

Key Success Factors for Effective Co-ordination and Collaboration Between Public Sector Agencies

Report of the

Controller and Auditor-General

Tumuaki o te Mana Arotake

Introduction

We used the findings from our examination of co-ordination and collaboration in the criminal justice sector, and the results of our analysis, to identify principles that can be used more widely for other agencies that are required to work together to meet the Government's outcomes.

Strategic Sector Leadership

- A single agency should be assigned clear responsibility, and given a mandate, to lead debate on broad sectoral issues, and to co-ordinate and convene forums for sector-wide consultation and collaboration. Where responsibility for leadership is unclear – as for particular policy work – agencies should seek a decision from Ministers.
- Chief Executives should establish a forum for considering sector-wide issues affecting their own agencies, and for monitoring major inter-agency projects. The forum should meet regularly to ensure continuing co-ordination of sector initiatives and oversee work programmes and projects, and should be strongly supported by all sector Chief Executives.
- Within the forum framework, Chief Executives should establish formal working groups for ongoing inter-agency consultation on key business issues with sector implications. These issues will differ from one sector to another, but might include areas such as policy development, service delivery, sector planning and reporting, research and evaluation, information technology, and responsiveness to Māori.



KEY SUCCESS FACTORS FOR EFFECTIVE CO-ORDINATION AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN PUBLIC SECTOR AGENCIES

- Agencies should prepare a set of common outcome statements consistent with the Government's goals and priorities – forming the basis for co-ordinated sector planning, reviews of existing funding, and consideration of bids for new funding. They would also serve as an agreed framework for individual agencies to identify their own goals and objectives in Statements of Intent.
- Where appropriate, the State Services Commission should make Chief Executives accountable for supporting agreed sector outcomes through performance agreements or other statements of expectations.
- Chief Executives should jointly create a framework (including leadership responsibilities and arrangements for information collection and analysis) for measuring and reporting on achievements as a sector, and on their collective performance in relation to the outcomes sought by the Government.

Sector Planning

- Agencies should agree on formal processes for them to plan as a sector, ensuring that consultation is co-ordinated and consistent.
- Agencies should consult on their draft policy work programmes in order to share information, identify common areas of interest, plan collaboration, and complement planned projects.

Managing Major Projects With Sector-wide Implications

- Clear governance arrangements should be established, clearly setting out the roles and responsibilities of each of the agencies involved in the project.



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- A project oversight group should regularly oversee progress, reviewing risks and issues. Oversight of sector-wide projects should ensure that agency project plans are co-ordinated and information is shared, and should encompass monitoring progress with each agency's project plan (including IT modifications). This oversight group should report to a group of sector Chief Executives.
- Consideration should be given to setting up working groups of senior managers to consult and collaborate in managing major projects with sector implications. These consultation and collaboration roles should be incorporated into the performance agreements of the managers involved. Such groups should:
 - have a clear purpose, with agreed terms of reference;
 - establish governance arrangements that clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of each of the agencies involved in the project;
 - include representatives at an appropriate level from all agencies relevant to the project;
 - establish sub-groups, where necessary, to consider particular aspects of the project; and
 - regularly report progress back to all member agencies and groups of sector Chief Executives.
- Agencies responsible for co-ordination of major policy development work with sector-wide implications should prepare a project plan for the sector. The project plan should include a sector-wide information technology strategy which addresses the implications for the information needs of the sector and the supporting information technology infrastructure and interfaces.

Establishing and Maintaining Effective Relationships Between Agencies

- Agencies should establish agreements or understandings (such as Memoranda of Understanding) outlining how they will work together. Such agreements should:
 - specify the circumstances in which consultation will occur and when; and
 - encompass areas of core business, such as information technology and policy development.
- Where possible, collaboration should build on existing relationships and activities, to avoid duplication. Succession planning should be undertaken to ensure that relationships built up over time are not lost when staff move or agencies change their structure.

Managing Information

- All agencies should have access to the necessary reliable information on the basis of which to forecast the volumes and types of services they need to provide in order to meet future demand.
- In all sectors where information sharing is a key input into planning and operations, all agencies should have an up-to-date information strategy that establishes the basis upon which information is used and shared.
- Sector Chief Executives should assign to one agency responsibility for monitoring information technology development with significant implications for the operations of the sector – including critical interfaces and the use and sharing of key data.

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- One agency should be responsible for monitoring the status of information technology across the sector, including the wider impact of agency developments and systems. That agency should oversee the status of agency information technology systems as they affect other agencies in the sector, and evaluate sector-wide impacts of any planned changes – ensuring that information systems meet both the purposes of individual agencies and the needs of other users in the system.
- In undertaking large information technology projects, all agencies should have regard to the guidelines we published in 2000¹ and the joint State Services Commission and Treasury guidelines published in August 2001.
- Agencies undertaking information technology projects with major impacts for other agencies should keep those agencies fully informed about the status of their projects, alerting the other agencies to any emerging project risk.
- Sector agencies should draw up sector-wide data-sharing arrangements (including interface protocols, and common underlying principles, definitions and standards).

Policy Development

- Agencies should consider agreeing protocols to govern the way in which they will work together to develop policy. The protocols should (among other things) specify the respective roles of the agencies, outline an agreed policy development process, and specify at which points consultation should occur.

1 *Governance and Oversight of Large Information Technology Projects*, ISBN 0-477-02862-4, Report of the Controller and Auditor-General, April 2000.

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- Agencies responsible for advising on new funding proposals for a sector should follow agreed processes that are transparent and fair and draw on reliable information about projected costs, benefits, and the likely contribution to meeting sector outcomes.
- Agencies undertaking major policy development projects (involving significant change to agency responsibilities, or entailing legislative reforms) should prepare their own project plans, to ensure that the impacts on business groups are properly identified and addressed. Risks and contingency plans should be drawn up, enabling options to be chosen to mitigate risk.
- Where policy development has large information technology implications, a senior IT oversight group should be established early in the policy development phase to ensure that any IT issues are dealt with as and when they arise.
- Agencies should allow adequate time for consultation – particularly where operational implications are significant or lead times are required to establish supporting infrastructure.

Research and Evaluation

- Agencies should consult on their research and evaluation programmes. One dedicated standing committee should be responsible for seeking opportunities for collaboration, and for considering proposals for research and evaluation with benefits for the sector. The Social Policy Research and Evaluation Committee provides a good model.





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