



Ministry of Education

DIVERSE TALENT FINALIST



By putting diversity and inclusion at the heart of its Summer Internship programme, the Ministry of Education has taken the first steps to embedding this practice into the foundations of its overall recruitment strategy.

The Ministry of Education is the Government's lead advisor on the education system, shaping direction for education agencies and providers and contributing towards a goal of delivering equitable and excellent outcomes. It has about 4,500 staff throughout New Zealand.

Its three-month Summer Internship is part of an Early in Careers programme, providing an avenue for people to enter the Ministry. Interns are placed across the various business units and take part in development sessions to instil inclusive and culturally grounded values that will be of benefit throughout their careers.

After outsourcing recruitment for the pilot programme in 2018, the Ministry has moved to a model where it now directly recruits most of its interns. This allows deliberate use of channels, events and language to attract diverse demographics. The recruitment campaign includes targeted events with Māori and Pacific students at tertiary institutes, profiles of former interns that students could identify with and job adverts that explicitly call for applications from diverse communities including Māori, Pacific and disabled candidates.



When establishing screening criteria, a strong emphasis was given to cultural awareness and competency to ensure a holistic balance of skillsets. The screening process also acknowledged that psychometric assessments are based on Western practices and can have built-in bias against minority groups. These were given a lesser weighting and deadlines for completing the tests were extended to accommodate applicants who may not have their own Wi-Fi. Time limits were removed for candidates who shared they had a disability and scores were adjusted to account for multilingual applicants. Abstract reasoning, rather than verbal reasoning, was used in 2020 to remove any language bias.

Due to the high number of applicants, the Ministry requires several assessors to be involved in the selection of interns. A diverse pool of assessors is selected, equipped with knowledge of unconscious bias and skills to mitigate its impact. A buddy system provides checks and balance on biases.

Candidate feedback is used to continuously improve this process.

Once the programme is underway, interns are brought together and introduced to independent weekly debriefs, enabling them to connect as a cohort, share their experiences of the past week and support each other, further strengthening whanaungatanga.

Emphasis is placed on pastoral care with each intern assigned a direct supervisor, a mentor and buddy that sits within their respective work team. Interns are also encouraged to speak up and raise any issues or concerns. There have been a handful of instances where this has occurred in the three years of the programme, and the willingness of these interns to share their experience and seek resolution demonstrates they feel safe, supported and heard.

Managers are also equipped to provide a culturally safe space and foster the right environment for interns to develop and reach their full potential.

“Interweaving diversity and inclusion into attraction, screening, selection and talent development processes has enabled us to make a real difference in how diverse talent is valued within our organisation,” says Sourcing and Selection Lead Lilian Singson.

“The Summer Internship was the first time that the Ministry applied diversity and inclusion in recruitment from start to finish. The learnings have been applied to other recruitment projects and steps are being taken to embed D&I more widely in our recruitment for the entire organisation.”

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THE AIM

The Ministry of Education wanted to realise its goal of an inclusive and culturally competent workplace through embedding diversity and inclusion in every aspect of its Summer Internship programme.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- The intern programme was co-designed with diverse stakeholders including former graduates, students, leaders from throughout the business and representatives from Māori, Pacific and Disabled employee networks.
- Candidates are recruited via a campaign that targets students from diverse demographics.
- During candidate screening, more emphasis is placed on cultural awareness and competency and less on psychometric assessments that can disadvantage minority groups.
- People from diverse backgrounds are chosen to assess the candidates, are briefed on the screening criteria and have knowledge of unconscious bias and how to mitigate its impact.
- Interns get support from their supervisors, a mentor and a buddy, an independent space to share their experiences and support each other and have a clear process for them to speak up and raise concerns.
- Managers are equipped to provide a culturally safe space and the right environment for interns to develop and reach their full potential.
- Learnings from the intern programme are being applied to talent practices across the business.



KEY LEARNING

Diversity and inclusion has a place in every aspect of attracting, recruiting and developing a workforce that is capable of delivering your organisation's strategic goals.

**DO WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WELL
AND DO WELL BECAUSE OF IT.**

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