



22 January 2025

Ref: DOIA -REQ-0006075

Liam Hehir

Email: fyi-request-29074-4c9f02d3@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe Liam

Thank you for your email of 5 November 2024 to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

My request pertains to the decision made by the Ministry to have staff attend training by The Pākehā Project, a programme that, according to recent media coverage and its own promotional materials, appears to focus on themes that may be perceived as overtly political, particularly concerning decolonisation and systemic change. ... Specifically, I request the following:

- 1. Cost and Analysis: The total amount spent by the Ministry on staff attendance at The Pākehā Project, including registration, travel, accommodation, and other expenses. Additionally, any cost-benefit analysis or justification made prior to approving the expenditure.*
- 2. Effectiveness and Outcomes: Documentation or reports detailing the measurable outcomes or benefits observed following staff participation, along with any evaluations of the programme's success or impact on departmental objectives.*
- 3. Approval and Decision-Making: The names or titles of officials who authorised the expenditure, along with any records of internal discussions or concerns raised about the appropriateness or potential political nature of the programme.*
- 4. Political Neutrality: Any steps taken to ensure compliance with the principle of political neutrality, including an assessment of whether the programme's emphasis on decolonization could conflict with public service requirements.*
- 5. Alternative Options: Records detailing whether any alternative cultural competency training programmes were considered, and the rationale for selecting The Pākehā Project over other available options. I am particularly interested in understanding how the decision to engage with this programme aligns with public service obligations to remain apolitical while pursuing professional development.*

In 2022 two MBIE employees, at manager level, attended The Pākehā Project, a programme focused on building the bicultural competencies of Pākehā leaders. This programme was offered as a pilot to see if it would be of benefit to MBIE by offering it as part of their suite of development courses.

Please find attached, as Annex One, documentation in scope of your request. The name of an attendee is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act, to protect the privacy of natural persons. I do not consider that the withholding of this information is outweighed by public interest considerations in making the information available.

Please find responses to your questions below:

Question One: Cost and Analysis:

The total cost for two staff to attend The Pākehā Project was \$21,700. This cost included registration, accommodation, travel and other expenses, such as travel, parking and food. Discussion regarding the approval of expenditure is contained in emails attached as Annex One. Further analysis is refused under section 18(g) of the Act, as the information is not held.

Question Two: Effectiveness and Outcomes:

Please find attached in Annex One, The Pākehā Project Learner Experience Evaluation form which contains feedback from a participant. Further documentation is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist.

Question Three: Approval and Decision-Making

Attendance by one staff member to The Pākehā Project was approved by the Manager, Talent and Development in the People and Culture Branch, discussions regarding this approval are captured in emails in Annex One. Approval for the other staff member was given by the Deputy Chief Executive, Te Waka Pūtahitanga. Further documentation is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist.

Question Four & Five: Political Neutrality & Alternative Options:

The Public Service Act 2020 (the Act), section 14 explicitly recognises the role of the Public Service to support the Crown in its relationships with Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi. While those who attended The Pākehā Project gave positive feedback on the course, the decision was made not to add it to the suite of courses offered by MBIE as there were other options available that better suited developing bi-cultural competency and could be offered widely across the organisation rather than just those in management positions and were better value for money. Some information regarding the assessment of the course is available in the emails attached as Annex One, further analysis is refused under section 18(g) of the Act.

As this programme did not progress further than the pilot, there is no further detailed analysis or formal documentation other than the emails attached in Annex One.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request or this response, or if you require any further assistance, please contact OIA@mbie.govt.nz.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kerry Jarvis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kerry Jarvis
Acting Chief People Officer
People and Culture
Corporate and Digital Shared Services