

Government growth initiative inspiring Waikato business

Hamilton's Everest Group is one of dozens of Waikato service providers boosting business capabilities through the Regional Business Partner Waikato programme.

Oppportunity Hamilton and Waikato Innovation Park are managing the government initiative in the region, giving business owners access to thousands of dollars of funding, advice and support.

Opportunity Hamilton business development manager Adrian Dixon said quality service providers like Everest Group help make the programme valuable to small and medium business owners.

Waikato is leading the way in response to the New Zealand Trade and Enterprise and Ministry of Science initiative, a nationwide network of business help organisations.

The Innovation Park arm of the initiative includes matching businesses with experts and potential collaborators, and access to R and D funding from a pool of \$75 million.

"We have already given out thousands of dollars towards training and Innovation Waikato has distributed more than \$1.5 million in technology and development funding to businesses. The response locally has been good," Adrian said.

This initiative delivers

seamless, integrated support to New Zealand business from idea to full commercialisation and export. It gives businesses access to research and development support, global expertise and will help drive technology, innovation and business capability training, Adrian said.

Opportunity Hamilton and Waikato Innovation Park are jointly appointed as one of 14 regional partners for the scheme throughout New Zealand, making them the contact for any business seeking government assistance.

Opportunity Hamilton and the park are working with economic development agencies, chambers of commerce, industry organisations, educational institutions and other key stakeholders in developing support programmes for the specific needs of each community.

"This is very much a regional initiative and our goal is to make it relevant and beneficial to everybody. We are working closely with each community to ensure this happens," Adrian said.

Opportunity Hamilton, formerly the Business



PETER MAXWELL

Development Centre, has more than 20 years experience helping thousands of people start and grow businesses, through business coaching, training and high impact support programmes.

A more recent focus has been helping businesses relocate and set up companies in Hamilton and marketing the city as an ideal business location.

Assistance available through the business development programme includes connecting businesses with experts, research partners and companies with complementary skills, commercialisation and advice on protecting intellectual property.

To be eligible for the voucher-based funding system business owners must demonstrate a desire to innovate and grow their business.

"Part of the assessment is talking through their business, getting a feel for where it's at, identifying their skill

gaps and executing a strategy to close their skill gaps with the appropriate training programme. Depending on a business' size and aspirations, regional partners can tailor funding and support to meet their needs," Adrian said.

The R and D investments focus on growing commercial business through the creation and commercialisation of innovative technology.

"Grants can be used for a range of R and D activity including new product development, enlisting domestic or off-shore expertise and internships for students," Peter Maxwell, of Innovation Park, said.

The regional partners provide access to TechNZ's Global Expert service to locate and connect businesses with international and national experts offering help from

concept to commercialisation. They also help businesses engage with Crown Research Institutes and universities.

"These R and D investments are made in the expectation that supported businesses will become more successful, ideally looking at developing or growing their export markets, and makes a contribution to job creation and New Zealand's economy. Ultimately they are giving something back to New Zealand," Peter said.

Businesses, scientists and students are among those already benefiting from the grants.

"This is really a way of enabling New Zealand companies to up their game and become more competitive internationally," Peter said.

NZTE is the government's national economic develop-



OPPORTUNITY Hamilton business development manager Adrian Dixon

ment agency.

TechNZ is the MSI's business programme, investing millions of dollars a year in research and development in New Zealand business.

To register for the business capability arm of the programme contact Robyn on 07 959 1623 or e-mail robyn@opportunityhamilton.co.nz, or for innovation contact Vicki on 07 857 0500 or e-mail vicki@innovationwaikato.co.nz.

TGH welcomes new director

Tainui Group Holdings (TGH) is delighted to welcome Matthew Cockram to the TGH board as an independent director.

Mr Cockram is the CEO and a principal of Cooper and Company NZ, a highly successful property development company based in Auckland. Before that he spent 20 years at law firm Bell Gully, the last five as chairman, where he specialised in construction,

commercial property and major projects.

TGH chairman John Spencer said Mr Cockram has a wealth of commercial-legal experience, especially in the area of commercial property development.

"His skills and experience fit well with the long term development path that TGH has mapped out," Mr Spencer said.

"I look forward to the contribution Matthew will make to

TGH."

Matthew Cockram replaces Barry Harris, who was to join the board but took up the position of CEO of the Hamilton City Council.

Mr Cockram joins John Spencer (chair) and Mike Allen - the two other independent directors, and Rukumoana Schaaflhausen, Koro Wetere and Rahui Papa - the three Waikato-Tainui directors on the TGH board.

Everest Group is now registered to accept NZTE Capability Development Vouchers.



Left to right - Diane Hallifax, Libby Gairdner, Karen Bain, Senga Allen

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