

Future Public Service Workforce

Interview Series

Oct 2019-Jan 2020

Summary of Key Change Themes

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to record the key change themes from an interview series exploring what the future public service workforce could look like 10-15 years from now and the critical issues that need to be addressed. Themes from the interviews will contribute to the environment scan, vision, and workforce enablers profile developed for a 2019/20 project on the future public service workforce. the purpose of the project is to inform a cross-agency conversation on the value of a strategic approach to the future public service workforce.

Twenty-five interviews were undertaken between October 2019 and January 2020. People from a variety of public service levels, domains and backgrounds were invited to participate in the interviews. We aimed to capture a range of leadership perspectives and expertise from across the public sector including chief executives regional, policy, human resource, operational leaders and unions. A small number of participants from outside the public sector were also involved. The interview process used a futures technique which takes participants through seven standard questions to elicit deep themes (see appendix). What follows is a summary of key themes from the interviews. Narrative is minimised to maximise enable participant voices using quotes from the interviews. Quotes have been selected to be representative of the ideas of the participant group and to highlight more specific views.

Quotes have been minimally edited to protect the confidentiality of participants and for readability (for example changing future to present tense). Bracketed text indicates words added to clarify the context of the quote. A number of strong themes on the major trends that are likely to drive and shape our future workforce emerged across the interview series. Responses to the interview question indicate that, in general, participants see change as evolving and incremental in response to social expectations and the impact of global trends. The interview series was completed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although many interview participants highlighted the gathering pace of change, it is not surprising that none foresaw a 'shock' such as a global pandemic. It is too early to know what impact COVID-19 might have on the future public service workforce. It could be that the pandemic increases or lessens the importance of some themes or that the pandemic acts as a catalyst to speed the workforce changes predicted in the interview series.

What is interesting to note is that many of the workforce challenges we have experienced during the pandemic (for example, improving workforce mobility and remote working) were anticipated by interview participants as part of the essential changes that need to occur to achieve an agile, modern public service workforce. This paper will be made available to public service agencies as one of several working papers that agencies may wish to use as a resource for their own workforce planning.

Acknowledgement

The interview team would like to express our appreciation to everyone who participated in the interviews. Thank you for your willingness to give your time and expert insights to this work.

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What success looks like in 2035

Participants in the interview series were asked to imagine what will be different about the public service workforce 10-15 years from now.

People involved in the interviews were clear that changes are needed if we are to provide agile, responsive and effective public services in 2035. To address the challenges of a rapidly changing world and a modern, more diverse New Zealand, our workforce will need to look different from today. Building on foundational values the public service will have extended capabilities and be working in new ways. In 2035, public service is highly attractive and a career of first choice.

The public service in 2035 is achieving more for citizens

Our results and improved outcomes are recognised by New Zealanders and internationally. We are seeing traction on some of our most difficult and complex issues.

What people said:

we are beginning to see ... shifts in those equity outcomes that we haven't been able to move; we will really be able to see the difference we are making as a public service

(we are) actually, at the forefront of resolving some really longstanding issues and being world leading. So that's the excitement ...

we are experimental, ...we are learning fast, ...we are co-designing, ...we ...understand partnership and ...give effect to our Māori /Crown relationship

(we are) more connected to New Zealanders not just through evidence and data but also through people's life experience

services are fast, accessible, adaptable, responsive, commercialvalue adding

There is a sense that 'we trust the public service they're here to do the best and there is a spirit of service

we are building stronger and better communities collectively, we are contributing to that and people really resonate with that, not just in the public service, communities resonate with that

citizens (are) proud of their public service and basically tell people that it's increased their wellbeing, their ability to live well making a positive difference in their lives.

Public services are connected and collaborative

Our workforce works closely together and with New Zealanders to meet their needs of public services. We achieve a good balance between citizens' interests at national and local levels, deploying modern technologies to better understand and meet citizen's service expectations.

What people said:

a more unified public service, and people see us as a singular service

empowering and working with communities a lot more and building solutions from the ground up

(we) work in a way which is not just about being collaborative, but about truly being able to manage working together in a co-decision space, whilst maintaining the ability to represent particular views at the table

policy analysis, data and observation landing points (based) on the experiences of real people, on the actual experiences and lives of real New Zealanders

the link between policy formation and acting, execution, and that loop (is) tightened up ... so, we're agile in a way we think about policy and regulatory reform ... (and) allow the feedback from New Zealanders to say this isn't working for us

A much more digital public service, a much more connected public service and a much more diverse public service

AI ... more integrated into the way we do business, people ... able to engage in a way that it's not always ... with a human and get responses more of a 24/7 nature

those people who require a face- to- face service and that is the best thing for them ... they can access a face-to-face service

(able to) connect locally and service local environment's needs under a national umbrella

a public service that isn't as Wellington based and it if is Wellington based it's mobile.

A highly professional and capable public service

The public service workforce has stayed with its core strengths and values. New ways of working and expanded capabilities, building on a tradition of service to New Zealand and its citizens, have made these gains possible.

What people said:

(keeping) the culture of the public service as it relates to public service. And the primacy of public service

people ... are dedicated to the notion of public service, spirit of service ... But equally importantly, there is a low tolerance for and a low expectation of corrupt practice

we are a professional workforce, and we ... see ourselves as a professional workforce. And we ... hold ourselves to those high standards

a greater emphasis on relationship skills - the ability to collaborate, negotiate, influence, be parts of teams, work across different agencies

teams forming to do a piece of work, then reforming and storming and norming and then reforming into other teams ... much more of a way of working

a competent public service in terms of cultural competency

people who have the expertise and confidence to be able to work ... autonomously and with devolved decision making to be able to be much more responsive to individual needs

a life-long learning approach, so that we're thinking of constantly re-skilling, we're thinking about constantly re-shaping competency and skill frameworks.

The public service is an employer of first choice

Public service is highly desirable - there is a buzz around working in the public service. Public service careers are flexible and mobile.

