



Ministry of Social Development

DIVERSE TALENT

MEDIUM-LARGE ORGANISATION WINNER



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VIDEO**

Two long-running programmes developing the internal capability of high-performing Māori and Pacific staff are key to supporting the Ministry of Social Development's strategy of reflecting the community it serves to better support its clients to be safe, strong and independent.

The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) is one of New Zealand's largest government departments, with more than 9,000 staff across over 200 locations, serving more than one million New Zealanders. It is at the forefront of some challenging social development issues, including the economic implications of COVID-19 and the housing crisis.

"It is critical for our success as an organisation that we reflect the people we serve, which means acknowledging and appreciating our own diversity so we can support our clients' aspirations," says Learning and Capability Director Tony Stenhouse.

About 24 per cent of MSD staff identify as Māori and 17.5 per cent as Pacifica, which is higher than representation within the public sector overall. More than 24 per cent of managers are Māori and 15 per cent are Pacifica.

Contributing to these figures are two key development programmes that have been delivering outstanding outcomes for two decades.

Te Aratiatia (The Pathway Ahead) prepares Māori and Pacific staff who show potential to step up to management roles and Te Aka Matua (The Climb to Prominence) further develops high-performing Māori and Pacific managers into more senior management and leadership roles.

Running for 21 years, the Te Aratiatia programme is based around formal assessments and ongoing coaching and development. It provides participants with a challenging learning experience that will expand their knowledge and understanding of what effective leadership looks like and help them apply this knowledge through a practical project assignment and on-the-job opportunities.

The number of applications each year far exceeds capacity and potential applicants go through a rigorous screening process. Successful applicants will be strong performers in their current position who actively demonstrate the people skills and aspiration to lead others.

Almost 250 Māori and Pacific staff have participated in this programme – the goal is to prepare participants for their first leadership role within 18 months and the programme has a 75 per cent success rate. It's highly regarded in the public sector, receiving applicants from other agencies such as Inland Revenue, Health, and Education.

Te Aka Matua is a post-graduate executive development programme that has been in place for 19 years to support managers into more senior and leadership roles. It is delivered over three years and targets high-performing Māori and Pacific managers, providing them with an opportunity to gain a masters level tertiary qualification and to help participants prepare for positions at senior management level.

With only five places available on the programme every three years, places are highly sought after. It requires a large commitment by applicants with both work and study requirements. Since 2003, 40 Māori and Pacific leaders have participated in this programme.

Two decades of investment in these programmes has resulted in many senior alumni spread across MSD and other areas of the public sector.

“I completed Te Aratiatia in 2013 and it was life changing. It wasn't only about learning about people, it was about holding up a mirror and learning about myself as a leader and how to bring others on the journey with me,” says Waikato Regional Director Rauwai Herbert Johnson.

Following on from Te Aratiatia, Rauwai embarked on tertiary study and graduated in 2015 with a Postgraduate Diploma in Management Studies.

“I am now completing Te Aka Matua and working towards my Masters of Public Management. I will always attribute my success in my career and learnings to my start point, which was Te Aratiatia.”

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THE AIM

The Ministry of Social Development needed to support its strategy of better reflecting and supporting the community it serves with a diverse workforce by developing more Māori and Pacific leaders.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Two long-running programmes, each aimed at providing participants with a pathway for career progression, were used to develop the capabilities of high-performing Māori and Pacific staff.
- Suitable candidates were identified through a rigorous screening process which includes senior leader endorsement, screening by the Senior Advisor Māori and an interview with a panel of senior Māori and Pacific leaders.
- A safe cultural setting was provided for learning, affirming the participant's background and different stages of development and identity.
- A variety of strategies, such as peer-to-peer learning, psychometrics and other tools, were used to give participants the self-knowledge and confidence needed to reflect their culture in their leadership.
- Participants' profiles were raised by giving them the opportunity to lead a significant work programme and present to senior leaders.
- The benefits of the programme were broadened by 'exporting' participants to roles throughout MSD and the wider public sector.

KEY LEARNING

By delivering targeted learning in a safe cultural setting, MSD has been able to sustain successful development programmes for Māori and Pacific staff for more than two decades, providing career progression and the opportunity to increase the number of leaders from these cultural groups throughout the organisation and the wider public sector.



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