



New Zealand's Fourth Open Government Partnership Plan Self-Assessment Report 2025

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Introduction and Background

This Report provides a self-assessment of New Zealand's Fourth National Action Plan (Plan) under the Open Government Partnership (OGP). The Background to this Report discusses the country's open government context, including how the government operates and the strength and contribution of the community and voluntary sector. It describes the significant change and disruption in the environment in the Plan period and notes that, while there were challenges, the benefits realised included strengthened collaborative relationships between government and communities. The Action Plan process discusses the self-assessment of OGP compliance in relation to the Plan's eight commitments, with four of the eight substantially delivered, two not delivered, and the remaining two, delivered in part. Finally, the Report discusses some insights and lessons learned from the Plan process and makes four key recommendations for improvement.

New Zealand's Open Government Context

1.a New Zealand's System of Government

- The starting point for understanding open government in New Zealand is through the country's system of government. New Zealand is fortunate to be a mature democracy¹, with a long record of free and fair elections and of guaranteeing political rights and civil liberties. Each voter has a say on who represents them in Parliament and in local government.
- A constitutional monarchy, the government is made up of democratically elected representatives and MPs². Most ministers are members of the Cabinet, the main decision-making body of the government.³ OGP is led by the Minister for the Public Service, supported by the Public Service Commission as secretariat (the Commission). Cabinet approves the country's OGP National Action Plans.
- According to the Varieties of Democracy Indices (V-Dem)⁴, New Zealand was the seventh-most electoral democratic country in the world in 2024. The government ranks highly for transparency and since 1995⁵, when the Corruption Perceptions Index started, has been ranked in the top four countries in the world for the least amount of perceived public sector corruption.

1.b Engagement with the Government

- OGP is one of several ways through which citizens can influence government. While voting in the general election is the primary way to influence government decision-making, citizens can, and often do, engage with government by:
 - participating in a consultation process. Consultation occurs at different stages of decision-making and can take different forms.⁶ Strong public interest can attract extensive participation, e.g. the Regulatory Standards Bill discussion document attracted almost 23,000 submissions⁷;

¹ [Representative democracy and Parliament – Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#)

² "List MPs" are elected from the party list under the MMP system.

³ [5. Cabinet Decision-making | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPMC\)](#)

⁴ [V-Dem](#)

⁵ [Corruption Perceptions Index 2024 - Transparency.org](#)

⁶ For example, in the case of policy, before any proposed policy becomes a bill and is subject to Select Committee scrutiny

⁷ [The Regulatory Standards Bill: What you need to know | RNZ News](#)

- making a submission to a select committee about proposed legislation⁸, a distinctive and valued feature of the legislative process. For example, over 300,000 written submissions⁹ were received on the Treaty Principles Bill in early 2025;
- starting a petition seeking to change a law, policy, or to correct an injustice¹⁰. New Zealand has a strong tradition of petitions¹¹, the number of which have increased markedly since the electronic petitions were introduced in 2018.¹²
- starting a petition to ask for a nationwide referendum, or a ‘citizens-initiated referendum’¹³. A referendum, or a vote on a question, is an important tool in this democracy.

1.c Role of the Community and Voluntary Sector in strengthening community and democracy

- The phrase 'community and voluntary sector' (CVS) in this Report refers to all the groups working for local and regional communities, hapu and iwi, as well as larger organisations, such as national charities. CVS includes “civil society organisations”¹⁴. New Zealand has a large CVS, comprising over 114,000 organisations¹⁵, which range from small community groups to large charities that impact every aspect of New Zealand’s society. Community organisations focused on international issues make up the smallest category, comprising just 0.8% of the CVS.¹⁶ The overwhelming majority of CVS (89.2%) are staffed by volunteers¹⁷. The CVS plays a vital role in building social infrastructure by connecting people and providing services, mobilising volunteers, and sharing information and resources. CVS efforts thus promote trust, alongside making a significant economic and social contribution to the country.¹⁸
- The CVS also plays an important role in raising issues and shaping government policy. Alongside discrete engagement processes, many policy makers have developed networks and collaborations to engage with the CVS on a range of policy and community issues and tap into the wealth of their knowledge, experience, and diverse views, to enhance policy advice and ensure it is informed by lived experience¹⁹.
- It must be noted that communities also address public issues independently of government through community development (CD), an engagement practice where communities act on issues important to them. CD has existed since the 1930s²⁰. CD includes promoting skills, collective effort to effect change, building a shared vision, trust, and achieving practical results.

⁸ [Chapter 37 - The Legislative Process: Select Committee Consideration - New Zealand Parliament](#)

⁹ [External consultants to analyse record Treaty Principles submissions - Newsroom](#)

¹⁰ Petitions FAQ - New Zealand Parliament. The House continues an ancient right exercised in England for people to petition to seek redress for an almost unlimited range of (real or supposed) wrongs done to petitioners, to advocate amendments to the law or changes in Government policy, or to seek public inquiries into unsatisfactory situations.

¹¹ A petition is one of the most common ways for people to engage directly with the House. The largest and most famous were the series of petitions calling on Parliament to give women the vote, submitted to Parliament in July 1893 and signed by about 24,000 women.