What people said:

more people excited by what's on the horizon on what's next, how can we be at the forefront ...

people employed by Public Service, they feel good because they're making a difference and being valued by the people they're providing public services to

this is a good place to actually contribute, grow, develop, you can be at the top of your game here

a public service that people compete to get into. It's got status and that people aspire to and employment within the public service is seen as a cool thing to do. And people want to come to us, and they want to stay with us because we cater to their development and progression

a range of people ... see themselves in this world our Asian, Pacific, Māori and Pakeha communities all represented and feeling comfortable to put themselves forward

safe for people who come from ... different cultures to be able to participate as their full selves, bringing their culture to their workplace rather than having to leave it at home

fluid structures, fluid workplaces and ... the public sector workforce as one workforce rather than agency-centric workforces

a flow of people in and out of the public service between public, private, public, community. ... a much more free system of movement.

What needs to change

Asked to explore the critical issues for the public service workforce, people described what they see as the key challenges to achieving their vision for the future. Underpinning each of the workforce change challenges is the vision of a future public service that is more agile and responsive to the needs of New Zealanders.

Participants observed that the change that needs to happen, is from a position of strength - the fundamental values and professionalism of New Zealand's public service today.

Six interrelated change challenges emerged from the interview series. Each theme is an opportunity to grow the collective capability of the public service and to modernise how New Zealanders experience their public services.

The issues identified are not necessarily new. People acknowledged that the public service is already addressing the issues, albeit at an early stage. What is new perhaps is the extent to which their insights paint a coherent picture of the change demands ahead.

There is an underlying concern - for some even a sense of urgency - that we need to start now to grip up the issues, to be more intentional to ensure that necessary change happens in time, and in a way that is most effective to achieve the best outcomes for New Zealanders and for New Zealand. This concern translates into a call for coordinated thinking and approach across the six change themes:

Six change themes

- 1 The Maori /Crown relationship *the words that come to mind are 'proper partnership'*
- 2 Including diversity *the future of work is diversity!*
- 3 Flexible, modern workplace arrangements *people being able to work where they like, when they like ...*
- 4 A technology enabled workforce *they literally power-down when they come to work*
- 5 A highly capable workforce *actually, your people are your most important investment*
- 6 System tools for workforce change *We really need to up our game on grad recruitment*

1 The Māori Crown relationship

The primary importance of the Māori Crown relationship came through strongly in interviews. People spoke to the change challenge ahead due to a history of undervaluing the Treaty of Waitangi as a founding document and a resulting legacy of inequality and social disadvantage. The future relationship between Māori and the Crown is about more sharing of power and decision-making in the context of an increasingly diverse New Zealand.

What people said:

We need to honour what made the current New Zealand - what it should have been. We need to honour that in order to go forward, otherwise we are continuing with the past, where there has been a lot of grievance, a lot of disputes that are still plaguing New Zealand to this point

Our Crown-Māori relationship, as a piece of our constitution, that relationship needs to be worked through seriously in terms of how we understand the experience of Māori

When you look at the stats, whether they be children taken into care or unemployment, Corrections, Māori are leading the way and not positively ...

statistics around rates over-representation in care particularly... I would attribute that not just to colonisation, I would also say that there continues to be this, I guess public opinion around whether it's really a problem, and that's quite concerning ... People aren't surprised when you inform them of those sorts of things and I think that's quite damning for our country ... around the cultures that sit within organisations ... need to acknowledge the true significance of providing better outcomes for Māori and in particular for NZ

Historically we have had a narrative in NZ of ... it's just Pākehā and Māori and that's what the Treaty relationship is all about, as opposed to Māori and ō tau iwi, all non-Māori ... (we need) to make sure that we're including more people than just Pākehā when we talk about the Treaty relationship

(In 2040) Māori and the Crown will share power equably and decision making power and resources. And so, that's something (that) needs to happen because as long as we (are) unwilling to share that power, then we will continue to see the inequities in our society.

A new partnership

Participants recognised that the public service has made progress but believe that the real shift lies ahead. Without greater momentum New Zealand is at risk of accumulating disadvantage. In improving outcomes with and for Maori, there is an opportunity to grow the wider social mandate around the Treaty of Waitangi. To achieve greater momentum the whole public service needs to own and model a true partnership way of working with Maori.

What people said:

We've done very well in incorporating our wider thinking about the Treaty into the civil service. That's been remarkable in my time, both as a country ... but the civil service has responded quite well to that

I see, within the public sector, shifts towards that more equitable sharing of power...

Not addressing this issue ... risks further marginalisation, further poor advice, continuation of the kind of poor outcomes that we are seeing ...

(We need to) acknowledge that Māori actually know what's best for Māori, we probably don't need to have as much influence over their behaviour and what they do as we think If we respect them as experts in their own lives, then it changes the dynamic

We have a culture of 'we know better' of designing for, not with ...

You can see a world in which the Treaty means it is more co-design, it's a co-decision-making process. But I don't think we'll end up there. Partly because the demographics on the other side are so profound ... there would be profound discomfort from other segments of the population ... (we need to be) sorting out what the role in Treaty and governance is going to be or at least evolving it to a place that it keeps evolving, that manages the social tensions around that

If we are successful, we will see a Māori lexicon, a Te Ao Māori lexicon embedded in the language of the public service ... and actually being true to our partnership ... those are going to be really, really important changes that we want to actually embed

It's not just about how you grow the public service it's about how you grow the organisations that are helping to serve the people that we serve. Post-Treaty settlement partners ... what they really want to happen is the skillset of the public servants who can come into the organisations and help them to grow

That's where we want to be in terms of that success ... And having our partners talking about how successful we are is much better than us doing it ourselves.

Capability and leadership

Building Te Ao Māori capability is the key to making tangible progress with and for Māori. People consider that current public service understanding and capability to work effectively with Māori communities is low overall. To make a real difference, understanding and valuing the Treaty partnership and capability in Te Ao Māori, needs to be led and widespread across the public service workforce.

What people said:

If you're going to honour Crown-Māori partnership there's a lot of training to be had, a lot of mindsets to be reached (hearts and minds) ...

In the Māori-Crown partnership space, government and leadership in the public sector have a lot to do, ... it needs to start filtering down. In things like induction programmes it needs to be seriously considered, it needs to be spoken about from the top. And not just reliant on just Māori teams and Māori people and agencies to educate. It needs to be a whole of government ... It's always got to be right across. To the point where it is the norm to know about the Treaty to have some basic Te Reo training

Chief executives should be nearly fluent in Te Reo ... it's an important part of being a leader of the Crown. I think it would just be a given to have a good working level of Te Reo ...

