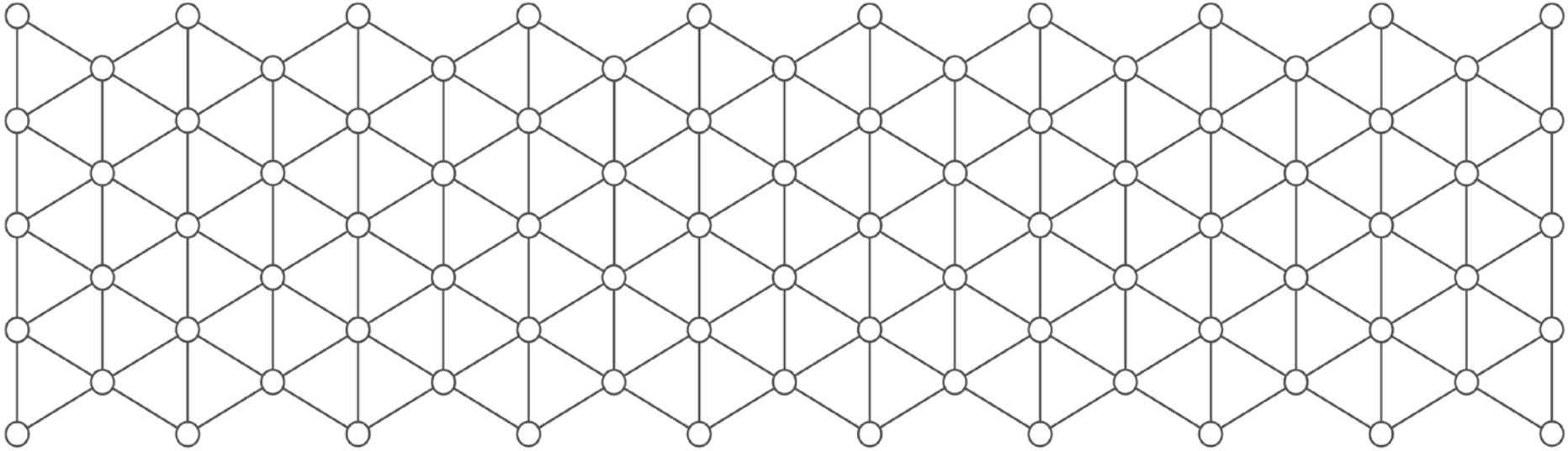
The Policy Project

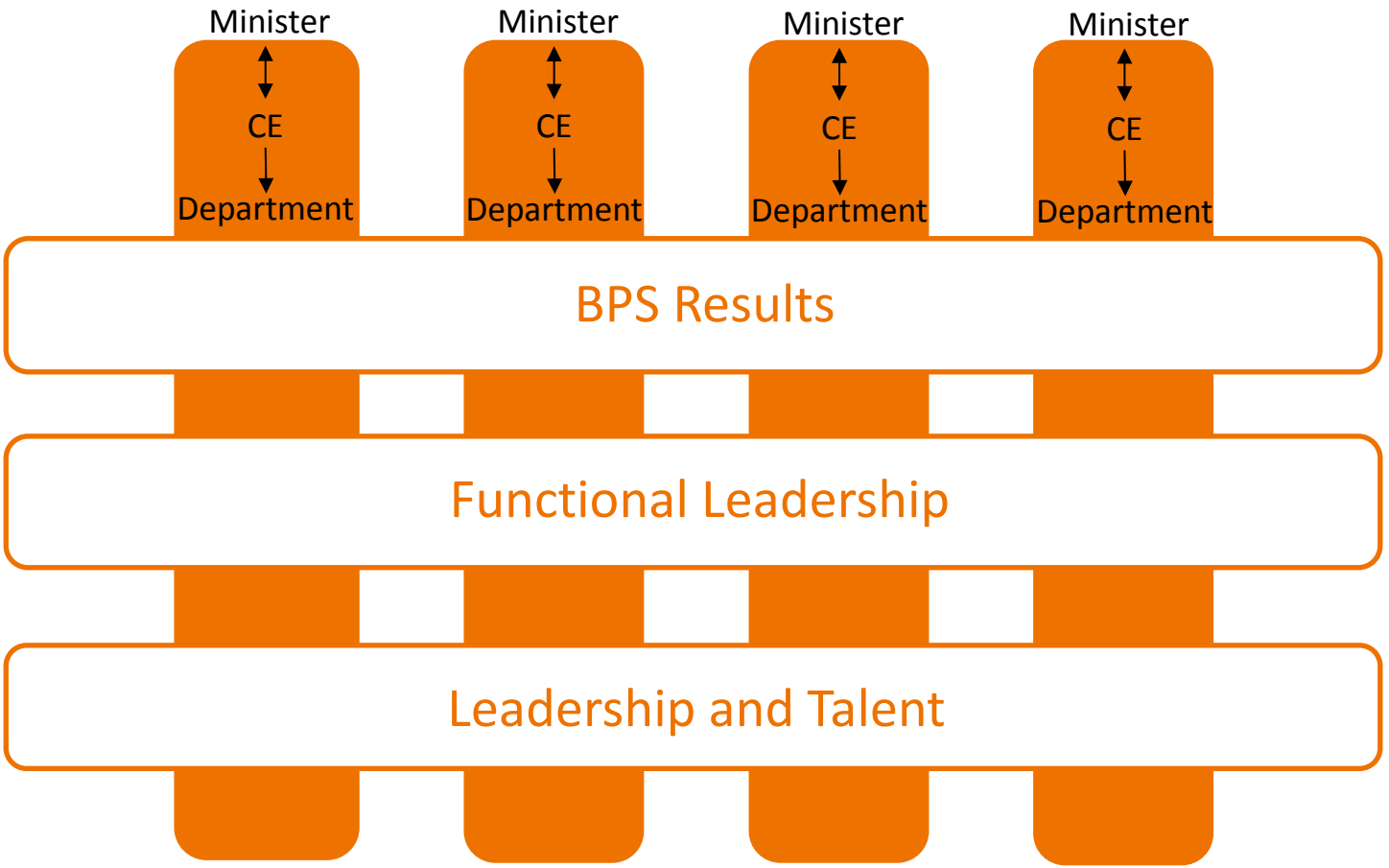
Responsive today, shaping tomorrow

The Policy Project

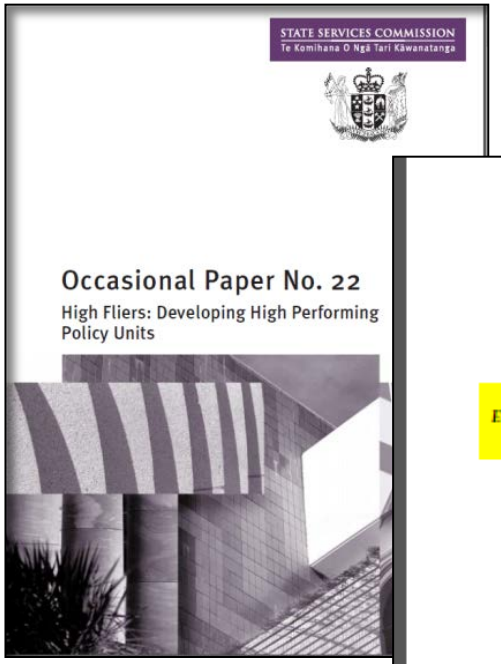
Improving the quality of policy advice across government – the journey, progress and challenges.

