can intentionally design for it rather than leaving it to chance.

Delegates will be introduced to five practical principles for accelerating graduate integration: shared challenge, psychological safety, informal interaction, reflection and purpose. Rather than simply hearing about these principles, participants will experience them directly through a live, facilitated shared-challenge activity that mirrors exactly what a new graduate feels on day one - uncertainty, unclear roles, and the gradual formation of trust and communication as the exercise progresses. Following the activity, a facilitated debrief will draw out the parallels between what delegates just experienced and what happens (or fails to happen) in real graduate cohorts.

The session closes with a live conversation with a graduate employer (TBC - KPMG) who has applied these principles in practice, sharing what challenge they were solving, what surprised them, and what they'd tell someone designing a graduate program today. Delegates will leave with practical, evidence-informed ideas for intentionally building connection, trust and collaboration within their own graduate cohorts. Grounded in a real experience, not just a framework.

Tracey Rowe and Sam Clapham, Team Up

Concurrent Sessions 3 | 1:55pm - 2:35pm

Stream 1 (Room: Millennium Ballroom): Thinking Beyond the Capability Gap

Over the past year, we undertook an in-depth review of our Graduate Development Programme (GDP), informed by extensive discussions with leaders and teams across the business. A consistent theme emerged: some core competencies, particularly in areas such as teamwork, communication, and workplace effectiveness, were not as strong as those seen in previous cohorts. To better understand this shift, we explored global research on early career development trends. This confirmed that these patterns are not unique to our organisation and are being observed internationally across graduate populations. Importantly, these gaps are not reflective of individual shortcomings. They are a natural consequence of graduates spending formative learning years during the COVID pandemic, when opportunities to build key interpersonal and professional skills were significantly constrained.

However, our insights went further. We recognised that redesigning our programme requires more than understanding which capabilities are lacking. It requires a deeper understanding of how graduates have been learning and the environments they have been learning in. The pandemic did not simply disrupt education temporarily. It fundamentally reshaped how students engage with learning, collaborate, and build knowledge. Hybrid environments, increased digital reliance, and reduced in person interaction have created a learning experience that continues to influence today's cohorts.

This raises an important question for organisations. Are we truly confident that we understand how graduates are learning now, and therefore where the real capability gaps sit? Without this insight, there is a risk that we continue to design programmes for a learning context that no longer exists.

This perspective reframed our approach. Rather than viewing these gaps as deficits, we see them as both an opportunity and a responsibility. Organisations now play a critical role in rebuilding and strengthening these capabilities, while aligning learning design to the realities of modern education and work. Our refreshed Graduate Development Programme responds to this by combining capability development with a more intentional, experience led approach that reflects how graduates learn today. I am looking forward to sharing the journey of redesigning the programme, key insights from research and stakeholder engagement, and practical strategies for aligning early career development with evolving learning behaviours to future proof graduate programmes.

Ashley Jones, Beca

Stream 2 (Room: Aucklander): Designing In, Not Bolting On

There's a significant pool of great, diverse, dedicated talent that most graduate programmes are quietly missing - not because it isn't out there, but because the recruitment process itself is creating barriers without anyone meaning to. Disability disclosure at application stage is low, which usually means this talent is already in your pipeline more often than your data shows - you're just not seeing it.

This session is a practical, confidence-building walk through the graduate recruitment and onboarding journey - from job ad through assessment, interview, offer, and the first six months in role - showing exactly where great candidates most often hit friction, and the small, low-cost design changes that fix it.

You'll leave with a simple idea to guide it all: shift the effort of navigating the process from the candidate to the system around them. Do that well, and you're not just ticking a diversity box for your organisation, you're building a genuinely stronger, more capable graduate cohort, because you're reaching the talent your current process may be inadvertently filtering out. This session is practical and evidence-based, built for teams who've already made the commitment to inclusive hiring and want the tools to execute it with confidence

Sarah Todd, Workbridge - Propel People

Stream 3 (Room: Coromandel): Rethinking Early Talent: A Unified, AI-Enabled Approach to Recruiting and Developing Early Talent

Early Talent managers across New Zealand and Australia are under growing pressure to hire fairly and efficiently at scale, while candidates increasingly expect a modern, transparent and low-friction experience. At the same time, many organisations are still relying on disconnected point solutions, an ATS here, a spreadsheet there, a separate assessment vendor, that make it hard to see the whole candidate journey or to defend decisions with consistent, defensible evidence.

