



The Policy Project

Responsive today,
shaping tomorrow



**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

Response to the interim evaluation of the Policy Project

Purpose of this document

Allen + Clarke Policy and Regulatory Specialists conducted an interim evaluation of the Policy Project between March and November 2021. This document sets out the Policy Project's response to the interim evaluation's findings and recommendations.

Publication details

Response to the interim evaluation of the Policy Project was released in May 2023 by the Policy Project.

The Policy Project
c/o The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160
New Zealand

Email: policy.project@dpmc.govt.nz

Website: dpmc.govt.nz/policy-project

Table of Contents

The interim evaluation's findings	3
Response to the interim evaluation's findings	4
1. Improvement horizon developed	4
2. Consistency and confidence in policy quality assessments.....	5
3. Refresh of the Policy Skills and Policy Capability Frameworks....	6
4. Policy Capability Leads' Group – an effective conduit.....	6
5. New bespoke 'all of government' training offerings.....	7
6. Supporting agencies to drive diversity in policy making	7
7. New online outreach and Communications Strategy.....	8
8. Agency time to engage with capability building tools.....	8
9. Senior Public Service leaders to champion the Policy Project....	8

© Crown copyright



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. In essence, you are free to copy, distribute and adapt the work, as long as you attribute the work to the Crown and abide by the other licence terms.

To view a copy of this licence, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. Please note that no departmental or governmental emblem, logo or Coat of Arms may be used in any way which infringes any provision of the Flags, Emblems, and Names Protection Act 1981. Attribution to the Crown should be in written form and not by reproduction of any such emblem, logo or Coat of Arms.

The interim evaluation's findings

In late 2020, the Head of the Policy Profession commissioned an interim evaluation of the Policy Project, having decided that it was at an appropriate point in its life to undergo such a review. This reflected an expectation at the Policy Project's establishment in 2014 that the culture change needed to improve the policy system would take around a decade.

Allen + Clarke Policy and Regulatory Specialists conducted the interim evaluation of the Policy Project from March to November 2021. For a summary of the findings and recommendations, see [Overview of the interim evaluation of the Policy Project](#). For the full detail, see the [Allen + Clarke interim evaluation report](#).

Allen + Clarke found that the Policy Project's resources were seen by the policy community as being high quality and relevant, but more needed to be done to raise awareness of the Policy Project, and to reflect the evolving nature of policy making in Aotearoa. Allen + Clarke also found that the Policy Project's governance and operational model is appropriate.

While senior leaders, managers, and policy capability leads have a high awareness of the Policy Project and use its resources, there is lower visibility amongst policy practitioners, particularly principal advisors and senior advisors, who are the 'engine room' of policy development. Allen + Clarke found some evidence that mandating the Policy Quality Framework across the policy system is prompting some agencies and individuals to critically assess policy outputs and make changes to facilitate improvements.

Allen + Clarke made the following eight recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the Policy Project in its next phase:

- 1** Develop and implement a marketing strategy so that agencies and policy practitioners are aware of the Policy Project, how it can assist them, and what products, services and events are available.
- 2** Identify opportunities that could be leveraged to drive the policy community to the Policy Project.
- 3** Ensure that senior public sector leaders and managers promote and champion the Policy Project within their agencies.
- 4** Public sector agencies need to ring fence time for policy practitioners to engage with the Policy Project's capability building tools and resources.
- 5** Ensure Policy Project outputs suit the needs of the pressured, fast paced policy delivery environment.
- 6** Continue to partner with relevant agencies to ensure the Policy Project reflects the diverse needs and voices of modern policy development in Aotearoa.
- 7** Improve the annual policy quality assessment, so that agencies understand how these assessments operate, have confidence in the results, and use it to drive performance improvement.
- 8** Investigate the potential to develop system-wide metrics to measure policy quality and maturity, to provide clearer targets for the progress of the Policy Project and the policy system as a whole.

Response to the interim evaluation's findings

The Policy Profession Board accepted all the interim evaluation recommendations in principle in November 2021, and commissioned a series of papers from the Policy Project on how best to implement the recommendations. The papers were tested with the Policy Capability Leads' Group and the Tier 2 Policy Leaders' Network before being presented to the Policy Profession Board during 2022.

The Policy Profession Board's final decisions in response to the interim evaluation are set out below. The response reflects progress as of April 2023 in implementing the interim evaluation's recommendations.

The focus of the Policy Project over the next three years will be on embedding the response and other innovations that will improve the policy system and its outcomes. The focus of the response is in the nine areas outlined below.

1 Improvement horizon developed to measure the maturity of the policy system (recommendation 8)

The Policy Profession Board asked the Policy Project to develop an approach to measuring the maturity of the policy system as at 30 June 2026. An improvement horizon was developed by a cross-agency working group and approved by the Board in March 2022.

The Improvement Horizon describes the policy community's shared ambition for what we want the policy system to be like by 30 June 2026. This ambition includes the key behaviours and outcomes we want to achieve – the success attributes.