¹² For an example of the use of petitions to raise awareness and create national change see: Plastic fantastic - petitions capture the public mood - New Zealand Parliament

¹³ [Seek a referendum - New Zealand Parliament](#)

¹⁴ The term “civil society organisation” has no formal definition, can mean different things to different people, and tends to be used to refer to advocacy groups, rather than organisations in the wider community and voluntary sector that may or may not have an advocacy function. See: [What-is-civil-society.pdf](#) and J Kendall & M Knapp, “A loose and baggy monster: boundaries, definitions and typologies”, in Introduction to the Voluntary Sector, eds. R Hedley, C Rochester & J Davis Smith, Routledge, 1994, 66-95

¹⁵ [Community and voluntary groups in NZ - CommunityNet Aotearoa](#)

¹⁶ See: [Statistics | Tūao Aotearoa Volunteering New Zealand](#)

¹⁷ See: [Statistics | Tūao Aotearoa Volunteering New Zealand](#)

¹⁸ See: [Statistics | Tūao Aotearoa Volunteering New Zealand](#)

¹⁹ See, for example, The New Zealand Non-Profit Sector and Government Policy, 2009: [Microsoft Word - sanders5.doc](#)

²⁰ See: [Community Development In Aotearoa New Zealand: A Historical Journey – Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development](#)

1.d New Zealand's Environment in the Plan period

- While cases were first reported in early 2020, COVID-19 effects²¹ continued until after August 2023, when restrictions stopped²². While COVID-19 effects declined in 2023, other global trends were felt. These included rising inflation and interest rates, supply chain constraints and a cost-of-living crisis.²³
- In early 2023, major weather events disrupted New Zealanders' lives and livelihoods, calling for an immediate government response. Floods in Auckland in January 2023 were followed by Cyclone Gabrielle a month later, causing multiple, complex effects across the country. Some regions suffered significant flooding, disruption to transport and supply routes and damage to homes, land and crops.
- The CVS and communities played an important role in working with central and local government to respond to COVID-19 and the major weather events²⁴. The relationships, collaborative experience and trust between community leaders, entities and the community enabled vital services to be delivered quickly, with aid going to where it was most needed. By partnering with CVS, the Public Service was able to adapt to meet the challenges, innovate and improve support and service delivery.
- For government, the Plan period coincided with a time of political transition and fiscal restraint. After two consecutive terms of a Labour-led, coalition government, in late 2023, a three-party coalition, comprising the National, Act and NZ First parties, was elected to government, bringing policy change. The Public Service is apolitical, serving the government of the day. When a new government is sworn in, the Public Service must change direction to implement the government of the day's policies and priorities. Following the change in government, a multi-year Fiscal Sustainability Programme across the Public Service reduced agency baseline budgets, impacting the delivery of the Plan. The savings created, of around \$1.5 billion, were reallocated to new priorities.

²¹ Over 2 million COVID-19 cases and 4,000 deaths were recorded.

²² [Covid-19 restrictions dropped: What you need to know | RNZ News](#)

²³ [New cost of living figures show who it's hitting hardest | RNZ News](#)

²⁴ The COVID-19 response also saw the success of existing and emerging regional leadership structures involving community, local government, iwi and hapu. Central government has supported this success through the cross-government 'Caring for Communities' workstream, see: [Presentation-pack-on-resurgence-structures-for-regional-leadership-and-Civil-Defence.PDF](#). This workstream takes a regionally led, nationally enabled system approach to supporting communities, helping regional leadership structures connect with each other and with parts of central government.

New Zealand's Reform Priorities and Plan Commitments

1.e.(i) Community Engagement

Relevance of Citizen Engagement to Open Government Principles

Civic participation enables citizens to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives and communities, fostering a healthy, functioning democracy. Involving the diverse community in decision-making, policy development and implementation strengthens local ownership, community capacity and structures and improves transparency, accountability and resource allocations. Effective engagement can bridge different perspectives, improve community cohesion, and resolve disagreements.

Commitments 1, 2 and 3

Commitments 1 and 2 (see *Assessment of the Commitments*) reflect the government's continuing efforts to increase citizen participation in government, to improve policy and service outcomes and to strengthen democracy. The success of community engagement reform is evident from the increasing adoption of the Policy Community Engagement Tool (PCET). The PCET was revised after being trialled by 16 agencies for all their community engagement practice during the term of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019. High levels of community engagement in the 2023 and 2024 Public Service Spirit of Service Awards²⁵ evidence the uptake of the PCET.

Community Engagement as a Reform Priority

- Section 11 of the Public Service Act 2020²⁶ (PS Act) describes the role of the Public Service to facilitate active citizenship and support constitutional and democratic government.
- "Open government" is one of five principles of government in the PS Act. The importance of positive and strong relationships is also captured. For example, in relation to the Māori-Crown relationship and with the regions. During the Plan period, open government was embedded through:
 - appointing Regional Commissioners to bring a regional voice to central government;
 - publishing Long-Term Insights Briefings²⁷, enhancing transparency, citizen participation and policy stewardship;
 - supplementing legislation with guidance, including a revised PCET²⁸ and Cabinet Directions, to support better quality, more nuanced, citizen engagement with government²⁹;
 - revising the PCET in the light of 16 agencies' use in all engagement practice for one year;
 - strengthening government engagement with local communities, in part prompted by the need to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and weather events;
 - actively informing the public on how to have a say to increase citizen participation. For example, Parliament's Engagement Strategy³⁰, measured annually, aims to give citizens the ability to access the right information and tools to engage with Parliament.

1.e.(ii) Increasing Transparency and Accountability

Relevance of Transparency and Accountability to Open Government Principles

Transparency and accountability help the public to understand what is going on and the reasoning behind government's decisions. It ensures the government is responsible and accountable to the public for its actions and inaction. Transparency makes information available which can be used to assess the government's performance and to guard against possible misuse of powers.

Commitments 4, 5 and 6

²⁵ See: Public Service Day Awards - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission

²⁶ See: [Public Service Act 2020 No 40 \(as at 16 December 2024\)](#), [Public Act 11 Purpose - New Zealand Legislation](#)

²⁷ [Long-term Insights Briefings - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

²⁸ [Policy Community Engagement Tool | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPMC\)](#)

²⁹ See: [Community engagement | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPMC\)](#)

³⁰ [Parliament Engagement Strategy - New Zealand Parliament](#)

Commitments 4, 5 and 6 of the Plan (see *Part Four: Assessment of the Commitments*) reflect the government's continuing efforts to strengthen public integrity and accountability by increasing government transparency and reducing the misuse of legal entities to combat fraud and corruption risks.

