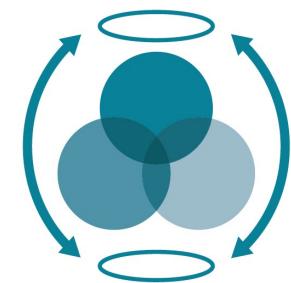


Policy Managers Forum

15 April 2015



The Policy Project
Responsive Today,
Shaping Tomorrow



Context

Background

The Policy Project aims to improve the performance of the policy function and quality of policy advice across government. The Policy Project is led by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in collaboration with public service policy leaders.

In July 2014 the Policy Project held a Policy Forum for policy leaders to codesign the project roadmap and work programme.

The Policy Forum was followed by an Analyst Forum in October. Early career analysts from across the Public Service shared their ideas for improving policy capability, quality and performance. At the end of the session analysts were joined by the Tier 2 Policy Leaders Network – together they discussed how to lift the policy game.

The Policy Managers Forum

The Policy Managers Forum provided an opportunity for managers from across the public service to come together and share insights and ideas for improving the quality of policy advice and creating high performing policy teams.

Policy Managers tested and iterated some key deliverables for the Policy Project including a common policy quality framework, and work to develop a high-performing policy workforce. Peter Carr (Policy Manager at the Ministry of Transport) partnered with the Policy Project to ensure the Forum was relevant and useful for policy managers.

At the end of the session, the Policy Managers had the opportunity to discuss their ideas with Andrew Kibblewhite, Chief Executive of DPMC and Head of the Policy Profession and the Tier 2 Policy Leaders Network.



Context

This document

This document records the conversations at the Policy Managers Forum. It is a collation of policy managers' rich insights and ideas of how to change the policy system.

Structure of the Forum

Policy Managers were split into five groups and explored five topics during the Forum. Each topic discussion concluded with groups coming up with an idea for each topic.



The topics were:

1.

What does a great policy analyst look like?

2.

What does a great policy manager look like?

3.

What does a great policy process look like?

4.

What does a great policy team look like?

5.

What does great policy advice look like?

Participation

The collaborative ‘speed-dating’ session included:

39
Managers

20
Government Agencies

5
Topic areas



Agencies involved

Ministry of Education
Ministry of Social Development
Department of Internal Affairs
Ministry of Health
Ministry of Defence
Ministry for Culture and Heritage
Ministry for Primary Industries
Inland Revenue Department
Inland Revenue Department
Department of Conservation
Ministry of Transport
Ministry of Justice
Land Information New Zealand
The Treasury
Te Puni Kōkiri
Ministry for the Environment
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
Superu
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Department of Corrections

Participants

Peter Carr Marian Willberg
Pamela Cohen Therese Egan
Dan Brown Sarah Metwell
Colin Holden Peter Frawley
Cindy O'Brien Julie Keenan
Ben McBride Simon Rae
Jeremy Steele Jo Gascoigne
Felicity Buchanan Tim Herbert
Jamie Kerr Caroline Greaney
Karl Woodhead Todd Cleaver
Spencer Clubb Angela Mellish
Antonia Reid Brian Hallinan
Hannah Cameron Oliver Sander
Tania Gerrard Kaye Ronald
Dasha Leonova Hilary Eade
Lisa Ramanui Ed May
Nigel Evans Vasantha Krishnan
Charlotte Beaglehole Sarah Kerkin
Peter Richardson Matthew Gilbert
Robyn Henderson

Forum Directors

Sally Washington (Policy Project) Jim Scully (Thinkplace)
Laura de Haan (Policy Project) Jess Lunnon (Thinkplace)

Forming and connecting



What inspires me most about my role as a policy manager?

Each policy manager shared with the group what inspires them most about their role. Four overarching themes emerged:



Making life better for NZers

Creating a high quality public service that adds value

Influencing policy on issues that really matter

Seeing great work make a difference



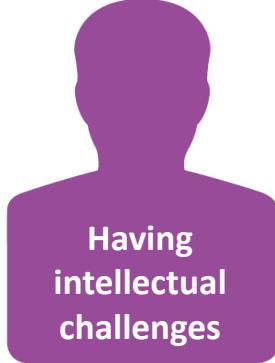
Helping to develop great policy people

Recruiting bright young people and encouraging them to grow

Helping clear the way for analysts to solve big problems

Creating an environment that allows people to be useful and happy about their work

Developing people to outgrow their role



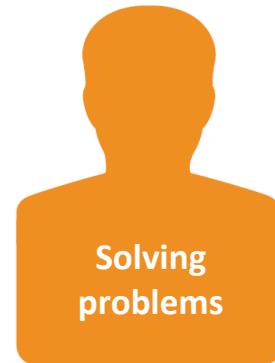
Having intellectual challenges

Tackling intractable problems in a frequently changing context

Working with inspirational and intellectual people

Having the autonomy to shape how you do the job

Being a thought leader and thinking creatively



Solving problems

Improving quality of policy by improving connections

Bringing together diverse skills and agencies for high agility advice

Linking ideas across agencies and sectors to find new approaches

Integrating policy perspectives from conception to implementation

What does a great policy manager look like?



What does a great policy manager look like?



Focus Questions

1. How do you get the best out of your people? What helps and hinders you to do this role well?
2. How do you get the best out of your policy processes? How do you enable great policy processes?
3. How do you best balance multiple perspectives and stakeholders in the short and long term?

A great policy manager:

Is the glue that holds an agency together

Must be able to manage expectations (up, down and out) while navigating a clear way forward. We need to:

- Translate information and work so it is relevant and practical for the team
- Meaningfully engage, relay information and build trust with senior leaders and ministers
- Ease tensions in team, agency and system while enabling all to be heard
- Take 10,000 foot view on situations and use today's issues to push towards long term goals
- Balance the tensions and tradeoffs of consistently high workloads and expectations, while maintaining the respect of multiple stakeholders

Works across the system

Fosters the right connections so that collaboration is possible. Cross agency work is difficult but you can't solve complex problems in isolation. We need to:

- Have smart networks with key stakeholders and customers
- Seek out and harness high-impact opportunities for collaboration across the system
- Value people making connections early and collaborating authentically
- Understand and maintain sound judgement on when to collaborate and when to direct – play a 'Navigator'

Values people and policy craft

Has mutual respect for the craft and the staff. Creates an enabling environment that supports others to be successful. We need to:

- Build an authorising environment for staff – a clear sense of priorities, robust processes and useful frameworks
- Ensure great commissioning happens – confirm expectations, clarify problem definitions, establish resource requirements, get the right people involved
- Value and cultivate a creative environment – welcome experimental approaches and new thinking so policy and people stay relevant
- Develop great analysts who provide great policy – provide space for learning and stretch opportunities
- Establish high engagement – understand what motivates/energises people and play to their strengths
- Prevent high profile policy work crowding out 'management time' and longer term policy
- Give regular, constructive (but honest) feedback – to improve policy and develop people
- Respect and trust the team – allow them to do their job and back them when necessary

Is enabled by the support of others

To get the best out of us, we need support from above and below:

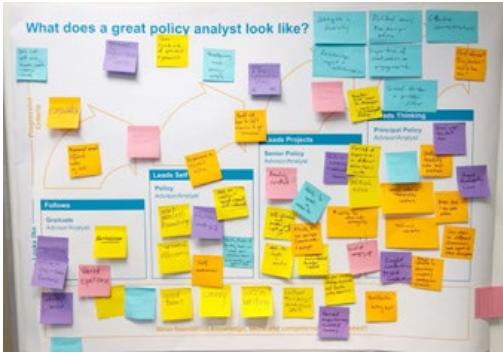
- Staff who can do their role well and efficiently
 - A clear direction, vision and culture
 - Aligned allocation of resources and prioritisation with longer term planning (short timeframes mean people can't do the great job they want to do)
 - Senior management who value the role of policy managers in nurturing staff and delivering high quality policy
 - Tolerance of failure from above – fail fast, learn fast
 - High quality administrative and corporate support that gets hygiene right (HR/IT including document sign-out, technology)
 - Organisational processes that provide agility –systematise some things to make good habits and reduce transaction cost



What does a great policy analyst look like?



What does a great policy analyst look like?



Focus Questions

1. What foundation knowledge, skills and competencies do policy people all need?
2. What does a great policy graduate, advisor/analyst, senior and principal look like? What types of role come after the principal role?
3. How might we support analysts to build their skills, gain experience and progress through their career pathways?

Core attributes of great policy professionals

A great policy professional must be open to new opportunities and challenges throughout their career. This includes being:

- Enthusiastic and engaged
- Broadminded, inquisitive and analytically strong
- Resilient and adaptable
- Open to learning and feedback
- A good communicator and relationship manager
- Emotionally intelligent and self-aware

Diversity of experience is key

Policy people (whether technical or generalist) need to seek out a diverse range of experiences to build the knowledge, skills and competencies required for a great policy career. This will increasingly mean non-linear career pathways:

- Different roles within their agency – policy, operational and service design
- Different roles in the public service - Ministers Office, central agency, frontline agency
- Different roles outside the public service – ministerial advisor, private sector, NGO
- Seeking out insights into other roles – e.g. through secondments and opportunities to shadow others

We need to think differently about thought leadership

We need to re-imagine the senior principal analyst role to bring diverse perspectives in and provide attractive career pathways. This includes:

- Developing and acknowledging both the thought leadership and people leadership role
- Encouraging movement from manager to principal and back again
- Having transparent transition and promotion plans that include new roles (e.g. chief advisor, policy directors)
- Creating new exit and entry points to enable movement in and out of the public service (e.g. consulting)

What does a great policy team look like?



