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DOIA 2223-2552

D Towell
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Tēnā koe D Towell

Thank you for your request of 5 May 2023 to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), requesting the following information about the Advanced Digital Employed-Led Processing and Targeting (ADEPT) system under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA):

1. *How much was ADEPT initially projected to cost?*
2. *How much has ADEPT cost at the time of its release?*
3. *How much has ADEPT cost to date?*
4. *What are the projected costs for ADEPT over the next 10 years?*
5. *How many reports (or equivalent reporting mechanisms) of problems regarding ADEPT have been made by INZ staff?*
6. *How many issues / problems do the ADEPT team have to resolve?*
7. *When are identified issues / problems going to be fixed in ADEPT? Or how long is it expected to take to resolve any issues.*
8. *Copies of reports (or equivalent reporting mechanisms) of problems regarding ADEPT raised by staff working for -*
    (a) Border
    (b) Visa Operations
    (c) Investigations and Compliance
    (d) Any other group within INZ.
9. *How many of the following instances have occurred -*
    (a) Resident visa and permanent residence visa holders stopped at the border because their ADEPT visas are not recognised
    (b) Blank visas issued by ADEPT
    (c) Visas issued in the wrong name by ADEPT
    (d) Visas issued with no conditions by ADEPT
    (e) Visas issued to the wrong person by ADEPT
    (f) Visas issues to the wrong travel document by ADEPT
10. *Copies of any documentation relating to compatibility issues between ADEPT and AMS systems.*
11. *What are the projected timeframes to resolve any issues between ADEPT and AMS.*
12. *How many sensitive issues reports or no surprises fact sheets have been sent by staff relating to issues regarding ADEPT. And details as to the nature of these reports.*

About ADEPT

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent two-year border restrictions, Immigration New Zealand (INZ) made the decision to close some of our offshore visa processing offices with the intention of moving processing onshore. This was due to both the impact of the pandemic on those processing sites and the impact of the border closure on visa application volumes.

We have been progressively moving to online service delivery for several years and several products are online only. ADEPT was developed in order to implement the Government's new Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV), and to improve the efficiency of visa processing via the automation of processing steps and better manage increasing visa volumes that we were experiencing prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ADEPT is part of the Government's Enhanced Immigration Online programme, which is designed to bring significant efficiency gains, improve timeliness and reduce costs over time.

More information about the rollout of products under the Enhanced Immigration Online banner can be found on INZ's website, at https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/our-online-systems/enhancements-to-immigration-online.

Your request

My answers to each part of your request are as follows:

Question 1 **Initial cost projection for ADEPT**
Question 2 **Cost of ADEPT at time of its release**
Question 3 **Cost of ADEPT to date**; and
Question 4 **Projected costs of ADEPT**

ADEPT was delivered via two projects:

- **Automated Decision Assist (ADA)**, providing improved visa processing, and with appropriate controls, can allow automation of some process steps, and
- **Employer Direct Project (EDP)**, implementing the Cabinet-directed Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV) reforms, delivering an employer accreditation and job check portal, and the base capability for the new online visa application system.

The initial cabinet approved budget for the development of ADEPT via the two projects was $58,693,000.

The scope of the programme was changed in response to the changing operating environment created by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, there were adjustments to policy settings resulting in systems development changes (the most significant being the 2021 Resident Visa) and amended delivery timeframes as the timetable for opening the border was adjusted.

The overall cost for the programme was less than that approved in the original business cases; the two ADEPT projects had a total final spend of $56,807,854.

The total budgeted ICT spend for the Enhanced Immigration Online system, which excludes the internal support, was $8.1m for the 2022/23 financial year.

Since October 2022, the ICT spend is estimated at $12m for the 2022/23 financial year. The main cost charges were from Microsoft, DXC, Theta and includes the new project work.

The estimated operating costs for ADEPT will depend on a number of factors such as the demand for Visas. Future costs will be managed within the total Immigration New Zealand Budget.

The external contractors on the project provided a range of services alongside permanent staff, including programme and vendor contract management and administration, business analysis, process design and communications.

Question 5 Reports of problems with ADEPT made by Immigration New Zealand (INZ) staff
Question 8 Copies of reports of problems broken down by INZ business group; and
Question 9 Number of time certain issues with ADEPT have been recorded

We regularly undertake quality checks to pick up any errors or issues and to ensure the INZ system is working as expected.

