

2026 Investment Advice to TEC for the Equine, Greyhounds and Racing Industry

Muka Tangata is the Workforce Development Council (WDC) for the food and fibre sector. We work on ways to enhance vocational education and training (VET) to meet the needs of industry, iwi and hapū Māori, ākonga (learners), and kaimahi (workers), and support them to flourish.

Alongside our work on qualifications, standards, and quality assurance, we advise government, based on engagement with industry, on what qualifications they should support and fund. This takes the form of our annual Investment Advice to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). This focuses on the current set of qualifications (as TEC can only purchase programmes for existing qualifications).

This document sets out industry and workforce trends for the Equine, Greyhounds and Racing industry, as well as identified skills needs. We have used this information to determine how many places are needed for qualifications relevant to the Equine, Greyhounds and Racing industry.

Equine, Greyhounds and Racing Industry trends:

These industries have been through significant challenges as a result of recent (and ongoing) Government reviews calling for reforms. The move to a more tightly regulated industry and focus on both animal welfare and worker safety will require increased training and skills to meet these needs.

In 2024, the New Zealand Racing industry reported generating close to \$1.9 billion in value-added contribution to the New Zealand economy, up from a reported \$1.6 billion in 2018.

Equine, Greyhounds and Racing Workforce trends:

The workforce currently has low levels of formal qualifications, with a critical proportion having no qualifications at all, and would need a substantially higher than requested level of investment to reach industry benchmark parity.

The industries have struggled with attraction and recruitment and have low new entrant retention rates and low levels of industry tenure which drive a need for training of replacements and to provide pathways to attract & retain workers.

Industry skill needs identified from engagement

Our industry engagement analysis and review of key industry documents has highlighted the following skill needs across all qualification levels:

- Industry is looking to raise the skills of this group to better meet its needs, especially as health and safety have been key issues, and to provide better career pathways to sustain industry.

Current qualifications and priorities

Below are three tables outlining qualifications and priorities. Where possible, each table outlines how these qualifications may fill skills needs, the scale of change we are seeking in our advice, the preferred mode of delivery, and the level of priority for this change.

Table 1: Equine, Greyhounds and Racing related qualifications

Table 2: Pan-sector qualifications and credentials

- These qualifications provide skills that are relevant to a number of industries across our sector. We are unsure if Equine, Greyhounds and Racing learners are enrolling in these qualifications and welcome any insights from industry.

Table 3: Related qualifications or credentials in development (or planned for)

- To be offered in 2026 or earlier.

Mode

We have not been specific about mode at a qualification level. However, in general, we recommend a preference for workplace training as part of the mix of the provision across all of our industries. This could include both work-based training and campus-based learning that include a strong component of practical 'on job' experience in a workplace setting.

What are we looking for?

For these three tables, we are seeking feedback on the following:

- Are industry using these qualifications?
- What is the preferred mode of delivery? (e.g. workplace-based, extramural, etc.)
- Do you agree with our prioritisation or have any recommendations for qualifications where we have not given a level of priority (low, medium, high)?
- What sort of level change do you anticipate? How many more trained people do you need?

Table 1: Equine, Greyhounds and Racing related qualifications

Qualification or credential	What skills does this qualification provide	Scale of change you are seeking for 2026	Mode of delivery	Priority level (for this advice)
New Zealand Certificate in Equine Skills (Level 2) [2375]	The New Zealand Certificate in Equine Skills is an introductory qualification providing the equine industry with individuals who have the skills and knowledge to work safely and effectively around horses in the equine industry.	10-15%		
New Zealand Certificate in Assistant Trainer (Level 4) [4825]	Graduates of the New Zealand Certificate in Assistant Trainer (level 4) will be able to contribute effectively and professionally in a supervisory role in the equine racing industry. The new programme is expected to be available in 2025.	30 learners		
New Zealand Certificate in Equine Breeding (Stud Groom) (Level 3) [2370]	The purpose of this qualification is to provide the equine breeding industry with individuals who have the skills and knowledge to assist with all aspects of breeding, mating, and the early education of young horses.			Medium priority
New Zealand Certificate in Equine Skills (Level 3): Harness Racing Stable Assistant, Thoroughbred Raceday Strapper, Thoroughbred Stable Assistant, Thoroughbred Racing Track Rider, and Sporthorse Stable Assistant [2376]	The purpose of this qualification is to provide the equine industry with individuals who have the skills and knowledge to assist in the stabling, care, and/or exercise of horses in the performance horse sectors of the equine industry. The qualification is stranded to reflect the specialist skills required to work either in the harness industry, thoroughbred racing industry or the sporthorse industry.			Medium Priority
New Zealand Certificate in Equine Racing (Level 4):	The purpose of this qualification is to provide the equine racing industry with individuals who have			Medium Priority