Increasing Government Transparency and Accountability as a Reform Priority

- One of Parliament's key functions is scrutiny, which is about holding government to account. In 2023 Parliament introduced two, non-consecutive scrutiny weeks to the parliamentary calendar³¹ as part of a substantive strengthening of scrutiny.^{32,33}
- In July 2024, the government established the Social Investment Agency (SIA), as a central agency, to accelerate a social investment approach to spending and improve performance measures across the Public Service. Agency chief executives now work closely with their portfolio Ministers in developing clear performance and outcome measures to enhance government accountability and transparency³⁴;
- The Companies Act 1993, which governs how the 730,000 companies in New Zealand are established, operate, and dissolved, is now more than 30 years old. On 5 August 2024, the Government initiated a package of reforms to ensure the rules governing companies are clear, workable and fit for purpose³⁵. These reforms are the first step in a phased approach. The second phase of reforms, starting in 2025, is a review of directors' duties and related issues of director liability, sanctions, and more effective enforcement. The review will consider issues raised in the *Mainzeal* Supreme Court decision³⁶ and provide an opportunity to modernise the governance framework and clarify directors' responsibilities, particularly in managing financial risks and ensuring greater transparency³⁷.
- As noted by the Institute of Directors³⁸, updates to the financial services and health and safety frameworks, along with changes to the Charities Act 2005 and the Incorporated Societies Act 2022, reflect the government's focus on upholding high professional standards of corporate governance practice and accountability.

1.e.(iii) Increasing Openness and Information Transparency

Relevance of Government Openness and Information Transparency to Open Government Principles

Timely access to government information creates openness and builds public trust and confidence. It supports citizens to better understand and participate in government, whether it be in exercising rights, contributing to policy or contracting to provide services. Greater transparency and accountability build the public's trust and confidence in how the government conducts itself.

Commitments 7 and 8

Commitment 7 and 8 (see *Assessment of the Commitments*) support efforts to increase government information transparency and accountability. Commitment 7 aims to increase the availability of government information by enhancing the scrutiny of legislative clauses that exempt certain information from statutory release provisions. Transparent use of information is particularly important given the increasing use of technology, including algorithms³⁹, so that citizens can understand how decisions are made and can exercise their rights to challenge government decision-making.

³¹ [These weeks give select committees more time to engage in scrutiny activities and look ahead, at the Government's spending plans, and back, at what public entities achieve with that spending. See: *Introducing: scrutiny weeks - New Zealand Parliament*](#)

³² [Public sector guidance on select committee scrutiny - New Zealand Parliament](#)

³³ [Scrutiny Week saves some of the most contentious issues for last - Newsroom](#)

³⁴ See: [Cabinet paper: Accelerating Social Investment | Social Investment Agency](#)

³⁵ See: [Modernising the Companies Act 1993 and Making Other Improvements for Business - Cabinet paper](#)

³⁶ [Yan v Mainzeal Property and Construction Limited \(in liquidation\) \[2023\] NZSC 113.](#)

³⁷ Transparency of beneficial ownership is discussed in the body of this Report

³⁸ See [Top 5 issues: 2. Governance reform | IoD NZ](#)

³⁹ See: [Government algorithm transparency and accountability - data.govt.nz](#)

Increasing Openness and Information Transparency as a Reform Priority

Information transparency

- New Zealand has had freedom of information legislation for over forty years. The Commission's Official Information Act (OIA) work programme supports agencies to achieve high standards of practice in responding to requests for official information⁴⁰, which the Ombudsman scrutinises closely⁴¹. Agencies have publicly reported on their OIA request compliance since 2016. From June 2023, agencies have also proactively released Cabinet material within 30 business days of final Cabinet decisions⁴², unless there is good reason not to publish or to withhold part, or to delay release⁴³. Cabinet recently agreed⁴⁴ agencies are to report to the Commission six-monthly on proactive release of Cabinet papers: see [Proactive release - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#). Cabinet has set out areas where it would like to see proactive release expanded over time⁴⁵.

Openness and use of technology

- Algorithm transparency and accountability, including the Algorithm Charter, is part of a wider ecosystem of ongoing work, including tools and research. The greater power and complexity of predictive algorithms makes transparency increasingly important. Commitment 8 builds on previous OGP algorithmic transparency work. Related reforms include:
 - In July 2023, the Public Service Commissioner appointed the Secretary for Internal Affairs to a System Lead role, of Government Chief Digital Officer (GCDO)⁴⁶. The role includes leading on Artificial Intelligence (AI)⁴⁷;
 - In July 2024, Cabinet set expectations for government agencies using AI technologies as part of setting a strategic approach to AI. Cabinet agreed that agencies should be encouraged to adopt AI for its benefits, while managing the risks⁴⁸. It noted the role of the GCDO in accelerating responsible AI use across public services, to deliver better outcomes for all New Zealanders;
 - Launching a Public Service AI Framework⁴⁹ in January 2025 to support agencies' use of AI and in how to implement these technologies safely⁵⁰.