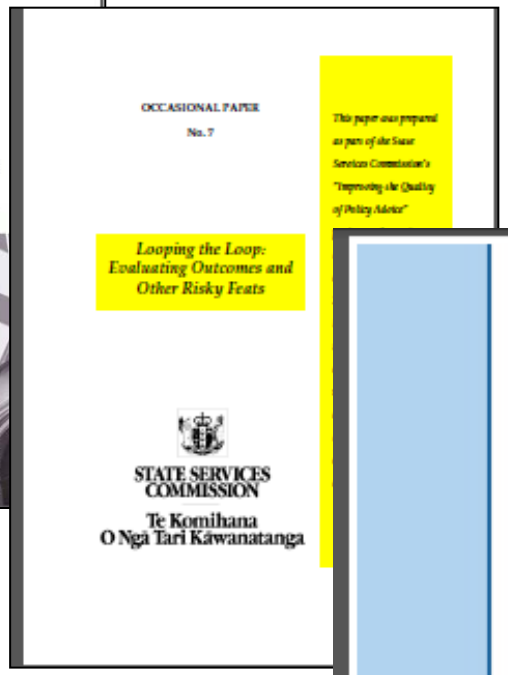


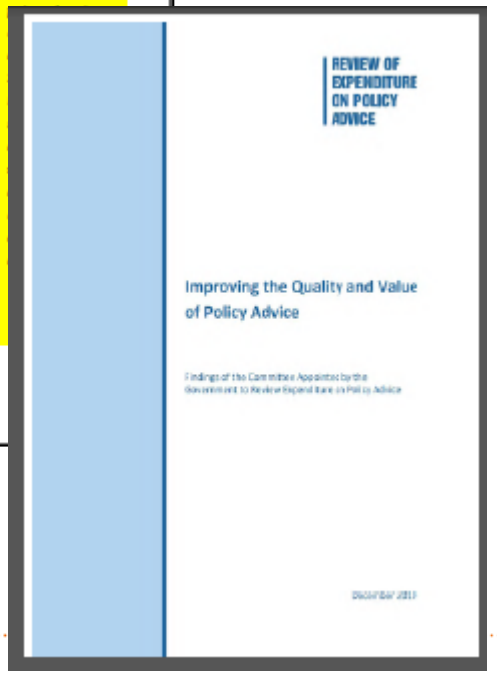
The context – Better Public Services



We've been down this road before…

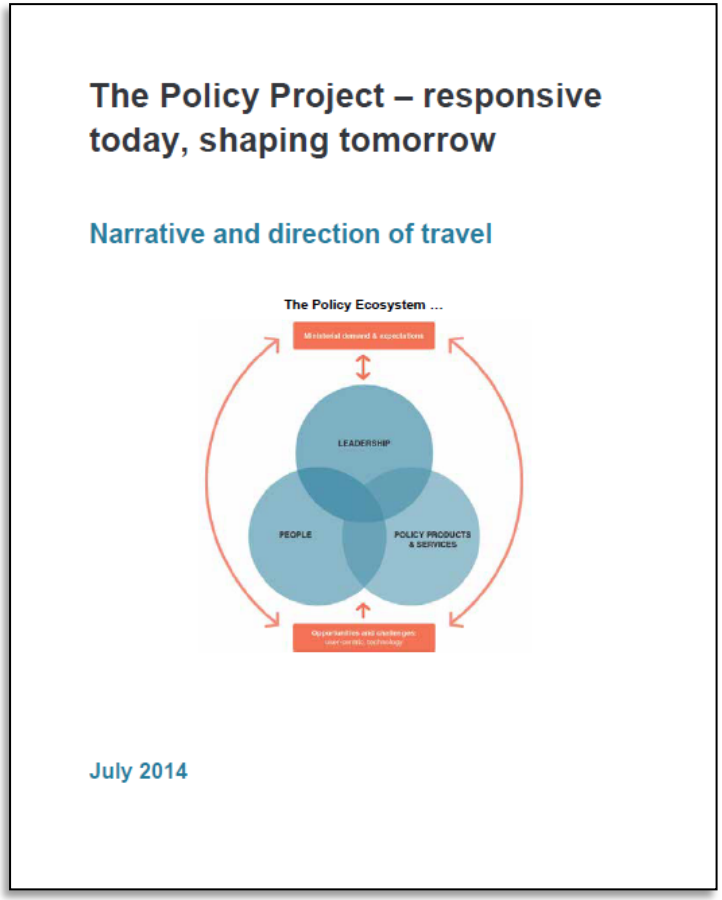






The diagnosis…

- policy advice of variable quality
- shortage of skilled senior policy advisors
- policy advice short on evidence, user needs, evaluation of ‘what works’