Thoroughbred Racing Jockey, Harness Driver/Trainer, and Harness Racing Driver [2374]	<p>the skills and knowledge to either ride thoroughbred racehorses or drive standardbred horses.</p> <p>The qualification is stranded to reflect the specialist skills required to ride in the thoroughbred racing industry, drive/train standardbred horses in the harness racing industry, and drive standardbred horses at raceday in the harness racing industry.</p>			
New Zealand Certificate in Equine Skills (Sporthorse Groom) (Level 4) [2377]	The purpose of this qualification is to provide the equine industry with individuals who have the skills and knowledge to manage the care and exercise of horses in training for the sporthorse sector of the equine industry.			Medium Priority
New Zealand Certificate in Equine Breeding (Senior Stud Groom) (Level 4) [2371]	The purpose of this qualification is to provide the equine breeding industry with individuals who have the skills and knowledge to assist with all aspects of breeding, mating, and the early education of young horses.			Medium Priority
New Zealand Certificate in Equine Racing (Level 4): Thoroughbred Racing Jockey, Harness Trainer, and Harness Racing Driver [4221]	The purpose of this qualification is to provide the equine racing industry with individuals who have the skills and knowledge to either ride thoroughbred racehorses, train standardbred horses or drive standardbred horses at race meetings on raceday.			Medium Priority
New Zealand Diploma in Equine Management (Level 5): Broodmare Management, Yearling Management, Stallion Management, and Racing Stable Foreman [2380]	The purpose of this qualification is to provide the equine industry with individuals who have the skills and knowledge to manage horses in either a breeding operation or racing stables which are valued by the equine breeding and racing industries and recognised both nationally and internationally.			Medium Priority

Table 2: Pan-sector qualifications and credentials

Qualification or credential	What skills does this qualification provide	Scale of change you are seeking for 2026	Mode of delivery	Priority level (for this advice)
New Zealand Certificate in Primary Industry Skills (Level 2): Optional strand in Self-Management and Employability Skills [2218]	<p>The New Zealand Certificate in Primary Industry Skills is designed to meet the needs of industries by enabling workers to carry out practical tasks associated with an entry level role in a primary industry context; including using safe work practices and self-management skills. It is targeted at new or potential entrants into the primary sector including seasonal workers, career changers and those not yet engaged in education, employment or training.</p> <p>A repeated concern from across nearly all of our industries has been the need for a strong set of basic skills for workers in the food and fibre sector, especially for those who are not familiar with those work settings.</p> <p>From our engagement with the food and fibre sector, industries have particularly identified health and safety, self-management and 'employability' skills as key gaps in their workforces (in fact these form the most often cited skills gaps by industries), especially for new entrants.</p>	15%		High Priority
New Zealand Certificate in Primary Industry Operational Skills (Level 3): Optional strands in	The New Zealand Certificate in Primary Industry Operational Skills is one of the sector's central cross-sector qualifications designed to provide primary industry workplaces with individuals who can safely and effectively carry out operational	20-25%		High Priority

Specialist Equipment, and Infrastructure [2215]	<p>activities which involve vehicles, machinery and specialist equipment, and infrastructure.</p> <p>Industries from across our sector have identified the need to strengthen a core set of capabilities for workers, both those entering the industry and the existing workforce. In particular, industries want people who can (safely) operate vehicles, machinery, and other specialist equipment; and maintain infrastructure.</p>			
Emerging Leadership in People, Food and Fibre Industries (Micro-credential) (Level 4) [5044]	<p>The purpose of this micro-credential is to provide a formal credential to recognise the skills and knowledge attained by learners/ākonga as they enter leadership roles across a range of People, Food and Fibre industries in Aotearoa New Zealand. The micro-credential provides a training scaffold to support and upskill potential, new, or existing leaders, including seasonal workers and career changers, and workers in supporting industries, into leadership roles.</p>	New development		
New Zealand Diploma in Primary Industry Business Management (Level 5) [2221]	<p>The New Zealand Diploma in Primary Industry Management is a pan-sector qualification that builds financial management, business planning and general business decision-making skills. It also contains skills around leadership, including for staff employment and work allocation, and applying interpersonal and leadership skills to monitor staff performance, health, safety, and well-being requirements in a primary industry business. It enables a graduate to plan, implement and review the environmental sustainability requirements of a primary industry business.</p> <p>MPI workforce forecasting indicates the need for more skilled workers, with both technical and</p>	10-15%		High priority

	business/managerial skills needs rising. Most of our industries have also highlighted leadership as a pressing skills gap, alongside a need for business planning and financial management. Environmental sustainability - and the skills required to respond to a changing environment - is an emerging issue for the sector.			
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Table 3: Related qualifications or credentials in development (or planned for)				
Qualification or credential	What skills does this qualification provide	Scale of change you are seeking for 2026	Mode of delivery	Priority level (for this advice)
Entry Level Qualification Development Project: including stackable micro-credentials	We are planning to build flexible, sustainable, and enduring learning pathways for learners as they enter the primary industry sector.			