(Te Ao Māori) should become a norm, a behavioural norm, a cultural norm in the organisations that we work with

How we, how we address those problems has to come back to how we engage and how we engage comes back to how culturally capable we are ... quite a simple and important priority.

A culturally capable workforce

To achieve a culturally capable workforce, representation of Māori across the various levels and domains of the public service workforce is an important focus. There needs to be recognition of the challenges that Māori face as public servants. To attract and retain Māori in an increasingly competitive labour market, we need to support the resilience of Māori in our workforce and address structural inertia and bias. Further, all public servants need to be culturally competent as service providers across all our communities.

What people said:

... If I'm going to pick one thing, I'm going to pick Māori in the workforce

The public service always has to reflect the make-up of your country and in New Zealand that also means taking cognisance of Treaty obligations...

The most critical issue facing the workforce is an ability to recruit and retain Māori in the public service ... they have a unique set of challenges. ... we have to find a way to balance the fact that they have competing interests on them ...for many ... it is seen as a sell out to work for the Crown. They face enormous pressure from their family, iwi, and they are potentially marginalised within the public service

Growing the workforce development up to the senior levels and that requires investment. Because the pipeline is small now especially in the policy area

I have got friends in the public service who we talk about in terms of Māori policy and they'll never get jobs in policy due to the way we design the interview process ... It's not that they can't do the role, they can

(People are) saying Māori nurses are the future of the health service, but we're never going to get 100% of the health service staffed by Māori as they only make up 15% of the population – so just on the sheer basis of numbers it just doesn't work

(All public servants) culturally competent from a Treaty partnership point of view to a cultural competence point of view. And how do we incorporate that into the way we work because when we do that, innovation will start to happen more?

2 Including diversity

Achieving a diverse and representative workforce was the dominant theme through the interview series with most emphasis on greater ethnic and cultural diversity. Better reflecting New Zealand's growing population diversity is critical to trust in public services and to successfully address entrenched social inequalities. Diversity is also important to attracting a new generation of workers to the public service. A workforce that reflects New Zealand's population just in terms of numbers is not enough. Representation is also about diversity throughout the various occupational groupings and levels of the public service.

What people said:

A successful public service ... would be one I could see myself in. That our communities will look into the public service and (not) feel the institutional racism that they feel

To have social cohesion we need to be doing things that build trust and relationships and connections between communities from different backgrounds

High diversity creates opportunities and challenges, opportunities by bringing in different ways of thinking together and therefore maybe, maybe, solving some of our wicked problems

Critical to ensure that there is diversity of thinking that it is reflective of our community, the public service and the people that work in the public service reflect the community, through all of the government... so services can be tailored then impactful to all of New Zealand

Seeing is believing! Kids in South Auckland, kids in Northland seeing the leadership of the public sector. If they see people that look (like) and reflect them, then they're more likely to see themselves to see a career pathway for them in the public sector.

The many faces of diversity

People highlighted the many faces of diversity that can contribute different perspectives. These included commonly identified diversity themes such as gender, sexuality, disability and age but also geographical, rural/urban, socio-economic difference, language diversity and a broad range of life/occupational experiences.

What people said:

We know the demographics of New Zealand; we've got workers who are at a greater age than ever before and that will only continue

Looking at non-traditional areas where you might gain skills from ... people with disabilities ... (they) could have the very skills levels you are looking for. Looking at migrant groups and looking at ways you can integrate greater ethnicity across the workforce ...

The spatial, the place-based stuff is important. Wellington is not particularly reflective of the NZ population, and on top of that, Auckland is really, really different from the rest of the population

(Auckland) is by far NZ's biggest and most diverse labour market. It's the location of a lot of people and a lot of skills that a modern public service needs ...

(The differences are) going to get sharper between the metros and the regions ... that issue is becoming very sharp in terms of social consensus and wider social licence, you see that internationally.

A good start

People support work across agencies to build a more diverse workforce but see it as early stage. There is a view that, understandably, the early focus has been on 'low-hanging fruit' but that it's time to think more deeply and to be more intentional. Generally, people pointed to a strongly led and deliberate approach building on existing good practice and extending it more broadly across the system.

What people said:

It's a good start point but I think we all know that we've got a way to go

We've already got difficulties hiring and recruiting the social segments we want to get a more diverse workforce. We're really struggling despite a lot of effort. I don't think that's going to go away, with the ageing population I think that's going to be harder

Do we truly understand how community is changing ... we haven't actually figured out how to get bicultural right never mind multicultural, so where is the investment going into some of that?

There are many aspects to our diversity that we haven't tackled. Just diving into the state sector workforce data, you can see a whole big gap in there around the ethnic pay gap, for example

There has been some really good work to start to really address the undervaluation of women's work ... it's going to continue to be a tension ... in 15 years' time I'd really like to see that that wasn't an issue on the table any more... but we've got a long way to go

(On gender) -Yes, we've made improvement, but we've hardly nailed it ... I might be satisfied with the change that's happened in my working life to date but the younger generation are not. They're wanting different things and they're demanding it.

Do we need to go harder?

Alongside the narrative of incremental change some questioned whether the public service needs to go harder and faster on workforce diversity.

The challenge is that being open to something doesn't make it happen. So, I think we need to recognise that you need a level of proactivity sometimes if you want to effect the change you think you need ...

You could ask yourself whether it's fast enough? And whether you need to do something more radical. Do we go as far as biasing our recruitment processes and if so, how much of that we want to do. Do we go for even more active recruitment into certain population groups? Do we go harder and faster on Treaty training and getting everyone up to speed on equity?

I'd look at the lack of diversity (in leadership) and I'd address that, pretty pronto!

(a representative workforce) driving targets around what that would look like. Then driving targets through to tier 2, 3, 4.

Inclusion is the game-changer

Diversity throughout the public service is only half the equation. Inclusion is the game-changer. One aspect of inclusion is about fairness, ensuring that people from different backgrounds can equally be part of the public service and feel able to be fully themselves at work. Having safe, inclusive teams make it more likely

that we will be able to attract and retain a diverse workforce. The second element is being inclusive in how we work, lifting our collective capability to understand, co-design and deliver policy and services that are more effective for New Zealand's diverse communities.