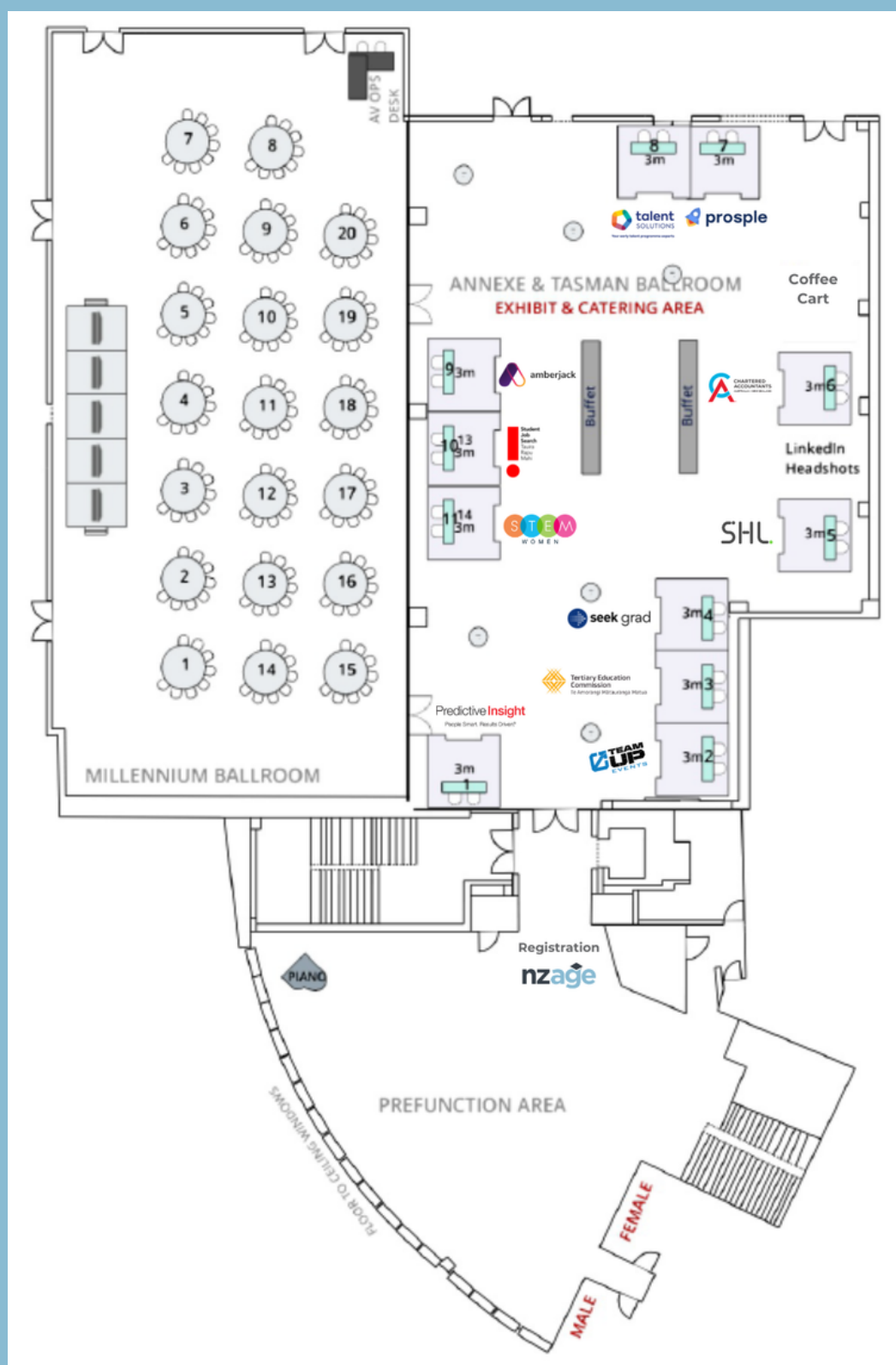
This session speaks directly to that gap: it shows how a unified platform and a multi-signal, AI-supported assessment approach can give talent teams both better decisions and a better candidate experience, without losing the human judgement that early talent programmes depend on.