- focus on the immediate/poor investment in policy capability for the future – stewardship
- weak cross-government systems for collaboration, alignment and prioritisation



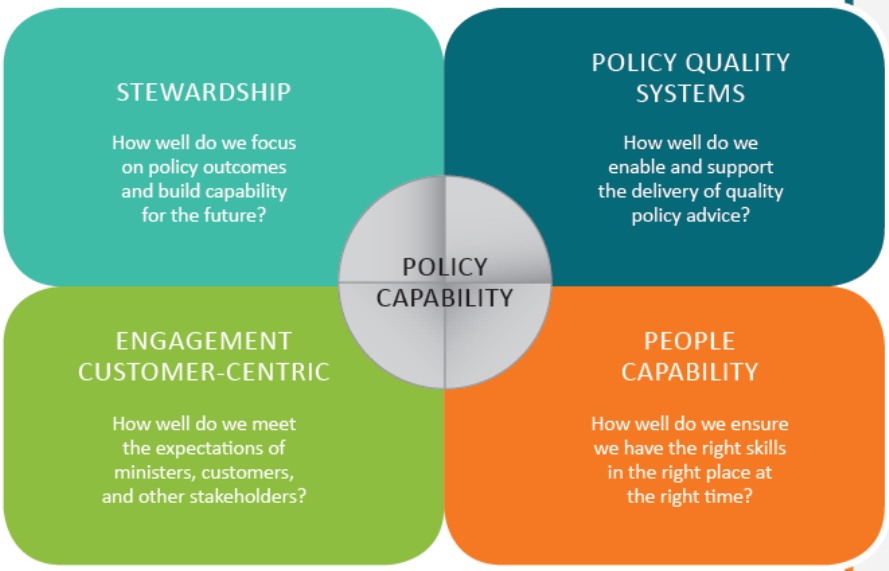
Operating model – principles of how we work…

Collaboration…..
not command and control

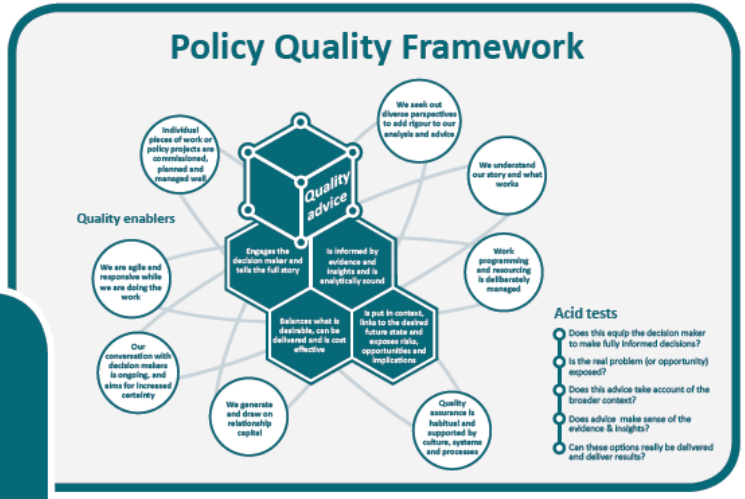
Engage the policy community to co-design a work programme