The Improvement Horizon includes ten success attributes across three policy system levels – policy advisors, policy agencies, and the policy system as a whole – in four focus areas:

- A** Continuous improvement of policy skills, organisational policy capability, and the quality of policy advice.
- B** Engaging with Māori, understanding Māori perspectives, and applying Tiriti o Waitangi analysis and Te Ao Māori in policy advice.
- C** Policy stewardship and developing policy advice that is robust into the future.
- D** Community engagement and reflecting diverse voices in policy advice.

The Board agreed in principle to 17 indicators for monitoring the policy system's progress and the Policy Project's impact across the policy system as a whole. Implementing the indicators has been delayed until later this calendar year, due to competing priorities in 2022/23. Work is underway to send out a policy information request to agencies covering 2020/21 and 2021/22 years, to collect information for policy quality, ministerial satisfaction with policy advice, and some of the other indicators. The other data sources for the remaining indicators are being scoped to determine the resource implications of collecting them.

2 Consistency and confidence in policy quality assessments (recommendation 7)

In response to this recommendation, the Board agreed in March 2022 to a strategy to improve the annual policy quality of advice assessments. The strategy responds to concerns expressed by senior leaders and policy managers about the consistency and integrity of quality scores for policy advice across agencies.

The Policy Profession Board agreed that the Policy Project:

- A** establish an independent policy paper review panel to review and re-score a sample of papers from the 2021/22 year – in order to determine the consistency of agencies' scoring.
- B** commission an experienced policy specialist to act as a roving ambassador to internal agency policy quality review panels and provide advice on good practice and matters of concern.
- C** prepare additional guidance for agencies' policy quality panels to assist their understanding of best practice and what good policy advice looks like.
- D** hold regular webinars for agency policy quality review panels.

Implementation of the strategy is progressing well. An independent policy paper review panel was set up by the Policy Project in October 2022. The panel has reviewed 52 papers from 26 of the 28 Public Service agencies with policy appropriations. While the panel identified some differences in scoring by agencies, these were not significant.

Cathy Scott was appointed as the roving ambassador in October 2022. Cathy has met with agency internal policy quality panels to learn more about their processes and practices, and to identify what additional support they may find helpful.

Both the independent policy paper review panel and the roving ambassador's findings will contribute to revised guidance for panels on using the Policy Quality Framework to assess the quality of their policy advice. The revised guidance will be ready in time for agency policy quality assessments in 2023/24. Additional guidance for panels is likely to include more information on sampling approaches, assessing the fitness for purpose of advice, and assessing how well advice incorporates Tiriti o Waitangi analysis and Te Ao Māori perspectives. Once the revised guidance is developed, a webinar will be held with agency policy quality review panel members to take them through the revised guidance and to answer any questions they may have.

A package of materials will be presented to the Tier 2 Policy Leaders' Network and Policy Profession Board in August 2023 on:

- the independent policy paper review panel's report
- the roving ambassador's findings
- the revised panel guidance
- any recommendations for change to the current Policy Quality Framework.

3 Refresh of the Policy Skills Framework and the Policy Capability Framework and other related resources (recommendations 5 and 6)

The Policy Profession Board agreed in March 2022 to a refresh of the Policy Skills Framework and Policy Capability Framework, to ensure they better reflect the diverse needs and voices of modern policy development in Aotearoa, and the fast-paced nature of the policy delivery environment.

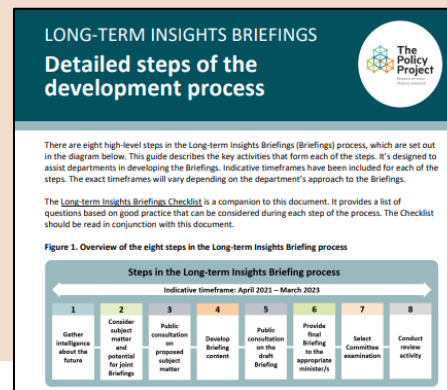
The refreshed frameworks are being developed by a cross agency working group. The Board will consider the refreshed Policy Skills Framework in June 2023. The refreshed Policy Skills Framework includes new areas of knowledge, applied skills, practices and behaviours, required of today's policy practitioners – for example, Te Ao Māori, the Treaty and Māori Crown relationships, Stewardship, Futures Thinking, and Systems Awareness.

Work on refreshing the Policy Capability Framework will start later in 2023. When the two revised frameworks are launched, the Policy Project will use the opportunity to drive the policy community to all our frameworks and tools. The Policy Project is also currently updating:

The **Policy Community Engagement Tool** which was published and piloted for use by agencies responding to recommendations of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain. A further edition of the tool will be published for use by all government agencies, as part of the 4th Open Government Partnership National Action Plan.



The **Long-term Insights Briefings** guidance based on agencies' experiences of undertaking their inaugural briefings, to make guidance fit for purpose for the second round.



4 Policy Capability Leads' Group an effective conduit into and from agencies (recommendation 2)

As the interim evaluation was being finalised by Allen + Clarke, the Policy Project was establishing new mechanisms to connect with the policy community.

