

How to Use this Guide

This guide has been compiled to assist community groups, NGOs and agencies to find out information about their local communities. The steps in the guide are suggestions only, and it is hoped that you will be able to pick through the parts that are useful to you, and ignore the parts that are not.

Content Sections

Desired Outcome

Each section begins with a desired outcome. This is intended to provide a vision of the types of communities we wish to live in. It is there to help focus the project on the data to be collected and the content of the interviews.

It is a suggestion only. Your community may have a different vision, come from a different starting point or you may wish to work towards a shared vision once the data has been collected and the interviews have been conducted.

Introduction

The introduction of each section has been designed to describe what the section covers and why this section is important to the community and in particular, children, young people and their families. The information can be used as background in your publication if appropriate.

Indicators

There is a wide range of data available that could be used to look at aspects of the lives of children and young people at the community level. However, the quality, availability and costs of the data vary considerably.

Often we cannot 'measure' an aspect of community life easily. For example, it is difficult to find a measure of health or wellbeing as so many things contribute to being healthy or well. Indicators are used to build up a picture of community life.

Unfortunately indicators are often somewhat blunt measures.

The indicators reported in this guide have been selected because they were considered to be good quality, available and cost effective.

Overall we have tried to select indicators that met all, or most, of the following criteria:

- Relevant to children, young people and their families
- Recognized as an accurate way of measuring an outcome or providing context
- Valid (providing a true reflection or measure of the issue; scientifically credible or otherwise defensible)

- Widely supported as an indicator or measure (either within the community, New Zealand or internationally)¹
- Measurable (quantifiable, with data existing to measure it)
- Cost effective (obtainable at a reasonable cost in terms of time and financial resourcing)
- Methodologically rigorous so that the data provider collects and reports the data accurately and consistently
- Comparable (able to be standardised or accurately compared with similar indicators)
- Understandable (easily understandable or able to be presented in a simple way to our target audiences)
- Consistent over time so that it is possible to track trends
- Where possible, able to be disaggregated or broken down by demographic and other characteristics
- Where possible comparable with data collected at Council and national level.²

Local Indicators

These are indicators where the data can be collected at a community level.

Possible indicators

These are indicators that some communities may be able to collect, for example, because their council collects information about their community.

Background Indicators

These indicators may not be available at community level; however, they may provide some understanding and context that is useful to your profile. As an example, some of the environmental indicators are collected at Council level – if your community are likely to be swimming in the same water and breathing the same air as those around them they may provide useful background information.

Note

For every indicator that you collect you will need to think about:

1. The time frame you wish to use – i.e. if you are looking at trends you will need to order data over a 3 or 5 year period
2. Who you wish to compare yourself with. In most cases this will be your local Council and New Zealand as a whole.

You will need to order this data at the same time that you order the data for community.

1 There was heavy reliance on indicators reported in projects such as the Quality of Life Report and the Social Report, or on indicators collected by Statistics New Zealand.

2 These criteria closely followed the criteria established by the Social Report, 2005 and the Quality of Life Report, 2003.

Indicator List

In addition to the indicators listed in this guide, there is an indicator list on the [MSD website](#)³. Those who want to find even more detailed information about their communities may wish to use this as a starting point. Many of the indicators listed, however, are not yet available at a local level.

This list is updated on a regular basis. As data providers become more able to meet the needs of local communities the indicator list will be updated.

Interviews

A community cannot rely solely on the statistics available to build a picture of its strengths and weaknesses. There are likely to be gaps in the data available. Even where data is available, it can be difficult to interpret. For example, are low levels of reported crime an indication that there are low levels of crime in a community or low levels of reporting?

Interviews with young people can help identify how children and young people see the strengths and challenges in their community. Interviews with key people in the local community can help a community interpret the data and fill in some of the gaps.

Each section has a list of possible contacts that could be interviewed and some suggested of what can be asked.

See the [Interview section](#) for more details.