David Cvetkovski, TectoniQ

Grand Millennium Rooms

All sessions on Day 1 are in the Millennium Ballroom.

Upon entering the lobby area, please turn right and take the escalator to Level 1. From there, turn right again and use the escalator or stairs to reach our Ballrooms. The exhibition area is located within the Annexe and Tasman Ballroom. Alternatively, if you enter through the parking area, proceed to Level 8, which is our lobby. You can then take the lift (press B) directly to the Ballroom.



Grand Millennium Rooms

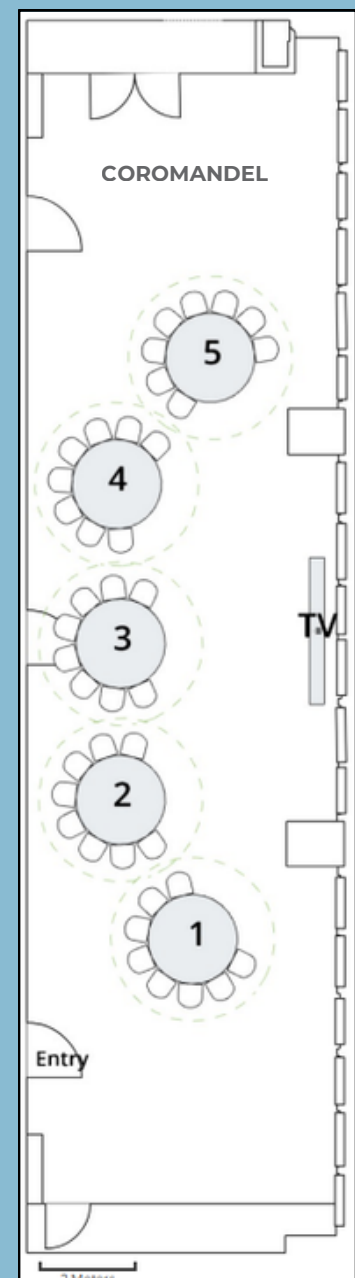
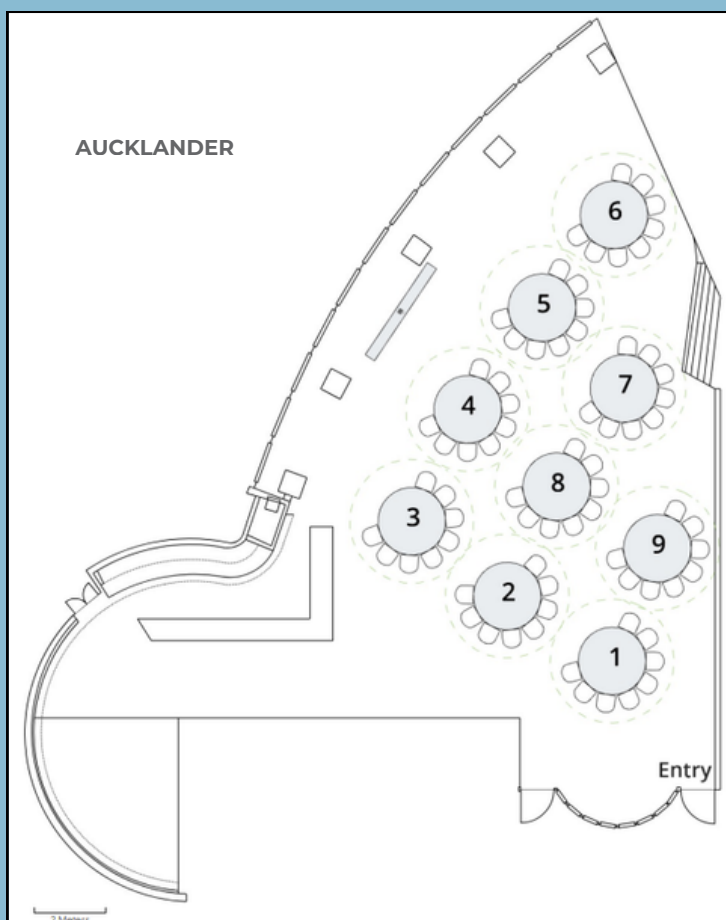


