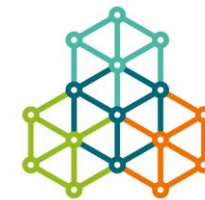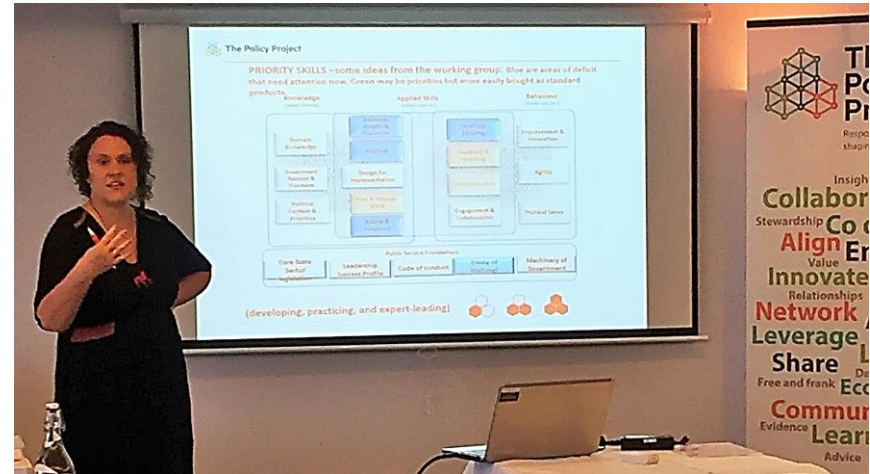# Policy People Capability Workshop

Capability-building through training – collective action

4 October 2017

The Policy Project

Responsive today,
shaping tomorrow

Purpose and intent

Formal training is one area where agencies have said that the policy community can make a difference by acting more collectively. This has been a recurring topic as the Policy Project has progressed. Our goal in this workshop was to move the conversation on from our last workshop in August (available here) to assessing key elements that could contribute to a proposal for action in this area. The attendees for this workshop again included agency-nominated policy capability leads and some HR/OD experts.

Agencies worked in groups to identify which skills in the Policy Skills Framework were both most important to improve, and most amenable to formal training. We discussed the barriers and enablers to formal training being available and used at an optimal level by policy agencies. Finally, three possible proposals for action were tested by the group. For each action, critical success factors and risks were identified.

Participants

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Inland Revenue Department

Veronica Jacobsen
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Greg Campbell
Ministry of Justice

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Ministry of Transport

Grace Campbell-Macdonald
The Treasury

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Ministry for Pacific Peoples

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Ministry of Transport

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Ministry for Primary Industries

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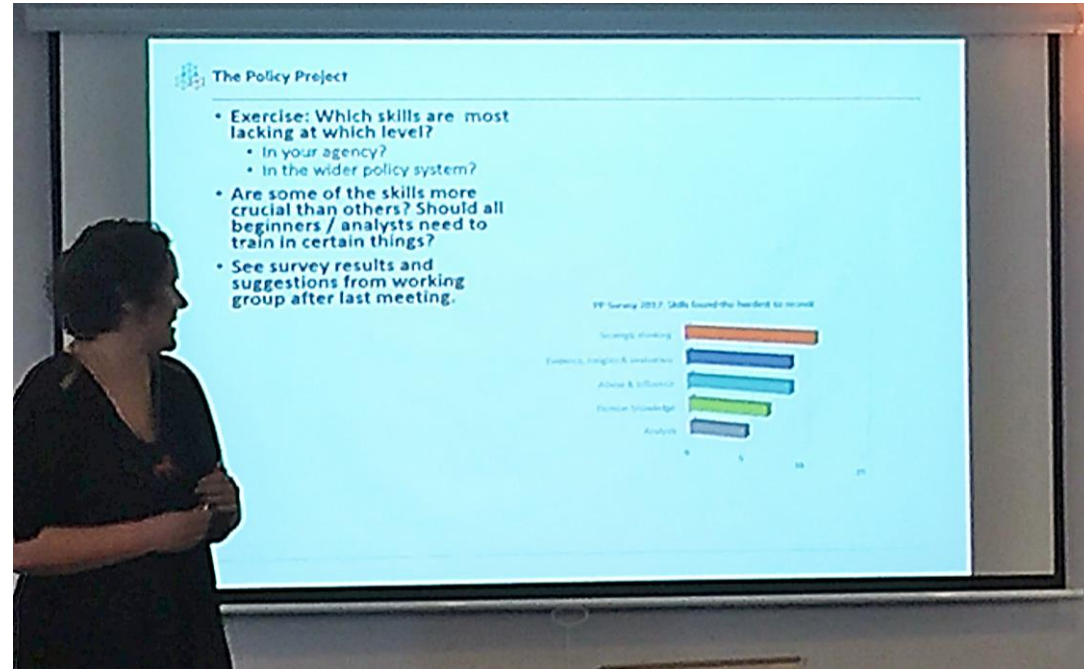
Louise Munro
Senior Advisor

Alpa Modi
Team Coordinator

Skills assessment

We had asked agencies in our survey earlier in the year which skills were the 'hardest to recruit'.

Those skills ('top five') were:

- Strategic thinking
- Evidence insights & evaluation
- Advise & influence
- Domain knowledge
- Analysis.

We now wanted to validate that result by asking:

- are those skills the same as those which were most in need of improvement AND
- are those skills appropriately addressed by formal training?

Training priorities from the Policy Skills Framework

We did an exercise asking each table to identify which skills were both their highest priority, and amenable to formal training. We added another dimension by asking which level of analyst most needed training in the skill. With a small number of 'votes' for each participant, a wide spread of skills were chosen, but there were clear 'winners'.

Top three (and closely followed by)

Developing:
- Evidence, Insights & Evaluation
- Analysis
- Treaty of Waitangi.

Practicing:
- Evidence, Insights & Evaluation
- Treaty of Waitangi
- Strategic Thinking
  (closely followed by Analysis, and Design for Implementation).

Expert/Leading:
- Evidence, Insights & Evaluation
- Strategic Thinking
- Design for Implementation
  (closely followed by Feedback and Coaching,
  Engagement & Collaboration, and
  Improvement & Innovation).

Category	Skill	Developing	Practicing	Expert / Leading
Knowledge	Domain Knowledge	1		
	Government Systems & Processes	4		
	Political Context & Priorities		1	
	Evidence, Insights & Evaluation	11	9	8
Applied Skills	Analysis	9	6	4
	Design for Implementation	2	6	6
	Plan & Manage Work	4	3	1
	Advise & Influence	2	6	4
	Strategic Thinking	2	7	7
	Feedback & Coaching	2	2	5
Behaviour	Communication	2	4	1
	Engagement & Collaboration	3	4	5
	Improvement & Innovation		2	5
	Agility			1
	Political Savvy		4	5
Public Service Foundations	Core State Sector Legislation	1		
	Leadership Success Profile			
	Code of Conduct	1		
	Treaty of Waitangi	7	8	4
	Machinery of Government	2		

So why isn't the training already available and used?

Modelling supply and demand suggested a number of possible barriers

Barriers to demand for *internal* training

- Lack of capability to analyse training needs of staff
- Lack of information on which skills *should* be a training priority

Barriers to demand for *external* training

- Lack of skills in procurement of appropriate training
- Lack of information on which training is good quality and meets goals

Barriers to supply of in-house training

- Lack of in-house skills for developing and delivering training content
- Lack of funding and time available (especially for small agencies)

Barriers to supply of external training

- Lack of suppliers with policy-specific expertise
- Lower profits from policy-specific versus more generic training
- Lack of information for suppliers on what type or amount of training is wanted
- Reported demand is not matched by funding and release for staff to take up training

Three ideas for addressing barriers to training

1. BUY BETTER:
Stock take external training and develop online directory with 'ratings' from participants (Trip Advisor)

This proposal would aim to address the barrier that managers and others making training decisions lack information on which training is good quality and meets goals:

- Success factors included the need for very wide publicity to achieve a critical mass of courses and feedback, and for ongoing management of such a directory.

- Key risks included concerns that the ratings might not represent the cross-section of attendees, being either just the negative voices or superficial. Research shows that feedback sheets on the day have little relationship to the usefulness of the course to the employer.
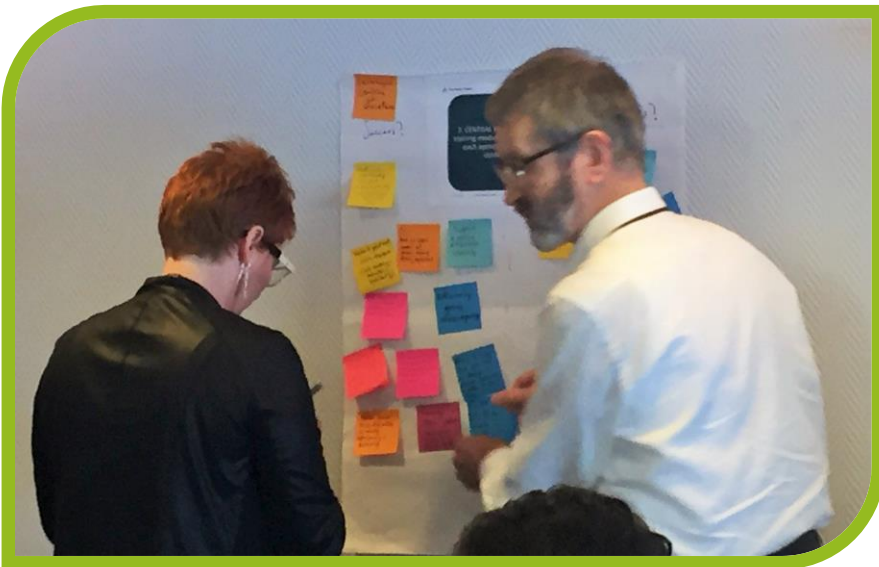
# Agencies are already taking some steps to share training

2. SHARE MORE:
Stocktake internal training across Public Service and encourage open access and promotion to other agencies

Cross-agency sharing of in-house training would aim to address the barrier of a lack of skills, time and funding being available to create and deliver training.

- The group identified key success factors for this to be promotion and uptake. Joint scheduling was also key, and Veronica Jacobsen from MBIE suggested acting now to share training schedules. Some of this happened at the workshop and we would encourage others to contact Veronica in the short term.

- The main risk identified by participants was the impact of success of the proposal – a few extra attendees at the margins would not affect provider agencies, but if many took up some courses, there might be significant calls on staff time and funding from some agencies. It was not clear how small agencies could necessarily reciprocate.

# Did attendees think centralised provision would overcome the barriers of capability and coordination?
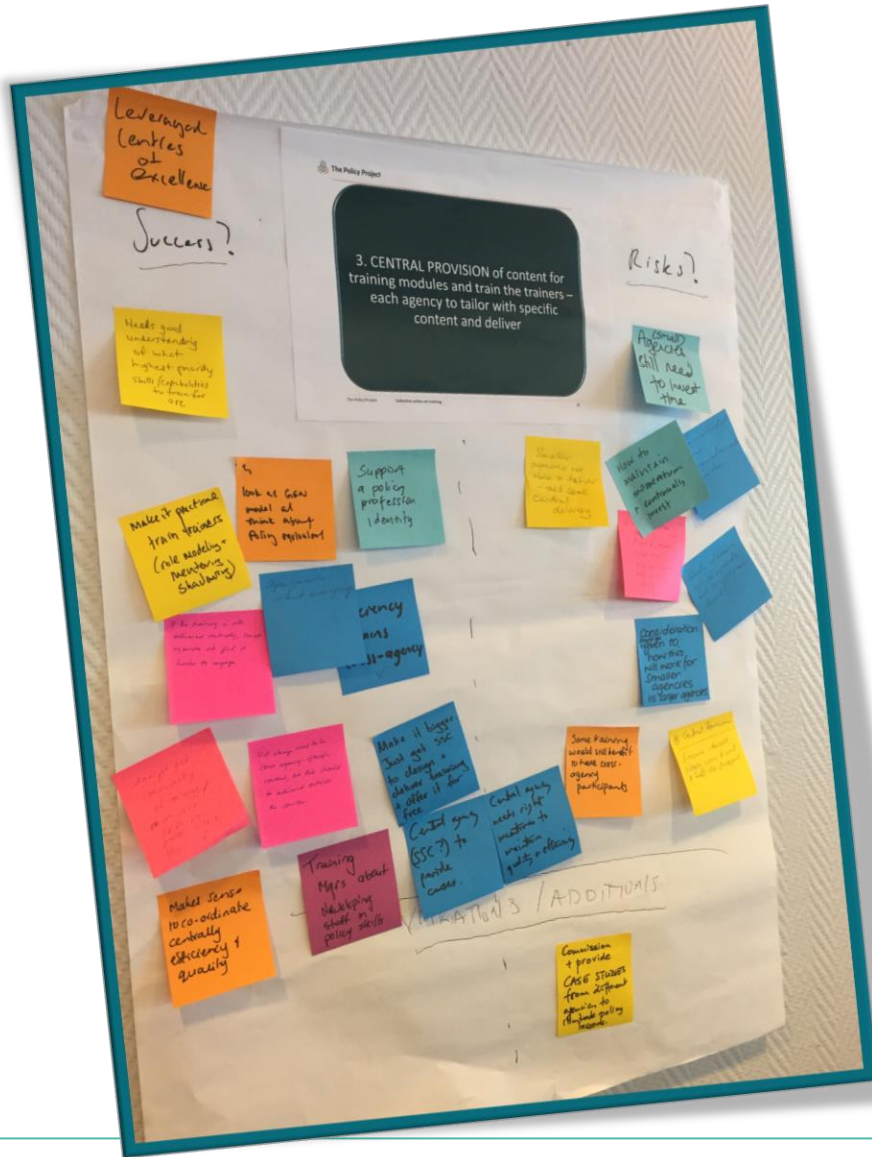
3. CENTRAL PROVISION of content for training modules and training for the trainers – each agency then to tailor the content to their context and deliver training themselves

This proposal also recognises that as staff move between agencies, a common set of core training would benefit the system:

- To succeed there would need to be ongoing investment and momentum.

- Risks were centred around the fact the agencies each independently decide their investment and priorities.

Next steps – the Policy Profession Board
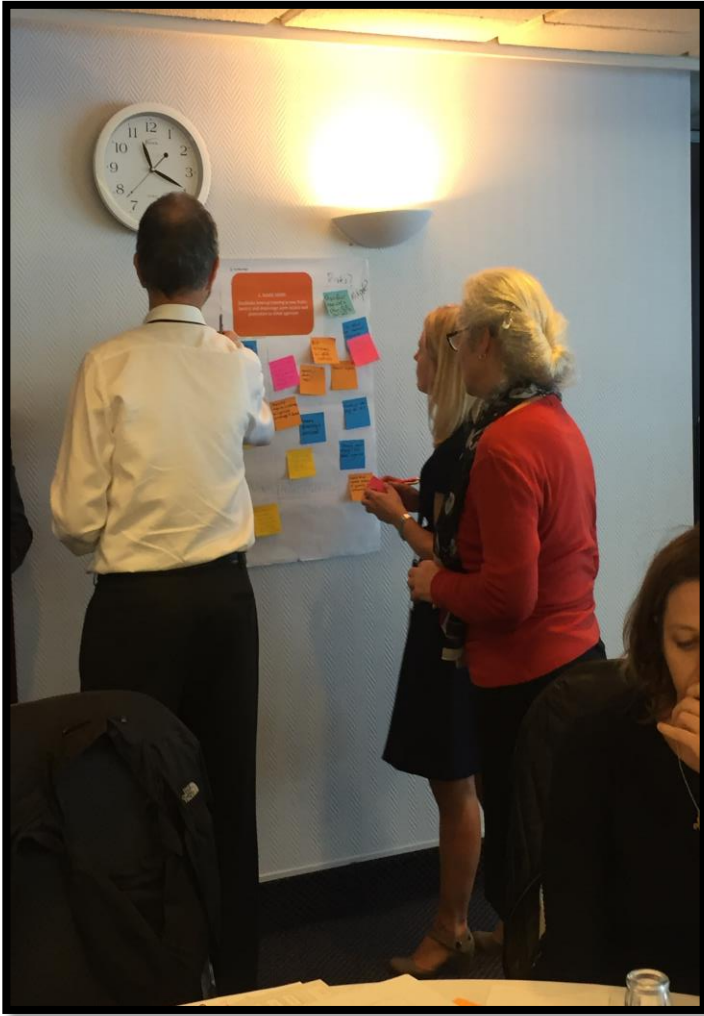
- The Policy Project will pull together the information and views shared in this session, undertake some further analysis, and produce a paper on the training element of a workforce strategy to go to the Policy Profession Board.

- The paper will be built around acknowledgement of the barriers that exist now, and reflect the skill priorities validated at the workshop.

- The paper will present options to collectively improve formal training and its role in the Public Service and policy 'system' having "the right skills in the right place at the right time".

- Feedback on the paper will be obtained from Policy Capability leads before it is presented to the Board.

Key updates

We also updated the group about the other current priorities of the Policy Project:

- Continuing work on codifying policy stewardship for giving free and frank advice to successive governments and related system changes.

- Policy Methods Toolbox – developing the content for Release 2.

- Supporting the HoPP Board (now renamed the Policy Profession Board) to take on the role of career board for senior policy leaders.