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The New Zealand Institute of Intelligence Professionals

**Diversity Survey Requirements**

March 2021

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# Executive Summary

In November 2020, theNew Zealand Institute of Intelligence Professionals (NZIIP) commissioned one of their interns to begin the scoping phase of the Institute’s diversity assessment survey. His work would ensure a well-rounded basis for the survey and provide NZIIP with a diverse range of member feedback to consider.

To determine member values, diversity requirements, and future industry needs the intern produced a semi-structured interview plan for the scoping phase. The plan would set the parameters for each interview and included the following questions:

1. How do you (the professional) define diversity?
2. What are some of the barriers to diversity in the New Zealand intelligence sector and/or National Security System?
3. How should the profession move forward?

Between November 2020 – February 2021, the intern conducted 21 interviews with key members of the New Zealand intelligence sector and National Security System. With an initial scope of eight interviewees, he grew this pool to include managers, directors, deputy chief executives, and the Directors-General of the NZSIS and GCSB.

The scoping phase highlighted organisational culture, recruitment, security clearances, and a lack of public engagement as significant barriers to diversity and inclusion. All 21 interviewees mentioned at least one of these barriers; a large majority associated them with the lack of ethnic, cultural, and neuro diversity in the sector.

From the available findings the intern compiled a list of suggested and partial questions which reflected member’s thoughts and opinions. He followed this with a series of recommendations concerning the survey’s design, parameters, and distribution.

The intern’s product details NZIIP stakeholder requirements and lists a series of questions for the NZIIP Diversity Assessment Survey. It aims to support NZIIP in its mission to grow and connect the intelligence profession(al) through participation, partnership, and protection.

# Introduction

## ***Diversity***

Diversity concerns our individual differences; the unique blend of knowledge, skills, perspectives, and experiences brought into the workplace. It can include characteristics such as cultural background and ethnicity, age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, language, education, and professional experiences.

## ***Inclusion***

Inclusion refers to that which ensures everyone feels respected, valued, and safe in the workplace. Members can experience inclusion when others treat them equitably and with respect; they feel a sense of connectedness or belonging to a group; they feel safe and able to speak up without the fear of embarrassment or retaliation. Diversity without inclusion leads to tokenism.

## ***Why Diversity and Inclusion Matter***

*“Our future will be in part determined by our ability to recruit and retain good people who more closely reflect the community we serve.”* – Directors-General of NZIC

In August 2020, the Public Service Act 2020 came into force. The Act, with an increased focus on diversity and inclusion, sets out the shared purpose, principles, and values of the Public sector. It requires Public service chief executives to be guided by the principle that employees should reflect the wider community and to ensure that employment policies and practises foster a workplace inclusive of all groups.

When organisations value workplace diversity and inclusion they see benefits such as higher employee engagement, improved performance, greater innovation, retention of talent, improved employee wellbeing, lower levels of poor behaviour such as harassment and bullying, and increased attractiveness to potential employees. Using this report NZIIP should champion diversity, not on legal or ethical grounds, but rather because increased diversity will lead to better intelligence collection and analysis.

# Scope of Work

## ***Deliverables***

A written assessment of NZIIP stakeholder requirements and listed questions for the NZIIP Diversity Assessment Survey.

## ***Tasks***

Conduct interviews with key members of the New Zealand intelligence sector and National Security System. These should focus on establishing both quantitative and qualitative requirements for sector leaders and members.

## ***Project Guidance***

1. Draft communications to members calling for expressions of interest in informing NZIIP Diversity Assessment Survey Requirements.
2. Collate and manage member responses.
3. Develop an interview plan to determine interviewees’ thoughts and opinions.
4. Facilitate introductions to interviewees through NZIIP committee members.
5. Prepare an interview schedule.
6. Collate interview responses and notes for future NZIIP use.
7. Prepare written assessment of NZIIP stakeholder requirements.
8. Prepare questions for the NZIIP Diversity Assessment Survey.

## ***Sample***

Number Interviewed: 21 (see Appendices for sample statistics)

## ***Limitations and Constraints***

The project could not interview a more diverse range of intelligence professionals due to time restrictions and member availability. Similar constraints also limited the project’s ability to collect the thoughts and opinions of non-intelligence members such as those from Te Puni Kōkiri or the Public Service Commission.

