

8 February 2023



Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 07 December 2022 in which you asked:

- *Please provide a list of every team building exercise your department has had over the last 2 years. For each exercise, please explain what it was, how many staff were involved, and what kind of staff it involved (interns/executives, etc.).*
- *For clarification, “team building” refers to any event or exercise where staff participate to create a sense of togetherness or to get to know each other. They may be referred to by a different name at your department, so please outline this in your response. Examples may include but not be limited to the following: treasure hunt, movie night, initiation party, laser tag, etc.*
- *Please provide the total cost of all team building exercises organized for staff at your department over the last 2 years. Please break this down for each team building exercise. Costs should include but not be limited to the following: travel expenses, catering, venue hire, entertainment, staff hours, accommodation, organizing, consulting, etc.*
- *Also, please provide any costs budgeted for future team building events yet to be completed.*

On 19 January, after a discussion with our team, your request was refined to:

A 2-year past view of team building exercises (defined as any event or exercise where staff participate to create a sense of togetherness or to get to know each other) from one of our larger offices – detailing the event and any costs to the Department associated.

In refining this request, you acknowledged that we cannot replicate requested data for all offices on a national level. You were also informed that as an organisation we do not expect our offices to hold this information and any records available would be inconsistent and incomplete.



Context

As an organisation we primarily operate via a decentralised budget for training which does not differentiate activities in a manner which can provide the data you seek. In this respect our financial systems do not distinguish any activity that could be considered as ‘team building exercises’ from any other learning and development activity. We instead utilise a learning management system to track completion and attendance of learning, and courses covered within its centralised budget. As there is no centralised budget for ‘team building exercises or courses’, team building as an activity is not tracked in the learning management system.

Any team building activity is at the discretion of individual managers and is frequently combined with other training or planning activities. On a semi-regular basis, teams meet in one location for the purpose of planning and sharing information, e.g., regular senior leaders’ hui, operational leadership team meetings, etc.

For your reference we provide information (where it can be identified) concerning internal spend on a variety of activities including conferences, seminars, staff retreats, offsite training, or planning and team building exercises (including travel costs). The purpose of these activities and associated spend are provided via our Annual Review submission which is publicly available on the Parliament website. Responses for the 2021/2022 financial year are available and accessible at: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/sc/submissions-and-advice/document/53SCEN_EVI_129941_EN10594/departments-of-conservation-responses-to-written-questions.

Response

We sought data from our Auckland office, being one of our larger offices, as per your refined request. We are unfortunately still unable to provide you with a 2-year summary of team building exercises despite this refinement. This data is unable to be extracted from our systems (for reasons previously described) and all other team building exercises occur outside of formal work arrangements. As a result, your request is unfortunately refused under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act, as the information you have requested cannot be identified.

The Auckland Office does also have an active social club and its activities would fit into your description of “team building” exercises. All activities organised by the social club are self-funded by membership fees and are not funded by the department. These activities also take place out of office hours.

We do budget up to \$20 per staff member for Christmas functions, which would fit your description of “team building” exercises – this budget remained the same for the 2021 and 2022 calendar year. The Auckland Office though has not held a Christmas function for the last two years due to COVID-19 restrictions. Last year the function was cancelled due to poor weather.



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

Nāku noa, nā



Ginny Baddeley

Chief People Officer

Department of Conservation

Te Papa Atawhai