

Purpose

This advice informs agencies that they can and should be **addressing bias** and discrimination in all its forms. This is one of the five Papa Pounamu mandatory requirements that agencies are expected to plan and report on. Advice is available for each of the mandatory requirements:

- Cultural Competence
- **Addressing Bias**
- Inclusive Leadership
- Building Relationships
- Employee-led Networks

The five mandatory requirements are designed to complement each other. They also work with existing diversity and inclusion commitments to make the most positive impact across all diversity dimensions.

What do we mean by addressing bias?

A bias is a tendency or prejudice either toward or against something or someone. We all have biases and they can be complex and challenging to identify and manage. There are many different types of bias, both unconscious and conscious. For the purposes of this advice when we refer to addressing bias we are talking about more than just unconscious bias training. We mean public service employees need to understand bias, how it operates and how we can act to mitigate. This needs to be supported by changes to workplace systems and structures to reduce bias from occurring.

Why does addressing bias matter in the Public Service?

We know bias and discrimination persist in our workplaces. Pay gaps continue to exist as does ethnic under-representation in leadership levels. While we have made good progress in closing the gender pay gap and in increasing Māori and ethnic representation there is still much to do. Addressing bias is one of the most powerful ways in which our public service can create fair, diverse

and inclusive workplaces where everyone can succeed and is valued. This will enable the Public Service to engage meaningfully, and to design and deliver services that meet the needs of **all** New Zealanders, now and into the future.

How do we address bias in the Public Service?

Agencies will adopt a bias learning solution. People leaders will ‘walk the talk’ by completing bias learning and by encouraging all employees to do the same. They will also encourage ongoing reflection and action as Public Sector agencies work to address bias over time. We need to identify and mitigate bias as individuals, as teams and through our workplace systems and structures. This will be an ongoing journey. To make positive progress agencies must intentionally plan, do and report.

Planning

Each agency will need to determine what the best bias learning solution is for their people. This is likely to look different for different agencies and may require different approaches within agencies. All agencies should outline their planned approach to address bias in their forward annual plans. These plans should recognise the need for both individual learning and for workplace structural and system change.

Doing

Example - ...we plan on addressing bias by having our employees undertake bias learning. We expect that by Dec 2020, all our people leaders/managers will have completed bias learning and that 75% of all other employees will have completed bias learning by June 2021. Teams will have ongoing conversations about bias awareness and ways to mitigate it. We will also review our recruitment policies and practices to identify where bias occurs and how we can make changes to mitigate bias from occurring.

It is expected that Public Sector agencies create a culture that prioritises fairness. That means supporting employees with time and resources to learn, recognise and remove bias from day-to-day practices and from workplace systems and structures. Undertaking bias learning will be the first step in doing this. This will enable a shared understanding across our public service on how bias and discrimination occurs. It will also help us to work together to remove bias from workplace structures and systems.

Example - ...our people leaders lead by example and commit to completing bias learning and embedding this learning in their day-to-day activities. They actively support all employees to undertake their own bias learning and back them to remove or reduce bias whenever possible in their day-to-day activities. People leaders set aside time when convening recruitment panels, making recruitment decisions and having progression or development conversations to mitigate bias. The HR team review all recruitment policies and practices in line with the [Gender Pay Taskforce guidance](#).

Reporting

In Annual Reports, agencies will be expected to include specific evidence or examples of action that demonstrates progress made in addressing bias within your agency.

Example - ...we have promoted the availability of bias learning through our staff intranet and through our leaders. All people leaders have completed bias learning. 70% of all other employees have completed bias learning. We have started to make structural and system changes by applying the [Gender Pay Taskforce guidance](#) in all our HR processes. We use the principles from the [Gender Pay Taskforce guidance](#) across all diversity dimensions.

Potential learning solution options to address bias in your agency

Many agencies will already be using a form of bias learning. Other agencies who do not have a current bias learning solution are encouraged to work with their people to explore their options. Some potential options are:

- Adopt a pre-existing bias learning solution
- Use an off-the-shelf learning solution delivered by external providers
- Tailor or customise your own addressing bias learning solution.

Any learning solution can be further supplemented by other resources and should promote ongoing learning and behaviour change.

Addressing bias is about more than training

Learning can be an effective tool for increasing awareness of bias and reducing bias, although on its own it's unlikely to eliminate it. It is important that agencies take a much broader approach to address bias and to achieve system-wide change. Agencies should support employees to undertake bias learning while also beginning to change workplace structures and systems to prevent bias occurring. Agencies can use the existing [Gender Pay Taskforce guidance](#) to help achieve this. The principles of this guidance are applicable across all diversity dimensions. This work can be uncomfortable and challenging. All efforts to address bias should be recognised and supported. This will be an ongoing journey that will evolve over time.

For further information please visit <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/our-work/diversity-and-inclusion/> or contact <mailto:diversityandinclusion@publicservice.govt.nz>

Addressing Bias Tools and Resources

Further information that will be helpful to public service employees and agencies on addressing bias can be found [here](#). This includes a collation of useful tools and resources, as well as more details on the potential learning solutions to help address bias in the Public Service.