# Findings

This report specifically tried to answer the following questions:

**How do you (the professional) define diversity?**

Most interviewees defined diversity in terms of demographics. Members identified background, culture, ethnicity, education, and neuro diversity as specific areas the sector needed to work on. Interviewees often linked demographics to **diversity of thought**.

**What are some of the barriers to diversity in the New Zealand intelligence sector and/or National Security System?**

Every interviewee identified one or more of the following barriers**: recruitment**; **security clearances**; tendency to over classify information; **lack of public engagement**; reluctance of sector to “demystify” itself; the perceived “elitist” culture of the NZIC; conservative ‘middle ground’ of agencies; **organisational culture**.

**How should the profession move forward?**

In addition to mitigating the barriers cited above, most interviewees felt the intelligence sector and National Security System needed to move forward with greater **transparency**. The Directors-General of the NZIC described this process as “the long journey of myth-busting.”

**What should an NZIIP survey look like?**

1. Any survey released needs to detail the **role of NZIIP** in promoting diversity and prioritise the idea of “you talk we listen.”
2. Should make the participant feel uncomfortable as well as valued and respected.
3. The survey needs a champion, someone, or some agency, beyond NZIIP.
4. Should provide statistics of current sector demographics as well as where the participant works.
5. Should provide an option for short answer questions.
6. The survey needs to make participants feel as if they are contributing to something bigger.

# Assessment

## ***Diversity of Thought***

Diversity of thought should quantify how an individual’s life experience, whether professional or otherwise, can influence their thinking or analysis. One interviewee defined the intelligence sector’s diversity of thought capabilities as its “competitive edge in matters of national security and the Pacific region,” as New Zealand understands the “Pacific way.”

Members suggested that *diversity + inclusion = diversity of thought*. If the sector strives to represent the population it serves, and provides an inclusive workplace for potential employees, then this will in turn lead to diversity of thought.

## ***Recruitment***

Some interviewees believe certain organisations, particularly the NZIC, fail to maintain equitable recruitment practises. They suggested these agencies of searching for the perfect candidate through a “cookie cutter” recruitment system, designed to entrench what “good looks like.” Whether this process was more influenced by human resource departments or NZIC managers and senior leaders was not elaborated on. Members want the intelligence community to focus on producing a more equitable recruitment system that works for New Zealand’s diversifying demographics, as a priority over recruiting from their Five Eyes partners.

Interviewees also highlighted oblique and recycled job advertisements as a significant barrier. One DPMC interviewee noted that many advertisements remain outdated and fail to mention the organisation’s values or commitment to Te Titiri o Waitangi. Another interviewee believes agencies remain quite vague when posting job positions and fail to list transferable skills; they worry many agency advertisements “already picture the perfect candidate in mind” and will exercise an unacknowledged bias towards certain applicants.

## ***Security Clearances***

Almost every interviewee covered the negative impact of security clearances. They commented that agencies remain “hung up” on security clearances, which alienates a large portion of diverse applicants.

Interviewees believe the sector needs to provide more information on “who really needs” and “who can apply for” a security clearance. As applicants may feel underqualified for a position or simply not apply due to a poor understanding of clearance conditions.

The Chief Vetting Officer (CVO) at NZSIS commented that the Protective Security Requirements (PSR) website lists all the relevant information on obtaining a security clearance. The employing organisation should inform applicants about the vetting process (especially in their job advertisements), provide a list of FAQs, and direct potential employees to this website. Organisations should also state the *length of time* it takes to obtain a security clearance and, alongside the Vetting Office, work towards mitigating this significant barrier.

## ***Lack of Public Engagement***

According to some interviewees, the intelligence sector and National Security System fails to actively engage with the wider public. One interviewee, working on the Royal Commission Inquiry into the Christchurch Attacks, found certain individual and family perceptions of the intelligence community were tainted by history and the media.

