

Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai Kia Toipoto (Closing Gaps) Action Plan 2024

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Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
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Executive summary

The Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai (DOC) is committed to cultivating a diverse and inclusive culture that supports our strategic goal of being a great organisation to work for, and with.

We remain committed to building a diverse workforce that reflects the communities we serve, while ensuring everyone has the opportunity to thrive in an inclusive and welcoming culture. DOC's approach to inclusion and diversity is shaped by the Public Service Commission's (PSC) Papa Pounamu and Kia Toipoto programmes.

DOC has made considerable progress in several areas. However, we acknowledge there are still challenges that need further attention to ensure lasting, meaningful change.

As in previous years, DOC continues to navigate substantial organisational changes aimed at improving efficiency, meeting savings targets and optimising our structure to achieve priority goals. While we remain focused on these objectives, maintaining momentum has required careful management of resources, presenting some challenges along the way. Nonetheless, our goals remain focused on ensuring DOC is a place where people feel valued, supported and able to thrive, while also fostering strong, positive relationships with external partners and stakeholders.

Summary of findings

- **Māori representation:** Increased to 15.7% from 14.7% last year.
- **Māori pay gap:** Remains low at 5.5%, with no significant change from last year.
- **Pacific and Asian representation:** Pacific representation remains low at 1.2%, while Asian representation has increased from 3.6% to 5%.
- **Gender pay gap:** Continues to remain low at 1.6%, well below the public sector average of 7.1%.
- **Female representation:** 52.7% of DOC staff are female, with women holding 44% of senior leadership positions, a slight decrease from last year's 47%.

Progressing well

- DOC's gender and Māori pay gaps remain low compared to the public sector average.
- The proportion of women in senior leadership roles has remained stable, contributing to gender balance within leadership teams.
- Reviews of remuneration and HR policies have continued to improve transparency and ensure equity in decision-making processes.

Room for improvement

- Māori staff representation has increased, but we continue to focus on attracting and retaining more Māori, Pacific and other ethnic communities.
- Further analysis is needed to understand the causes of the Māori pay gap and develop solutions to address any disparity.

- More work is needed to ensure employees with disabilities are fully supported.

Focus areas

In the coming year, DOC will focus on:

- embedding our new organisational values and behaviours into everyday practices, ensuring they inspire and unite our workforce
- building multicultural and Treaty capability across the organisation
- building the success of our employee-led networks to foster connection and advocacy
- continuing the refresh of our HR policies, with a focus on inclusion, equity and accessibility

Organisation overview, context and commitment

Vision

At DOC, our vision for inclusion and diversity is rooted in nurturing our people's innate ability to honour their own, and each other's, unique taonga. We believe that by embracing the diversity of our workforce, we create a thriving organisational ecosystem where everyone is empowered to bring their authentic selves to work.

We aspire to build a workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve, enhancing our ability to protect and preserve Aotearoa New Zealand's natural heritage.

Through collaboration and respect for each person's unique contribution, we create a work environment where innovation flourishes and sustainable conservation outcomes are achieved.

Commitment to Papa Pounamu and Kia Toipoto

The PSC's Papa Pounamu and Kia Toipoto programmes are central to our approach to inclusion and diversity. These frameworks provide us with a clear pathway to advance equity within our workplace, ensuring individuals are supported to reach their full potential.

Commitment to legal and ethical obligations

We are firmly committed to upholding our legal and ethical obligations, as set out in the Public Service Act 2020, Human Rights Act 1993 and Equal Pay Act 1972. These laws provide the foundation for ensuring fairness, equality and respect in our workplace. We strive not only to meet these obligations but also to exceed them, setting a standard of excellence in creating a truly equitable and inclusive organisation.

Organisation context and workforce

DOC has a diverse workforce spanning a broad spectrum of roles, including policy, organisation support, science, operational rangers and more. Each of these functions works collectively to achieve our mission of better outcomes for nature.

