

Case Study: Bridging Knowledge and Industry Through Connectedness and Collaboration

Organisation: University of Waikato.

Contact: Alvin Yeo, Industry Engagement Manager - Au Reikura, School of Computing and Mathematical Sciences.

Overview

The University of Waikato is a cornerstone of digital innovation and education in the region. Through its strong focus on research, applied learning, and partnership, the University nurtures both talent and knowledge that fuel the Waikato's digital technology ecosystem.

Experience with the Ecosystem Mapping Prototype

Alvin Yeo participated in the prototype testing to help connect education with industry and to "give back" to the ecosystem:

"It does take that village to grow the whole ecosystem...everybody needs to chip in."

He quickly saw the value of the tool in making the regional technology landscape more visible - for students, researchers, and local companies alike:

"If you're not visible then people can't connect to you...that connecting of the dots is quite important."

For Alvin, the map bridges the gap between education and industry, helping students discover opportunities, guiding employers to local talent, and highlighting where collaboration can flourish.

Key Impacts and Opportunities Identified

The University views the ecosystem map as a living directory that can continually connect people, organisations, and ideas. It supports:

- Work-integrated learning: students can identify internship and employment opportunities in local tech firms.
- Research collaboration: academics can find partners aligned with their focus areas, such as data sovereignty or IoT.
- Regional visibility: businesses gain exposure within a collective Waikato identity, improving chances for joint projects and investment.

Alvin also noted the project's importance for equity and inclusion, emphasising that mātauranga Māori provides a unique cultural strength that sets Aotearoa apart:

"We must provide equitable opportunities ... because everybody has a part to play."

He highlighted sustainability as a priority - the need to keep data fresh and to establish a long-term model for maintaining and funding the platform.

Quote

“We need to get everyone paddling the waka in the same direction.”

Looking Ahead

Alvin envisions the Ecosystem Map as a core resource for students, researchers, and industry to connect and collaborate. He suggests future iterations could be sustained through a membership model, similar to a Chamber of Commerce, where contributors help fund and update the platform. Ultimately, he believes the project will help the region “move from survive to thrive” by building a more connected and inclusive digital future for Waikato.