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Whare Kaupapa Atawhai | Conservation House

18 Manners Street, Wellington 6011

doc.govt.nz

Ref: OIAD-9492

24 August 2026

Tēnā koe [redacted]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation, received on 27 July 2026, in which you asked for the following information:

> *The total number of leaders and staff that have been sent on external leadership courses over the last 12 months. How much money has that cost?*
>
> *During the same period as above, how much money has DOC spent on external consultants.*

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982.

On 13 August 2026, we wrote to you regarding the first part of your request and advised that the Department was experiencing significant resourcing pressures which were affecting our ability to undertake the analysis required to respond. We noted that we had recently responded to an earlier request for the same information covering the period from 1 January 2024 to 3 December 2025 and invited you to refine your request to that date range. You subsequently advised that you did not wish to refine your request.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *The total number of leaders and staff that have been sent on external leadership courses over the last 12 months. How much money has that cost?*

   Following further review of this question, we have determined that the Department does not hold the requested information in the form sought. This is because leadership training is not recorded separately from other training and additionally, the scope of leadership training has changed significantly over time. Initially, participation in leadership development programmes was generally limited to approximately 10 Tier 1 and Tier 2 leaders. More recently, eligibility has been expanded to include people leaders down to Tier 5, which is one reason leadership training is now delivered internally rather than through external providers.

To respond to your request, staff would be required to identify information from a range of records and undertake significant analysis to separate leadership training from other training activity, identify potential external providers, and analyse expenditure across the organisation for the previous financial year. Given the volume of information potentially within scope and the extent of the work required to locate, assess, analyse, and compile that information, we have concluded that meeting this part of your request would require substantial collation and research. Accordingly, this aspect of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act 1982.

In an effort to assist however, we have attached a summary of external leadership course costs and attendance numbers (Calendar Years 2024-2025) that is more readily available. This information had been compiled previously when the Department had greater capacity to undertake the necessary analysis. We note that this was still a complex and resource-intensive exercise, requiring considerable effort to produce. The information is attached as an **Appendix** at the end of this response.

2. *During the same period as above, how much money has DOC spent on external consultants.*

I can advise that for financial year 2026, the Department spent $21,261,682.14 on external consultants. The Department engages external consultants to deliver key conservation programmes and initiatives by providing specialist technical expertise, research capability, and additional delivery capacity where this is not otherwise available or cost-effective to permanently retain in-house.

As a front-line delivery agency with a significant asset base, the Department also uses specialist consultants to support the delivery of infrastructure projects and maintenance activities. The Department continues to carefully manage its use of consultants and contractors in line with government expectations.

In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Official Information Act and determined there are no public interests that outweigh the grounds for withholding.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Department's website.

[redacted]

Nāku noa, nā



Nick Mayo
Chief Financial Officer
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Appendix

External Leadership Courses Summary (Calendar Years 2024-2025)

This summary has been prepared from information contained in OIAD-6106 Attachment 1. Please be advised that the below provides details of external leadership training undertaken during calendar years 2024 and 2025 and does not align exactly with a rolling 12-month period.

Summary

The Department does not maintain a consolidated record of the number of unique individuals who have attended external leadership courses. In preparing this response, information has been drawn from an existing compilation of leadership-related training undertaken during the 2024 and 2025 calendar years.

The table below therefore reports attendance instances rather than unique attendees. Where an individual attended more than one leadership activity, each attendance has been counted separately. As a result, the total of 42 attendances should not be interpreted as representing 42 individual staff members.

Based on the information available, the total cost of the leadership programmes identified in the compilation was $193,227, comprising course fees, accommodation, travel, and associated costs – see below table for breakdown of costs.

Cost of external leadership courses (2024-2025)

Programme	**Participants**	**Number of attendees**
Senior Leadership Workshop (Nov 2024)	Senior Leadership Team	8
Strategic Leadership Programme (2025)	Deputy Director-General Public Affairs	1
Senior Leadership Workshop (25 Feb 2025)	Senior Leadership Team	8
Senior Leadership Workshop (29-30 Apr 2025)	Senior Leadership Team	8
Senior Leadership Retreat (26-27 Aug 2025)	Senior Leadership Team	8
Senior Leadership Retreat (25-26 Nov 2025)	Senior Leadership Team	8
Company Directors Course (May 2025)	Deputy Director-General Organisation Support	1
Total attendance instances		42

Cost category	Amount ($)
Course fees	183,429
Accommodation	3,485
Flights and travel	6,146
Associated costs	167
Total costs	193, 227