People believe that, although inclusion is on our agenda, we have barely started on a journey where the power of diversity is recognised and becomes integrated into who we are and how we work as a public service.

What people said:

So, we talk diversity ... but it's diversity in thought (we need). Because we have different genders and different races doesn't itself bring diversity into a public service that doesn't appreciate diversity

Not just awareness of difference and that we can live with it - not just live with but appreciate and also value (diversity)

Do we really want different people? Because if we really want different people, allow them to be different when they are at work rather than have a culture that forces them to be all the same

And that question of how you build the internal capability to efficiently gain the strengths from that diversity is another challenge

Not just diversity because we are diverse already. But the inclusion of diversity in the way we work in the public sector a deliberate and explicit inclusion in the processes, in the policies that are written and how they are implemented.

Making inclusion real

People's reflections on inclusion acknowledged the positives around early steps but underlined the need for more and deeper thinking on how we become more inclusive, how we address unconscious and structural bias and avoid loss of talent to the public service.

What people said:

The next big challenge; how do you accommodate the needs of diverse staff and grow collective capability in meeting New Zealand's diverse needs?

There's a real deep dive needed by the public service needed into understanding what (inclusion) actually means rather than just words of 'we need to be more inclusive, we need to have more diversity'. What does that actually in practice look like? What does it feel like? How does it work?

There's a whole lot of work in the capability space of the general workforce to know and understand the value of diversity in the way that they work ... It's really a two-way thing. Where the team begins to learn how to work with another culture ... they'll learn to work with other cultures as it increases, so there's a two-way learning model that's happening

.... Unconscious bias training, if it doesn't talk about institutional racism and structural racism, is only dealing with part of the problem. It's only dealing with the behaviours and the attitudes; it's not dealing with the systems and the results of those systems

Pacifica and Asian and other ethnicities - a bias within the selection processes and retention processes for those groups

If we look at Pacific Island representation - not bad in terms of getting people in and some quite successful internship programmes, but not really good about helping those people once they are in

The risk is attrition...the ability to keep people, particularly people from more marginalised backgrounds in the workplace, if it's not a safe workplace for them to be. Because if they come in and they don't see any opportunities to change it in a way that makes it better, or they don't feel heard, or they don't feel their culture is being recognised, or they don't feel cared for, then they won't stay.

On beliefs and values

People expressed real commitment to achieving greater workforce diversity but also talked about the challenges of building a diverse workforce. In particular, people talked about what 'merit' means in the context of a diverse and inclusive public service. Others noted that 'merit' could be the forerunner of other conversations as the public service becomes more diverse and the need could arise to reconcile potentially differing cross-cultural understandings and values.

What people said:

Appointment on merit is vitally important and those two things (diversity and merit) sometimes can feel like they're jarring

It's entirely appropriate to hire on merit but merit has two components – the best person for the job and the best person for the organisation and they are two different things. And if we really do want diversity in the public service, we need to think about the second part – who's the best person for the public service?

And if you define merit as being able to pull a diverse group of people together to walk in many cultural worlds, to have that degree of cultural empathy as a key component of merit, that would set the tone ...

(Diversity) challenges everything ... probably the one I'm more interested in is trust in the public services, and that for me is around again different cultural norms and understandings of public services

I know we have a formal code of conduct but a lot of the expectations of what it means to be a public servant in NZ have not been codified. They are almost, sort of, innate understandings ... there's an issue you have to manage in terms of retaining the strengths of the public service even as you seek to broaden the experience and increase the diversity of your public service.

3 The changing world of work

Changing expectations about work are already evident in today's public service workforce and are likely to intensify. People cited the pace of change, a more diverse population and a generational shift as key drivers of a new way of thinking about work that challenges traditional assumptions. Increasingly, from a base assumption around flexible work, a new generation of workers will have different expectations about what workplaces should offer. Work environments that are supportive, diverse, inclusive and respectful are a given.

What people said:

The current generation ... their expectations of careers and how they work and when they work and where they work has changed. And they are around things like mobility and wanting better career mobility ... Issues with regard to loyalty, or organisational loyalty or tenure aren't of as high importance to them.

So that notion that we think about as 'employment' – we might think of as 'our employees' - is quite challenged. What people think about as work, for them is more of a portfolio -how do they bring income into the family?

Before we used to treat those 'ins and outs' as separate stages of careers, whereas often now, they are combined: they're caring and they're working at the same time, they're in education, they are volunteering

Not ... many people that want to work 5 days a week 48 weeks a year anymore, at any age or not for 40 years. So again, it's part of that fluidity and flexibility, that I might want to take a year out when I'm 37 and go travelling and it shouldn't be abnormal, I might want to work 30 weeks of the year not 48

And we're already seeing a lot of people who have aspirations for a portfolio career where they will move into different places. And also, we're already seeing a lot of (older) people ... working a lot longer ...

That multi-generational workforce, and the quite significant differences across those that are entering the organisation and those that are nearing the end of their career

And retention, that's around how we work and mobility and accommodating peoples' complex and changing lives particularly through life cycles ... (and) it's not necessarily a gender issue anymore ... it's an issue for males and females, both will seek more flexible work arrangements. Older workers will look for more flexible work arrangements as they near retirement. So how do we build in that flexibility to retain those people?

Work with purpose and direction is valued

The good news is that the aspirations of a new generation are very consistent with the purpose and future direction of the public service. Younger people are seeking work that has meaning and social impact. However, there is no room for complacency.

What people said:

Work that makes a difference, that has purpose and is not just creating profit for the shareholders, is highly valued by young people and so their orientation towards public service is really strong. We don't have to sell them the message ... all of our stuff is good news - you know work for New Zealanders, do good work, do work that has meaning

And it's not about money, it's actually about purpose. Younger people that we need actually care a lot about purpose. 'I want to work with an organisation that matters, and I want to work with an organisation that is people centric not process centric'

They all have loyalty to the cause but not to the place of work, not to an employer

...I think what we are seeing is a shift in the younger generation around their views on society. And they have much more of a say, but they don't actually have to be in public service to have a say ... they are leveraging social media to have a say. So, ... it would be quite dangerous to just assume that we're still going to get the kind of people we need

That notion of service has become a bit problematic in terms of new talent coming through. They see it as community value in the wider sense rather than often that sense of service ... that has been (more) around to agencies and government and needs to be broadened out to communities.