Our workforce adapts seasonally, with a significant influx of fixed-term and casual workers during the summer months, aligning with peak visitor periods and optimal outdoor working conditions. This seasonal variation ensures we are well-resourced to meet our operational demands during busier times.

Given DOC's presence across Aotearoa New Zealand, including remote offshore islands, attracting and retaining talent can sometimes be influenced by the demographics of the local area. Some roles are highly specialised, drawing from a limited talent pool, while others, such as administrative positions, reflect historical trends, with these roles still predominantly held by women.

Stakeholder engagement

We took a High Performance Engagement approach to the creation of this action plan and the initiatives identified within it. This approach is based on the principle that the people closest to the issue need to be involved in the design and implementation of a solution. We continue to

work closely with the Public Service Association (PSA) under the High Performance Engagement approach to strengthen our culture of collaboration and engagement.

The development of this plan involved engagement with a number of stakeholders across the Department. This included Remuneration, Recruitment, Digital, Organisational Development, Learning and Development, Treaty Relationships and Human Resources. Subject matter experts from each of these groups provided input for the plan, giving context on progress and targets for their particular area. We engaged with the PSA and the Deputy Director-General of Organisation Support, with input and approval subsequently received for submission.

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Workforce data

DOC's data reflects 2,844 employees as at 30 June 2024. This includes 2,420 permanent employees and 424 fixed-term employees, and includes employees working on a full-time and part-time basis.

Table 1: Trends over time

	June 2024	June 2023	June 2022	June 2021
Gender (Male/Female) (%)	46.7 / 52.7	47.4 / 51.9	47.8 / 51.4	49.3 / 50.2
Gender pay gap (based on average salaries)	1.6%	1.8%	0.9%	1.3%
Māori (% of workforce)	15.7%	14.7%	12.7%	12.3%
Pacific (% of workforce)	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	1.1%
Average age (years)	45	44	44	44

Please note: The current data set definition has changed, which means the above table contains a different data set than has been previously provided.

Table 2: Employees gender and ethnicity

Gender and ethnicity	2024
Female %	52.7%
Male %	46.7%
Another gender %	0.2%
European %	75.1%
Māori %	15.7%
Pacific %	1.2%
Asian %	5.0%
MELAA %	1.6%
Disclosed ethnicity %	95.6%
Gender pay gap	1.6%
Māori pay gap	5.5%
Pacific pay gap	-0.9%
Asian pay gap	-3.9%
MELAA pay gap	6.4%

Table 3: Representation across Tiers 2 and 3

Tier	Female %	Male %
Tier 2 [6]	50%	50%
Tier 3 [45]	47%	53%

Table 4: Employees' ethnic representation across all tiers

Tier	% Asian	% European	% Māori	% MELAA	% Pacific peoples	Other ethnic group
Tier 2 and 3 [50]	4%	82%	20%	0%	0%	6%
Tier 2 [6]	0%	83%	17%	0%	0%	0%
Tier 3 [44]	5%	82%	20%	0%	0%	7%
Tier 4 [244]	2%	78%	20%	1%	2%	9%
Tier 5 [2,223]	5%	75%	15%	2%	1%	15%

Please note: There is one less Tier 3 individual counted in Table 4 due to their ethnicity being unknown

Table 5: Employees full-time and part-time representation by gender

Tier	Female %	Male %
Full time [2,496]	51%	48%
Part time [136]	79%	21%

Please note: The percentage of full-time staff does not add up to 100%, reflecting that some staff chose not to answer.

- **Summary of workforce representation data:**
 - DOC's workforce representation has not changed significantly over the past four years.
 - There are currently slightly more female employees (52.7%) than male employees (46.7%). Of DOC employees, 0.2% are categorised as another gender.
 - DOC's relatively balanced gender workforce and low gender pay gap indicates little to no concerns with regard to gender inequities.
 - European employees continue to make up most of the workforce (75.1%).
 - Māori representation has shown to have increased steadily over the last four years, from 12.3% to 15.7%.