Examples, Tips and Notes

Example

We have provided some examples to illustrate what the profile might look like, along with tips and notes that may be helpful.

Tip

Enjoy!

Note

Good luck!

³ <http://www.msd.govt.nz/>

Interviewing

To find out the strengths and challenges facing your community and fill in some of the gaps in data you may wish to interview people.

People to be interviewed could include:

- Children, young people and their families i.e. through establishing reference groups, talking to young people involved in youth groups or student councils
- Community coordinators
- Key people working with or involved in your community.

Possible people to interview are suggested in each section of the guide.

Tip

By thinking outside the square you may be able to get feedback about the community from children and young people e.g. by running a poster competition about the good and not so good things about your local community.

Questions

As a starting point you could just ask the following questions...

- What is good about our community?
- What is not so good about our community? (What are the challenges?)
- What are our strengths?
- What are our weaknesses?

Each section contains additional questions that you *could* ask.

Consent

You will need to explain what the project is about and ask if the person consents to being interviewed. You may wish to give the person being interviewed an information sheet about the project.

Example

We are writing a Community Profile of Northcote. It has a focus on children and young people aged up to 24 years and will be distributed to those working with this group or who have an interest in this area.

The profile is the first step in a collaborative project to support children and young people in the Northcote community.

The aim over the next three years is to improve social, economic, environmental and cultural outcomes for children and young people by improving services and support with a focus on:

- Learning what works best at community level
- Looking at the needs of children at different stages of development

- Using research and best practice to inform future decisions

We are interviewing young people, their families and those working with the Northcote community in order to find out:

- What is good about our community?
- What is not so good about our community? (What are the challenges?)
- What are our strengths?
- What are our weaknesses?

We are interested in your views. Please note that you will not be quoted in the final document without your explicit written permission.

Quoting

If you would like to quote someone in your profile you must make sure that you have their consent and that you have carefully checked that you have quoted them correctly

- Take careful notes
- Ask how they wish to have the quote attributed i.e. normally we use their position – e.g. School Principal, Northcote
- Email them with the quote you are to use and how it will be attributed
- Get written or emailed consent that the quote is correct and that they are happy to have it attributed to them in that way
- Make sure that you file the written consent in a safe place. It is suggested that consent forms are kept for a minimum of 2 years.

Where to Start

Defining Your Community

The first step in writing a community profile is to define the catchment area of your community. What is your community, what are the physical boundaries of the area?

This will need to be agreed upon and clearly communicated to all those working on your project.

Common Ways Data is Collected

You will then need to think about how data about your community is collected.

This is very important as the data you collect needs to relate as closely as possible to the boundaries of your community. After all you want to identify the strengths and challenges in *your* community – not those of the areas around you.

Meshblocks (MBs)

These are the smallest areas Statistics New Zealand uses. Generally meshblocks in rural areas have a population of around 60 people, while in urban areas the meshblock is roughly the size of a city block and contains approximately 110 people (although the size varies considerably).

Census Area Units (CAUs)

Census Area units are the step between meshblocks and Council areas (Territorial Authorities). In urban areas area units usually contain 3,000-5,000 people.

Territorial Local Authorities (TLAs)

These are City Council and Local Council areas. They are also referred to as Territorial Authorities or TAs.

Regional Councils

Regional councils cover every territorial authority in New Zealand (except the Chatham Islands). Several councils usually belong to one Regional Council.

Note

Agencies and organisations such as Housing New Zealand, DHBs, Work and Income, Child Youth and Family etc will also have boundaries that are likely to differ from your community. You will need to be aware that when collecting data from them that their boundaries may differ from yours, those of Statistics New Zealand and those of other agencies.

Boundaries and Data Collection

Collecting data on your community may be easy if you community is:

- Already defined and commonly used – for example if your boundaries are the same as a Council or a Regional Authority.

Most of us, however, will need to try and align our communities' boundaries with those of those of Statistics New Zealand as that is the organisation that will be providing much of the data.

