

WELLINGTON

The Customhouse, 1 Hinemoa Street, Wellington
PO Box 2218, Wellington 6140
Phone: 04 901 4500 Fax: 04 901 4555 All general enquiries phone: 0800 428 786
Email: feedback@customs.govt.nz Website: www.customs.govt.nz

7 November 2017

Ref: CR OIA 17-250



By email: 

Dear 

Request for information under the Official Information Act 1982

Thank you for your email of 9 October 2017 to the New Zealand Customs Service (Customs) in which you requested information under the Official Information Act 1982 about Customs' use of psychometric testing.

Specifically, you have requested:

- the number of psychometric assessments of staff, if any, Customs has carried out, per year, from 1 July 2010 until 1 July 2017, broken down by year
- the amount of money Customs has spent on psychometric tests for staff, if any, over the same period, again broken down by year
- commentary around the circumstances in which psychometric testing is used, the company used to provide the testing, and the types of roles psychometric testing is used to assess
- that if Customs does not or has never used psychometric testing, confirmation of that.

Customs has interpreted psychometric testing to include cognitive ability testing (reasoning) as well as personality, leadership and team style assessments.

Since 2010 Customs has used psychometric testing for both external appointments into Customs, and development (including team building) for current Customs employees. Psychometric testing is not routinely used as part of restructuring, but has been previously used to assess specific skills required in new roles.

Customs does not hold one central record of the number of psychometric tests administered, so has sourced the data requested from its external providers. Therefore, the data provided is not a definitive list of psychometric assessments undertaken by Customs. Additionally, the data does not clarify the reason why assessments were completed or who the people were

that completed the tests, for example whether the tests were completed by external applicants applying for a vacancy, or existing employees using testing for personal development.

For the period 1 July 2010 to 1 July 2017, Customs has conducted approximately 3,847 psychometric assessments and spent approximately \$210,000 on psychometric testing. A full breakdown of the number of assessments and costs per year is included as an appendix to this letter.

You will note that there is a marked increase between the total number of assessments conducted between 1 July 2010 and 1 July 2016, and the total number of assessments conducted from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017. The reason for this is that Customs changed the timing of when psychometric tests took place during the recruitment process. Prior to 2016, psychometric testing occurred after applicants had been short-listed for a vacancy. More recently, Customs uses psychometric testing (cognitive ability tests) as a screening tool prior to short-listing, meaning the number of people tested is greater. Additionally, both the number of applications received, and the number of appointments made to operational Customs officer roles increased significantly in 2016 and 2017 over previous years.

Over this period psychometric testing has, at times, been included as part of Customs wider development programmes and recruitment processes, and it has not been possible to isolate the cost of psychometric testing from the total cost of those programmes. Where it has been possible to isolate, the cost of psychometric testing is outlined in the table with the figures rounded to the nearest dollar. The costs of psychometric testing undertaken by Randstad, as part of Customs Officer recruitment, are part of a wider recruitment programme and, as such, the figures provided are estimates only.

Use of psychometric testing in recruitment

Psychometric testing is one of a range of tools used in Customs' selection process. The assessment process for Customs Officer and Assistant Customs Officer vacancies includes psychometric testing. Recruitment for Customs Officers also includes verbal/numerical/critical and personality profiling. These tests are designed to assess essential skills and capabilities for Customs' operational roles. Randstad currently facilitates the entire external operational recruitment process, including the administration of psychometric testing. Previous assessments were administered by Opra Consulting Group or by trained internal assessors.

Customs does not routinely use psychometric testing for appointment into non-operational vacancies (roles that are not Customs Officers), however it can be used if deemed appropriate.

In the past, Customs' assessment processes for appointment to leadership roles included a component of psychometric testing, specifically in relation to leadership style and preference. These assessments were administered by Cerno or Opra Consulting Group, however this approach is no longer the norm.

Use of psychometric testing for development

Customs uses psychometric testing for development purposes usually at leadership levels, often as part of wider leadership programmes.

The intention of psychometric testing in these instances is to help staff understand their underlying preferences and strengths and to form part of their development initiatives.

Leadership Insight is a common development assessment programme for leaders across the public sector since 2015. It is owned by the State Services Commission and delivered in partnership with Cerno Ltd and the Leadership Development Centre. The State Services Commission will be providing the requested information for all agencies in relation to Leadership Insight.

Customs' managers have also used psychometric testing with their staff as part of team building exercises, with a particular focus on team styles and communication.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the enclosed information, please contact the Customs' Communications team via email communications@customs.govt.nz

Yours sincerely



Jacinda Funnell
Acting Group Manager
People and Capability

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT

Appendix 1

Number of psychometric tests conducted by Customs between 1 July 2010 and 30 July 2017

Year	Number of tests
1 July 2010 – 30 June 2011	848
1 July 2010 – 30 June 2012	308
1 July 2012 – 30 June 2013	240
1 July 2013 – 30 June 2014	97
1 July 2014 – 30 June 2015	65
1 July 2015 – 30 June 2016	52
1 July 2016 – 30 June 2017	2,237

Customs spend on psychometric testing for the period 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2017

Year	Opra	Cerno	Randstad
1 July 2010 – 30 June 2011	\$20,390		
1 July 2011 – 30 June 2012	\$11,530		
1 July 2012 – 30 June 2013	\$10,145	\$15,662	
1 July 2013 – 30 June 2014	\$3,315	\$10,400	
1 July 2014 – 30 June 2015	\$9,485		
1 July 2015 – 30 June 2016	\$33,156		\$8,000
1 July 2016 – 30 June 2017			\$56,000
1 July 2010 – 30 June 2017			\$32,000