- Pacific and Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African (MELAA) representation remains very low (1.2% and 1.6% respectively). Asian representation is also low but has increased this year to 5%.
 - The number of employees at DOC with disabilities has also remained relatively constant over time, with 2.6% of employees reporting a disability at June 2024.
 - We do not have data identifying the proportion of DOC employees who are part of the Rainbow community.
 - The average age of DOC employees has increased slightly from 44 to 45 years.
 - Female representation in full-time roles has increased slightly from 49% to 51%. Female staff continue to represent 79% of part-time roles.
 - Previous analysis¹ has shown there are specific occupational groups where there are gender imbalances. Administration, community and advisor roles were predominantly female occupied, whereas ranger (Heritage and Visitor) roles were predominately male occupied. This remains an area that requires further analysis.
- **Pay gaps and average salaries**
 - DOC's gender and ethnic pay gaps have not changed significantly over the past four years.
 - Our gender pay gap remains low – it has moved from 1.8% in 2023 to 1.6% in 2024 using average salaries. The Public Service pay gap is 7.1%.
 - The Māori pay gap also is relatively low and unchanged from 2023 at 5.5% using average salaries. The Public Service Māori pay gap is 4.8%².
 - Given the small sample sizes it is likely that pay gaps for other ethnicities may not be meaningful; however, these also continue to be low. The Pacific (-0.9%) and Asian (-3.9%) pay gaps are negative numbers, meaning these employees, on average, earn more than non-Pacific or non-Asian employees. This is contrary to what is seen in other organisations.

¹ [Kia Toipoto \(Closing Gaps\) Action Plan 2023 \(doc.govt.nz\)](#)

² [Workforce Data - Pay gaps - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

Inclusion and diversity

Advancing workforce diversity and inclusive recruitment

At DOC, we are committed to building a workforce that reflects the communities we serve. In 2023/24, we focused on improving recruitment processes to attract diverse talent and ensure our practices are inclusive. The recruitment team was upskilled to empower them in educating and advising managers on sourcing diverse talent, as well as following PSC best practices during the selection process.

While no specific diversity targets were set, we continue to communicate the importance of building diverse teams to our leaders. Regular workforce reporting allows managers to see where they are succeeding and where further improvement is needed. Tools and education are also provided to ensure we are doing our best to remove bias from the recruitment process.

A refresh of our internal and external content looked to better reflect the inclusive and diverse workforce we aim to build. This included updates to our careers website, job adverts, application forms and social media messaging. A review of our selection processes, including intranet guidance and training workshops for managers, has also ensured we remain respectful of different backgrounds. A hiring manager resource was embedded into job debriefs to maintain consistent and inclusive messaging.

Looking ahead, we plan to strengthen our networks to promote opportunities more widely and improve access to recruitment data. This will enable the recruitment team to have informed conversations with hiring managers about the diversity of their teams and the talent they are attracting. Managers will also be able to review where in the recruitment process they might be losing diversity within their candidate pools. Further work will be done to improve imagery and highlight success stories from employees of diverse backgrounds.

We also continue to offer two e-learning modules on unconscious bias through our learning portal 'DOC Learn'.

Case studies

The following two case studies are examples of our recent efforts to build an inclusive workforce and fulfil our responsibilities as an honourable Treaty partner.

Case study: Treaty capability

Overview

The past year has seen a large and positive shift in momentum as we increased our commitment to ensuring our obligations to Māori-Crown relations and Treaty capability for our staff at Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai. In 2023/24 financial year, DOC established a new Treaty Capability Oversight directorate, which reviewed all legislative obligations, systems and policies, and developed a Treaty Capability Framework to streamline and connect the individual components. This will lead to a more efficient and effective approach to achieve meaningful outcomes.

Te reo Māori revitalisation and Maihi Karauna

Under Te Ture mō Te Reo Māori 2016 our work in the last year has been focused on the reconciliation of the requirements under Maihi Karauna, ensuring we have clarity not only in our obligations, but also how best we can achieve these across the estate, which has multiple teams, offices, districts and regions across Aotearoa. With this completed, we have successfully finalised and submitted our Mahere Reo Māori 'Te Reo Aurea' and have moved into implementation of the goals we have set to help revitalise te reo Māori across DOC and Aotearoa.

Te Reo Aurea: Systems and staff capability

At a systems level, Te Reo Aurea will guide the review and enhancement of our processes, policies and systems to provide clear direction and measurable outcomes for te reo Māori revitalisation. At an individual level, we will launch a redeveloped survey to assess staff capability in and attitudes to te reo, further supporting our revitalisation efforts.

Whāinga Amorangi and Te Pūkenga Atawhai

Under the Public Service Act 2020, Te Pūkenga Atawhai has been the DOC Whāinga Amorangi response for over three years and has been at the heart of our Māori-Crown approach. The week-long marae stay encompasses not only the core components of te reo, Treaty of Waitangi and Aotearoa New Zealand history, but also multiple additional components within Whāinga Amorangi that help our people to build awareness, empathy, skills and confidence when engaging with our Treaty partners at the place where we work.

In the last year, staff have successfully completed Te Pūkenga Atawhai, with our evaluations showing the programme had a significant positive impact on individuals' understanding, confidence and engagement with te ao Māori, te reo Māori, tikanga and kawa, Māori Engagement, Section 4 and Treaty of Waitangi obligations on both personal and professional levels. On average, participants increased 40% in both competence and confidence for each of the individual components after participating in the programme.

Due to the success of the programme, the demand for Te Pūkenga Atawhai has outgrown the ability to meet the obligations under Whāinga Amorangi and as such a refreshed submission for Whāinga Amorangi has been developed and will be implemented in 2024/25. The structure and content of Te Pūkenga Atawhai has also been reviewed to provide a 12-month wraparound programme utilising online learning modules and will become a core component of a wider DOC Whāinga Amorangi submission moving forward, which will see the development of 12-month Treaty Capability plans for each directorate.

Expanding Māori knowledge through Wānanga and Kura Reo

In line with Whāinga Amorangi, DOC was also able to provide staff the opportunity to attend a weekly full-day wānanga-style online mātauranga session held with Professor Rangi Mātāmua over an eight-week period, with over 97% of attendees feeling their practical knowledge of mātauranga had increased. Additionally, at the conclusion of the wānanga series, staff reported a 533% increase in feeling 'fairly confident' or 'confident' with their understanding of mātauranga.

Another great opportunity that supported our Whāinga Amorangi aspirations was the the first Kura Reo Taiao delivered completely in Māori across four days at Waikōhatu Marae. In addition to increased te reo knowledge specific to te taiao, all staff made large shifts in other Whāinga Amorangi components of tikanga and kawa, te ao Māori and Māori engagement. Most importantly, the mātauranga shared reinforced the intimate relationship between Māori and te taiao, highlighting the critical role of te reo Māori and mātauranga in enabling our DOC kaimahi to work alongside our Treaty partners to achieve positive conservation outcomes. DOC also had staff attend the Kura Reo Taiao in Tokomaru Akau and is looking for ways to ensure we can continue to keep our staff involved in these moving forward as part of meeting our commitments to both Whāinga Amorangi and Maihi Karauna through Te Reo Auea.

Local initiatives and future focus

Alongside national programmes, DOC's districts and regions have implemented Treaty capability initiatives tailored to local needs. These include wall walks, te reo classes, Treaty workshops, tikanga sessions and more, all aimed at enhancing relationships with Treaty partners. Moving forward, DOC remains committed to offering both national and regional initiatives to continue strengthening Treaty capability across the organisation.