When I look at my children their value systems are going to have to align with the organisation or they are not going to work there -it's becoming even more prominent ...

Changing expectations will shape our organisations

Participants commend the steps agencies are taking towards more flexible workplaces but see this as a first stage of a much bigger challenge. Changing employee expectations could have a significant impact on the shape of the public service workforce, how we think about work and how work happens. The needs and expectations of citizens should be part of this conversation.

What people said:

We need to think differently about how people work and where people work. And how people work may not be the traditional 9-5 or it may not necessarily be that 40-hour week

What is our default assumption about work, and does it actually fit the reality of the talent we want to attract? ...There are systemic barriers ...hard wiring that makes it difficult – like work is 37.5 hours (weekly). No, it's not! ...Can we find different ways of thinking about it?

(In the future we will have) a much different profile of work. We might be half contractors and consultants and half employees. We might even have more than that. We might have a very small core. We could have moved to an employment proposition where people were working for us and others, that they would be contracting in and out ...

You've got tensions around when and how the public want to receive their services and then when and how employees may want to deliver those services. ... so, there is a path to chart around some of the system tensions that there are

A lot of flexibility of work talked about but it's actually not in the context of the flexible needs of our citizens and how we can serve them the best. It's very much, our job as the public sector, to make sure we have the right person there at the right time ... that is going to be a real challenge for the future. ... And then I think there is also a challenge around things like the business hours ... 9 till 5.

Accommodating differing expectations

There is some nervousness about the magnitude of accommodating differing and often very individualised employee expectations as well as a likely need to re-engineer organisational systems and processes supporting the workforce.

What people said:

Very complex for organisations to think about how they can accommodate those things, but how and where (work happens) is really important for people going forward

The fundamentals ... still need to be in place, which is what's the construct of the work, the shape of the work, the flexibility that sits around the work, the pay, terms and conditions that go with the work, you need to stay relevant. Development has to still be relevant.

How do we get people with the skill and experience (required), but also able to have that portfolio career

(We will need to) consciously think about, the differences in everything from induction and training and so on when you've got someone who may be working for you for quite a short period of time, before they move on to other experiences...

Modern workplaces and employment offerings

People accept that the public service must move with the times to stay relevant in a competitive labour market. The challenge of responding to changing expectations and processes becomes an opportunity to consider modern workplaces and employment offerings that could reach, attract and retain a wider range of new entrants.

What people said:

Talent ... highly productive people will not stay in the public service if we are not providing that exciting innovative, entrepreneurial environment that is responsive to NZ

If we don't have flexible work then we won't have a diverse workforce ...enabling diverse people to come to work and contribute in a way that works for them, results in better outputs, better representation for the communities and societies that they represent and serve

We always have to be competitive in terms of remuneration but ... what people value in their package ... maybe it will need to be more of a cafeteria package ... the value of components from which you can choose at different times of your life

Pay is not high on their agenda ... things like impact, a sense of belonging, a sense of inclusiveness, a sense of contributing to a wider good are all of higher

What are the things that we have to offer that could offer a competitive advantage within the market?' Things like our terms and conditions, our work environments. Things like diversity and inclusion having positive culture where people are respected and can truly flourish, not just survive are really important

Young people often make decisions on where they are going to work based off an organisation's position or strategy in terms of diversity and inclusion. And just generally how we treat people

(Young people) want to have impact, they want to not be implementers but deciders ...They want greater voice with regard to direction, greater clarity with regard to where organisations are going.

4 A technology enabled workplace

Technology as an enabler of services to citizens and of the public service workforce was a common theme across interviews. The promise of new technologies is meeting citizens' expectations of faster, more timely and more responsive services and the potential for productivity gain. There is a view that the public service lags the private sector in technology uptake and that the public service workforce has not fully recognised

the opportunity or how technology is changing the nature of work. One consequence of a slower uptake and appreciation what technology can offer is an unfavourable impact on our attractiveness to a new generation of employees.

What people said:

Public services will be delivered fundamentally differently in fifteen to twenty years' time. Much more digitally - my expectation is that you will have a much more digitally capable workforce. Because that's simply the reality of how organisations are going to engage ... from a cultural, economic, community perspective

Automation is going to hit the public service, of course it is, we have got a lot of routine processes ... so there is going to be pressure put on to be more efficient because you can see other pieces of the economy, anything that's a routine can be automated.

(Younger) people are not going to want to deal with the public service in the way that ... they do today. There's no way they want to ... the next generation after them will be even ... more technology savvy and will be more used to getting things immediately

Our children coming into our workforce ... work in a digital way, they just don't know anything else, so us continuing to say "how do we get digital" or "how do we go digital" is kind of nonsense

They can source information in quite a different way and it's a real generational split

We can term it in terms of millennials vs boomers, or whatever- but just recognise that different people now they get their information in different ways, they produce it in different ways.

The IT infrastructure is so out of date compared to what they can use at home and what they use with their friends. And so, they literally power-down when they come to work

My ability to be mobile and to be that experiential policy person really is quite limited by what I have from an IT perspective.

Thinking ahead on technology

People believe that the public service needs to have a holistic approach, ahead of time, on what technology change means for public services and related capability requirements. For some, a key issue was making considered choices on what services look like in a digital world - to grapple with and find the right balance, integrating technology and service delivery but also ensuring that technology supports and doesn't diminish the human face of the public service.

What people said:

People are going to be functioning in digital ecosystems and in a digital world which we are already starting to see the tips of. But that world in 2030 is going to have much richer data flows, much richer sense of networks and we'll start to see augmentation happen - physical beings interacting with AI enabled systems, interacting with robotics, with ...

2025 is going to look a lot more different than 2020 ... and we need to be prepared today for what that might really look like ... we need to be more cognisant of what the private sector are doing in that space and really understand where the giants are at (Microsoft, Google, Amazon, Facebook). What spaces are they moving to?

Investment in technology is very difficult but investment ahead of time would be amazing

To be a player in the future ... we have to think about how we will utilise technology as a (public) service - not as an organisation or a department but as a (public) service and how we might adapt to be more agile around the use of technology.