⁴⁰ Increased information transparency has led to significantly improved timeliness since 2016. Despite a near doubling in volume of OIA requests, for the reporting period 1 July 2023 to 21 December 2023, 98.1 percent of requests were responded to within legislated timeframes, see: [The next steps in the public release of official information \(PDF, 431 KB\)](#)
[41 Ombudsman New Zealand | Tari o te Kaitiaki Mana Tangata](#)

⁴² That is, released without an Official Information Act request having been made

⁴³ [Proactive release of Cabinet material | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPMC\)](#)

⁴⁴ [CO \(23\) 4: Proactive Release of Cabinet Material: Updated Requirements | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPMC\)](#)

⁴⁵ [The next steps in the public release of official information \(PDF, 431 KB\)](#)

⁴⁶ [Government Chief Digital Officer's role in artificial intelligence \(AI\) | NZ Digital government](#)

⁴⁷ See: [Government Chief Digital Officer's role in artificial intelligence \(AI\) | NZ Digital government](#)

⁴⁸ [Approach to work on Artificial Intelligence](#)

⁴⁹ [Public Service AI Framework | NZ Digital government](#)

⁵⁰ See the strategy and guidance: [Responsible AI Guidance for a Public Service: GenAI](#); and [Public Service AI Framework](#)

Action Plan Process

The table below describes the Government's approach to Participation throughout the OGP cycle.

2a. Action Plan Process - The Government's Approach to Participation throughout the OGP cycle	
The Idea Generation Stage	
Dissemination of information and spaces and platforms for dialogue and co-creation	
<p>An inclusive, ongoing dialogue was facilitated using a variety of spaces and platforms. Efforts to attract greater public participation in the Plan included travel around New Zealand to engage with diverse individuals and groups and publishing clear information at key stages of the process. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • invitations to participate were sent out via Twitter at @ogpnz, LinkedIn, Facebook, the OGP NZ website and to around 700 OGP subscribers; • face-to-face engagement over a two-year period, interrupted by Covid-19, included nine events in five towns and cities; • an option for written submission was offered as part of the process. See, for example: Ideas for the Plan Open Government Partnership • While COVID-19 presented challenges, it accelerated the use of new technology. For example, in February 2021, the OGP website launched a public, online platform for a dialogue on OGP. The platform posed questions about the 'challenges for a public conversation on how we advance active citizenship, partnership, responsiveness and transparency of government'. However, the public made little use of the channel. • The idea generation stage generated an unprecedented number of 1500 submissions for ideas for OGP commitments. The various submissions needed to be collated to reduce duplication and those of substance organized under themes. 	
Co-ownership and joint decision making	
<p>The MSF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Expert Advisory Panel (EAP), described in New Zealand's Third Action Plan Self-Assessment⁵¹, advised officials on the process⁵². • In 2021, a joint report, from the MSF and CVS groups, seeking direction on potential areas of focus for the Plan, went to the Minister for the Public Service⁵³. • The EAP and some CVS were involved in the Plan development process, with the EAP endorsing the final proposed Plan. 	
Commitment Selection and Development Stage	
Dissemination of information and spaces and platforms for dialogue and co-creation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant resource was invested to run the workshops for the Plan. Information about the commitment development workshops was communicated publicly and regularly through various channels (ie the OGP NZ website, LinkedIn and Facebook, OGP mailing list subscribers); • The constitutional policy context includes consideration of Treaty of Waitangi implications⁵⁴. Māori participation in OGP is generally at citizen level, not as Iwi Treaty partners. In February 2022, CVS and MSF members attended 	

⁵¹ See: <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/assets/OGP/NAP3-Self-Assessment-Final.pdf>.

⁵² See EAP meeting notes for Fourth National Action Plan: [New Zealand's National Action Plans - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

⁵³ See: Report-Potential-focus-areas-for-New-Zealand's-fourth-OGP-National-Action-Plan (1).pdf

⁵⁴ Government policy on the Māori-Crown relationship and the Crown's obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi is set out in various instruments. In particular, see [CO \(19\) 5: Te Tiriti o Waitangi / Treaty of Waitangi Guidance | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPMC\)](#) (Cabinet guidelines for policymakers to consider Te Tiriti in policy development and implementation) and [Te Arawhiti -](#)

a pre-workshop session, facilitated by Te Puni Kokiri, which discussed the role of the Treaty and the Crown's obligations under The Treaty.

The Workshops Process

- OGP workshops and two subsequent meetings attracted around 40 participants for each. Participants included citizens, agency staff, MSF and a small number of CVS members. The private sector was largely absent;
- Registered participants were given advance information about OGP, the OGP process, the ideas, and templates;
- Workshops were run by an independent professional facilitator online for the first time, to manage COVID-19 risks while making participation accessible to all;
- The process comprised large and small group break-out sessions. Participants fed back about the process through two surveys, with the process adjusted as a result. For example, the length of break-out sessions was increased;
- Workshop participants were encouraged to contribute in writing post-workshop, to aid commitment development;
- Recordings of the workshops, posted online promptly after each session, invited participants and the public to give feedback;
- Disagreement about which commitments to progress impacted the time available to develop the commitments;
- At the request of some participants, two additional meetings were arranged to discuss the commitments to go to Cabinet;
- Despite multiple requests, feedback on potential commitments and input into their development was minimal;
- After the planned workshops and additional meetings, some CVS participants met with the Minister to put their views about the process and particular commitment proposals. Following this, the CVS participants wrote to the OGP Steering Committee to complain that the process did not meet OGP co-design requirements (not upheld);
- Eleven proposed commitments were put to Cabinet, which agreed to the eight commitments that had received wide support;
- The draft Plan was published for final consultation from 24 November to 12 December 2022. See: [Appendix-B-Summary-of-Feedback-on-NAP4-FINAL.pdf](#) and [New Zealand's National Action Plans - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

Co-ownership and joint decision making – Government and citizens should jointly own and develop the process

The MSF

- The Expert Advisory Panel (EAP) supported officials throughout the process, helping improve the workshop design, in response to feedback. EAP was involved in commitment selection and development and endorsed the draft Plan. See EAP Meeting Notes Fourth National Action Plan⁵⁵.

Agencies

- Agencies leading commitments must resource work from baseline funding. Commitments need to align with Ministerial priorities in order to be supported by Ministers. Some agencies chose not to participate in the OGP process.
- Commitment leads were encouraged to engage with interested citizens and CVS, where possible, in developing and implementing commitments. Agencies determine the nature and scope of the engagement, in accordance with the PCET. Many agencies have stakeholder groups and specialist bodies they consult with who do not participate in OGP. For example, the Ministry of Justice engaged with the Legislation Design and Advisory Committee, while New Zealand Government Procurement continued to engage with procurement stakeholder groups.

[Engagement](#) (Te Arawhiti (the Office for Māori Crown Relations) guidance to public servants on how to consider Te Tiriti implications in policy development and implementation).

⁵⁵ [New Zealand's National Action Plans - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

Implementation Stage
Dissemination of information and spaces and platforms for dialogue and co-creation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates on the Plan's progress were publicly reported four times, twice annually, over the two years of the Plan; • The 2023 in-person sessions were moderated by an independent facilitator and the 2024 report-backs were delivered online; • Questions were able to be put to leads at the reporting sessions or in writing. The written questions and responses were reported on the OGP NZ website, see: OGP report back events and reporting: December 2024 progress report(PDF, 653 KB); August 2024 progress report(PDF, 567 KB); December 2023 progress report(PDF, 1.4 MB); June 2023 progress report(PDF, 229 KB) and https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/assets/OGP/Final-30-June-report-slides-NAP4-Commitments.pptx
Co-ownership and joint decision making – As outlined above, engagement with OGP participants in implementation varied, depending on the nature of the implementation and agencies' consultation practice with stakeholder groups.
See comments under <i>Agency decision-making</i> , above

IRM Recommendations

3. Use of the IRM Recommendations

Recorded Recommendations

The five IRM recommendations recorded in the 2018 – 2022 Design Report are:

1. Reform official information laws;
2. Strengthen the role and mandate of the EAP as it continues to act as New Zealand's Multi-stakeholder Forum;
3. Create a joint CVS/government public engagement Community of Practice or Hub;
4. Apply civics education learning at community and local government level;
5. Strengthen high-quality public media reporting by continuing the Local Democracy Reporter pilot to ensure transparency and [public accountability](#) of local government.

Response

Some of the recommendations are outside of the remit of government agencies and/or were not proposed as potential commitments by participants in the Plan processes.

Additional Comments

- **Reform Official Information laws:** Legislative reform is not well suited to the OGP process. We observe that a commitment to review the use of exemption clauses to the Official Information Act was in the Plan.
- **Strengthen the role and mandate of the EAP as it continues to act as New Zealand's Multi-stakeholder Forum:** During 2023 and 2024, an external consultancy was engaged to undertake a comprehensive review of New Zealand's approach to OGP and advise on how it could be improved, including multi-stakeholder forum options. That review included a survey of 17 OGP-member countries, comparing approaches to co-creation, funding, governance arrangements and MSFs. Plan participants, including CVS and agency staff, were consulted in the Review process⁵⁶.
- **Create a joint CVS/government public engagement Community of Practice or Hub:** A Cross-Government Stakeholder Engagement Community of Practice (CGSCoP) was established by a core group of Public Service engagement practitioners, to function as a community of practice, in order to lift the quality and consistency of community engagement practice across the Public Service.
- **Apply civics education learning at community and local government level:** This was not proposed by Plan participants.
- **Strengthen high-quality public media reporting by continuing the Local Democracy Reporter pilot to ensure transparency and [public accountability](#) of local government:** Central government's mandate does not extend to local government.

⁵⁶[Open Government Partnership review - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

Assessment of Commitments

1. Adopt a community engagement tool

A decision was made not to develop the initially proposed “community engagement Model Standard”. Commitment One instead focused on improving the quality and uptake of community and citizen engagement through use and promotion of the engagement tool. This work comprised refining the Policy Community Engagement Tool (PCET); promoting its use and supporting an across government engagement community of practice. The PCET fulfills recommendation 38 of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain (RCOI).

A Model Standard

- The model standard initially proposed was not developed as the Public Service Commissioner’s mandate to issue mandatory standards under the Public Service Act 2020 is limited to minimum standards of integrity and conduct: s 17(1) of the Act.

PCET

- The first edition of the PCET, launched in January 2022 under the Third National Action Plan, was used by the sixteen agencies for all engagement with community groups during the term of the RCOI.
- Consultation on the PCET included taking into account the views of survivors, witnesses, Kāpuia⁵⁷, CVS, local government and the private sector and incorporating these views into the second, revised, edition of the PCET (published in October 2023). The updated version and additional engagement guidance is available on the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) website and is regularly promoted by the DPMC Policy Project group.
- The PCET aligns with international standards for community engagement (ie International Association for Public Participation (IAP2))
- Promoting the PCET by publishing case study examples encourages greater use and lifts the quality and consistency of engagement practice. The growing use of the PCET in engagement is evidenced by the Spirit of Service Awards and the Public Service Commission’s co-design, with survivors, on the Survivor Model Standards (see Reference below).

CGSCoP

- The Cross-Government Stakeholder Engagement Community of Practice (CGSCoP) supports engagement best practice, with speaker events, tools and guidance that are well-received and well-subscribed. The collaboration website shares information, resources and case studies. Although reliant on volunteers, the CGSCoP ‘s has over 150 members from more than 30 agencies.

Next Steps

The Policy Project within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet continues to steward community engagement, including through its seminar series. The Policy Community Engagement Tool and guidance and resources continue to be promoted and the CGSCoP supported.

References

December 2024 progress report(PDF, 653 KB); August 2024 progress report(PDF, 567 KB); December 2023 progress report(PDF, 1.4 MB); June 2023 progress report(PDF, 229 KB) and <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/assets/OGP/Final-30-June-report-slides-NAP4-Commitments.pptx>

[The Policy Project | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPMC\)](#)

[Policy Community Engagement Tool | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPMC\)](#)

[Kāpuia – Ministerial Advisory Group | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPMC\)](#)

[kapuia-collated-feedback-july-2021-august-2023.pdf](#)

[Community engagement - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

[Working With Survivors - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

⁵⁷ [Kāpuia – Ministerial Advisory Group | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPMC\)](#)

2. Research deliberative processes for community engagement

This commitment involved exploring how innovative, deliberative, democratic processes can be adapted and used to improve engagement in the New Zealand context by identifying and creating an appropriate case study example. There is potential for greater use of deliberative processes for a wide range of challenging topics. Case studies can encourage greater use of the process.

- A small governance group was formed for this commitment. The group included a CVS member and a sponsor from the Cross Government Stakeholder Community of Practice.
- The Watercare citizens' assembly case study was produced and was published on the Public Service Commission's website, in addition to other examples of central and local government deliberative processes, along with information and useful links. The case studies aim to inform, guide, and encourage greater use of deliberative processes by government and communities.

Next Steps

The work was completed.

References

December 2024 progress report(PDF, 653 KB); August 2024 progress report(PDF, 567 KB); December 2023 progress report(PDF, 1.4 MB); June 2023 progress report(PDF, 229 KB) and

<https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/assets/OGP/Final-30-June-report-slides-NAP4-Commitments.pptx>

[Deliberative processes – citizens' juries and citizens' assemblies - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

[Free guide to deliberative democracy – MosaicLab](#)

[Deliberative Engagement: Why, What and How for Local Government - Trust Democracy NZ](#)

3. Establish an inclusive, multi-channel approach to the delivery of government information and services

Interacting with government services is often about accessing rights and entitlements. This commitment proposed an inclusive, multi-channel approach to the government's delivery of information and services, to remove any access barriers in the way. Providing genuine choice for people about how they can interact with government - whether online, face-to-face, or by phone, enables more people to access services and have a say.

- Commitment not delivered. The agency commissioned with leading this commitment was unable to resource and prioritise this work during the Plan period.

Next Steps

- The Minister for Digitising Government tasked the Government Chief Digital Officer (GCDO) to deliver an improved and more unified customer service experience for digital government services. The GCDO developed an All-of Government Service Modernisation Roadmap to help drive progress towards this outcome through a range of initiatives.

References

December 2024 progress report(PDF, 653 KB); August 2024 progress report(PDF, 567 KB); December 2023 progress report(PDF, 1.4 MB); June 2023 progress report(PDF, 229 KB) and

<https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/assets/OGP/Final-30-June-report-slides-NAP4-Commitments.pptx>

<https://www.digital.govt.nz/digital-government/strategy/strategy-summary/service-modernisation-roadmap>

<https://www.digital.govt.nz/digital-government/strategy/insights-and-commentary/delivering-a-unified-customerservice-experience-for-digital-government-service>

4. Design and implement a National Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy

Designing and implementing a National Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy enables work programmes to be aligned and coordinated. Alignment and coordination efforts strengthen the ability to identify and combat fraud and corruption and enhance transparency and accountability. Implementing a strategy

improves the scrutiny over, and safeguarding of, public funds. Assurance over the appropriate use of public funds increases public trust and confidence in the government, both internationally and domestically.

- Joint agency work on a national counter fraud and corruption strategy commenced but has remained in the development phase, awaiting direction from the Minister of Police/Serious Fraud Office and Minister of Justice

Next Steps

- Ministers' decisions on the next steps, including timeframes, are yet to be made. Agencies have prepared additional advice to support Ministers' decision-making.

References

December 2024 progress report(PDF, 653 KB); August 2024 progress report(PDF, 567 KB); December 2023 progress report(PDF, 1.4 MB); June 2023 progress report(PDF, 229 KB) and

<https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/assets/OGP/Final-30-June-report-slides-NAP4-Commitments.pptx>

[SFO's fraud and corruption strategy](#)

[Strategic Areas of Focus - Serious Fraud Office, New Zealand](#)

[SFO-Briefing-to-Incoming-Minister-2023.pdf](#)

[Proactive Information Releases - Serious Fraud Office, New Zealand](#) references Ministerial briefings on strategy

5. Increase transparency of beneficial ownership of companies and limited partnerships

This commitment proposed to introduce a requirement that the Companies Office obtain and hold adequate, accurate, and up-to-date information on the beneficial owners of companies and limited partnerships in a public register.

Being able to access a register to identify the beneficial owners in these legal arrangements aids prevention and detection of abuse by criminals who circumvent anti-money laundering and countering financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) measures. Reducing the risks of abuse increases business transparency and public trust and confidence in business integrity and government, domestically and internationally.

- Commitment not delivered. Electoral change resulted in a change in policy direction. In August 2024, the responsible Minister took forward decisions to introduce a unique identifier⁵⁸ however a decision was made not to progress a beneficial owners' register.

Next Steps

The government has yet to decide whether to introduce a beneficial ownership register.

References

December 2024 progress report(PDF, 653 KB); August 2024 progress report(PDF, 567 KB); December 2023 progress report(PDF, 1.4 MB); June 2023 progress report(PDF, 229 KB) and

<https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/assets/OGP/Final-30-June-report-slides-NAP4-Commitments.pptx>

[Companies Act modernisation won't include beneficial ownership register | interest.co.nz;](#)

<https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/28988-modernising-the-companies-act-1993-and-making-other-improvements-for-business-proactiverelase-pdf>

Background papers:

[Supporting the integrity of the corporate governance system | Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment](#)

6. Improve government procurement transparency

This commitment work is part of MBIE's wider effort to improve transparency and efficacy of public procurement. The work involved:

- improving the Government Electronic Tender Services (GETS), to better capture spend data in line with publication requirements under the Government Procurement Rules;
- developing the foundations for an integrated data system and future data management by establishing a data governance framework, reporting requirements and standards to enhance the visibility of procurement information and enable a comprehensive view of government expenditure; and

