

Te Au Pūngao Named Finalist for National Innovation Award

Marlborough's innovation hub recognised for connecting export industries with emerging technology sectors at 2025 EDNZ Best Practice Awards

BLLENHEIM, MARLBOROUGH, NEW ZEALAND, November 18, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Te Au](#)

“

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Louisa Murray, Community Manager, Te Au Pūngao

[Pūngao, Marlborough](#)'s hub for innovation, has been named a finalist for the Excellence in Innovation award at the 2025 Economic Development New Zealand ([EDNZ](#)) Best Practice Awards.

This national award celebrates initiatives delivering transformative impact through bold, pioneering approaches that strengthen organisations and regions across Aotearoa.

Te Au Pūngao—meaning "the current of energy"—was recognised for a model that connects Marlborough's

export-led primary industries with emerging technology sectors. The hub is the centrepiece for an ecosystem where established businesses, founders, and remote workers collaborate to solve problems, test ideas, and build capability.

"Being recognised as a finalist alongside some of New Zealand's most impactful initiatives is a tremendous honour," said Louisa Murray, who leads Te Au Pūngao as Community Manager. "It reinforces Marlborough's growing strength as a region where advancement thrives in partnership with industry, whenua, and community."

A Pioneering Regional Model

Established by Marlborough District Council and managed by Whiringa Ltd, Te Au Pūngao represents a strategic investment in regional economic development. The hub provides the infrastructure, community, and hands-on support that enable businesses to experiment, collaborate, and grow.

Marlborough's position as a leading export region—driven by wine, aquaculture, and forestry—offers a unique platform for sector transformation. Te Au Pūngao brings these

industries together with AI, robotics, digital tools, and rapid prototyping capability, creating pathways for technology adoption across the region.

"Regional hubs operate in a different context from the main centres," Murray explains. "Our approach focuses on Marlborough's natural strengths. We work closely with local industries, draw on the region's export expertise, and create an environment where the next generation of businesses can take shape here."

Recognition Among National Leaders

The Excellence in Innovation category included major initiatives from across the country. The award was won by ChristchurchNZ for their BioOra Scaling initiative, a landmark HealthTech project supporting BioOra, a biotechnology startup commercialising CAR-T therapy. The initiative is projected to generate \$250 million for Christchurch's GDP over three years and positions the city as a global centre for immunotherapy research.

"The calibre of finalists shows the depth of pioneering work right across Aotearoa," Murray notes. "We congratulate ChristchurchNZ on their outstanding achievement. This recognition shows Marlborough is building strong momentum in our own journey toward becoming a centre for technology-led growth."

Building Marlborough's Future

Te Au Pūngao's finalist placement comes at an important moment as the hub expands its programmes and membership.

"This is only the start," Murray declares. "Marlborough is perfectly positioned for growth in agritech, food technology, sustainable aquaculture, and climate-smart viticulture. Te Au Pūngao provides the foundation to help these opportunities take shape. National recognition helps share that story with investors, founders, and businesses who see value in being close to industry."

The hub is currently welcoming new members, with particular interest from businesses and professionals seeking to operate at the intersection of traditional industry excellence and technological advancement.

About Te Au Pūngao

Te Au Pūngao is Marlborough's hub for innovation, technology, and collaboration. Established by Marlborough District Council and managed by Whiringa Ltd, the hub connects startups, entrepreneurs, and established businesses with the resources, networks, and support they need to thrive.

The hub is guided by four value areas:

- Māuitanga – innovation and excellence
- Whakamana – empowerment and wellbeing
- Tūhono – connection and collaboration
- Kaitiakitanga – sustainability and responsibility

For more information, visit teaupungao.com

About EDNZ Best Practice Awards

The Economic Development New Zealand Best Practice Awards celebrate excellence in economic development. The Excellence in Innovation award recognises initiatives that push boundaries, embrace creativity, and deliver outstanding results through continuous refinement or bold, cutting-edge advancements.

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