Three Frameworks – a policy improvement infrastructure

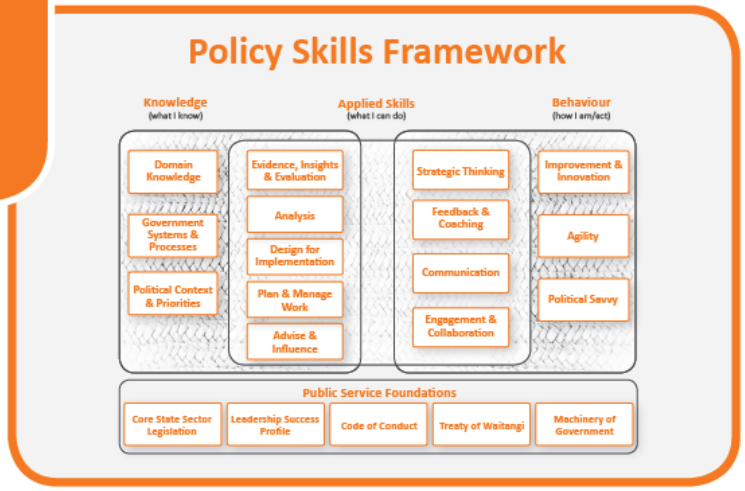
Policy Capability Framework



Policy Quality Framework

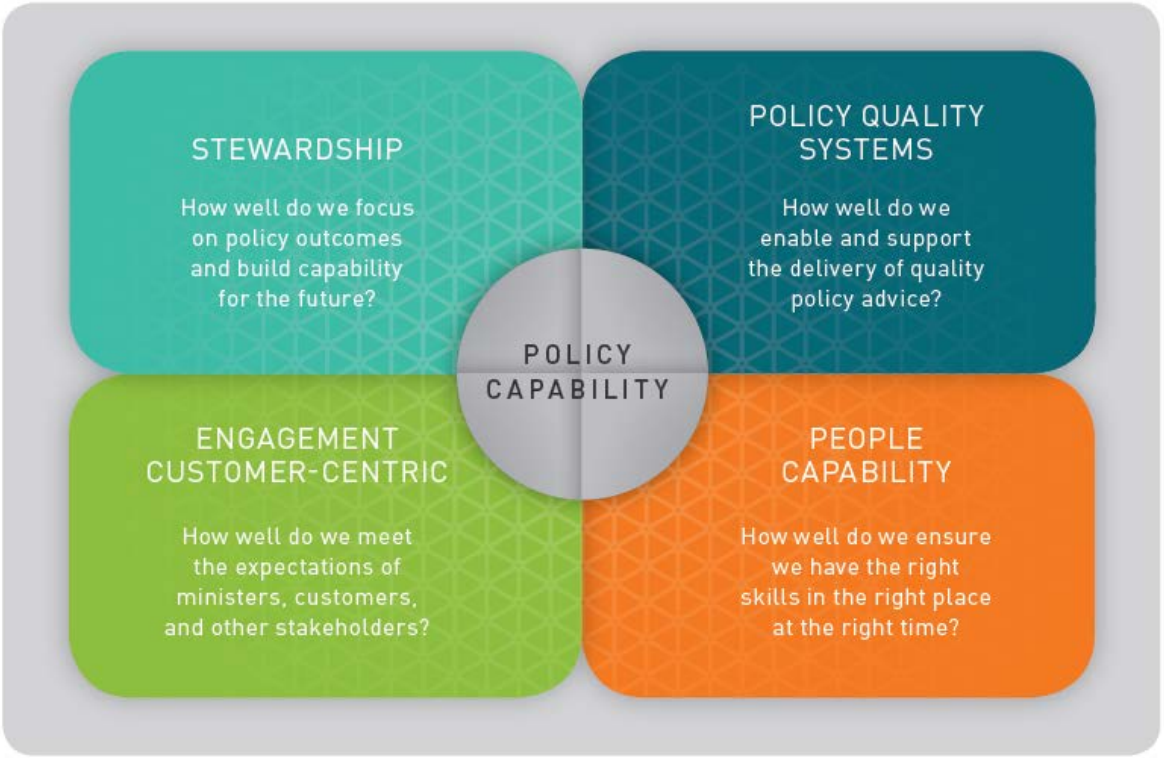


Policy Skills Framework



Policy Capability Framework

PURPOSE	What is the role of the policy function in this organisation? How does it relate to other parts of the organisation?
OUTCOMES	What outcomes are we here to achieve? How much do we know about our customers and the wider ecosystem we operate in?
CAPABILITY	Is our policy function the best it can be, now and for the future?



