

Purpose

This is advice on **building relationships**. This is one of the five Papa Pounamu mandatory requirements that agencies are expected to plan and report on, with an initial focus on people leaders building relationships with their people.

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 and work together with existing diversity and inclusion commitments to make the most positive impact across all diversity dimensions.

What do we mean by building relationships?

Building relationships is an essential part of inclusive practice. Positive and inclusive relationships matter for all our people at all levels, both inside organisations and out into the community. For the purposes of this advice, building relationships is about deliberately building a diverse range of purposeful relationships that are positive and inclusive. These relationships encourage diverse perspectives, value different worldviews, avoid assumptions and address negative biases.

We all have a responsibility to build relationships that enhance the ways in which our Public Service delivers for New Zealanders. Strong relationships with diverse people and communities increase the trust and confidence within our Public Service agencies and across the Public Service as a whole.

Why does building relationships matter in the Public Service?

Building positive and inclusive relationships is one way in which we can all foster diversity and inclusivity in the Public Service. It's about how strong, inclusive relationships transcend workplaces to benefit both the people who work within the Public Service and those that we serve. Strong relationships enable people to feel valued, supported and respected.

Including diverse perspectives in our work enhances collaborative working, drives innovation and fosters a sense of belonging. This helps to build a more inclusive Public Service that is better able to meet the needs of **all** New Zealanders.

How do we build relationships in the Public Service?

Most agencies will have policies, processes and/or practices that support relationship development with stakeholders and for people leaders with their direct reports. When we talk about building relationships that support diversity and inclusion, we want people to think about any gaps in relationships; where can the relationship be strengthened and ultimately, how can we reach out to expand the range of relationships we have. There is a range of tools available that can help individuals, teams and agencies to build positive and inclusive relationships. We have collated these tools and resources into the [Inclusive Practice Toolkit](#). These tools and resources may already be familiar to you. You might also find some that are less familiar.

We want agencies to promote the use of these tools and resources alongside any agency-specific policies, processes and resources that encourage positive and inclusive relationships within the workplace. People leaders 'walk the talk' by modelling inclusive practice in their day-to-day interactions. To make and evidence progress on building relationships, agencies need to intentionally plan, do and report.

Planning

Each agency will need to assess and determine their best approach to building positive and inclusive relationships within their workplaces. This should have an initial focus on people leaders building positive and inclusive relationships with their teams. How this is done will likely look different for each agency and may require different approaches within agencies. All agencies should outline their planned approach to building relationships in their forward agency plans.

Example - ... Our agency plans to use focus groups to better understand the experiences of our diverse staff and what we can do to improve inclusion in the workplace. This will help us to understand their concerns and how we can best address these. We are also planning to develop ways to better understand the experience of communities and key stakeholders our agency works with.

Doing

The more we are deliberate about building positive and inclusive relationships the more inclusive practice becomes a natural part of what we do. This will enable an inclusive and effective Public Service workforce. We expect that our people leaders will draw on the available tools and advice to build relationships that reflect the diverse needs of the people they work with, and for. Some tools will fit some situations or relationships better than others. As you become more familiar with the tools and resources you will be able to identify more opportunities to use them regularly.

Example - ... In meetings and 1:1 conversations our people leaders are deliberately using tools and modelling techniques to appreciate the different perspectives that people might bring (based on their culture, faith, ability or a range of other diverse experiences). Our people leaders are recognising and valuing the broad range of perspectives and worldviews represented across their teams and work in ways that use these to enhance our work.

Reporting

In your Annual Report you will be expected to include specific evidence or examples that demonstrate positive progress in building inclusive relationships at your agency.

We encourage agencies to consider if any internal reporting, and customer or stakeholder feedback can also be used in your reporting on building relationships.

Example - ... 80% of staff who participated in a focus group told us they have positive relationships at work. Our focus groups have suggested how we can improve the workplace experience of our rainbow and disabled staff. We have also developed and implemented a range of mechanisms for our customers to share their feedback. Feedback from our customers indicates they are having more positive interactions with our staff, the overall quality of our service is improving, and they trust our staff to do what is right

For further information please visit [Diversity and Inclusion](#) or email [Diversity and Inclusion](#)

Inclusive Practice Toolkit

The Inclusive Practice Toolkit is a collation of helpful tools and resources to build positive and inclusive relationships. The tools and resources are focused on growing our diversity and inclusion capability. Regular and committed use to these tools and resources will help us to build more positive and inclusive relationships as individuals, teams and agencies, which in turn builds a more inclusive Public Service.

The Inclusive Practice Toolkit can be found [here](#).