Technology, how ever it develops in the future, is there to enable the service, not to control it

I can kind of see two paths, one, a much more community connected one and one more a digital connected one and figuring out how you use those two things together

Higher touch agencies, which would be any of the caring agencies ... that human thing will not go away. So, when we are in our lowest moments, we need to meet a person and when we are feeling vulnerable, we need a person and when things are complicated, we need a navigator or a guide through to that place for ourselves and for our services

A key difference with the public service is we also have to ensure whatever it looks like in 2035, that those people who require a face to face service and that is the best thing for them, that they can access a face to face service, because often, particularly in our smaller rural Māori communities, that's what they talk about, a face to face service that's disappeared

(It's) about designing services that are digital, or services that are community even the digital ones - that customer centric design, and again, it's that rethinking how we work.

Workforce impact

A planned approach to technology, is also needed to actively prepare the workforce for future, potentially more rapid technological change. People painted a picture of new capabilities broader than just the technical/digital reflecting the impact of technology on how work happens. People also noted that capability building will have a protective role for the workforce. There is an opportunity to collaborate with a range of stakeholders to address potential for job disruption due to technological change.

What people said:

It's very tempting to sort of see it as a disrupter... but if you look back ... we are always having to adapt to those changes. It's just the pace of those changes is happening a lot quicker

the world will have shifted ... because there will be a whole group of people who are truly digital native both in our customer base and in our working population and whole group of people who - this is still going to be like, 'this is something I had to learn but I don't really get'....

(We need to) be quite clear on what we think, what we think the future capability skillsets are and are going to be required. And that's looking into new technologies and new ways of thinking, because they require different ways of thinking

Learning to build partnerships that allow you to have end to end design, ... and some will be commercial, with some commercial levers, and some will be community of thinking levers and what are the skills and capabilities that you need alongside some of those others if you are in a much more connected world, because that is our world, it's a much more connected world!

It will help to identify how roles will change, the impact of automation on some of the kinds of repetitive work, but then the shift in terms of skills if we are going to automate or digitalise that particular kind of task or that component of the job

(Need to) look at the bigger picture, a broader range of agreements around employment transitions. So, people, as their jobs change and some of their skills that they have been trained in change and they have to move ... that there are transitions or groups that look at how people won't be disadvantaged by that.

Extending flexibility

To more effectively support employees and reap the full benefits of new technologies, there is also a need to be open to and to enable different ways of working in a way that extends our current move to greater flexibility.

What people said:

(Lift) our investment in tools to let people do their work, or a completely different shift away to 'bring your own device to work' and thinking about how those communities of people connect

We need to be open minded about both personal drivers and ways of organising and, the ... platforms people are going to use

Much more open to people being able to work where they like, when they like, on a device they like, or a method that they like. So much more outcome driven, rather than us controlling the work

By necessity there's going to have to be more opportunity for remote working

We cant take for granted that everyone can work remotely.

... everyone is hot desking, so you don't have your own space, that's the new model for us. Technology (leads to the question of) 'why do we even have this (office) space?' Then, we need a workforce that can reflect that.

5 A highly capable workforce

People are confident that we have a capable, professional workforce now. However, meeting the myriad challenges of the 21st Century – rapid technological change, greater diversity and social change - and to resolve complex social issues, the public service will require some quite different capabilities and overall a significant lift in capability. At the heart of the required capability shift is the goal of more citizen-centric services where New Zealanders are more involved in policy development, service design and delivery.

What people said:

(Another) thing we've done well is that there is still quality... we've certainly got some good talent, the raw talent in that as well

We've been pretty successful as a public service reflecting on ourselves and pushing ourselves and thinking about 'are we really ..?'

The nature of what we are going to need in terms of skills, capabilities and those sorts of things are probably vastly different from those that we have today

In a practical sense we really do need to think about the kind of workforce we need, we need really good planning, we need good training, we need re-training because things will keep changing, they're changing now much faster

A lot of (future) solutions will involve things like increased flexibility, structure and staff organisation, how work is conducted, non-linear and agile methodologies for conducting work. A greater organisational, sectorial willingness to take, to do things in a new way will be important. That's going to require quite a significant capability lift

There's a whole kind of question about 'what are the core skills we want in public servants?' (obviously there's always going to be technical skills), but the other stuff. I think we need probably more both clarity but also careful planning about the type of work people are going to be doing and what the job of a public servant is going to be

You'd want to see a more structured approach to capability building that has a much clearer connection to the desired operating model

Strategic capability planning that goes beyond agencies and looks cross-agency at the core functions and there is more shared leadership over the development trajectories of those functions

People infrastructure as well, you need that long-term investment and substantial investment.

Investing in people capability

People believe that there needs to be a much more strategic and coordinated approach to building capability, supported by investment. Investment includes supporting the capability development of today's public servants to enable them to adapt and thrive in a changing work context and to build a culture of life-long learning

The real core of all of this is the people. And so, that's the capital we have to think really cleverly about. How do we set that up for the future world...and refresh it, and maintain it?

What's our buy, build, borrow strategy that sits behind that to address the capability side?

Making the most of the current workforce that you have and investing in it well

Us understanding how we help our... really good public servants ... think about where the world is changing and what it means and how they reinvent themselves

Learning will be an ongoing piece, not a piece that you do in one part of your life for 3 years /5years. That'll be something you continue to do all your life. You'll have different careers

We talk about lifelong learning and people coming in and out of skills development. And I think that the public sector will need to have access to that type of process, and in some ways, may lead it

People may start with one public service career, and then the need for those skills disappears and then, serious training and re-training I think is going to absolutely need to be built in.

What are the future capabilities we need?

People agree that being clear on future capabilities is about a focus on the needs of citizens and the skills and behaviours needed to realise modern joined up public services. Broad ranging generalist capabilities will be required as well as more technical and specialist capabilities across and within public service domains. There is also an opportunity to revisit how skills and work should/could be structured.