Honouring our Treaty partnership in Learning and Development

Being an honourable Treaty partner is fundamental to DOC's Learning and Development core skills programmes. These programmes focus on building cultural awareness and competency, acknowledging the dual roles of Tangata Tiriti (non-Māori) and Tangata Whenua (Māori), and the importance of fostering significant relationships within DOC and with our Treaty partners. Every programme includes an introductory level of te ao Māori, which encompasses te reo Māori me ōna tikanga, and features workshops that explore what it means to be an honourable Treaty partner.

- Kia Māhuri Tōtara (Growing new and current leaders): This programme was introduced in early 2024. It includes e-learning and reading materials that focus on the role of a Connector – helping leaders bring diverse groups together to share information and achieve common goals. The programme also teaches leaders how to incorporate Treaty capability into their everyday work.
- Ruia Te Kākano (Planting seeds for all staff): This programme features a Treaty Relationships workshop, focusing on what it means to be an honourable Treaty partner at DOC.

Management Essentials programme

In 2024, DOC developed and delivered a new Honourable Treaty Partner series as part of the Management Essentials programme. This series equips people leaders with the skills, knowledge and tools needed to uphold DOC's responsibilities as an honourable Treaty partner in their daily work. The series focuses on important aspects like the tikanga of hui with Treaty partners, Treaty negotiations, settlement processes and personal development planning to help leaders grow in their role as Treaty partners.

This programme also includes a Thriving Teams workshop – focusing on creating psychological safety and a team environment where people feel safe to contribute, bring their full selves to work and speak out.

Case study: Strengthening DOC's culture through values and behaviours

How this work started

In December 2023, our Director-General announced DOC would begin work in 2024 to strengthen our culture. Creating new values and behaviours was the first phase.

Inclusion and diversity in the creation process

In March 2024, staff were invited to share their feedback through online workshops, online forms or written posters. There were 31 workshops, 118 online forms and seven interactive posters. Over 780 people provided feedback from all areas of DOC. This feedback, alongside feedback from other key stakeholders, led to the creation of four values and eight behaviours that represent the voices of our people.

Being an honourable Treaty partner

One of DOC's strategic outcomes is being an honourable Treaty partner. We have put this at the heart of our values and behaviours work. At the outset we established a culture project team with Māori experts. This team is co-sponsored by our Chief People Officer and the Deputy Director-General Treaty Relationships Group. Throughout the end-to-end development of our values and behaviours we have worked in partnership to reflect our people's voices in an authentic and genuine way.

Our final values and behaviours will strengthen us

Our values and behaviours were approved by the Senior Leadership Team in September 2024. They will become part of our refreshed DOC Strategy – describing how we want to work at our best together, and with others, to achieve great outcomes for nature.

Our new values and behaviours will enable us to continue building a culture that's inclusive, where people are respected, and diverse ideas and perspectives are valued and celebrated. Ultimately, our values and behaviours aim to strengthen us being a fantastic place to work in, and with.

What's coming up next

In 2025, our new values and behaviours will be woven into our systems and processes at DOC. For example, brand, recruitment, induction, performance and development, reward and recognition. In short, they will become a part of everything we do and how we do it, and will be highly visible.

Kia Toipoto enabling initiatives

Employee-led networks

Our **Women's Network**, launched on Suffrage Day (19 September). The Network aims to *create a safe space for whakawhanaungatanga within DOC: where staff of all genders are able to connect, support, advocate and share knowledge to enable women to flourish.*

Engagement and participation has been remarkable, with over 500 staff estimated to have attended the online launch hui, and over 330 members signing up within the first month.

The network focuses on four key strategic areas: sharing knowledge; fostering connections; advocating; and championing opportunities.

DOC's **Rainbow Network** is a long-established community dedicated to supporting Rainbow staff and allies. It provides a safe and inclusive space where people can connect, share experiences and advocate for greater understanding and equity within the workplace. The network has been instrumental in raising awareness, education and fostering a culture of belonging for Rainbow individuals at DOC. Through regular events (including a weekly morning quiz catch-up), educational initiatives and peer support, the Rainbow Network continues to play a vital role in ensuring DOC is a place where everyone feels respected and valued.

