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**Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government

# **Summary of Te Tauākī Whanonga mō te Rāngai Tūmatanui | The Code of Conduct for the Public Sector**

Adapted in 2026 by Accessible Formats Service,  
Blind Low Vision NZ, Auckland

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Government Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa

# **Summary of Te Tauākī Whanonga mō te Rāngai Tūmatanui The Code of Conduct for the Public Sector**

The following summary information is based on the full Code of Conduct for the Public Sector.

## **What is a code of conduct?**

A code of conduct is a set of rules about how people behave. Most codes of conduct also tell you what could happen if the rules are not followed and how to report concerns. Codes of conduct might also group these rules around a set of values or principles.

## **What is the Code of Conduct for the Public Sector?**

The Public Service Commissioner has issued a new Code of Conduct for the Public Sector. The Code replaces the Standards of Integrity and Conduct, which has been in place since 2007.

The Code is in place from 30 March 2026 and the Public Sector and public servants must comply with the Code.

The Code sets standards of integrity and conduct. These standards are the rules that must be followed by public servants when doing their work. The Code has 21 standards, grouped around five public service values and five public service principles.

The Code also contains guidance to help understand what the standards mean and how to apply them in practical ways. The guidance also tells us things like what can happen if the standards are not followed, how to report concerns, and the responsibilities different people have like employees, managers and organisational leaders.

The Code is an important document that helps to maintain public trust and confidence in the work of the Public Sector and the public servants doing that work.

## **What is the Public Sector?**

The term "Public Sector" has a specific meaning in the Code. It means the organisations that the Code applies to, like:

- Public service departments (for example, Ministries and departments)
- Statutory entities, such as Crown agents and most Crown entities
- Companies named in Schedule 4A of the Public Finance Act 1989, and
- the Parliamentary Counsel Office.

These organisations are funded by the government and in different ways, are accountable for what they do. Many of these organisations provide important goods and services directly to the public, including through systems like public healthcare, welfare, taxation, and public housing.

## **Who are public servants?**

The term "public servant" has a specific meaning in the Code. It means any person the Code applies to, or anyone working in the Public Sector. It does not include board members of Crown entities or directors of Public Finance Act 1989 Schedule 4A companies, because they have their own code of conduct.

## **What are the 5 public service principles?**

The Code's public service principles come from section 12 of the Public Service Act 2020. They are foundational pillars that guide how the Public Sector works to achieve its purpose. The 5 principles are:

1. Political neutrality—to act in a politically neutral manner
2. Free and frank advice—when giving advice to Ministers, to do so in a free and frank manner

3. Merit-based appointments—to make merit-based appointments (unless an exception applies under the Act)
4. Open government—to foster a culture of open government
5. Stewardship—to proactively promote stewardship of the Public Sector.

Each of these principles has at least one related standard in the Code that must be followed.

## **What are the 5 public service values?**

The Code's public service values come from section 16 of the Public Service Act 2020. They guide how public servants behave in every interaction they have with others, including Ministers, colleagues and the public. The 5 values are:

1. Trustworthy—to act with integrity and be open and transparent
2. Respectful—to treat all people with dignity and compassion and act with humility
3. Impartial—to treat all people fairly, without personal favour or bias
4. Accountable—to take responsibility and answer for our work, actions and decisions
5. Responsive—to understand and meet people's needs and aspirations.

Each of these values has at least two related standards in the Code that must be followed.

## **What are the 21 standards of integrity and conduct?**

The 21 standards of integrity and conduct, grouped by public service principles and values are:

### **Trustworthy**

- We are honest and professional.
- We act lawfully and use public power fairly and reasonably.
- We avoid work and non-work activities that may compromise our ability to do our job.

### **Respectful**

- We recognise and uphold the dignity of every person.
- We contribute to a positive and safe workplace culture.
- We act with care and respect, and do not behave in ways that are inappropriate or could harm others.

### **Impartial**

- We act objectively and do not allow our personal beliefs, interests, activities, or relationships to impact our work.

- We disclose our relevant interests and manage all conflicts of interest appropriately.
- We never misuse our position for personal gain or to benefit or disadvantage others.
- We decline gifts or benefits that place us under any actual or perceived obligation or influence.

## **Accountable**

- We are open to scrutiny and can account for what we do.
- We treat our organisation's information and resources with care and use them only for proper purposes.
- We aim to improve the performance and efficiency of our organisation.

## **Responsive**

- We take the time to listen to and understand people's circumstances and needs.
- We aim to collaborate and engage meaningfully with New Zealanders to design policies and deliver services that meet their needs and aspirations.

## **Political neutrality**

- We act in a politically neutral manner, which enables us to effectively serve current and future governments.
- We respect the authority of the government of the day.

## **Free and frank advice**

- We support our organisation to provide Ministers with timely, robust and unbiased advice.

## **Merit-based appointments**

- We are fair and robust in our recruitment and selection processes and must give preference to the person who is best suited to the position.

## **Open government**

- We aim to make government information, decisions and services transparent, accessible and available.

## **Stewardship**

- We manage and care for the Public Sector, so that it may continue to meet the needs of New Zealanders now and into the future.

# **If I'm a public servant, what are my responsibilities?**

All public servants must follow the Code's standards. If you are a public servant, your organisation/employer will ask you to:

- read, understand and abide by the Code
- complete training about the Code to help you learn more about it.

You must also continue to meet any other standards set by your employer/organisation.

## **How does the Code relate to a Public Sector organisation's code of conduct?**

Public Sector organisations may have their own code of conduct, with their own values or principles. If so, that organisational code of conduct will be consistent with the Code.

Public servants working in an organisation with its own code of conduct may be asked to read and understand both the organisation's code of conduct and the Code issued by the Public Service Commissioner.

## **Where can I read the Code?**

You can read about the Code on the Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission website here <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/guidance/the-code-of-conduct-for-the-public-sector> or here <https://bit.ly/4swE1lb>

This is not an Easy Read document. There are some technical terms outlined in the Code glossary.

If you are a public servant, you may want to ask someone in your organisation to help you to read it. This could be

your manager, your organisation's Integrity Champion, your HR/people team, or someone else you trust.

## **Where to find more information**

If you are a public servant and have questions about the Code, you can talk to your manager or your organisation's Integrity Champion.

Some frequently asked questions and answers are on Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission website here <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/publications/the-code-of-conduct-for-the-public-sector-information-for-public-sector-organisations> or here <https://bit.ly/4bK72CW>

You can also contact the Commission by:

- Email: [enquiries@publicservice.govt.nz](mailto:enquiries@publicservice.govt.nz)
- Phone: 04 495 6600 (Monday-Friday 8:00am-5:00pm)
  - If you are Deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, speech impaired or find it hard to talk, you can use the New Zealand Relay Service. [www.nzrelay.co.nz](http://www.nzrelay.co.nz)

## **End of The Code of Conduct for the Public Sector**