

Belong Aotearoa, a systems change focused organisation, wanted to test how internships might eliminate barriers to help employers recruit skilled migrants easily into their organisations and help partners of skilled migrants re-establish their careers.

OVERVIEW

The pilot successfully bridged the gap between employees and employers, supporting seven skilled migrants to achieve positive employment outcomes and re-establish their careers in NZ, while enabling employers to tap into an underutilised talent pool.

During the up to three-month paid internship, employers found the interns brought a wealth of skills, fresh ideas, and perspectives and were productive and positive. Their teams particularly benefitted from the cross-cultural learning.

Interns learned more about NZ workplace culture, grew their networks, regained their confidence, improved their mental wellbeing and felt a greater sense of belonging. Following the internship, all interns found employment which utilises their skills, and employers are committed to supporting migrants into employment and creating more diverse workforces.

Whilst the impact is limited to seven skilled migrants and five workplaces, the key insights generated will inform the future work of Belong Aotearoa and others to bridge the gap.

7 highly skilled interns were matched and supported throughout their internship by Belong Aotearoa



All seven interns had faced significant challenges before applying for the internship, including leaving unhealthy workplace environments, experiencing racism in their search for work and being made redundant during COVID, leading to many struggling with low self-confidence, social isolation, and poor mental health. They were, however, highly motivated to find meaningful work which matched their skill set, learn more about NZ workplace culture and gain valuable work experience.

PILOT OBJECTIVES

- To test the role of internships in bridging the gap between employers and employees.
- To gain key insights about gaps in the system from employers' and interns' perspectives to improve employment pathways for skilled migrants.
- To support organisations to tap into an underutilised talent pool for economic recovery in the current COVID-19 business context.
- To support positive employment outcomes for skilled migrants, primarily partners, to support retention of skills in NZ.

An internship pilot funded through the Ethnic Communities Development Fund was implemented with skilled migrants, mainly partners, matched to organisations through an up to three-month paid (living wage) internship, subsidised by Belong Aotearoa.

KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE EVALUATION

① **The living wage subsidy provided by Belong Aotearoa was a key enabler for host organisations to join the internship pilot.**



"In terms of making this an attractive proposition for [us] in our financial position right now, knowing it was part funded, that sort of thing ticked all the boxes."

-- *Host organisation* --

② **Belong Aotearoa found high-quality candidates and made the recruitment process seamless.**

"[Belong Aotearoa] had done all the good work. They had already profiled this person, and we were able to match the role with the personality, knowing already that they are probably quite a good fit, so it is just a matter of interviewing them."

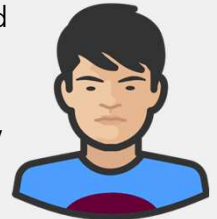
-- *Host organisation* --



③ **A less formal interview process put candidates at ease and provided a friendly environment for host organisations to confidently choose the interns that matched the roles they had to offer.**

"It lasted an hour, and we talked a lot, I felt super comfortable, and they were really kind. We had a really good conversation, so I felt good in the interview."

-- *Intern* --



"What was great was having Belong Aotearoa's continued support. I felt there was someone there for me when I needed it."

-- *Intern* --



I will recommend keeping in mind that less formal interviews help you to get the best candidates"

-- *Host organisation* --

④ **Host organisations were impressed by interns' skills, productivity, positive attitudes, fresh ideas and perspectives.**

"We had a highly skilled person who hit the ground running."

-- *Host organisation* --



"Ethnic diversity is a major consideration in terms of the current and future economy and labour force of this country."

(Distinguished Professor Paul Spoonley, Massey University, June 2020)

KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE EVALUATION (cont...)

5 One of the greatest strengths of the internship pilot was the opportunities for cross-cultural learning

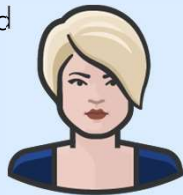


"It is a two-way thing, we have learnt a lot about her, her culture and family which has been enlightening to us."

-- Host organisation --

"[In NZ] we have a habit of trying to bolster people along and the good old kiwi way of doing it is to tease somebody or make light of something. We sat down and had a conversation and she said I would rather you say straight 'that is a great idea' or 'I don't think that is going to work'."

-- Host organisation --



6 Interns felt the 3-month paid internship helped them regain their confidence, improved their mental health and well-being, and increased their sense of belonging.



"When I started working there my husband said it is so nice to see me smiling when I come home"

-- Intern --

"I feel fulfilled and it's a big accomplishment."

-- Intern --



"It has been good for my mental health because I was feeling terrible. It almost feels magical."

-- Intern --

7 The extent to which interns were struggling before applying for the internship indicates there is a huge gap between skilled migrants looking for work and people who need their skills and knowledge in their sectors.



"I found it hard finding a job. When I applied through Seek, they were asking for the residency status."

-- Intern --

"That was one of the roles we were recruiting for and I really struggled to get somebody using our external HR consultant]"

-- Host organisation --



"I was struggling somehow. I had time with my children but was thinking I need to do something myself. I need to work. I need to accomplish more."

-- Intern --

8 Host organisations value diverse workforces and are committed to supporting skilled migrants into employment, however there are many challenges for employers and potential employees when tackling this on their own. They would not have the capacity to set up their own internship programme in-house.

"I understand there are systemic and institutional barriers that migrants face when applying for jobs so providing opportunities like this is essential."

-- Host organisation --



KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE EVALUATION

9 Interns felt they were able to share and contribute their ideas, perspectives, skills and be productive in their new workplace. Many felt if the internship were longer, they could support some of the new ideas to be implemented.



"I am super happy, and I think [my employer] is super happy because I am giving her a new migrant perspective."

-- Intern--

"When you go for an internship, you think it is about you gaining something, but I think the need is from both sides. Someone like me who is a new migrant who has worked in many places has a lot of experience and exposure which they can really utilise."



-- Intern--

10 The internship has supported interns to understand more about New Zealand workplace culture and increased their confidence speaking English in professional settings. Interns wanted more opportunities to grow their knowledge and confidence around communication in the workplace.



"I am shy and super quiet in English but at work I can't be so talking with people, asking things, and going to meetings is helping me practise a lot."

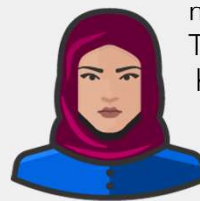
-- Intern--

"In my new job many of my team members are Māori and with my internship experience I feel more comfortable when I approach them."

-- Intern--



11 The internship opened doors and opportunities for interns, through offering local experience, references, and networking opportunities. For some, they explained the pilot as providing a bridge between skilled migrants and employers.



"I started applying for jobs and now I am getting calls because I have put it in my CV and on my LinkedIn profile. This is something that was not happening earlier. This happened within a month of starting my internship."

-- Intern--

"Having attended and tried other programmes and services that support migrants through employment, I can say this one is the only one that is really doing something meaningful for us, knocking on the door of employers, preparing them, and finding opportunities for us."

-- Intern--