Policy Capability Framework

Policy Capability Framework — How to make our policy function the best it can be, now and for the future

The Policy Project — Responsive today, shaping tomorrow

Policy quality systems - *Build the systems and processes that support the delivery of quality policy advice*

Element	Lead Question	Lines of Enquiry/Indicators
Commissioning	How well does the team use appropriate systems and processes to ensure that the supply of policy advice meets demand and has impact?	Is the policy intent/commissioned product clear from inception? Is there 'free and frank' challenge where necessary (where an alternative approach/process might have more chance of delivering policy intent)? Are appropriate commissioning tools, templates and guidance made available and consistently used by policy staff? To what extent are policy staff able to be present at meetings with senior officials/Ministers when work is commissioned? What strategies are in place to avoid policy intent being 'lost in translation' (including through relationships with ministerial office staff)? How is proactive, unsolicited, policy advice offered and received (e.g. proposing changes to policy settings or transformative policy shifts)?
Planning and project management	How well does the team ensure that the right policy outputs are delivered, on time, using the most efficient mix of resources?	How are resources prioritised to the highest value work, and low value work deprioritised/stopped? How are policy outputs costed, and how is this information used for planning, prioritisation and resource allocation? Are outputs typically delivered on time and budget? Are 'fit for purpose' 'right touch' project management methods and tools effectively employed by policy staff? What templates and guidance are available to support the choice of method? Are project management skills present in the policy team?
Research, analysis and knowledge	How well is the policy team actively investing in building its knowledge base over time?	How well does the policy team understand, keep up to date and contribute to the body of knowledge in its field, including relevant literature, and evidence? Are key information gaps identified and is there is a plan in place to address them? What systems are in place for recording and accessing relevant previous approaches to policy issues, current evidence (local and international) and anticipating future trends? Are policy staff clear about the set of analytical tools they are required to have proficiency in? Is there good data architecture? Is knowledge (not just data) being generated?
Quality assurance	How effective are policy quality assurance processes?	What quality assurance and/or peer review processes are in place? Are all policy outputs reviewed for accuracy, formatting and clarity of message? Do the authors of papers receive regular feedback? Are quality ratings from internal and external checks good? Is a robust methodology (such as the Policy Quality Framework) consistently employed? Is ministerial and stakeholder feedback solicited? Is feedback positive/on an upward trajectory?
Evaluation and learning	How well is evaluation and learning embedded into business as usual?	Is the impact of policies within the team's area of responsibility subject to systematic monitoring and evaluation? How are results documented? What investment is there in benefits monitoring, learning and evaluation? Does this inform future policy development? How well are the insights, information and knowledge produced through policy processes systematically captured, shared and used to inform future improvement strategies?

Deep dive and deep dive with maturity ratings…

st it can be, now and for the future

The Policy Project — Responsive today, shaping tomorrow

	Where are we now?	Where do we want to be? By when?	What will we do to get there?
broader policy agenda and r system, including input to the importance of ging strategic issues?	Maturity level: ○		
etter public value? nment and foresee aff articulate what they are and able to deliver as being responsive to fs deliberate and based on es safeguarded for longer sed? t and anticipated future supply)?	Maturity level: ○		
n and between policy teams d to consider different innovation)? are motivated, engaged and agency? How well do it is sought after for here?	Maturity level: ○		
Investment in future capability — **How well does the team plan and resource to build future policy capability (both policy content and people)?** — Are leaders committed to organisational learning and growing policy capability? Is there a clear plan for investing in capability that might be needed in future, including through knowledge management and a research strategy? How well are knowledge gaps identified (e.g. scanning) and a clear plan for addressing them developed? Are policy staff consistently striving to improve their capabilities (e.g. training, stretch goals)?	Maturity level: ○		

Insights

- improvement not audit
- think in stages of the improvement journey
- measuring capability – be aspirational
- self review – critical friend – external – all options

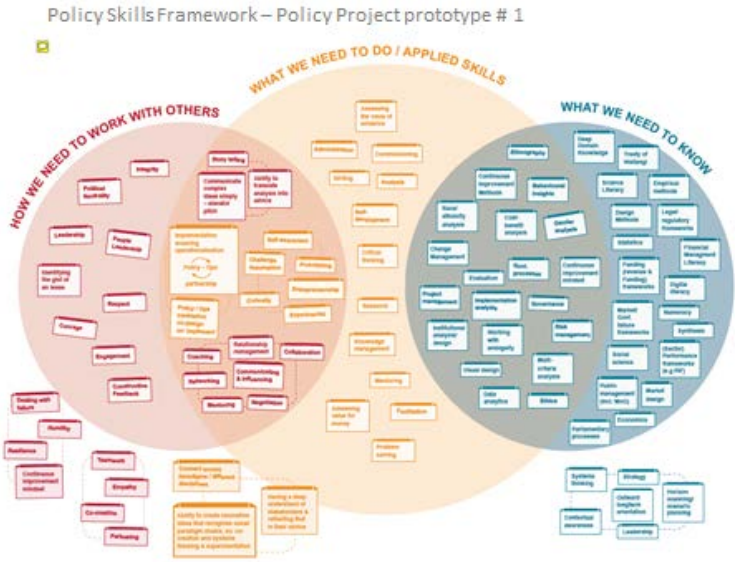
Maturity levels

- **Informal** — Ad hoc practices that are person, team &/or situation specific
- **Enabled** — Policy processes, capability and support systems in place.
- **Practiced** — Formal systems & practices enacted, generally effective but requires concerted effort to embed.
- **Embedded** — Systems and practices part of culture, used consistently and confidently, record of success. Regular review drives continuous improvement

