

Web-Enabled Application Process for Appointments to Statutory Bodies

The Ministry of Health is responsible for the preparation of appointments to 21 statutory bodies and committees and crown entities that the Minister of Health has appointment rights to. This work is currently undertaken by one FTE under the supervision of the Manager, Corporate Planning and Reporting.

Up until the development of the new web based application system the process had been for the Ministry to write to the various health and disability professional bodies and to the population Ministries (Consumer Affairs, Youth Affairs, Pacific Island Affairs and TPK) to seek their nominations of people who might be considered suitable by the Minister for appointment.

Once person's suitability for consideration has been identified they were requested to complete an application form and the details on this form were manually entered into the Ministry's Lotus Notes Statutory Bodies and Committees database. This database records the personal and professional details of all people currently serving on statutory bodies and committees, the functions of the bodies and committees, the classification of the committee under the Government's fees framework, and details of persons who wish to be considered for future appointment opportunities.

As the application form was quite complex it took some time to manually enter the details from the form into the database and often core data only was entered with the remaining data entry followed up when time and resources permitted. Backlogs of data entry were periodically cleared by contract workers engaged for this task.

The recently enacted Health Professional Competence Assurance Act 2003 requires vacancies on professional bodies to be publicly advertised thereby potentially significantly increasing the number of people putting their names forward for consideration of appointment. As the majority of vacancies on statutory bodies and committees were to be publicly advertised it was decided to advertise all vacancies arising in 2003/04 to enable the Ministry to widen the pool of people to recruit from. It was therefore necessary to develop new procedures so that an increased number of applications could be managed within existing resources.

It was estimated that, unless a better way could be found of managing the expected increase in applications that staffing would need to increase by 1.5 to 2.0 FTE.

The Solution

The use of a web-enabled process was selected to meet the Government direction for greater diversity in membership of statutory bodies and committees. The on-line information and application process coupled with public advertisement of positions has resulted in greater transparency of the decision making processes while meeting the business need of managing applications more effectively.

The Government and Sector Relations Group and the Information Management and Technology Group of the Ministry have developed an on-line application procedure for members of the public wishing to be considered for appointment to a statutory body or

committee by the Minister of Health. The on-line application process can be accessed through the Ministry's main website (www.moh.govt.nz) by clicking on the About link.

People wishing to be considered for appointment can now go to the Ministry's website to obtain information on the body or committee they are interested in serving on and can complete and submit the application form on-line. The on-line process requires the applicant to complete all questions in order for the application to be 'accepted' by the system. The receipt of the application is acknowledged automatically by e-mail. Once the application form has been submitted the responsible Analyst will determine if the application is to be accepted. This process weeds out frivolous applicants and persons not considered to be qualified for appointment.

If the application is accepted the person's details are automatically entered into the Ministry's Statutory Bodies and Committees database, which can be accessed by Ministry staff through their intranet portal.

The Benefits

Since 1 October when the system was introduced, there has been a significant response from a number of high calibre candidates.

The new process has a number of advantages for the Ministry and the citizen:

- Reduces the Ministry's time required to enter data into the Statutory Bodies and Committees database;
- The web-based application process requires all questions to be answered for an application to be accepted. This has reduced the amount of time required to follow up on missing, ambiguous or incomplete answers;
- All applications are entered immediately into the database with the result that the information is immediately available to other Ministry of Health staff seeking suitable candidates for ministerial or technical advisory committees;
- Removes the need to file hard copies of applications;
- Provides greater access to the citizen and increasing the pool of people available for consideration of appointment to Health bodies and committees;
- When there is a vacancy to be filled the database can be searched for people who have indicated that they would like to serve on that body or committee, or for people with the prerequisite skills;
- The database can be searched and reported on quickly and easily;
- Introduction of this web-enabled system has already saved two staff positions.