The Policy Project

Improving the quality of policy advice across government – the journey, progress and challenges.
The context – Better Public Services

- BPS Results
- Functional Leadership
- Leadership and Talent
We’ve been down this road before...
The diagnosis...

- policy advice of variable quality
- shortage of skilled senior policy advisors
- policy advice short on evidence, user needs, evaluation of ‘what works’
- focus on the immediate/poor investment in policy capability for the future – stewardship
- weak cross-government systems for collaboration, alignment and prioritisation
Operating model – principles of how we work...

Collaboration.....
not command and control
Engage the policy community to co-design a work programme
Three Frameworks – a policy improvement infrastructure

Policy Capability Framework

STEWARDSHIP
How well do we focus on policy outcomes and build capability for the future?

POLICY QUALITY SYSTEMS
How well do we enable and support the delivery of quality policy advice?

ENGAGEMENT CUSTOMER-CENTRIC
How well do we meet the expectations of ministers, customers, and other stakeholders?

PEOPLE CAPABILITY
How well do we ensure we have the right skills in the right place at the right time?

Policy Skills Framework

Knowledge (what I know)
- Demands,
- Knowledge
- Government System & Processes
- Strategic Thinking
- Political Context & Priorities

Applied Skills (what I can do)
- Evidence, Insights & Evaluation
- Analysis
- Design for Implementation
- Plan & Manage Work
- Advice & Influence
- Engagement & Collaboration

Behaviour (how I work)
- Improvement & Innovation
- Feedback & Coaching
- Communication
- Political Savvy
- Core State Sector Legislation
- Leadership Success Criteria
- Code of Conduct
- Treaty of Unity
- Machinery of Government
Policy Capability Framework

**PURPOSE**
What is the role of the policy function in this organisation? How does it relate to other parts of the organisation?

**OUTCOMES**
What outcomes are we here to achieve? How much do we know about our customers and the wider ecosystem we operate in?

**CAPABILITY**
Is our policy function the best it can be, now and for the future?

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**PEOPLE CAPABILITY**
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### Policy Capability Framework

**Policy Quality Systems** - Build the systems and processes that support the delivery of quality policy advice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Lead Question</th>
<th>Lines of Enquiry/Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commissioning</td>
<td>How well does the team use appropriate systems and processes to ensure that the supply of policy advice meets demand and has impact?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning and project management</td>
<td>How well does the team ensure that the right policy outputs are delivered, on time, using the most efficient mix of resources?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research, analysis and knowledge</td>
<td>How well is the policy team actively investing in building its knowledge base over time?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality assurance</td>
<td>How effective are policy quality assurance processes?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation and learning</td>
<td>How well is evaluation and learning embedded into business as usual?</td>
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**Insights**

- **improvement not audit**
- **think in stages of the improvement journey**
- **measuring capability – be aspirational**
- **self review – critical friend – external – all options**

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**Deep dive and deep dive with maturity ratings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where are we now?</th>
<th>Where do we want to be? By when?</th>
<th>What will we do to get there?</th>
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**Policy Quality Framework**

- **Element**
- **Lead Question**
- **Lines of Enquiry/Indicators**

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**Maturity Levels**

- **Informal**
- **Transitional**
- **Formalised**
- **Expert**
- **Emerging**

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**Practical Knowledge**

- **Draft Policy processes, capacity and support services in place**
- **Practiced**
- **Exemplified**
- **Practised**
- **Individual**

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**The Policy Project**

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Building prototypes of policy people capability

Who needs what?

Card sorting – first policy skills framework prototype
Policy Skills Framework

Knowledge (what I know)
- Domain Knowledge
- Government Systems & Processes
- Political Context & Priorities

Applied Skills (what I can do)
- Evidence, Insights & Evaluation
- Analysis
- Design for Implementation
- Plan & Manage Work
- Advise & Influence
- Strategic Thinking
- Feedback & Coaching
- Communication
- Engagement & Collaboration

Behaviour (how I am/act)
- Improvement & Innovation
- Agility
- Political Savvy

Public Service Foundations
- Core State Sector Legislation
- Leadership Success Profile
- Code of Conduct
- Treaty of Waitangi
- Machinery of Government
Policy Skills Framework – applications & insights

Insights

- T - breadth and depth
- policy ‘archetypes’
- future focus
- behaviour matters
- conversation is key
- a foundation for future standards and collective initiatives

Developing the team

Team skills mapping template

Use this template to capture current and/or future skills the team needs

Developing self

Knowledge
Applied skill
Level
Behaviour

Knowledge
Applied skill
Level
Behaviour

The Policy Project
Policy Quality Framework

Quality enablers

- Individual pieces of work or policy projects are commissioned, planned and managed well
- We are agile and responsive while we are doing the work
- Our conversation with decision makers is ongoing, and aims for increased certainty
- We generate and draw on relationship capital

Quality advice

- Engages the decision maker and tells the full story
- Is informed by evidence and insights and is analytically sound
- Balances what is desirable, can be delivered and is cost effective
- Is put in context, links to the desired future state and exposes risks, opportunities and implications
- Quality assurance is habitual and supported by culture, systems and processes

Acid tests

- Does this equip the decision maker to make fully informed decisions?
- Is the real problem (or opportunity) exposed?
- Does this advice take account of the broader context?
- Does advice make sense of the evidence & insights?
- Can these options really be delivered and deliver results?
**Insights**

- the policy ‘cycle’ is dynamic & iterative
- not all advice is created equally
- more frontloading is expected
- great advice draws on multiple perspectives
- minister and public as customer
- plan and manage for quality
- relationship capital – build it, draw on it - policy is a long term game
A menu of tools that apply the PQF for agencies to pick and choose from

- Checklists based on the elements of the framework
- Extended guidance on the core quality characteristics
- Three templated options for reviewers/critical friends to give feedback on draft advice
- ‘Start right’ tools to prime for quality
- Ex-post quality assessment tools
- Commissioning tools (next development phase)
- Discussion starter/diagnosis tool: What’s critical to success in this context
- Mandate/project tools for high stakes, larger scale work (next development phase)

Policy Quality Framework

Lessons learned discussion starters
Setting expectations... Head of the Policy Profession

• Free, frank and other F-words
• Policy ecosystem – inside out/outside in
• Evidence, insights, engagement, evaluation
• Build and share capability – system focus ‘take one for the team’
• Innovation and new methods...
Ministers are the intermediate customer. The ultimate customer is the public you are serving — the industry we are regulating, the vulnerable people we need to support.

Policy is an art. It is a skilled profession... bringing the different perspectives together... policy is sterile without a range of perspectives. You need to bring the inside-out and the outside-in to take great ideas to scale.
For discussion...

• Is ‘policy’ a profession?
• Better performance: how can we get ‘the basics’ right and apply new methods?
• What is good evidence?
• How might we reframe ‘policy’ and the ‘policy cycle’?
• Bringing others in – essential or risky? End-to-end not ‘spray and walk away’
• ‘Steal with pride’ – how might we share across jurisdictions...
Access the frameworks @
www.dpmc.govt.nz/policyproject

Contact us
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