



31 July 2017

Ms Gael Wright

via FYI website

Ref: DOIA 1718-003

Dear Ms Wright

Thank you for your email of 1 July 2017 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 ("the Act"), the following information:

"Re: Marsden Fund (administered by the Royal Society)

Please make available the following information.

All minutes of all Grant Assessment Committee meetings for the last 5 years. There should be no redaction of identities as these are minutes of meetings of an official public body.

All scores of all grant applications for the last 5 years. This should include scores at each stage of the assessment (including, panel scoring at each stage (by individual if possible) and reviewer scores) and final outcome. While it is appreciated that reviewer identities might want to be protected it would be preferable if all applicant information and committee member information is provided (for the purposes of statistical analysis). Certainly panelist identities should be provided as they are acting as public servants.

In particular, we refer MBIE to Section 6 of the Official Information Act '...information shall be made available unless there is good reason for withholding it' and we see no "good reason" for any of this information to be withheld from public scrutiny.'

I acknowledge that on 13 July 2017 you refined your request as follows:

"Please omit the minutes at this stage.

I presume however that there must be spreadsheets or a database where grant scoring information is stored. I presume its not a database then - as in that case a reasonably simple database look up would produce all the records requested.

Instead, can you make all the spreadsheets where these data is held available. This should not take too much work”

By email dated 24 July 2017 (copy attached) the Ministry offered to discuss your specific requirements, and asked that you contact us by 27 July 2017 to do so. No further correspondence or communication has been received from you regarding your request.

As noted in our email the request is substantial and will require substantial collation and review across a large number of individual files. To provide you with copies of the information would require staff to manually review each file. Providing this information would remove Ministry staff from their core duties and therefore the greater public interest in the effective and efficient administration of the public service would not be served.

Moreover the Ministry would need to review each piece of information to consider withholding information under the following grounds of the Act:

- i) 9 (2) (a) protect the privacy of natural persons,

And

- ii) 9 (2) (ba) (i) protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence or which any person has been or could be compelled to provide under the authority of any enactment, where the making available of the information would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, and it is in the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied.

And

- iii) 9 (2) (g) (i) maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any department or organisation in the course of their duty; or

I therefore confirm that I am refusing your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act as it would require substantial collation.

Under section 18A I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in both cases, the Ministry’s ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced, and the Ministry would not therefore be able to respond to your request.

Under section 18B I have also consulted with you and invited you to contact us to discuss making your request in a manner that might not entail a substantial collation.

You have the right to seek and investigation and review of my refusal by the Ombudsman, whose address for contact purposes is:

The Ombudsman
Office of the Ombudsman
PO Box 10-152
WELLINGTON 6143

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request or this response, or if you require any further assistance, please contact MBIE's Ministerial services team at oia@mbie.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Sillars'.

Helen Sillars
Manager, Specialised Investments
Science System Investment and Performance
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment



DOIA 1718-003

Ms Gael Wright
[REDACTED]

via email

24 July 2017

Kia ora Gael

Thank you for your response. The following information would still fall within the scope of your refined request:

- 115,920 individual assessment scores
- 6,900 proposals and
- 3300 referee reports for full proposals.

The Ministry may therefore refuse your request on the grounds of substantial collusion under section 18(f) of the OIA, unless you are able to considerably further narrow the scope of your request and/or the Ministry considers imposing a charge.

For your information, with any collation of information necessary to respond to your request, the Ministry is likely to consider withholding information under the following grounds:

- i) 9 (2) (a) protect the privacy of natural persons,

And

- ii) 9 (2) (ba) (i): protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence or which any person has been or could be compelled to provide under the authority of any enactment, where the making available of the information would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, and it is in the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied.

And

- iii) 9 (2) (g) (i) maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any department or organisation in the course of their duty; or

Ministry officials are available to discuss the following options with you:

- a) Understanding your specific requirements, and refining the scope of your request to (for example) a particular set of scores from a panel or year. The Ministry could then reassess the scope of the information requested and the work involved; and/or
- b) Reviewing the possible work involved within the scope of your refined request and therefore assisting the Ministry to consider the charges it may need to fix in order to respond to your request, under sections 18A(1)(a) and 15 of the Act.

The Ministry invites you to contact us to discuss the above options with you. The Ministry will then be in a position to determine whether it needs to extend the timeframe for responding to you (currently 31 July).

Please note that if we don't hear from you by Thursday 27 July your request will be refused under section 18(f) of the Act, on the ground of substantial collusion.

Yours sincerely



Helen Sillars
Manager, Specialised Investments
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment