

Launch of the Policy Project Frameworks

Speech in the Grand Hall, Parliament Buildings

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Introduction

**Whāia te iti kahurangi, ki te tūohu koe me maunga teitei.
(Keep your eye on the prize, and if you have to succumb in the effort
let it be to a lofty mountain)**

**E nga mana
E nga reo
E nga rau rangatira ma
Tena Koutou katoa**

I am delighted to welcome you all to the formal launch of our three brand new policy improvement frameworks. They have been built for and by the policy community to lift its own performance – to improve how we as advisors support good government decision making.

One way or another you are all here as members of the policy community. So I know that one of the main reasons you all get up in the morning is to make a difference to the lives of New Zealanders. We do that by supporting the Government make good decisions through giving the Government good advice.

Policy matters. And I thank you all for your commitment to making our policy advice as good as it can be.

Three frameworks to support improved policy quality and capability

I'm proud of the three foundation frameworks the policy community has built for itself. Let me just outline what each one does.

- **The Policy Quality Framework** – it sets out what great policy advice looks like and what enables it. Good advice engages decision makers and helps them take a decision, it is clear about the problem/opportunity, is informed by evidence, it balances what is desirable, possible and cost-effective, and it is savvy.
- **The Policy Skills Framework** – it sets out what great policy advisors looks like – what knowledge they have, what skills they need to have, and what behaviour we expect of them. It is designed for use by individuals building their own skills profile and for managers building high performing policy teams.
- **The Policy Capability Framework** – it sets out what makes for a high performing policy shop – with lines of inquiry to assess factors like stewardship (investing in capability for the future), systems and processes for delivering quality advice, and being customer-centric.

The three frameworks can be stand along or used as an integrated package.

Collaboration and co-production

I want to congratulate everyone who has contributed to these products, including my chief executive colleagues whose agencies have fronted up with cash and staff to help. I want to give special thanks to the Tier 2 Policy Leaders – deputy secretaries with policy responsibilities from across government – who have sponsored and supported the work from the outset.

I also want to thank the Policy Project team – especially Sally Washington and Jo Hartigan – the team has ‘walked the talk’ by modelling a truly collaborative approach to its work. You have put a sense of style back into the policy game!

People from across the broad policy community (analysts, managers, academics, HR people) have been involved every step of the way in the production of these frameworks and tools.

The co-production approach means the frameworks cover what you think is important and where you aspire to be as a policy community. These are your products. They will help you to do your job better.

Call to action – use them

A lot of work has gone into these policy frameworks. And it is important to me we now use them to harvest the gains.

As Head of the Policy Profession, I expect senior leaders to:

- **promote the frameworks** in their own agency and champion them outside – even beyond the public service. Crown entities, local government partners, NGOs. I have been asked by ANZSOG to talk about the frameworks to some of their international programmes! These are world class policy tools and we should make the most of them.
- **challenge yourselves**, be open to constructive challenge – the frameworks are designed to stimulate courageous conversations about performance.
- **offer support to colleagues** in other agencies who might need some help (with new or difficult challenges or because they are short on capability). Let’s think about being ‘critical friends’ to our peers.
- **take one for the team** – if your agency is particularly good at something (e.g. project management for policy) or have some established and successful training provision, open it to others who have less capacity or scale.

The Policy Project team is available to support your efforts.

Next steps – improve and innovate

Moving ahead the Policy Project will be digging into areas that we’ve seen need more attention:

- **Building the future policy toolkit** – what new things do we need in our toolkit? The investment approach and other methods for generating information about users (design thinking, behavioural insights) have the potential to help us innovate the policy practice. The Policy Project will act as the catalyst, broker and facilitator to showcase and share promising practice.

- **Free and frank advice** – there are many conversations around town on this at the moment. My message is we are not doing our job unless we provide ministers with free, frank and fearless advice. And in order to do that we have to protect a safe, confidential place where contrary views can be aired and shared.
- **Building people capability** – there are still challenges related to our policy workforce. We need to think about whether we need a more joined up approach to our workforce – a collective as opposed to a competitive model.

Vision for the future

Let me leave you with some thoughts on **what success would look like in 5 years, my vision for the policy function**:

- We provide **free, frank, fearless and savvy advice** – to support good government decision making. And we are known for doing so.
- Our advice is based on the **best available evidence and user insights** – an understanding of the real lives of real people – we know what works and we keep striving for new and better ways of doing things.
- We **can identify the ‘big issues’** (whether future, looming or cross-cutting) and can mobilise to collectively find solutions that improve the lives of New Zealanders.
- We develop and can deploy a **high-performing policy cadre** – so we have the right people in the right place at the right time.
- We **think system and not just agency** – we are one policy community that supports the government of the day in the service of the people of New Zealand.

As Head of the Policy Profession I want to ensure that business of providing advice – the policy function – is the best it can be, world leading even.

These frameworks – the **Policy Capability Framework**, the **Policy Skills Framework** and the **Policy Quality Framework** – take us some way towards this future. I look to the collective efforts of the policy community to carry things on.

A view from the ‘demand side’.

Prime Minister, can I say how enormously grateful we are that you agreed to launch the policy frameworks today. We could not ask for an endorsement from a more important customer! Your support today sends a signal to all of us in the policy community that what we do matters. And that we should continue to strive to lift the quality and impact of what we do.