

Tomorrow's Workforce Award Entrant: Auckland Council



Video Link <https://vimeo.com/178545409/034c54c29b>

In order to serve Auckland's increasingly diverse population, Auckland Council has identified the need to create a workforce that engages effectively with all its customers, communities and citizens. With the speed and scale of Auckland's population change, Auckland Council saw the opportunity to increase diversity through its recruitment of young talent.

The council launched its early career pathways programmes in 2014, with a focus on graduates, cadets and interns. In the first two years, 58 graduates, 65 interns and 41 cadets were recruited into the organisation - with a further 132 participants starting in 2016.

The Council's graduate framework was based on global best practice. The programme recruits through an open sourcing strategy with a strong on-campus presence at the University of Auckland, AUT, Massey University, MIT, and Unitec as well as leveraging social networks, liaising with tertiary student leaders and an effective social media campaign.

The cadet programme was designed in 2014 using an innovative customer-centric design process. Internal and external stakeholders, including unemployed youth, worked together to identify insights, ensure widespread buy-in from the organisation and build an economically sustainable solution. The programme recruited through a

closed sourcing strategy using support organisations; this targeted approach ensured the council's responsiveness to Māori, and attraction of unemployed and underrepresented groups.

The 2014 graduate programme attracted a diverse range of candidates but applications from Māori and Pasifika students were low. In 2015 and 2016 additional efforts were made to attract Māori and Pasifika employees into the council with strong results. This uplift was the result of engagement with community groups (iwi, marae based organisations and faith groups), and work placements for top Māori and Pasifika students.

Selection processes for each programme involved written applications, phone screening, cognitive testing and assessment centres, with emphasis on diversity. Decision makers involved in the process received unconscious bias awareness training and participants were welcome to participate in whānau/aiga interviews. New cadets and graduates were welcomed to a week-long induction with a pōwhiri and then partnered with a buddy, mentor and team leader.

Performance results from the 2015 yearly manager survey have shown the selection and induction processes to be very successful. The survey showed 93% of managers rated graduates as highly motivated and committed and their overall performance as good/excellent. 100% of managers agreed that the cadets in their team contributed to diversity of thought.

The increasing number of departments willing to support the programmes is also evidence of its success within the workplace. In 2014 five departments were involved – and that has grown to 25 in 2016 for graduates, 18 for cadets and 13 for interns.

In some instances, specific challenges such as ageing workforce are being addressed through involvement in the programmes. For example, the Building Control department (which has an older, predominantly male workforce) recruited five young women in 2014.

The programmes have seen excellent retention and been awarded a range of accolades including being voted the third most desired graduate employer in New Zealand by New Zealand tertiary students.

Stephen Town | Chief Executive shares his impressions:

"Our graduates and cadets bring diversity and fresh thinking. They are the future leaders and specialists who will help meet the needs of our rapidly changing communities. In just two years we have built a strong youth brand and the stretch, growth and exposure our programmes are providing is really making a difference."

2016 Finance Graduate Abdulla Al-Dilimi sums up his experience:

"I chose the programme because of the diverse range of experiences that I could get through rotations. This multiplied tenfold in an organisation like Auckland Council which engages in countless activities. Starting out showed me that the sky was the limit in what you can do, every day is unique just like the people and there's always interesting real work you can dig your claws into. It's perfect for someone who wants to both develop their career and add real tangible value to Auckland, a cause worth being a part of."