Several interviewees criticised the community for failing to take “hard steps” in this space and would like to see greater engagement with minority groups. The sector should also increase its presence among secondary schools, career expos, community groups, and universities, while attempting to “mainstream intelligence” as a career pathway.

## ***Organisational Culture***

Potential employees may find the intelligence sector and/or National Security System a difficult environment to work in:

According to some interviewees, the intelligence sector and National Security System fails to cooperate on matters of diversity and inclusion. Relationships reportedly rarely exist owing to a perceived “professional arrogance” and perceptions of an “elitist” culture in the core intelligence agencies. The NZIC reported finding it difficult “to get traction for sector wide diversity” and found they could make greater change on their own. The Directors-General commented that, “while some may see this as a type of elitism or form of separation from the rest of the sector, the NZIC found it a necessary step in order to improve their function as New Zealand’s primary intelligence agencies.”

Several interviewees found a large portion of tier 2, 3, and 4 leaders (the middle block of deputy chief executives, directors, and managers) tend to remain in the same position and entrench organisational behaviour. One interviewee commented that they did not like the idea of “managers getting comfortable,” as this made for a “lousy intelligence professional.” Systems of career rotation could provide increased professional insight, adaptability, and allow for lower tier managers to progress.

Several interviewees believe the disciplined and outdated intelligence method marginalises the creativity of intelligence professionals. One interviewee suggested that some more junior intelligence professionals feel afraid to express their thoughts and opinions, especially in those organisations with a hierarchical nature. Another interviewee, the only member to express the need for greater gender diversity, described the intelligence community as “dominated by a white masculine culture.” Many of those in this culture will resist change, they suggested, especially if those members feel threatened or targeted by diversity and inclusion initiatives.

The sector must stress a culture that praises diversity of thought. The profession can no longer marginalise individual thought nor continue to produce “intelligence sheep” by forcing members to suppress their originality to fit in.

## ***Transparency***

The intelligence sector and National Security System arguably need greater transparency conditioned for ingroups and outgroups. As an ingroup, interviewees criticised the need to “over classify information,” a factor some attributed to the perceived “elitist” culture of the NZIC.

The sector also fails to explain its purpose to the wider public (the outgroup). New Zealanders need to understand the risks New Zealand faces and why these warrant an intelligence sector and national security workforce. “Myth-busting” should lead the sector’s outward transparency strategies, to ensure the wider public does not rely on the media, nor the annals of history, to inform its opinion of the intelligence community.

# Recommendations

## ***Survey Design***

NZIIP needs to include both ‘Diversity and Inclusion’ in the title of their anonymous survey. It should begin with a statement from the Chair stating the intention of the survey, its importance, and what NZIIP plans to do with the results. It would then ask the following questions:

1. When did you enter the intelligence profession?
2. How long have you been in the profession?
3. How many organisations have you worked at since you joined the profession?
4. Which agency do you work for (if comfortable responding)?
5. As well as those questions referring to a participant’s demographics.

The survey could employ the likert scale, strongly agree (A) – strongly disagree (D), for non-open-ended questions. Some of those provided in the assessment adhere to this scale. By the end of the survey the participant needs to feel accomplished, therefore it needs to maintain a good balance of short (easy) and long (hard) questions.

## ***Survey Parameters***

Individuals or organisations with intelligence or intelligence-related roles/services should complete a survey.

## ***Survey Distribution***

The Institute should use chief executives as their primary distribution method. In order to accomplish this it needs a champion, someone who takes the survey seriously and will ensure others do so to. The Director of DPMC’s National Security Work Force (NSWF) directorate would be a suitable champion for results across the intelligence sector and National Security System.

The survey provider, whether NZIIP or a third party, should process the results into three parts: (1) a formal assessment of the data collected made available to the public and all NZIIP members; (2) a grouping of raw data sets with specific agency details removed so other researchers can make use of the data; (3) a short report and the data specific to participations for their leaders to consider, this third option should avoid making recommendations to address the data and simply identify the conclusions available from the data.

## ***The Role of NZIIP***

Before the survey goes out NZIIP must decide how far it wants to promote this project; then sell this to the wider sector. The Institute must commit to championing diversity and inclusion by valuing member input and using this to make actionable change.

# Appendices