⁵⁸ Unique identifiers are individual numbers, references, or other forms of identification allocated to people by organisations as a way to uniquely identify the person to the organisation assigning the identifier. Examples include driver's licence numbers, passport numbers, IRD numbers, or National Health Index (NHI) numbers.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> developing a digital data platform to capture procurement information, in alignment with the Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS). 	
<p>MBIE is moving towards a system that collects high-quality data to provide a complete view of government procurement and enable insights. This will overcome past problems of poor data, poor transparency, technology shortcomings, and a general lack of standards. An end-to-end procurement platform will allow agencies and suppliers to shift their procurement lifecycle activities to a digital environment and enable the seamless collection of data to make reporting easier and increase transparency. As part of this work, data dashboards have been released that provide insights into procurement practices and spending patterns. This helps agencies identify their procurement strengths and areas for improvement, while supporting intelligence-led decisions. The dashboards will be continuously improved and updated. The associated work completed under this commitment has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> changes to GETS to improve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> capture of supplier organisation information; and the user interface manual response dialogue changes to the tender completion process, to provide more reason codes when a tender is not awarded. developing a digital data Procurement platform launch of the 'Ready Buy' (guided buying) module on the government procurement website; Functional testing continues on Procurement Platform⁵⁹ upon which user acceptance testing can commence. Work on foundations for the integrated data systems work has involved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> mapping an approach for transforming current services into an integrated system and the design and approval of the Data integration plan; and mapping current datasets and moving into delivery of the integrated procurement data, to analyse and evaluate procurement performance. <p>Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish integrations with source data systems and MBIE's Cloud Data Platform. Progress work on publishing fit-for-purpose data dashboards for agency & public use. Milestone measures for laying the foundations for integrated data system capability, planned to be completed by June 2025, and are currently on track. <p>References</p> <p>December 2024 progress report(PDF, 653 KB); August 2024 progress report(PDF, 567 KB); December 2023 progress report(PDF, 1.4 MB); June 2023 progress report(PDF, 229 KB) and https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/assets/OGP/Final-30-June-report-slides-NAP4-Commitments.pptx</p> <p>Government Procurement Rules New Zealand Government Procurement</p> <p>Data and reporting New Zealand Government Procurement</p> <p>New Zealand Government Procurement Ready Buy is now live New Zealand Government Procurement</p>	
<p>7. Strengthen the scrutiny of Official Information Act exemption clauses in legislation</p> <p>This commitment aimed to strengthen the scrutiny of legislative clauses that propose to override the disclosure requirements of the OIA. Some CVS members were concerned that too much use was being made of the ability to exempt particular legislation from Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) compliance. While the government is achieving very high levels of compliance in relation to OIA requests, this commitment aimed to address CVS concerns, to reduce the use of exemptions being introduced. Improved guidance for, and increased scrutiny over, OIA exemptions supports policy makers, increases transparency, and supports good regulatory stewardship. It also reduces the risks of inappropriate use, thereby strengthening access to government information.</p>	
<p>The Ministry of Justice completed this commitment, which involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reviewing a sample of existing exemption clauses and the communications about the clause before the exemption clauses were included in legislation reviewing current policy processes and guidance on the scrutiny of legislative clauses that propose to override the OIA 	

⁵⁹ SaaS solution

- meeting with stakeholders, including the Treasury and the Legislation Design and Advisory Committee, to consider options for strengthening the policy process and the guidance on OIA exemptions
- consulting on proposals to strengthen the scrutiny of OIA exemptions
- developing and circulating OIA exemptions guidance to raise the profile of this issue and publishing this guidance

Next Steps

As part of its ongoing, regulatory stewardship role, the Ministry of Justice will:

- continue to improve understanding and guidance to public sector agencies about exemptions to the OIA and their scrutiny;
- continue to work with other agencies and stakeholders to improve the process and guidance in relation to exemptions (for example, disclosure statements) over the longer-term.

References

December 2024 progress report(PDF, 653 KB); August 2024 progress report(PDF, 567 KB); December 2023 progress report(PDF, 1.4 MB); June 2023 progress report(PDF, 229 KB)

[News and events - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

8. Improve transparency and accountability of algorithm use across government

Government agencies use data to inform, improve and deliver services to New Zealanders. While simple algorithms may be used to standardise business processes, more complex algorithms can be used in high impact decisions that affect individuals, for example, decisions on entitlements to services.

Algorithmic transparency is about communicating clearly how decisions are reached and the role that algorithmic tools play in the process. This commitment aims to support government agencies to implement the principles in the Algorithm Charter and provide greater transparency and accountability of algorithm use. Work has involved:

- Establishing a community of practice to share knowledge and best practice, and build capability across signatories of the Charter (by June 2023);
- Working with stakeholders to design an implementation plan for high priority recommendations (by December 2023);
- Providing tools, guidance and other supports to signatories to help them meet the transparency and accountability objectives of the Charter (by December 2024).

Two of the commitment's milestones were completed and a third was partially completed in the Plan period.

- the community of practice for Algorithm Charter signatories continues to meet quarterly to share experiences and advice, discuss how to raise agency algorithm maturity, and support each other in implementing the Charter commitments.
- Stats NZ has published a high-level phased approach to implementing the recommendations from the One Year Review. Resource constraints have meant that Stats NZ's engagement with stakeholders of the remaining recommendations from the One Year Review have been limited.
- In December 2023 Stats NZ published the Algorithm Impact Assessment Toolkit, a series of tools for agencies to use to facilitate informed decision-making about the benefits and risks of government use of algorithms. In July 2024, the AI Toolkit was included in an interactive Catalogue of Tools and Metrics for Trustworthy AI published by OECD.AI, a global hub provided by the OECD for AI practitioners.