To do this you will need to decide on the boundaries of your community – right down to the street level and the street numbers if the street extends beyond your boundary - and then find out the meshblocks or CAUs that make up your community so that you can order the data that relates to your community.

There are several ways of doing this.

Option 1: See if anyone has already got this information

Contact your local Council. Some Councils, particularly larger councils or those in urban areas, may *already know* the names of the meshblocks and CAUs that make up your community.

Tip

Councils can have large numbers of staff working for them and it can be difficult to find the right person. The most likely people to know whether they hold this information will be a Statistical Officer, or someone in a Strategic Planning position. If you have any contacts in Council they may be able to help you find someone who can assist you.

Option 2: Look at the Statistics New Zealand Website

The [Statistics New Zealand website](#)⁴ has a range of existing community profiles at regional, council, suburb and CAU level. Click on the link above and see if your community is already listed.

If you are unsure which suburb or CAUs your community might comprise:

- Click on Territorial Authorities and the first letter of your Council's name to try and find your council
- Once your council comes up click on view map option
- Click on the option to view CAU names
- Use the zoom button to zoom to your area
- Every time you make a change – such as zooming in – click the 'update map' button
- See if the CAUs in your area come up on the map.

Tip

You may also need to click on the 'roads' option to help get your bearings

Note

This will not give you the names of the meshblocks that make up your community.

Option 3: A More Expensive Option

Unfortunately this is the route that many of us will need to take.

⁴ http://xtabs.stats.govt.nz/eng/statsbyarea/area_alpha.asp#au

Statistics New Zealand has [licensed companies](#)⁵ that can provide you with the names of meshblocks and CAUs that make up your community. Click on the link above and look at the companies listed under Digital Boundaries.

These companies can provide you with a list of CAUs and Meshblocks in your community.

You will need to provide them with either:

- An email of the roads and street addresses that make up the boundaries of your area, or
- Send them a map with boundaries on it (clearly marked e.g. in yellow highlighter). This can then be scanned in and attached to an email request or posted.

The cost will depend on the size of the catchment area. Different companies may price these differently so it may be worth getting a quote from more than one company.

Example of the Email

Quote for Meshblocks and CAUs

"We are writing a Community Profile for the Northcote area. To order data from Statistics New Zealand we need to know the meshblocks and CAUs contained within our catchment area. We would like this to be provided in list and map form so we can see where the boundaries are.

I have attached a map of the area we are interested in with the boundaries highlighted in yellow. Could you please provide a quote for this and a timeframe for completion once the quote has been accepted."

Tip

Read the Mapping Section of this guide before you order the data as you may wish to order a map at the same time.

Alignment

Once you worked out how the boundaries of Statistics New Zealand align with your boundaries and you have the names of the units that make up the boundaries (e.g. the Meshblocks or CAUs) you will have the technical knowledge to order data from Statistics New Zealand.

Tip

In some cases the boundaries may not align exactly. You will need to think how you are going to deal with this. E.g. you may decide if it is close enough to just make a footnote pointing out the differences, or you may wish to take another look at your boundaries and adjust them to align then more closely.

⁵ <http://www.stats.govt.nz/census/2006-census/mapping-2006-census-boundaries.htm>

Maps

A map of the area is an important visual guide of the boundaries of your community. It can help keep the project focused on your catchment area and it enables other groups and agencies to immediately see whether or not they work with your community.

It will also provide those *unfamiliar* with your community with a visual understanding of the area that the Community Profile covers.

Ordering Maps

The Statistics New Zealand website has maps that can be downloaded. However these are unlikely to provide the level of detail that you will need for your publication.

There are a wide range of companies that produce maps. You may wish to contact one of the licensed organisations on the [Statistics New Zealand website](#)⁶

If using non licensed companies check that they can mark up the features you require – such as CAUs.

The Quote

It can help to provide the mapping company with a brief description of the purpose of the project, whether the map is to be published or not, and some technical details.