Additionally, a **Kaimahi Māori network** is in the process of being developed to support Māori staff within DOC. This is still in initial stages and will be developed further during the year.

We are actively exploring how these networks can serve as vital support forums for staff, offering safe spaces for connection, peer support and collaboration in addressing challenges and identifying opportunities across DOC.

Inspiring career and leadership development

In March, we launched the Inspiring Women Speaker Series, featuring monthly sessions that run for 45–90 minutes and include speeches, panel discussions and workshops led by a diverse range of speakers. This series complements the newly established Women's Network, offering support to female staff at various stages of their career development. While the series focuses on topics of interest for women, it is open to all staff, welcoming anyone interested in learning. Attendance has ranged from 200 to 550 participants per session, with many more viewing the recordings afterward. Due to the overwhelmingly positive feedback, we plan to continue the series through 2025.

Flexible and hybrid work arrangements

Our people are distributed nationally and across a range of working environments, generally categorised as either frontline or enabling functions staff. In 2018/19, we introduced our flexible working policy with clear instruction that any flexible arrangements must meet the needs of the organisation, individual and team. Following Minister Willis' announcement regarding working from home, we are capturing our current state data and reviewing our existing policy settings ahead of the updated guidance expected for early 2025.

Enhancing accessibility across our digital platforms

DOC has signed *The Accessibility Charter*, committing us to meeting Aotearoa New Zealand Government Web Standards. This commitment is evident in our recent review of the internal intranet platform, which aimed to improve accessibility and transparency. The transformative work has resulted in a more accessible intranet for all staff. We are now turning our focus to refreshing our external website, ensuring the same high standards of accessibility are applied.

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Equity

Remuneration and transparency

In the 2023 Kia Toipoto plan,³ we shared that DOC was reviewing its remuneration system to make salary information clearer and more accessible. This review, a joint effort between DOC and the PSA, was scaled back in early 2024 due to cost-saving measures. Despite the reduced scope, we have achieved several key improvements and continue to work on others.

DOC's remuneration system is tiered, with different tasks and responsibilities assigned to each level. To further promote fairness, we have published starting salary guidelines to help hiring managers set consistent pay for both internal and external hires. These guidelines also highlight factors that should not influence salary decisions, although formal monitoring of starting salaries is not yet in place.

We are also preparing to launch an intranet page that will make it easier for staff to access remuneration information.

The 2023 plan outlines DOC's ongoing efforts to ensure transparency and fairness in remuneration, aiming to remove bias and discrimination from pay policies and practices. Additionally, quarterly HR reports monitor employee representation across gender, ethnicity, age, disability and job type, as well as tracking gender pay gaps. Annual workforce reviews provide further analysis, which is included in the workforce data analysis section of this action plan.

Tier 4 roles and pay transparency

Similar to the process used for Tier 5 roles, we have set up a banding committee for Tier 4 roles. This committee includes trained PSA representatives, a director and members of the HR team. Their job is to assign salary ranges to roles, helping ensure fairness and transparency in our pay system.

The committee approach reduces the chances of bias and makes the process clearer for everyone involved. We are also working to provide more information on how annual salary increases for Tier 4 roles are determined.

Empowering our people with the right information

At DOC, our policies, procedures and guidelines help our teams carry out conservation work safely and effectively. We're currently reviewing all these resources to make sure they are up to date, practical and truly support our people in their work.

Supporting our staff to do their best is at the heart of our success. That's why we're also reviewing our People and Culture policies to ensure everyone has the right information and guidance. The goal is to create refreshed, clear policies that help our people thrive in their roles.

³ [Kia Toipoto \(Closing Gaps\) Action Plan 2023 \(doc.govt.nz\)](#)

Conclusion

While progress has been made in many areas, DOC recognises there is still work to be done to fully realise our goals for inclusion and diversity. The efforts outlined in this report provide a foundation for continued growth and improvement. We will remain focused on enhancing our organisational culture and ensuring DOC is a great organisation to work for, and with.

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