Next Steps

- The Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation will continue to promote the Algorithm Charter and the Algorithm Impact Assessment toolkit with Government agencies as guidance for ensuring transparency of government Algorithms, including AI.
- Wider public engagement by the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation as part of building trust and confidence in government data.
- Stats NZ and the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation continue to work across government on the wider AI work programme.

References

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[Algorithm charter for Aotearoa New Zealand - data.govt.nz](#)

Summaries of Community of practice meeting is published on data.govt.nz.

[Algorithm charter community of practice - data.govt.nz](#)

[Algorithm Impact Assessment toolkit - data.govt.nz](#)

[Algorithm Impact Assessment Toolkit - OECD.AI](#)

[Algorithm-Charter-Year-1-Review-FINAL.pdf](#)

Lessons, Insights and Recommendations

Lessons and Insights in Developing and Implementing the Action Plan

Participation

Lack of diverse, significant, citizen participation in OGP

The purpose of OGP is to promote greater citizen participation in government and to make government more transparent, responsive, accountable and effective. Sufficient, diverse OGP participation supports OGP's purposes. However, the public continues to have low awareness of OGP, despite publicity efforts and the opportunity to participate in the OGP process in person and online. Other than agency staff and MSF members, only a small number of participants (less than ten) engaged in the Plan's development. Most of these participants were members of CVS advocacy groups, only one of these having a public delivery function. There was little private sector participation. Participation did not reflect the diversity of New Zealand's citizenry nor of the CVS.

Resourcing constraint effects

Some CVS members indicated that resourcing was a barrier to participation in the process, along with sufficiency of return for the time invested. The fiscal restraint experienced in the Plan period may have impacted both participation and diversity, particularly for an already-stretched CVS and for citizens with limited means. While a number of agencies participated, a number did not, as resourcing challenges also affected the Public Service.

Limited participation decreases diversity of participation while increasing the level of influence of those involved in the process on the outcomes. The risk to the process is that it may become increasingly exclusive, rather than inclusive. While it may not have been possible or practicable to have large numbers of citizens participate, greater and more diverse participation in the OGP process would enhance its value proposition and generate greater interest, potentially leading to greater participation in future.

Other factors that may be affecting OGP participation, are as follows:

Potential participants may have limited bandwidth

As outlined earlier, the Plan period coincided with periods of significant change and disruption. New Zealand has high rates of volunteering and a large CVS, many of whom were involved in responding to these changes and disruptions. This may have resulted in limited bandwidth, time, and resources to participate in OGP.

Established, competing, parallel processes

Relevant to Participation, above, and to Process, below, for New Zealand, OGP is a parallel process which, in practice, competes with a number of other established mechanisms through which citizens have a say and engage with government on public policy and services. In addition, the CVS and informal stakeholder groups and networks provide a channel for their members who wish to influence government decision-making on particular issues or topics.

Country System of Government

Role of Government in the Process and Community Engagement Practice

In New Zealand, Cabinet decides government policy, including Plan commitments. The Government is accountable for public policy and for the use of public resources, including for OGP. Some participants may not have been fully aware that:

- the government of the day determines policy priorities. Government priorities are the driver of commitment selection and implementation;
- government priorities can and do change, particularly in a challenging environment; and
- agencies do not receive additional resource to participate in OGP. Agency participation, including Plan development and implementation, is funded through agencies' baseline funding. To attract funding, commitments must have alignment with Ministerial priorities.

Process Challenges

Idea generation process

- The idea generation phase of the process was not efficient given the time, resources and travel involved. While 1500 ideas of varying quality were generated, only a small number were needed. As the process moved on, the ideas had little impact on the Plan and the process was not fit for purpose. The process may also have implied a promise of a greater level of influence to participants than was realised. While later on, the Minister indicated areas of focus, seeking a Ministerial direction on the priorities for OGP work at the outset would have saved time and effort.

Selection and commitment development process

Ambiguous terms and conflicting interpretations

- Some participants' interpretations of "co-creation" conflicted with the role of government in deciding the level of engagement and the Plan commitments. Interpretations of "co-creation" led to workshop and meeting time being diverted by disagreement about how the process ought to be run. The complaint, that the New Zealand government was non-compliant with OGP's "co-creation" requirements, led to some participants requesting a meeting with the Minister for the Public Service and also writing to OGP's international body. The complaint was not upheld.
- These interpretation issues added to the process challenges discussed above and, no doubt, inadvertently coloured the implied promise perceived by some participants as to their level of influence in the process.

Recommendations

The recommendations below seek to identify ways to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and fitness-for-purpose of OGP, as engagement processes, going forward.

1.	Attracting large numbers of people to participate in an OGP process may not be possible nor practicable. However, more could be done to attract more diverse government and citizen participation. This may involve using the resource available for OGP processes in a different way.
2.	Engaging with Ministers at the earliest stage of the process, to identify the government's priority areas for OGP commitments and communicating these. This would involve separating out commitment selection from development and avoid the risks of time and effort being spent on ideas that are not a priority and are unlikely to attract government support.
3.	Clearly communicating to potential OGP participants the level of influence they will have for each commitment topic at each stage of the OGP process.
4.	Structuring the engagement process to include an education element, to better inform the development of commitments, ensuring that all the right agencies and stakeholders can participate and that non-government participants have access to sufficient expertise.
5.	While OGP phrasing is ambiguous, the government could do more to educate the public about the country's democracy and open government processes. In particular, the role, responsibilities and expertise of agencies and functional leads and their work programmes, the government's open government work and approach to community engagement, and the role and function of the Treaty in government decision-making.

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Te Kawa Mataaho | Public Service Commission
Level 10, Te Iho | Bowen Building
1 Bowen Street
PO Box 329
Wellington 6140
Email: commission@publicservice.govt.nz
Website: <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/>