Example

“The Northcote community is working with a wide range of government and community organisations to identify local issues that affect children, young people and their families, and to then work collaboratively on solutions.

In order to focus project participants on the catchment area we would like to produce a map, suitable for publication, of our community and the surrounding area.”

You will need to supply the following type of information:

- The meshblocks, CAUs or addresses on which the map is to be based
- Whether or not you can supply a style guide for the map you want (if you supply a map that you like this can help streamline the process)
- Whether you want your logo on the map
- Whether a title is required and what this will be
- The number of copies of the Community Profile you intend printing (the price usually increases with the size of the publication run).

Production Details

- Size e.g. A4
- Colour, grey scale
- Layout – whether you want portrait, landscape, single sided

⁶ <http://www.stats.govt.nz/census/2006-census/mapping-2006-census-boundaries.htm>

- Scale – usually you would ask for best fit i.e. your community and limited surrounding area.
- Copy – electronic and/or hardcopy

You will also be asked for details of the data layers and map settings you require. An example of what is required is on the following page. These are the features that will be marked up on the map.

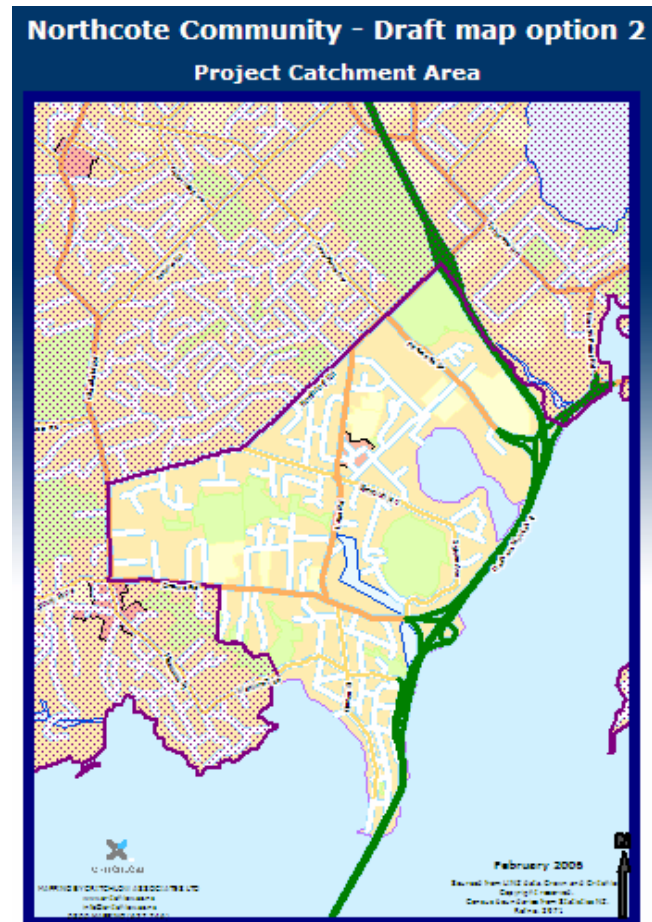
Data Layers & Settings

NationalMap2 Layers & Settings					
Layer	Visible	Labelled		Standard Colours *	Comments
		Yes	Column		
Airport	Y				
Area Unit	Y	Y	Label Only		
Built Up Area	Y				
City	N				
Coastline	Y				
Community of Interest	N				
Education	N				
Emergency Service	N				
Health	N				
Lake	Y				
Land	Y				
Landmark	N				You may wish to include a notable feature or important landmark – if so write this in here
Locality	N				
Main Road	Y	Y	Label Only		
Meshblock	N				This does not add value
Motorway Junction	N				
Park	Y				You may wish these to be labelled
Place	N				
Postcode	N				
Railway	Y				
Railway Station	N				
Regional Council	N				
River	Y				
Riverbed	N				
Road	Y				
School Site	Y				You may wish these to be labelled
Sea	Y				
Secondary Road	Y	Y	Label Only		
Shop	Y				
Territorial Authority	N				

Town	N				
------	---	--	--	--	--

Presentation

There are two different options for presenting these maps. The first has the area of interest shaded, while the second has the area outside of this shaded. Everything else is the same.