What people said:

All those capabilities around diversity, culture, understanding, empathy, you know either people or customer centred design

Capability building ... required across the public sector on the value of the Treaty, on inclusion, on design thinking citizen-centric versions

New forms of engagement, around participation and actually, the public service being genuinely open to participation

Greater emphasis on relationship skills -the ability to collaborate, negotiate, influence, be parts of teams, work across different agencies. Those kinds of skills become important

Problem solving skills, analytical skills, creative thinking, innovation, the ability to be innovative, teamwork, how do you work within a team, team functioning skills, adaptability

where's the investment going into understanding how to build commercial capabilities ... that risk management in a digital world.

Data analytics. The ability to interpret, communicate, present data ...is also really important

An emphasis on upskilling and transferring of skills from across the sector and also from one situation to the next, so that raises issues about different types of training. So obviously training in technical skills will be important in specialist areas ... and then it becomes really fundamental that people have thinking skills - and you need both

There are some pressures to continue to further specialisation, both through training and professionalism, how do we balance that with then having someone who can respond to a more holistic set of challenges or opportunities or needs that a citizen has

We're still very obsessed with tertiary qualifications when it comes to your Wellington public servants. Do you have a master's degree? Do you have a bachelor's degree? ... we are going to have to engage

in what 'success' or what educative 'success' looks like as the world is changing and you have a lot of very successful, entrepreneurial and innovative people who don't have degrees.

Leadership capability

Creating 'a different brand of leadership' is high on the people's list of capability building. People observed that leaders will face a more complex leadership challenge in a future where the public service is more engaged and connected with citizens; more digital and agile; together with a more diverse, multigenerational and distributed workforce. People argued for a more strategic approach to building leadership capability that covers leaders at all organisational levels.

What people said:

Some really good work on leadership development over the last few years. There's potential to build on that thinking more strategically about the future workforce and what does that mean for our leaders

We need to be doing work around leadership and what is required of leaders and agencies to meet the needs now of our changing workforce and that of the future. Because if we don't do that, we are certainly going to have some problems

A lot of (current) leadership models are based on male norms – quite individual kind of hero leaders ... there are a lot of other approaches to leadership that are currently not part of performance management systems or promotion models that are out there. That people from different ethnicities and different genders tend not to have their approaches recognised/reflected in those models

With the generation coming through, they will want people leaders

How do we start identifying the potential of people early and the type of thinking that we want? Not the kind of thinking that we want for today but for the future and most of that is around ... being able to be adaptive and connected and engaged

We need to recognise that leadership is at all levels of the public service, how do you grow leadership everywhere ... that we all lead, we lead in our communities, in all different ways

Priority actions are today's team leaders because in their cohort are probably going to be tomorrow's general managers. And they are ... the gatekeepers so I would focus directly and utterly on how they are being selected, what skill sets; what merit looks like; what their mindsets are and (support them) in a way that's compatible with ... leading incredibly diverse teams and organisations.

Culture shift

People see a culture shift across the public service as an integral dimension of building future capability. The goal is a more unified system with an agile, open culture where people are resilient, creative and confident around managing risk.

What people said:

Having individual agencies, identities and cultures and all those sorts of things are really important. But they need to see themselves and the people within them need to see themselves within the wider public service and as part of that there are so many opportunities for growth and development

A growth mindset ... that is 'you can master new skills and new ways of thinking' but also that you're not unduly threatened by change ..how do we accommodate the need for people to be able to embrace challenge to their practice as a positive and have that growth mindset around 'actually this is an opportunity'

Leadership roles need to allow for the contestation of ideas. I think people in leadership roles themselves need to be really prepared to embrace that growth mindset and display that

You want to work in an open system ... cultural features that are not there yet because we have this inherited culture of risk averseness versus risk management. Monolithic thinking versus let's be experimental, find out; learn quickly; fix it quickly; build upon it quickly

The public sector has to deal with ... multiple complex actors and as a result it maybe that it feels a bit risk averse. I think that there needs to be an opportunity somewhere for parts of the public sector to try stuff and be given the opportunity to fail without political repercussion.

6 System tools for workforce change

Public service 'system' and workforce issues are often two sides of the same coin. The issues with both a system and workforce lens that people raised most frequently were establishing vision for the future public service; modern mobile public service careers and pipelines; and a more strategic and deliberate approach to shaping the future public service workforce.

A vision for the future public service

People see value in creating a shared public service vision which could help bring together a disparate range of functions and align action at all levels of the system around its common purpose.

What people said:

Some kind of vision (of) ... how do we see the public service as part of our society and how the public service is intending to support communities and individuals and a clearer sense of what the purpose is ... Something that feels part of a modern economy and a modern society

I think we have to say that we have to set a bit of a vision for 2030. I always find that if you merely start telling people to go somewhere without telling them where they are going then it has very limited impact. And so if there is a vision for the sort for the public service we want in 2030 I think we should start talking about that now and start celebrating it and inviting people into it and you know that we invite the sorts of skills we think we will need in 2030

(It would be) really good to actually try and do a visioning piece and put that into a process that isn't about actions yet. Go through some sort of visioning process that we can all have an unshackled view of. And then work out what are some of the key things that we then create the actions around. So, it's, how do we create the space to do that new world thinking?

Part of the action ... is to talk with some citizens and say what do they think they want? What do they think they need? ... We need to look at it from the citizen angle as well

Thinking ahead to 2030, future trends in workforce, I think the real beauty in it is that whatever the Government ... we've already done this thinking and nobody will have to do it for us and we can

actually start to prepare Governments as they take power as to where we think the public service is heading.

A mobile, adaptive workforce

People advocated for developing an approach to public service careers that better reflects the aspirations of a new generation. With the right system settings, the pay-off could be improved interoperability, a healthy turnover in positions and an adaptive workforce culture. People want to see movement enabled across, and in and out, of the public sector. Moving between sectors as an integral part of a public service career could add to the appeal of public service and bring in skills that are hard to source. It could also reset expectations around a public service career and provide a new set of opportunities and incentives. Building in flexibility for individuals to choose their own career path and alumni processes for those who leave would be important to minimise loss of skills.

What people said:

We need to build better connections outside of the core public service and think much more flexibly about what a career development path looks like

Younger people are starting to ask questions around what's in it for me and how am I going to be developed and where is my career path and is it very clear and is it very visible?

Concepts of careers to take account of how (people) change and how their needs change...

