



Te Kawa Mataaho

Public Service Commission

29 April 2024

9(2)(a) privacy

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Official Information Request

Our Ref: OIA 2024-0077

I refer to your official information request received on 3 April 2024 where you asked:

"I note your agency/entity/organisation is listed as a signatory to the Charter at [Algorithm charter for Aotearoa New Zealand - data.govt.nz](https://data.govt.nz).

To assist me with my research, please would you provide at your earliest convenience any reports or materials held by your organisation:

- 1. setting out and/or summarising how and when your organisation has met, or intends to meet, the commitments to transparency and partnership set out in the Algorithm Charter for Aotearoa|New Zealand;*
- 2. setting out or explaining how decisions made by the organisation are informed by algorithms. This may include without limitation "plain English" documentation of the algorithm/s, information about the data and processes involved, or published information about how data is collected, secured, and stored;*
- 3. that demonstrate or detail how your organisation is delivering clear public benefits through Treaty of Waitangi commitments by embedding a te ao Maaori perspective in the organisation's development and use of algorithms consistent with the Treaty of Waitangi;*
- 4. that demonstrate or detail how your organisation has, or intends to, identify and consult with people, communities and groups who have an interest in algorithms, including Maaori;*
- 5. that describe how your organisation makes sure data is fit for purpose by identifying and managing bias;*
- 6. showing how privacy, ethics, and human rights are safeguarded by regular peer reviews of algorithms to assess for unintended consequences, and how the organisation acts on this information; and*
- 7. setting out the nominated point of contact for public inquiries about algorithms - together with any internal policies, principles, rules, or guidelines that relate to the above matters."*

Our response

The Algorithm Charter for Aotearoa New Zealand (the Charter) demonstrates a commitment to ensuring New Zealanders have confidence in how government agencies use algorithms. The Charter

is one of many ways that government demonstrates transparency and accountability in the use of data.

The Algorithm Charter Community of Practice (Community of Practice) was established in 2023 to facilitate knowledge and information sharing between Charter signatories. The Community of Practice establishment responds to an Independent Review of the Charter carried out in 2021 which found that, while there was “almost universal support for the Charter amongst Government agencies and subject matter experts who participated” and while some progress has been made in implementing Charter commitments, there was a strong desire for a community of practice for knowledge and information sharing.

It held its fourth gathering in April 2024. Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission (the Commission) often attends Community of Practice meetings. The Community of Practice also responds to the [Open Government Partnership of New Zealand’s Fourth Action Plan](#) (led by the Commission) which commits to making government more accessible, responsive and accountable to its citizens. Commitment 8 under the Action Plan undertakes to “Improve transparency and accountability of algorithm use across government”. In its role as [Government Chief Data Steward](#), Stats NZ led the development of the Algorithm Charter and is the agency that convenes the Community of Practice.

Following consultation across the public sector, Stats NZ has also developed the [Algorithm Impact Assessment toolkit](#) (published in December 2023) with resources designed to help agencies understand and assess the potential impacts of the algorithms they create or use.

The Commission does not currently use algorithms in any of the work we do. In advance of signing up to the Charter in 2021, the Commission checked to see if there would be any use for introducing algorithms and no areas were identified. The Commission is a member of the Charter to ensure there is a consistent approach to algorithms across the Public Service.

We are therefore refusing your request under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act 1982 on the grounds the information does not exist.

For any future enquiries about algorithms or data at the Commission, please contact commission@publicservice.govt.nz.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact Ministerial.Services@publicservice.govt.nz.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that we intend to publish this letter (with your personal details removed) on the Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission’s website.

Yours sincerely



Nicky Dirks

Manager – Ministerial and Executive Services
Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission