



**2025 Brandon Hall Group HCM  
Excellence Awards: Gold for Best  
Leadership Development Program**

## Our client.

Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa (Sport NZ) is a central government entity acting as a kaitiaki (guardian) for the play, active recreation, and sport system in New Zealand. Its mission is to support and promote high quality experiences in these areas to enhance physical activity and well-being for all New Zealanders. Sport NZ supports a diverse range of organizations, whose leaders vary significantly in technical backgrounds, experience, and resources.

## The ask.

How do you harness the diverse knowledge and experience of leaders across a public sector system, to enable transformational change at the organizational and sector level?

Sport NZ had identified a critical need to provide leadership development to strengthen the capability of organizations in New Zealand's sports system, in order to deliver on their strategic outcomes. Many executive leaders were feeling isolated in their roles, facing complex challenges, and were unsure how to bring their organizations and the sector into the future.

Sport NZ selected Adeption as a partner for a three-year term, to deliver biannual facilitated leadership development experiences for executives and future leaders. These experiences would build on previous development initiatives and sit within its sector-wide Puna leadership framework.

It set out five goals for the executive leadership experience.

1. Upskill a cohort of 20 CEOs from across the sector to enact transformational change for themselves and their organizations.
2. Grow relationships to build strong networks and establish a community of support and learning within and outside the program.
3. Retain and grow leaders in the sector who will positively impact the performance of organizations and the sector as a whole.
4. Foster continuous improvement and ongoing growth in leaders.
5. Provide opportunities for role modelling and collaboration between organizations.

## The solution.

Adeption and Sport NZ co-designed a six-month leadership development experience for executive leaders, called Te Au Hihiri (which means ‘dynamic, energetic, spirited, and determined’). It sits alongside the Te Au Mātāhae future leaders program, which together aim to strengthen leadership capability in the sector.

The resulting experience is framed around two in-person residential held at marae (Māori tribal meeting grounds)—a new experience for many participants. Wrapping around these intensive events are assessments, virtual facilitated workshops, cohort ‘share and reflect’ sessions, self-paced development on the Adeption platform, and on-the-job application of insights.



Core principles of the experience design are mindset development, peer-to-peer learning, community building, and continuous development in the flow of work, supported by Adeption’s ‘Be Conscious, Be Curious, Be Better’ (B3) methodology.

“This was a life changing and affirming experience! Thank you.”  
— **Sector participant**



## The experience.




### Prepare For Your Journey

-  Vertical Mindset Indicator
-  Residential / Launch (3 days)
-  Residential Companion workout
-  Take action or experiment
-  Share and Reflect (virtual 90 mins)





### Harnessing The Power Of Us

-  Prepare Workout
-  Workshop (virtual 3 hrs)
-  Take action or experiment
-  Implement Workout
-  Share and Reflect (virtual 90 mins)

### Understanding You

-  Prepare workout
-  Workshop (virtual 3 hrs)
-  Leadership Circle Profile assessment
-  Take action or experiment
-  Implement workout
-  Share and Reflect (virtual 90 mins)

### Serving Your Community

-  Prepare workout
-  Workshop (virtual 3 hrs)
-  Take action or experiment
-  Implement workout
-  Share and Reflect (virtual 90 mins)

### Sustaining Your Development

-  Prepare workout
-  Residential (2 days)
-  Residential Companion workout
-  Take action or experiment
-  Graduation

## The results (2024 cohort).

- Te Au Hihiri won a **Gold award for ‘Best Leadership Development Program’** at the 2025 Brandon Hall Group HCM Excellence Awards.
- **100% of participants** in the 2024 cohort rated the program as agree or strongly agree for the evaluation question “I have improved my performance and am inspired to continue taking action”.
- **Every participant improved their self-leadership ratings** after the program. 29% improved by at least 50%.
- Deep connections formed within the cohort, and an **ongoing self-driven community of support and learning** was established.
- **Turnover of leaders** in the cohort post-program is well below turnover rates seen across the sector in previous few years (pre-program).



“The most valuable aspect for me has been the networks created and the sharing of knowledge and personal experiences that took place outside of the workshops.” — **Sector participant**

## What worked well.

- **Co-design process:** Key to the partnership was a co-design process where Adepton and Sport NZ brought together key stakeholders—including several participants—to ground the program design in the context and needs of the executive leaders, harness learnings from the past, and identify the shifts needed to achieve the program goals.
- **Residentials:** The residential events were highly successful in creating an environment for participants to immerse themselves in development, show up authentically, and form strong connections within their cohort.
- **Blended delivery:** The combination of in-person and virtual events, self-paced digital workouts, and online coaching, maximized engagement and application.
- **Integration of Te ao Māori principles:** The holistic ecosystem approach, grounded in Te ao Māori principles, resonated strongly with participants and set the tone for a collective approach to success, in order to lift performance across the sector.

“I loved the entire program, from the coaching to the setting to the support networks, everything was amazing! I can't say enough positive things about this kaupapa – only that I'm grateful I can be a part of this journey with an amazing group of people, coaches and support team! Thank you!” — **Sector participant**