Collecting Data

Although each section has a list of indicators that you may wish to collect along with the information sources, we have also included additional indicators for those who have a bit more technical expertise. These have been listed separately in each section, for example under headings such as 'Table Builder'.

In addition to the indicators suggested there are also several important sites and sources that may help you find the data you need.

Statisphere

[Statisphere](http://www.statisphere.govt.nz/default.htm)⁷ is an invaluable website as it provides a comprehensive overview of all government statistics and has the links that you need to help you find them. It is regularly updated as new statistics come on-line.

You can search for statistics by subject and by agency.

Statistics New Zealand

[Statistics NZ](http://www.stats.govt.nz)⁸ has a great website. It can be a bit difficult to find your way around at first so may take a little time and patience to familiarise yourself with the site.

Statistics New Zealand has a helpline on 0508 525 525 (toll free).

For the really keen Statistics New Zealand also offer a range of courses and presentations including online courses at their office or they can come to yours. Contact your local office, the help line or info@stats.govt.nz to find out what is available and coming up.

There are likely to be people in your community who have used the website and are familiar with it. Try your local librarian. Librarians have often undergone training on the website.

The statistical officer in your local council may also have some experience with this.

If the data that you need is *not* on their website you can talk to them about providing customised data. Costs start at around \$115 (+GST). For more information and quotes, email info@stats.govt.nz or telephone 0508 525 525 (toll free).

Table Finder

For those who are confident technologically and statistically, Statistics New Zealand offers a wide range of tables on their website. It may, however, take some time to familiarise yourself with the website and the language used. Where possible, tables that may be useful have been listed in this guide.

Using Table Finder

Table Finder allows you to locate a table using variables measured in the 2001 Census.

For example, if you are looking for the number of 25-34 year old females living in Thorndon you will need to search for age, sex and usual residence (at area unit level).

Table Finder basically uses dropdown boxes to help you find the tables that you are looking for.

⁷ <http://www.statisphere.govt.nz/default.htm>

⁸ <http://www.stats.govt.nz/default.htm>

Clicking on the overall topic that you want information for (e.g. people) and then clicking on the variables listed (such as age, birthplace etc) may help you to find the tables you need.

Note

If your community does not fit Area Unit boundaries Table Finder is unlikely to be particularly useful as the smallest units reported are Area Units (not meshblocks).

Tip

To use Table Finder you will need to know the names of the Area Units that make up your community.

Census Table Finder - Example

[Search](#) | [Browse](#) | [Help](#)

Find tables about: Find tables about: [people](#) | [families](#) | [households](#) | [dwellings](#)

Ethnic group:

Select up to 4 variables from the list below

age	▲
availability for work	■
birthplace	■
ethnic group	■
highest qualification	▼

Add ? ? Remove

--

Find tables >>

How to Use Table Finder

How do I find a table?

Table Finder for the 2001 Census can be found at:

<http://xtabs.stats.govt.nz/eng/tablefinder/index.asp>

How do I find them?

1. Click search (the blue underlined button)
2. Select a *topic* from the "Find tables about" dropdown box (a selection of links will appear instead of a dropdown list if you don't have JavaScript enabled).

Note: You can restrict the search to a specific ethnicity if you want, e.g. you may wish to find out the number of Māori that speak Māori. To do this, choose the 'People' topic and then select the ethnic group you want from the dropdown list.

3. Select the variables (up to 4) that you want in the tables and click Add. You can make multiple selections by holding down the control (ctrl) button (or the command button for Apple users) while making your selection.
4. Check the variables you have selected. To remove a variable from your list, select it and click Remove.
5. Click Find tables.