I am refusing these parts of your request under section 18(f) of the OIA, due to the substantial collation required to provide a response. This means the work to get any records in scope of your request into a form that a decision can then be made on their contents outweighs the available resources to do so. I have made this decision due to the following factors:

- The source information is contained within tens of thousands of records that would need to be individually checked to determine which ones contain the requested information
- The records concerned are not held in a single location, database or with a single team
- We do not hold the records in a way that allows them to be easily identified as being from an INZ staff member
- We would be required to come up with a scale of severity, to distinguish a 'problem', from other types of raised issues, such as suggestions for improvement, frivolous issues or minor issues that can be readily fixed at the user end
- Some smaller issues would be resolved by our external information technology providers, and we may not be made aware of these resolutions, and therefore do not hold a record of these changes; and
- The work to sort through collated reports to determine the issue in scope can only reasonably done by a person with existing familiarity with ADEPT, meaning that it would require existing work to be delayed to complete.

In line with section 18A of the OIA, I do not consider that charging for this information or extending the timeframe to respond would allow your request to be granted.

Question 6 How many issues / problems do the ADEPT team have to resolve?
Question 7 When identified issues or problems going with ADEPT will be fixed; and
Question 11 Projected timeframes to resolve any issues between ADEPT and AMS.

We believe that ADEPT is working largely to expectation. Regular repairs and enhancements have been delivered to the system since it was launched, to ensure that it meets our expectation to provide a better system experience for applicants and their representatives, streamlined processing and quicker decisions. Recently, there are around 20-30 small fixes delivered each month through the regular production support team.

No large-scale technology deployment ever goes without a hitch, and we acknowledge that a number of customers, including immigration professionals experienced challenges with the new system that caused frustration. Employers provide regular feedback on our services, and this has greatly assisted us in identifying what parts of our systems and processes can be enhanced and has enabled us to prioritise fixes.

We recognise there is more work to do to process visas at the speed employers, customers and stakeholders expect, and we are focused on improving our processing rates and customer experience.

Question 10 **Copies of documentation relating to compatibility between ADEPT and INZ's Application Management System (AMS)**

There are no known compatibility issues between ADEPT and AMS. Any minor issues or incidents that arise are resolved via the production support stream as soon as practicably possible. Because of this, I am refusing this part of your request under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the requested information does not exist.

Question 12 **Sensitive issues reports or no surprises fact sheets sent by staff relating to ADEPT issue**

In line with sections 16(1)(e), 16(2)(c), 9(2)(a) and 9(1) of the OIA, this information is being provided to you in the form of a summary. Please refer to the table below for a summary of sensitive issues reports or no surprises fact sheets sent by staff relating to issues regarding ADEPT.

Type of issue	Number of issues	Summary/commentary
System issues	4	Issues relating to technical/system faults. These include issues such as visa applications not progressing or being finalised correctly.
Programming issues	7	Issues relating to the translation of immigration requirements into the ADEPT system. These include issues such as applicants being charged an application fee when not required to pay one, or being asked to provide medical tests when not required to provide them.
Integration issues	5	Issues where ADEPT is not correctly integrating with another electronic system, such as INZ's Application Management System or Immigration Health System.
Human error - frontline	5	Issues relating to errors made by frontline staff, whether through administrative error or due to training gaps.
Human error - national office	8	Issues relating to errors made by national office staff. These include a wide range of topics, such as: • Issues with staff access or permissions in ADEPT • Issues relating to subject matter advice, such as incorrect visa conditions or wording of visa conditions • Errors in communication of changes to staff
Human error - customer	2	Issues stemming from visa applicant use of the system, such as where applicants are inputting information incorrectly on application forms or where visa applications are delayed by applicants not providing the information requested.
Opportunity for enhancement	8	Issues relating to features that either do not exist or are not currently being utilised. These include some application types not yet being processed in ADEPT, difficulties in prioritising urgent applications, and the ability to make changes to an application after it is made (such as adding an additional applicant).

Please note: Some issues may be initially raised for one reason, but later be identified as a different type of problem; for example, an issue may initially present as a system issue, but upon closer inspection be a result of user error created by a training gap. These subsequent changes may not be reflected in the table.

Thank you again for your request. 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.

Nāku noa, nā

Robyn Moriarty
General Manager, Partnership and Programmes
Digital, Data and Insights