All main sessions on Day 2 are in the Millennium Ballroom.

Concurrent sessions will be in the Millennium Ballroom, Aucklander and Coromandel rooms.

Aucklander room: Located at Lobby level, next to the Concierge Desk. You can either take the lift directly down to the Lobby or use the stairs, which are accessible from Level 1.

Coromandel room: From the Ballroom, take the stairs down one level, which will lead you straight to the Coromandel. Alternatively, you may use the lift (press A) to reach the Atrium level, then walk straight to the end of the floor to find the Coromandel.



Thank you to our Partners



Principal Summit Partner



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Your early talent programme experts

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Workshop Partners



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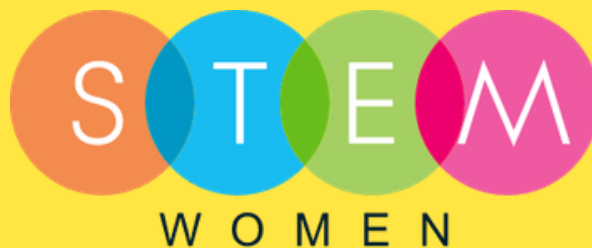
Exhibitor Partners



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**Tertiary Education
Commission**

Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua

Welcome delegates

We're delighted to share that we have delegates registered to attend the Summit and Awards 2026 from the following organisations:

ACCIONA Construction, Amberjack Global, Arup, ASB, Atlassian, Auckland Council, Auckland University of Technology, Aurecon Group, Australian Association for Graduate Employers, Baker Tilly Staples Rodway, BDO, Beca, Chartered Accountants Australia & New Zealand, Contact Energy, CPA Australia, Deloitte, Dentons, Downer, Eagle Technology, EY, Fletcher Construction, Fonterra, Foodstuffs North Island, Fulton Hogan, Government Digital Delivery Agency, Grant Thornton, HEB Construction, Holmes Group, KiwiRail, KPMG, Mainfreight, Mercury, Meridian Energy, Ministry for Regulation, Ministry of Social Development, MYOB, NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, Powerco, Predictive Insight, Prosple, PwC, Reserve Bank of New Zealand, Russell McVeagh, SEEK Grad, SHL, Simpson Grierson, Stantec, STEM Women, Strategic Pay, Student Job Search, Summer of Tech, Talent Solutions, Team Up, TectoniQ, Tertiary Education Commission, Tonkin + Taylor, Transpower, University of Auckland, University of Canterbury, University of Waikato, Vector, Vulcan, Watercare, Westland Milk Products, Workbridge - Propel People, WSP, Z Energy

NZAGE Board and Committee

Many of you we already know, but if we haven't had the pleasure of meeting yet, please do come and say hello at the Summit and Awards. The team look forward to meeting you.

NZAGE Board Co-Chairs

NZAGE Admin & Comms



Siobhan Warren



Shailan Patel
MYOB



Bronwyn Sweeney

NZAGE Board and Committee Members



Samantha McDiarmid
EY



Naomi Houston
Watercare



Chelsea Thomson
Fonterra



Rebecca Swanson
PwC



Andrena Corby
Fulton Hogan



Trish Mouton
Powerco

We look forward to seeing you at

NZAGE Summit and Awards 2026



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