

Jobs for Nature


# Lessons learned

## The five key findings from evaluating the programme and its outcomes

Jobs for Nature (JFN) was a \$1.2 billion programme set up in response to COVID-19 to create both nature-based employment opportunities and enduring environmental benefits. It ran from July 2020 to June 2025 and was administered by five government agencies.<sup>1</sup>

The Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai (DOC) allocated \$485.3 million over 225 projects across Aotearoa New Zealand. It is estimated that these projects will collectively return more than \$1.97 billion in environmental, social and economic benefits over 30 years.<sup>2</sup>





## Effective delivery requires investment in the right tools, systems and capabilities

Background	Lessons learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>JFN was the largest investment in community-led conservation to date. For the first year, DOC did not have an effective contract and data management tool to manage \$485 million across 225 projects.</li></ul>	<div>→</div> Fit-for-purpose technology solutions are great enablers, and investing in them will deliver a better experience for customers and contribute to higher quality outputs and increased productivity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Existing systems were not scalable at pace to manage a diverse investment portfolio.</li></ul>	<div>→</div> A scalable assurance system with clear accountabilities and resource for system monitoring is fundamental.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>JFN included administration, finance and communications within the project team.</li></ul>	<div>→</div> Support services were key to successful delivery. Retaining capable staff in support roles enables success and increases productivity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>JFN Delivery Managers were regional DOC staff who supported project partners in their areas. They proved to be vital for successful delivery, providing on-site assurance and support, and building relationships with project partners, amongst other benefits.</li></ul>	<div>→</div> To be successful, Delivery Managers needed to have the right expertise and be resourced appropriately. They also needed clarity about their role, clear accountability and reporting lines, and ongoing support. <sup>3</sup> Including the word ‘Manager’ in the title was a strong symbol and brought mana to the role.

‘At the outset, the Jobs for Nature programme did not have the necessary delivery systems and processes fully in place ... Over time, however, there were improvements as the programme adapted and evolved.’<sup>4</sup>

‘Delivery Managers [were] a game-changer, excellent model.’<sup>5</sup>



## Measuring performance enables continuous improvement

Background	Lessons learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>JFN needed to collect a wide range of information from project partners for different purposes. Data supported decision-makers with investment decisions, built confidence through effective risk management and helped demonstrate success.</li></ul>	<div>→</div> Strong data integrity is essential to allow the data to be used to its full potential and support decision making. Key performance data enabled us to monitor the programme both internally and externally, which drove continuous improvement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Reporting requirements were consistent across the five agencies. In some cases, this resulted in insufficient conservation data or compromises in how we reported.</li></ul>	<div>→</div> Demonstrating the impact of the investment needs to incorporate wider outcomes, benefits and storytelling elements. Measures and data need to provide for this. <div>→</div> More consideration should be given to the customer, their capability and how to use their existing data-collection methods.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To increase confidence in the delivery of the programme, the extensive data needed to be consolidated and easily understood by a range of people. It needed to be user-friendly and quick to visualise, and to monitor key performance measures to inform decision making.</li></ul>	<div>→</div> A real-time dashboard, which highlighted key performance indicators, can be used to provide evidence-driven delivery. <div>→</div> Traffic-light project health assessment focuses attention where it is needed. <div>→</div> Tools like these, backed by regular assurance meetings and staff visits to see progress first-hand, provide a highly effective level of risk management.

‘The dashboards were powerful to keep across existing progress as well as highlighting where issues may need addressing.’<sup>5</sup>



Fostering effective communication is key to success

Background	Lessons learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The programme was set up at speed, with a focus on generating employment quickly.</li><li>• Each of the five agencies approached the task in a different way, creating the potential for misalignment.</li></ul>	<p>→ A secretariat function is essential for multi-agency programmes of this scale to ensure strategic alignment, connection and consistent reporting across agencies.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Constant change to monitoring and reporting requirements while rolling out delivery was difficult for our project partners to navigate. Some project partners also underestimated the administrative workload of delivery and reporting.</li></ul>	<p>→ A customer-focused approach needs to prioritise ongoing support for project partners, including advice on administration, monitoring and reporting.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The programme had a huge amount of public visibility and scrutiny.</li></ul>	<p>→ Resourcing and effective communication with all stakeholders, including the public, is vital for a programme of this scale.</p>

‘The [JFN] Secretariat helped to generate cohesion and collaboration across agencies.’<sup>6</sup>



Agile investment processes allow for change

Background	Lessons learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expected unemployment rates did not eventuate. This provided an opportunity to strengthen the focus on skills, training and development and to increase conservation capability.</li></ul>	<p>→ Strategy needs to be flexible, with options to adapt to a changing context.</p> <p>→ Flexibility and reviews need to be built into every stage of the programme for successful delivery.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The context was continuously changing over the duration of the programme, including through challenges such as COVID-19, Cyclone Gabrielle, inflation, supply chain issues and rising costs. This impacted our project partners and what could be achieved.</li></ul>	<p>→ Variations to contracts are to be expected. Robust and clear processes are needed (within limits) so they do not become overly bureaucratic.</p> <p>→ Risk profiles may change. System controls and assurance processes need to allow for these adjustments.</p>