It's still not seamless and easy with regard to agility in moving people around. Both for development and progression but also to meet the needs of the public service

Structures are too rigid to easily reallocate capacity towards priorities and then across ...so capability and capacity exists but doesn't efficiently move to where the problems and challenges are

How do we move our talent around and onto the problems that we really need to do and reward and give incentive structures to do that?

There's not high turnover in a lot of roles, there's not a lot of natural rejuvenation, of course, that's then going to flow down to how people ... perceive the realism of being able to move up

We don't do a lot of inwards and outwards of the public service. You come into the public service and you might move around the public service, but there isn't much two-way flow ... between public, private or public, community, private, NGO or even international

We need something that encourages people to go out and in, and we can keep tabs on them and (know) that they're going through. I want these people not just in the civil service but also in delivery agencies, NGOs ... this would also help our diversity because it would appeal to the wider range of people we are trying to appeal to ... I want to pipeline our professionals as well somehow, I want to incentivise that, but I think we haven't made it easy for people to move in and out of the civil service. I think there will be more demand around that

We need a way to stay connected with people when they do go out of the public service, how do we keep that connection alive?

A sustainable pipeline

People believe developing a pipeline(s) of new and diverse entrants to the public service is an obvious strategy to build a sustainable public service with the right capabilities for the future. Some noted that there are successful models already in place that could be expanded. Stronger relationships with the education sector are critical to ensure that people coming out of education have the right entry level skills. Reaching out to potential entrants earlier in their education is essential to reaching groups who might otherwise be less interested in or equipped for a public service career.

What people said:

Growing and developing new people into the workforce is important. I guess a critical issue

We really need to up our game on grad recruitment and making sure that's really positive and working well

I think there's success in some of the ways some organisations have onboarded young people that we need to think about more broadly

(We have) best practice in terms of internship programmes that are happening right now. For public sector policy we've got Tupu tai which is the Pacific internship programme ...

The solution to that is to grow your own by recruiting inexperienced people who may or may not be graduates; they may be retraining or whatever, and structurally investing in their capability. But there seems to be ... cultural resistance to having structured and planned recruitment programmes in place. And accepting that a consequence of that is that you have 12 to 18 months of dedicated development required to make staff up to speed. But the point of that is that you are creating the pipeline that secures your future talent needs

And would I go back to those apprenticeship schemes? - don't know what they were called, you know schemes where we brought in - cadetships - yeah bring back the cadet!

We need to look at our hiring practices within the public service and start to look at different skill sets and how we either start bringing those in in intern programmes and secondments or hiring them into the public service now, because they will by and large be younger people and in 10 years' time they will be nice and ready to take on whatever challenges that are in front of them

Then a really important factor is, that idea of continuous learning and how does development and training fit in with the education system ... and if we are looking that far ahead into 2030 - are we educating people in the right skills?

Jobs will be a lot more complex ... they will actually need to know how to pull together information - so sense-making is increasingly challenging and we are not seeing people coming out of school with that. You've got to look for patterns, you've got to be highly articulate, you've got to be numerate, literate ... but among the young people, we will have to invest in the development of those skills, because they're not coming out of school with them

The particular set of skills we are looking for are not ones that are particularly grown or developed - even in kind of pure courses like public policy, they're not really focussed on the critical things.

A strategic approach to the future workforce

A more strategic and deliberate workforce approach would enable a system focus on growing a workforce with the capability to achieve the future public service vision and to ensure that the public service can

anticipate and successfully navigate a significantly more complex workforce environment. Some pointed to the need for a nimble approach that can move with a rapidly changing context. This includes being aware that new scenarios could emerge that may require a significant shift in direction. A strategic approach needs to be broad in scope and potentially longer-term in its outlook.

What people said:

We live in an environment that's changing - automation, technology, the environment, what's really important to people, our Treaty settlement. New Zealand ... (it) is very different and it means we need to ... ensure that we do have a workforce that's prepared for the future

We need a pretty clear picture about how we think things are going to evolve, or at least a couple of plausible competing strategy scenarios ... which will help us work out ... what things we're going to have to do under virtually any scenario and which things could go horribly wrong if we did them ... (we need to) design and think about the public service we need for the future. And start moving towards that and being able to adapt to that because there's no straight path to what that future will look like ... we think, things will change ... and we will adapt and move in a slightly different direction.

Our biggest resource is our people resource. What is our actual 15-year vision in terms of where we need capacity and what capabilities we need and how we're actually getting there?

We so desperately do need some workforce planning ... what's the workforce we're looking for? We need a good recipe for that.

... What are we going to do in this 5-year block, and it might be that we build out a system for that. In the second block, we make sure we have digitally capable people to run the system ...

Take that industry transformation mapping approach that the future work forum is looking at and apply it to the public service

There's a whole contracted workforce that, to some extent, should be regarded perhaps as some part of the public service ...

A more balanced and more sophisticated workforce conversation happening on a regular basis about the whole of the system; not just the elements that are core public sector agencies.

Appendix: Interview Series: Approach

The 7-questions interview technique was used to gather the strategic insights of a range of internal and external stakeholders. The 7-questions technique is used to elicit strategic issues and underlying issues themes in an area of policy.

Further information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/futures-toolkit-for-policy-makers-and-analysts>

For the purposes of the *Future Public Service Workforce* the seven standard interview questions were modified slightly to fit the topic.

Interview questions

1. What do you see as the critical issues for the public service workforce we need to get right to ensure we can provide good public services in 2030-35?
2. Looking ahead to 2030-35 if we have been successful in addressing these issues what would it look like? (being optimistic but realistic)
3. What are the dangers of not being successful?
4. What needs to change to enable a favourable result in 2030-35 (for example systems, relationships, decision making processes, culture)?
5. Looking back what are the successes we can build on? The failures we can learn from?
6. Looking forward what do you see as priority actions that should be carried out soon?
7. If you had absolute authority and could do anything, is there anything else you would do?

A range of participants bringing different experiences, perspectives and expertise on the public service and its workforce participated in a face-to-face interview of up to 60 minutes. Interview participants were not prompted in their responses to allow time for reflection and an uninterrupted train of thought.

Interviews were recorded and transcripts provided back to participants for checking.

Interview transcripts were grouped into broad themes and then sub-themes to confirm the key ideas and range of views across the group.

Data collected from the interviews has been de-identified to protect the confidentiality of participants.