Policy Skills Framework – a co-design approach

Building prototypes of policy people capability

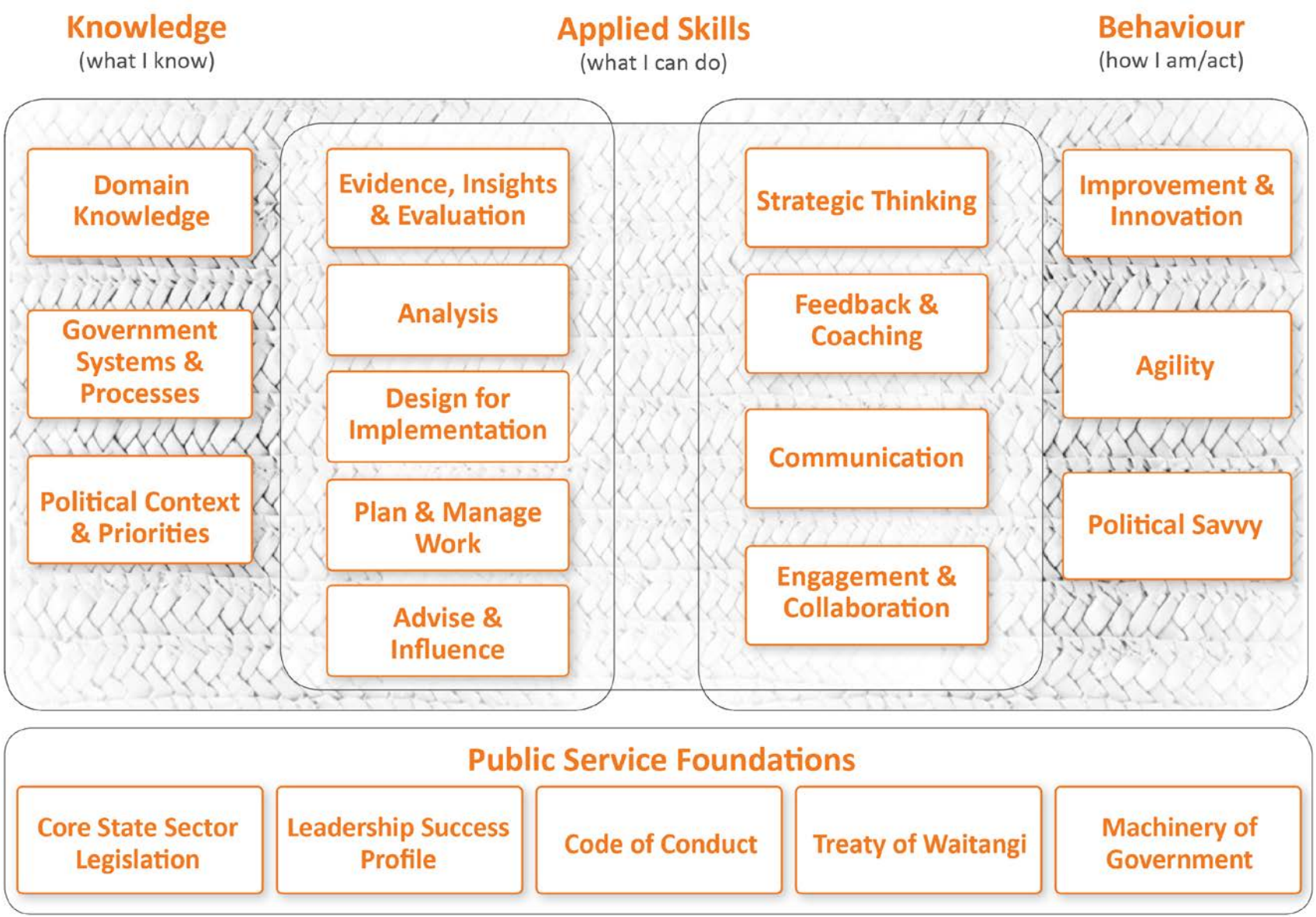
Who needs what?



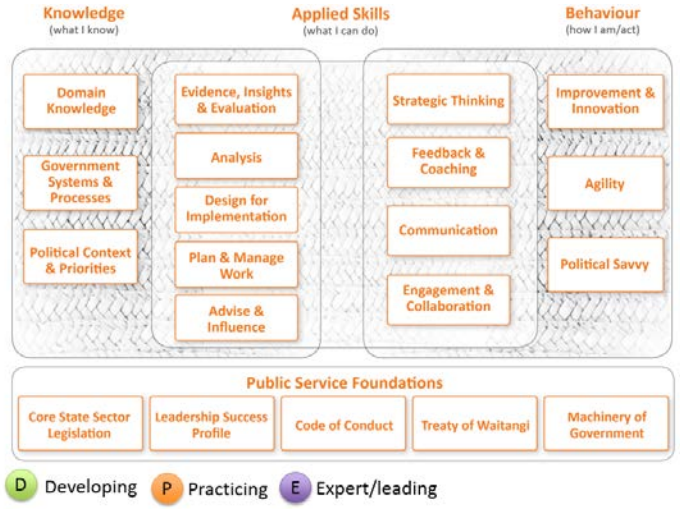
Card sorting – first policy skills framework prototype