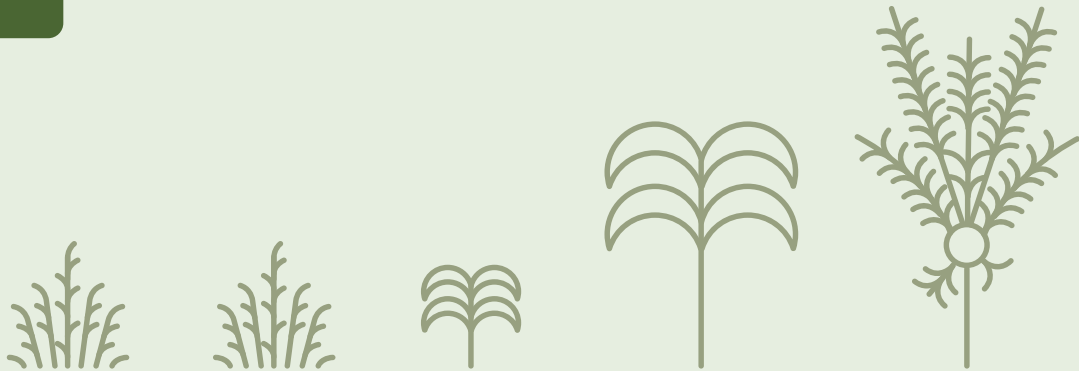
‘Achieving our outcomes required flexibility ... additionally there were many unpredictable factors such as weather, supply chain issues, and labour shortages as well as continued upward pricing pressures of both materials and labour.’<sup>4</sup>



Relationships take time and are critical for delivering at scale with maximum impact

Background	Lessons learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Early projects that were invested in were with known and trusted partners. These relationships were the foundation for early success, which built momentum.</li><li>• Further relationships needed to be built quickly across a range of people, organisations and stakeholders in an uncertain and ambiguous environment.</li></ul>	<p>→ JFN built and / or strengthened mutually beneficial, ongoing relationships between project partners and DOC. Building these relationships needs to be resourced sufficiently, as they often take time and can be challenging.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A significant portion of DOC’s investment was allocated to projects led by Treaty partners. However, ‘the speed with which the funding was deployed meant that Treaty obligations to share decision-making ... were not always evident’.<sup>6</sup> Instead, the lack of involvement led to ‘contractual and reporting requirements that did not reflect Māori values or capture important outcomes’.<sup>7</sup></li></ul>	<p>→ To meet DOC’s Treaty obligations and maximise benefits, Māori need to be involved as partners and leaders at all stages of the programme. Among other factors, this needs time, resourcing and a conducive environment. Setting up a programme under urgency may require trade-offs in this regard that should be discussed openly.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allocation of funding occurred more quickly in places where regional conservation forums and alliances were already in place. The trust already built in these forums enabled a cohesive approach and transition planning.</li></ul>	<p>→ Regional conservation alliances can work well, but it takes time and commitment to establish and develop this model, and the form of these will look different across the country.</p>

‘Government agencies need to move beyond “consultation and informing” towards identifying strategic partners that deliver on shared objectives. Agencies also need to develop a better understanding of whether and where they are trusted and to take this into account, particularly with regards to allowing time to build trusted partnerships.’<sup>6</sup>



See also the Jobs for Nature ‘Investment profile’, ‘Benefits’ and ‘Sustaining the gains’ summaries.

Notes:

1 The JFN agencies are DOC, the Ministry for the Environment Manatū Mō Te Taiao, the Ministry for Primary Industries Manatū Ahu Matua, Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand and the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment Hikina Whakatutuki.

2 Webber J, Steen-Jones C. 2024. Jobs for Nature impact assessment. Prepared for the Jobs for Nature Secretariat. Wellington: MartinJenkins. [www.jobsfornature.govt.nz/assets/Publications/Final-report-2024-Q4-J4N-impact-results-2024.pdf](http://www.jobsfornature.govt.nz/assets/Publications/Final-report-2024-Q4-J4N-impact-results-2024.pdf)

3 DOC. 2024. Delivery Manager Evaluation Survey (unpublished).

4 Information obtained from unpublished End of Project reports delivered to DOC in 2024.

5 DOC. 2024. Regional Director and Manager Evaluation Survey (unpublished).

6 Kereama J, Potiki M, Faasen K, Scott-Melton F, Carter M. 2023. Jobs for Nature evaluation: Year one report. Wellington: Allen + Clarke. [environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/jobs-for-nature-evaluation-year-one-reportl.pdf](http://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/jobs-for-nature-evaluation-year-one-reportl.pdf)

7 Kereama J, Stevenson B. 2024. Te Ao Māori evaluation: Jobs for Nature. Wellington: Allen + Clarke. [www.jobsfornature.govt.nz/assets/Publications/J4N-Evaluation-Te-Ao-Maori-Report\\_Final.pdf](http://www.jobsfornature.govt.nz/assets/Publications/J4N-Evaluation-Te-Ao-Maori-Report_Final.pdf)