Results

The results page will bring up the tables that match your choices most closely.

There may be a wide range of choices here. Check the list of Tables in Excel first as these will have formatted the data already.




Tip

Check that the table names have the areas that you need i.e. Most communities will need Area Unit data so look for tables with Area Unit in the title. If the title does not say that it is by Area Unit it is unlikely to have information specific to your community.

Most communities will need to check *Table Builder* as the Excel tables tend to give national results or results by Council area rather than at community level. (See the next section on how to use Table Builder).

Tip

For *information* about a table, click the information icon next to it.
To *open* a table, click on the table name.

-  Opens the table as an Excel file
-  Opens the table in Table Builder
-  Provides information about a table or variable.

Browse Index

Table Finder also has a [Browse Index](#)⁹ that you can also use to help you find tables from the 2001 Census.

⁹ <http://xtabs.stats.govt.nz/eng/TableFinder/browse.asp>

Census Table Finder

[Search](#) | [Browse](#) | [Help](#)

- education
- families and households
- housing
- income
- population characteristics
- transport and communication
- work

To find the table you want:

1. Open the topic by clicking on the icon next to it.
2. Open the variables you want by clicking on the icon next to it.
3. Click on the link of the table you want to open.

Table Builder

For those who are confident technologically and statistically, Statistics New Zealand has a facility which enables you to *build* a range of tables on their website and download them onto your computer. It is called Table Builder and enables you to customise tables so that you only get the information you need.

Although becoming confident using Table Builder can take a little time and practice this is a *great* resource as a lot of the data is at Area Unit level and can be used to build a picture of your local community.

Note

Like Table Finder if your community uses meshblock rather than Area Units, Table Builder is unlikely to be particularly useful as the smallest units it allows you to build Tables from are Area Units (not meshblocks). You will need to know the names of the Area Units that make up your community.

Using Table Builder

Getting started

Table Builder tables are found by:

1. Searching for tables by [subject](#)*
2. Searching the [folders](#)* of Tables, or
3. Using Table Finder (see above)

There are [Help Notes](#)* on the website if you need assistance and a detailed guide on how to use Table Builder.

* <http://www.stats.govt.nz/products-and-services/table-builder/default.htm>

The Statistics New Zealand Information Centre on 0508 525 525 (toll free within New Zealand) also offers assistance.

1. How to build your table

Once you have selected a table it will bring you to a screen that looks like this (See below). To build a table that meets your needs go straight to Variables listed on the left hand side of the screen. Here they are: Area, Year, Age Group and Sex.

Each variable when clicked gives you options. You simply select the options you want by clicking on a box and deselect the options that you don't want until you have built the table you need.



Table Builder

[Home](#) | [Table Builder home](#) | [Folder view](#) | [Census Table Finder](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Help](#)

Selection Menu

Variables [\(help\)](#)

[Area](#)

[Year](#)

[Age Group](#)

[Sex](#)

Rows: Columns:

Age Group and Sex, for the Census Night Population Count, 1991, 1996 and 2001 [i](#)

Options [\(help\)](#)

- [View Table](#)
- [View Graph](#)
- [Printable Version](#)
- [Download](#)