The Policy Project

Policy Skills Framework



Policy Skills Framework – applications & insights



Developing self

Developing the team

The Policy Project

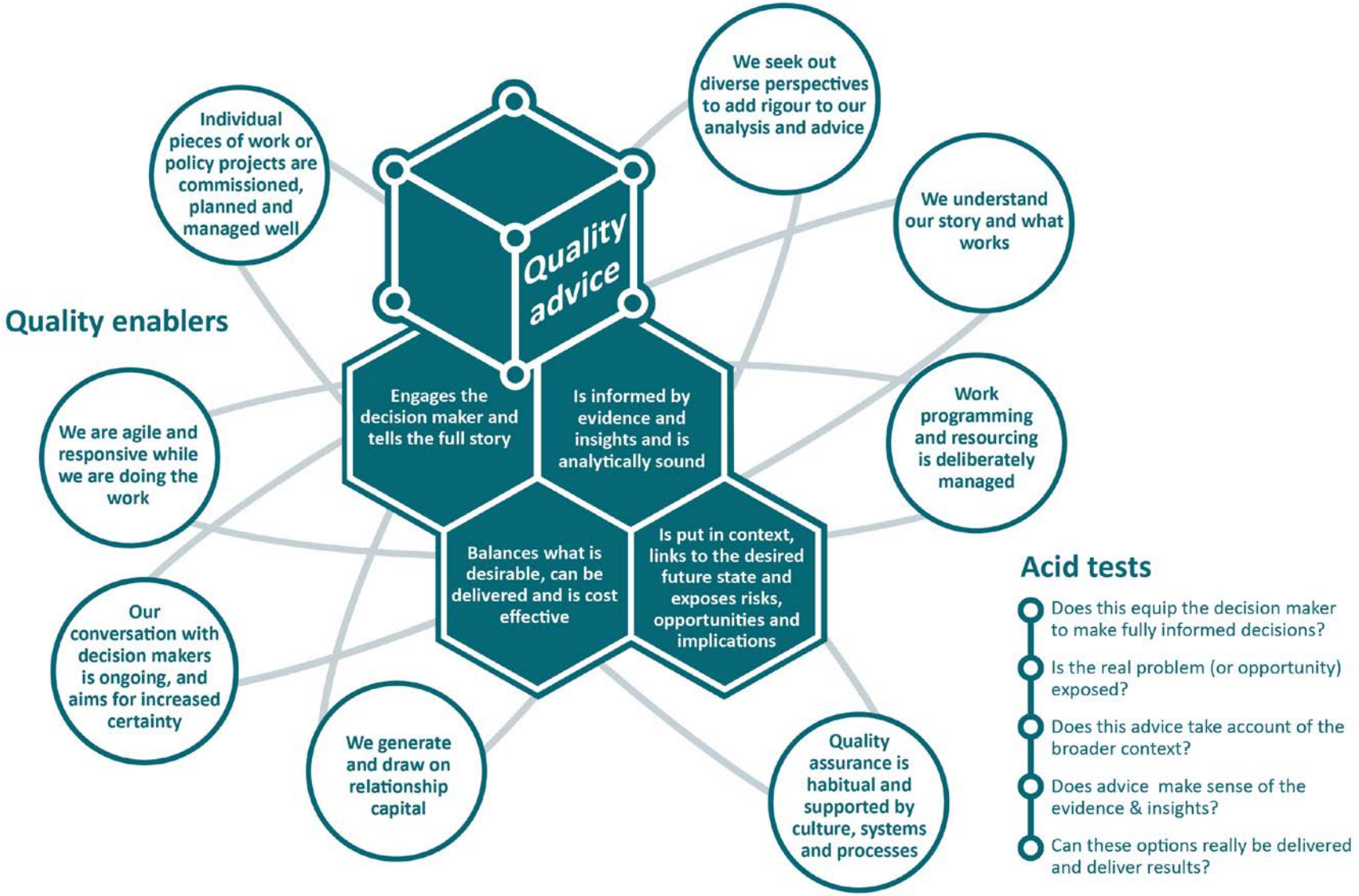
Team skills mapping template

Use this template to capture current and/or future skills the team needs

Insights

- T - breadth and depth
- policy ‘archetypes’
- future focus
- behaviour matters
- conversation is key
- a foundation for future standards and collective initiatives