What does a great policy team look like?



Focus Questions

- Looks like:** What is the make-up of a great policy team?
- Thinks like:** How does a great policy team work internally and externally?
- Performs like:** What does a great policy team achieve?



A great team:

Works as one

Is greater than the sum of its parts. A great team:

- Has a shared vision and purpose about how the team contributes to the wider organisation and to public value
- Works together rather than just sits together - owns each other's work
- Complements each other's strengths and weaknesses
- Can test, debate, challenge and resolve – avoids groupthink
- Value and respect all members
- Is supportive of each other and cares/ manages wellbeing (appreciation for lives outside work)
- Shares networks and connections

Takes ownership of what is delivered

Owns its policy products and processes and brings real change.
A great team:

- Walks the talk and has pride in the work – understands impact of policy on New Zealanders
- Looks for both quick wins and long term gains – the right project mix
- Is output orientated and agile – balances demands, prioritises effectively and delivers quality work on time
- Takes collective responsibility - productive, accountable, resilient
- Navigates complex situations and understands authorising environment

Works as a Hub

Values diversity and openness – seeks out new perspectives. A great team:

- Embraces diversity – background, skills, experiences, perspectives
- Has a mix of depth (subject matter knowledge) as well as breadth (expertise in range of subject matter)
- Functions as an open system – inclusive, collaborative and welcoming
- Creatively explores options and generates new ideas – diverge and converge on issues
- Brings maturity to the debate and challenges received wisdom
- Cultivates relationships across organisation and public service
- Remains constantly in touch with broader environment
- Is regularly sought out for advice by the organisation and across the public service

What does a great policy process look like?



What does a great policy process look like?



Focus Questions

1. Think about a great policy process you have been involved in. What did it look like?
2. Describe the components of a great process.

Get the basics right

Has a plan and has the right people involved. A great process:

- Has an agreed project management and communications approach
- Defines the task, products and direction up front but enables staff to revisit this
- Identifies resources – both money and people
- Plans the engagement process up front – who/ what/ when
- Identifies the evidence base to be drawn on and prioritises evidence gaps
- Outlines roles of team and ensures they play to people's strengths
- Establishes clear and meaningful governance and management (fit for purpose)
- Identifies decision-makers, stakeholders and customers and works as closely as possible with them
- Builds quality assurance and evaluation/ learning in from the beginning

Treat the process as an investment

Is a long-term investment that provides the foundation for future policy advice. A great process:

- Builds strong trusting relationships – with Ministers, agencies (both internally and externally)
- Establishes co-creation – reaches out to knowledge sources at all stages and purposefully covers different perspectives
- Ensures engagement happens authentically, early, widely, openly and often
- Feeds information back to stakeholders and customers – manages expectations, explains government/ parliament process, shares the final product
- Uses different perspectives and different people to create new insights
- Builds a stronger evidence base
- Embeds lessons learned throughout the process and disseminates those lessons

Make the space for good process

Builds some flexibility into the process from the beginning. A great process:

- Has flexibility to tailor process according to issue/ opportunity – allowing a swift shift in focus
- Is realistic and practical about time and space
- Enables team to test – draft – test (without investing in writing too early). Allows process to be open to iterations.

What does great policy advice look like?



What does great policy advice look like?

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Focus Questions

1. How would you know if your policy outputs are analytically robust, contextually aware, practical, useful and relevant, and communicated effectively?



Enduring, goes beyond quick fix

Policy advice achieves lasting impact. Great advice:

- Is future focused and proactive
- Goes beyond just the paper – the process and result matter
- Genuinely incorporates customer and stakeholder insights and feedback
- Is analytically robust, has a strong evidence base and is peer reviewed
- Explores a range of interventions (not just regulation)
- Builds in evaluation loops or is evaluation ready from the start

Tells a clear story, positioned in wider context

Great policy advice should be well communicated and make broader connections. Great advice:

- Tells the story – allows reader to relate, understands wider issues and has clear point of view
- Occurs at the right time to align with experience, trends and context
- Considers the audience and tailors appropriately – Cabinet paper/ analytical paper
- Recognises the achievable wider system outcomes (outcomes do not rest in just one agency)
- Gets the right balance between time and quality
- Ensures decision makers can make a decision quickly

Does not exist in a vacuum

Advice must be widely tested and meet the needs of end users. Great advice:

