

### ***New Zealand: SpeedMeet***

*Helping secondary students to meet and engage with potential employers in the skilled trades and service industry.*

In 2015, the Industry Training Federation (ITF) of New Zealand and several of its member Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) developed Trade SpeedMeet events, as part of an ITO-led promotional campaign to promote 'earn and learn' training and apprenticeships. These events give senior secondary school students (age 16-18) opportunities to meet with employers from the skilled trades and service industries who can help their transitions from school to work. The events are free to attend and students are encouraged to prepare a CV for the event.

The way it works is simple. Every six minutes, a secondary school student meets with an employer for a mini-interview, in a style similar to "speed-dating". Here, the students have an opportunity to get to know potential employers, and ask important questions like, 'where can this trade/industry take me?', 'can I work while I'm studying?', and 'how much could I earn?' SpeedMeet is designed to help students find work placements, apprenticeships and full-time employment in the skilled trades.

A SpeedMeet event typically lasts one hour, over which a student can expect to meet ten different employers. At the end, students note whether or not they would like to meet with each employer again, and the employers do the same for the students. If there is a match, the event organizer shares with the employer the student's contact details to arrange a follow-up meeting.

New Zealand currently faces a shortage in the skilled trades, which has been intensified by border and migration restrictions as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. SpeedMeet is part of a wider programme designed to help young people understand what the trades have to offer, expand their awareness of the range of career possibilities they can consider, and help them make the contacts that can help get them a job after school.

In late 2019, after the New Zealand government implemented reforms to its vocational education sector, the Ministry of Education began collaborating with the ITF and ITOs, schools and employers to extend SpeedMeet events to additional regions across New Zealand. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Education has supported SpeedMeet events as part of their work to connect schools, communities, and employers to help raise the awareness of vocational education careers by showcasing trades and 'earn while you learn' pathways. The results of these events, which at the end of May 2021 were attended by close to 45,000 students and nearly 3,000 employers, has shown that students substantially more likely to consider a vocational pathway. Additionally, 95% of students that attended an event felt "more prepared with the skills necessary to be successful in their further education and employment."