A Public Service-wide Policy Capability Leads' Group was established in June 2021 to support the work of the Policy Project. The Group comprises senior people with delegated responsibility for building policy capability across their agencies. The Group has proved to be an effective conduit into and from agencies – helping the Policy Project to promote and champion its resources, tools and training offerings. The Group also helps ensure Policy Project outputs suit the needs of the policy community by providing feedback on its work programme and draft advice and other outputs. It also provides an opportunity for agencies to share best policy practice.

5 New bespoke and wider ‘all of government’ training offerings (recommendation 2)

Training continues to be offered to agencies on using the suite of policy improvement frameworks, using case studies and exemplar papers relevant to each agency. Eighteen Public Service departments were supported in the 2021/22 financial year to use the improvement frameworks and build policy capability.

Since the interim evaluation, there has been a 200% increase in attendance at Policy Project training and events – resulting from moving these offerings online and opening them up to a wider cohort of senior and principal policy advisors. More than 2,300 people attended Policy Project events in 2021/22.

Since July 2021, eight Public Service agencies have opted into a comprehensive pilot of a new Policy Analysis Fundamentals course, with an associated ‘train the trainers’ initiative. Later this year another three agencies are scheduled to participate so far. The course provides tailored training in core and common policy analysis skills delivered in a way that meets the needs of each agency and further profiles the Policy Project’s resources and tools. In addition, ‘What is Policy Making?’ training for those early in career – initially developed primarily for face-to-face delivery for individual agencies – is being offered online and in person in Wellington as an ‘All of Government’ workshop. Policy Project courses are being advertised through newsletters and the Policy Capability Leads’ Group.

6 Supporting agencies with expertise to drive developments that will promote diversity in policy making (recommendation 6)

The Policy Profession Board considered a range of mechanisms for improving diversity in policy making. Those initiatives involve the Policy Project partnering with and supporting agencies that have a role to enhance diversity in the workforce and in policy making. The Policy Project is working with the Ministry for Pacific People, Te Arawhiti, Te Puni Kōkiri, and Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission to implement the following initiatives:

- Working with the new Community of Practice on Stakeholder Engagement to foster and support good practice engagement that ensures diverse voices are included in policy making. This includes an event run by the Policy Project in November 2022 on incorporating diverse voices in policy making.
- Partnering with the Ministry for Pacific Peoples to better understand the lived experience of Pacific employees in policy roles.
- Working with Te Puni Kōkiri, Te Arawhiti, and Te Kawa Mataaho to explore opportunities to build capability in Tiriti o Waitangi analysis and the use of Te Ao Māori and Tikanga in policy making.

The new Community of Practice has had an excellent response from participating agencies, with active Policy Project support on the steering committee. The Policy Project is working with the Ministry for Pacific People, Te Arawhiti, Te Puni Kōkiri, and Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission, at a pace that reflects what is feasible given their busy work programmes, to explore the last two initiatives.

As a system steward for the Treaty in policy, Te Arawhiti is:

1. Intending to extend its tools and guidance for agencies on incorporating Treaty analysis and Te Ao Māori perspectives in policy making.
2. Continuing to work directly with agencies to support them in building their capability in Treaty analysis and Te Ao Māori perspectives in policy.

The Policy Capability Leads’ Group meets in May 2023 to share best practice on how agencies have been building capability and resources to support applying Treaty analysis and Te Ao Māori perspectives in policy.

7 New online outreach and Communications Strategy (recommendations 1 and 2)

A new Policy Project LinkedIn group was established in November 2021. It profiles posts on building policy capability. An updated Communications Strategy is also under development to build on efforts to drive the policy community to the Policy Project's web pages and LinkedIn group. The Policy Project has started holding focus groups with policy practitioners and agencies to inform the Communications Strategy. Once the Policy Skills Framework and Policy Capability Framework are refreshed, a plan for uptake of those frameworks will be included as part of the Communications Strategy.

A final Communications Strategy will be considered by the Policy Profession Board later in 2023.

8 Ring fencing agency time for policy practitioners to engage with the Policy Project's capability building tools and resources (recommendation 4)

The Policy Profession Board and the Tier 2 Policy Leaders' Network discussed this recommendation and agreed in principle that ideally policy practitioners should have time to engage with the Policy Project's capability-building tools and resources. The feasibility of this in practice, however, depends on each agency's ability to respond to time-pressured and demand driven policy work. Making time for practitioners to engage with the Policy Project will therefore be implemented in agencies to suit their context and resources. The training initiatives offered to agencies (mentioned above) effectively ensure that more time is being set aside for policy staff to engage with Policy Project capability-building tools and resources.

9 Senior Public Service leaders and managers need to champion the Policy Project (recommendation 3)

The Policy Project is working with the Policy Capability Leads Group, Tier 2 Policy Leaders' Network, and the Policy Profession Board to identify opportunities as they arise, for senior leaders and managers to promote and champion the Policy Project in their agencies and to provide resources that support them in this.