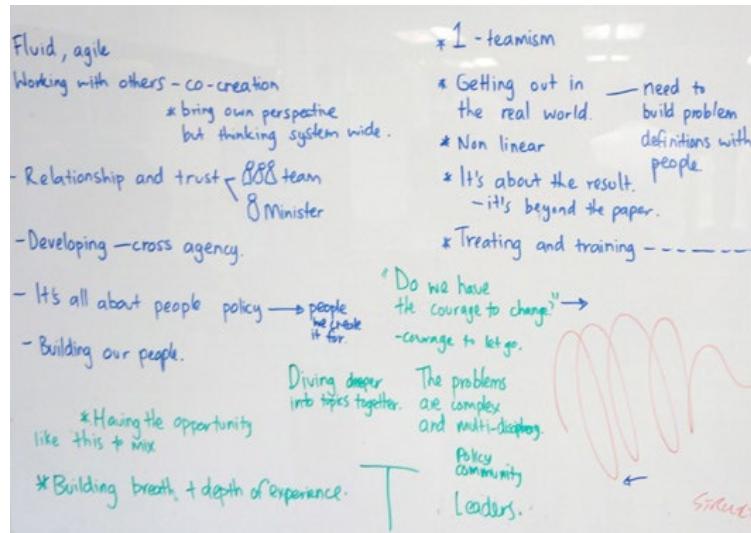
- Considers implementation from the start and connects with operational side/ frontline perspectives
- Is informed by the end-user and constituency to ensure it will actually work
- Takes a system perspective – should integrate across public service when appropriate
- Has buy-in from other agencies when necessary
- Demonstrates solid understandings of stakeholder perspectives. e.g. multi-sector demand (government/ industry/NGO sector)
- Is free and frank – respected by the Minister (regardless of whether the Minister hates it or loves it)
- Understands and communicates when impacts will result from policy change

Overall themes



Themes from the Policy Managers discussion with the Head of the Policy Profession and Tier 2 Policy Leaders

To conclude the session, Policy Managers were joined by Andrew Kibblewhite, Head of the Policy Profession, and the Tier 2 Policy Leaders Network. Together the group had an open conversation about the themes emerging from the day.



Change the way we do policy

Thinking beyond the paper –
Taking wider environment with you – stakeholders/ implementers and all others involved and buying in

Being future focused –
fundamentally change the policy process by looking for opportunities rather than problems (focussing on problems leads to reactivity)

Treating the policy process as iterative rather than following the traditional policy cycle

Diversity is crucial to the future performance of the policy function

Ensuring there is diversity in people, teams, processes and products to ensure well considered advice (gender, skills and experiences, backgrounds, thinking styles, approaches, ethnicity)

Bring diverse perspectives into policy by co-creating – understand and learn from stakeholders, the customer and frontline, overseas and other agencies (get out in the 'real world')

Policy managers have a key role to play

Develop and encourage both generalist and specialist policy people

Create learning opportunities for staff that go further than training courses – shadowing across agencies or more senior people, secondments

Help policy people to progress – acting opportunities and training to help senior staff transition to management role

Build a high performing policy team where members with diverse skills seamlessly complement and support each other

Closing messages



The Policy Project would like to thank all of the participants that attended the Policy Managers Forum and engaged so constructively. It was fantastic to see a room full of highly engaged managers working together to help shape our future policy system. We were delighted with the thoughtful insights and ideas.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the Policy Managers (Peter Carr, Jo Gascoigne and Karl Woodhead) who helped to make the Forum useful and relevant to Policy Managers. The Policy Project is grateful to the Ministry of Transport for partnering on the Managers Forum, providing the venue and for the logistical support.



“It was a really engaging event and a large part of this was down to the excellent planning and facilitation by the individuals involved.”

Treasury Policy Manager



“It was a privilege to hear about the challenges and opportunities the group had identified.”

Andrew Kibblewhite, CE of DPMC and Head of the Policy Profession

Continuing the conversation



Stay connected to the Policy Project

Information about the Policy Project is available at www.dpmc.govt.nz/policyproject. We are regularly sharing the Tier 2 Policy Leaders Network discussions and are constantly updating the Policy Project's news and events page. The next big Policy Project event is Andrew Kibblewhite's IPANZ seminar on 26 May. Please encourage your staff to attend!

Conversation Tracker – share it

Feel free to share this conversation tracker with colleagues or anyone you think will find it interesting.

Networks

Keep the conversations going with the new connections you made at the Policy Managers' Forum.

Feedback

The Policy Project welcomes your feedback. If you have any further ideas or comments about the Forum, this conversation tracker, or our policy system generally contact Sally Washington (Policy Project Programme Manager) at Policy.Project@dpmc.govt.nz.