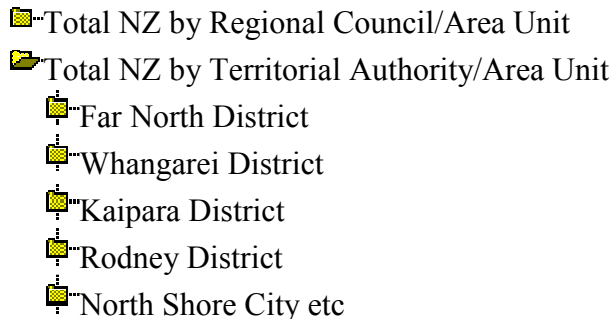
Powered by



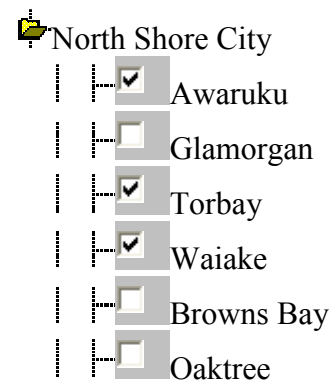
Year	1991	1996	2001
Age Group i	Total	Total	Total
Sex i	Total	Total	Total
Area i			
Total NZ by Regional Council/Area Unit	3,434,952	3,681,546	3,820,749
Total NZ by Territorial Authority/Area Unit	3,434,952	3,681,546	3,820,749
Total NZ by District Health Board/Area Unit	3,434,949	3,681,546	3,820,749

Example

1. To select the area you want click on the area variable (see above)
2. It will bring up a series of folders. If the area you want is within North Shore City click on the folder button beside North Shore City.



3. Select the areas that comprise your community:




Tip

If you want to include comparisons in your Table, e.g. between your community, your local Council and NZ as a whole, you will need to tick the box for your local council (in this case tick the North Shore City box) and the box for total New Zealand (in this case Total New Zealand by Territorial Authority/Area Unit).

4. When you have selected all the items required from the variable you are in, click on the **View Table** button under the **List of Variables** on the left of your screen, or the **Continue** button at the right of the screen. This will take you to the next variable on the list.
5. You can click on **View Table** at any time. This allows you to see how your table is looking. To change it just go back to the Variables and select and deselect boxes until you get the table you wish.
6. When you have built the table you need you can download it to your computer by clicking on **Download** under the **Options** section at the left hand side of your screen (below the Variables section). Note: If the Download option is not showing click **View Table** and it will appear.
7. At the top middle of your screen, just above your table, a new box will appear saying: Select file format. Choose the format you need (it is likely to be Excel) and click the Go button. By clicking save you can now save it onto your computer.

Note: Folders

The folder icon  means that there is more detail available if you wish to find it – i.e. a folder beside Auckland City means that you can look in detail at different parts of Auckland City (using Area Units). If there is no folder icon, there is no further detail available.

Official Information Requests

You have the right to ask for data or information from Government Agencies to be released to you under the Official Information Act. This can be a good way of getting the information you need in a timely manner. Agencies are quite used to receiving requests under the Act and have processes in place to make sure that your requests are answered.

Technically any request for information from an agency covered by the Act must be treated as an OIA request. Requesting it under the Act can help to clarify the timeframes and make sure that if they are thinking of withholding information that they only do so under the provisions of the Act. These provisions are limited.

The objectives of the Official Information Act 1982 are:

- to increase public access to official information to
- enable more effective participation in the making of laws and policies, and
- promote the accountability of Ministers and officials.
- to give persons access to official information about them; and
- at the same time to protect the public interest and safeguard personal privacy.

Guidelines from the Office of the Ombudsman (summarised)

For full details go to the [Office of the Ombudsman](#)¹⁰

Am I entitled to make a request for official information?

The following people or organisations are entitled to make requests for official information under the OIA:¹¹

- New Zealand citizens;
- Permanent residents of New Zealand;
- Persons who are in New Zealand;
- Bodies corporate which are incorporated in New Zealand; and
- Bodies corporate which are incorporated outside of New Zealand but have a place of business in New Zealand.

Who am I able to ask for official information?

The following people and organisations are subject to the OIA, and a request for information can be directed to them:

- Ministers
- Government Departments

¹⁰ <http://www.ombudsmen.govt.nz/guideA2.htm#How%20do%20I%20make%20a%20request?>

¹¹ Section 12(1) OIA

- Local Authorities

How do I make a request?

There is no specific 'phrase' or question which needs to be asked when requesting official information. A request does not have to be in writing and does not even have to specifically state that it has been made "*under the Official Information Act*".