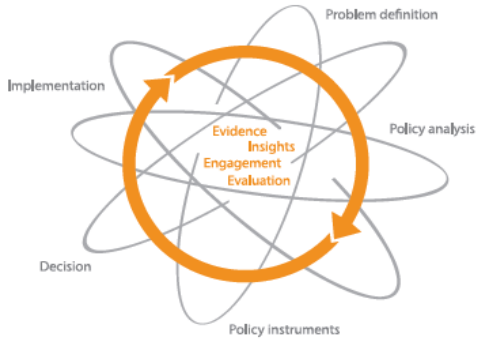
Policy Quality Framework

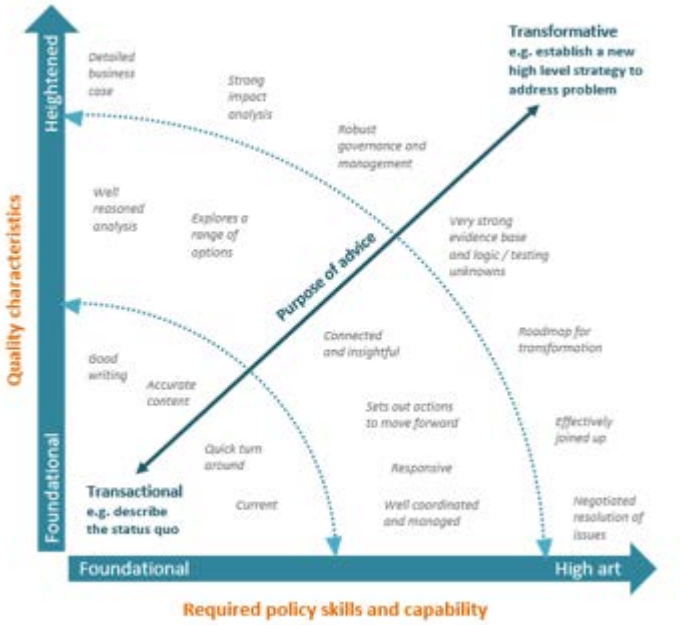


Policy Quality Framework

Insights

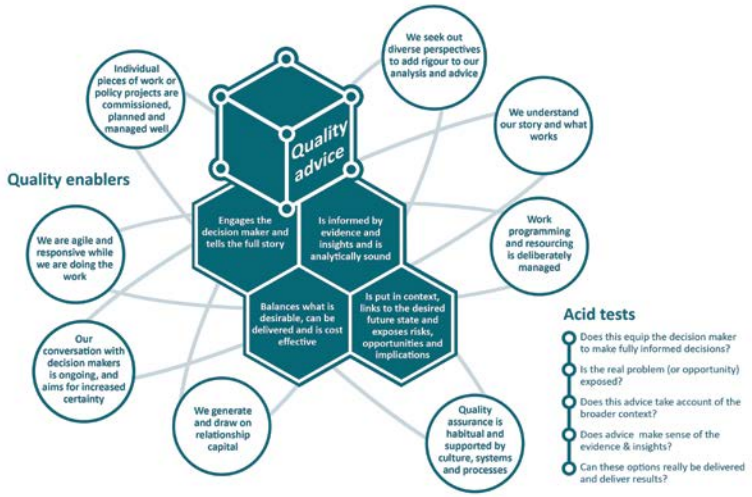
- the policy 'cycle' is dynamic & iterative
- not all advice is created equally
- more frontloading is expected
- great advice draws on multiple perspectives
- minister and public as customer
- plan and manage for quality
- relationship capital – build it, draw on it - policy is a long term game





Policy Quality Framework

A menu of tools that apply the PQF for agencies to pick and choose from

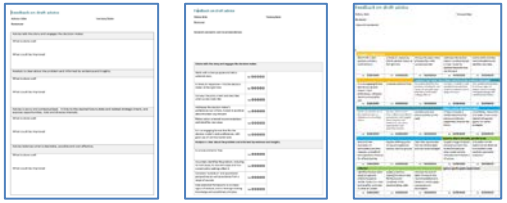


Policy Quality Framework

Checklists based on the elements of the framework

Extended guidance on the core quality characteristics

Three templated options for reviewers/critical friends to give feedback on draft advice



'Start right' tools to prime for quality

Commissioning tools (next development phase)

Discussion starter/ diagnosis tool: What's critical to success in this context

Mandate / project tools for high stakes, larger scale work (next development phase)

Lessons learned discussion starters

Ex-post quality assessment tools

Setting expectations… Head of the Policy Profession

- Free, frank and other F-words
- Policy ecosystem – inside out/outside in
- Evidence, insights, engagement, evaluation
- Build and share capability – system focus ‘take one for the team’
- Innovation and new methods…

The demand side…engaging decision makers

Ministers are the intermediate customer. The ultimate customer is the public you are serving – the industry we are regulating, the vulnerable people we need to support

Policy is an art. It is a skilled profession…bringing the different perspectives together… policy is sterile without a range of perspectives. You need to bring the inside-out and the outside-in to take great ideas to scale

For discussion…

- Is ‘policy’ a profession?
- Better performance: how can we get ‘the basics’ right and apply new methods?
- What is good evidence?
- How might we reframe ‘policy’ and the ‘policy cycle’?
- Bringing others in – essential or risky? End-to-end not ‘spray and walk away’
- ‘Steal with pride’ – how might we share across jurisdictions…

The Policy Project
Responsive today, shaping tomorrow

Access the frameworks @

www.dpmc.govt.nz/policyproject

Contact us

policyproject@dpmc.govt.nz

The Policy Project

Responsive today, shaping tomorrow