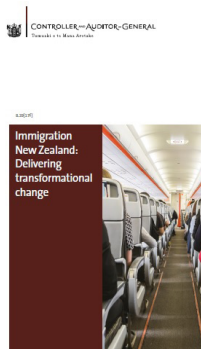




Summary of our report

Immigration New Zealand: Delivering transformational change



New Zealand competes internationally for skilled labour, international students, and tourists. An effective and efficient visa processing service is critical to ensuring that New Zealand remains an attractive place to live, work, study, and visit. It is also important to have a visa process that retains the security of New Zealand's borders by restricting entry to people who do not meet our immigration rules and requirements.

This report outlines how Immigration New Zealand turned a project that was at risk of failing into a business transformation programme that was delivered broadly on time and to budget.

I encourage other public sector entities to consider the good management practices highlighted in Part 4 of this report when planning change and putting it in place.

In the mid-2000s, Immigration New Zealand was struggling to process an increasing number of visa applications. Immigration New Zealand's information and communications technology system, developed a decade previously, could not keep up with advances in technology, such as online services. As a result, processing visa applications was slow and costly. Applicants did not have a transparent process they could follow online because the applications were still paper-based.

In response to these issues, Immigration New Zealand started a business project to modernise and improve its processing of visa applications. Initially, project governance and management was weak and the project was at significant risk of failing. In 2012, Immigration New Zealand changed its approach to the project, which resulted in the Vision 2015 Programme. Although the ICT system was becoming outdated, it was not fully replaced under the Vision 2015 Programme because Immigration New Zealand considered it too expensive to do so. Immigration New Zealand did not initially understand the complexity of fully replacing the old ICT system and underestimated budgeted costs. Eventually, Immigration New Zealand could confirm that elements of the core ICT were fit for purpose, particularly the processing capability. Therefore, several parts of the old ICT system were kept. Immigration New Zealand will need to carefully review and manage the viability of keeping parts of the ICT system.

Vital statistics:

- 43 pages
- Presented to Parliament on 13 April 2017
- Download from www.oag.govt.nz
- Contact: reports@oag.govt.nz

A significant reason why Immigration New Zealand could turn the project around was its willingness to learn, be challenged, and change as a result. The Vision 2015 Programme board also provided an effective steer for the programme through clear decision-making based on reliable information.

People can now apply for visitor, student, and work visas online. They can also check the status of their visa application online and communicate with Immigration New Zealand through their online account. Immigration New Zealand achieved this in a challenging environment where 17 overseas offices were receiving increasing numbers of visa applications. Immigration New Zealand also maintained the integrity of the visa processing system while these major changes were being made in different offices.

Good management practice was a large part of the Vision 2015 Programme's success. This included effective independent project governance, strong leadership, clear communication, and programme management that used an agile and pragmatic approach. Independent quality assurance was used effectively to support strong reporting and reviewing of the programme. Immigration New Zealand gave the programme priority and allocated it the right capability and capacity, using a mix of staff and external consultants.

Immigration New Zealand's understanding of the programme's detailed benefits was slow to emerge but strengthened over time. It gained a clearer view of how to improve the current system to meet its business needs and, more importantly, what its desired outcomes were for itself and visa applicants. The benefits to the wider economy, such as the tourism industry or employers recruiting skilled migrants, have yet to be clearly defined.

The Vision 2015 Programme was designed to deliver its benefits over time. It provided a platform that was expected to improve how effectively and efficiently Immigration New Zealand processed visas, thereby improving the experience for visa applicants. Some benefits have already been delivered. However, change is still being put in place. Immigration New Zealand still has much to do to realise the programme's intended benefits. We were unable to tell to what extent the programme has achieved its intended service benefits and wider outcomes.

Immigration New Zealand plans to deliver most of the benefits in the next three to five years. To ensure that changes are embedded and full benefits are delivered, Immigration New Zealand will need to consolidate the improvements it has put in place, ensure that accountability for delivering benefits is clear throughout the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, and establish an effective performance management and reporting framework.