However, it is helpful when you request information to spell out that you are actually requesting the information under the Official Information Act. Most agencies have special procedures in place to ensure that these requests are answered.

You have responsibilities under the Act to make it clear what you are asking for. Section 12(2) of the Act states that a request must be specified "*with due particularity*". This means that the person you send the request to must be able to identify what it is that you have actually requested – which just means you need to be clear about what it is that you are requesting in your letter or email.

Tips

- Make your request in writing (email is fine)
- State that you are requesting the information under the Official Information Act (in the email subject line)
- State clearly what information you are requesting including the indicator that you want, the time frame that you want the data for, and the boundaries of your community
- It can often be helpful to telephone or e-mail the relevant agency in order to obtain some preliminary advice – this can enable the request to be clarified.
- Although the Act does not require you to state the purpose of the request, explaining this may help the department to identify the relevant information

When should I receive a response to my request?

An agency must respond to a request for official information "*as soon as reasonably practicable*", and in any case not later than 20 working days after having received the request.

In certain circumstances they are entitled to extend to this time limit. However, this can only be done where:

- The request is for a large quantity of information or necessitates a search through a large quantity of information, and meeting the original time limit would unreasonably interfere with the operations of the agency; or
- Consultations necessary to make a decision on the request are such that a proper response to the request cannot reasonably be made within the original time limit.

An agency can only extend the time limit once, and must notify you within 20 working days of having received the request if it intends to do this.

If you do not receive a response to the request within 20 working days of its receipt by the agency, or by the extended time limit imposed by the organisation, the

request is deemed to have been refused and the requester may complain to an Ombudsman.

Do I have to pay for official information?

In most cases information is freely provided. However the OIA says that agencies may make a "*reasonable*" charge for the provision of information.

If an agency intends to impose a charge, it will usually write to you explaining how the proposed charge is made up and what the total charge is expected to be.

If you do not consider that the proposed charge is "*reasonable*", the Ombudsmen can be asked to investigate and review the charge.

What can I do if my request is refused?

Agencies are entitled to refuse requests for information if there is "*good reason*" to withhold that information under the OIA.

Note

There are a lot of misconceptions about the circumstances under which Official Information can be withheld. These are listed on the Ombudsmen's Website under Ombudsmen's Practice Guidelines under [common misconceptions](#).¹² For example, withholding information is unlikely to be necessary to protect privacy interests if the content of the particular information may not, in fact, relate to an identifiable natural person.

If information is withheld under the Act this does not mean that you cannot get the information. You have the right to have decision investigated and reviewed.

You must be told the reasons why that information has been withheld must be given, with reference to the appropriate section of the Act (a copy of the withheld information must be placed in an envelope and put on the physical file); and

You must also be advised of your right to have the decision investigated and reviewed by writing to the Ombudsmen.

Example

Official Information Request

I would like to make a request for information under the Official Information Act. I would like to know:

- The total number of suspensions of Year 1-8 and Year 9-13 students each year from 2001 to 2005 (Calendar Years) for the schools in the Northcote district. The schools in the district are Northcote College, Onepoto Primary (list here)
- The total number of suspensions of Year 1-8 and Year 9-13 students each year from 2001 to 2005 (Calendar Years) for the North Shore City Council area

¹² <http://www.ombudsmen.govt.nz/guideE.htm>

- The total number of suspensions of Year 1-8 and Year 9-13 students each year from 2001 to 2005 (Calendar Years) across New Zealand as a whole

In addition we would like to know the total number of students enrolled in the Northcote community, North Shore City Council and New Zealand as a whole in each of those years.

Please let us know of any caveats or limitations that would help us to interpret this data correctly.

The data will be published in the North cote Community Profile. This report is the first stage of the Northcote Child and Youth Development project – a collaborative project between government agencies and the Northcote community designed to support children and young people in Northcote.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you need more information.

Yours faithfully

Alex Woodley

(Contact details here)