



Summary of our report

Principles for effectively co-governing natural resources

Many New Zealanders are taking action, independently or in partnership with local or central government agencies, to conserve the environment for future generations and protect our economic, social, and cultural well-being.

Throughout New Zealand, iwi, hapū, and community groups are taking part in many projects to monitor, protect, and enhance the health of their local environment.

Some of these environmental projects are co-governed. Although co-governance is the focus of this report, we also touch on some co-management projects. Governance focuses on strategic matters, while management is concerned with day-to-day operational responsibilities.

Policies on, and approaches to, co-governance vary. In this evolving space, formal agreements often follow informal arrangements or long negotiations, including Treaty of Waitangi settlements.

Most importantly, successful co-governance relies on effective relationships. All parties to a relationship need to value and prioritise building an effective relationship. This takes time and commitment.

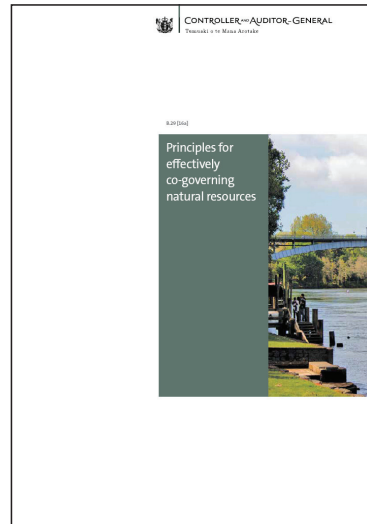
Building and maintaining mutual trust and respect needs constant attention to achieve good environmental outcomes.

The principles

This report identifies some principles to consider when setting up and maintaining effective co-governance and co-management arrangements. The principles are:

- Build and maintain a shared understanding of what everyone is trying to achieve.
- Build the structures, processes, and understanding about how people will work together.
- Involve people who have the right experience and capacity.
- Be accountable and transparent about performance, achievements, and challenges.
- Plan for financial sustainability and adapt as circumstances change.

Parties need a shared understanding about the project's purpose, including understanding each other's objectives and aspirations and being open to learning from each other, to work towards a common objective.



Good public administration supports good governance. As with all governance, co-governance benefits from having good administration, including clear processes for running and recording meetings and making decisions.

Co-governance also benefits from clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Structures and processes need to support the carefully built relationships and not replace them or get in the way.

Getting people with the right experience and capacity can be challenging, because many community groups or hapū start with limited capability and capacity. Public entities need to be careful not to make unrealistic demands straight away, and help build capability among the co-governors.

To maintain support for co-governance, parties need to set up proper financial management and accountability processes and ensure that they keep the public informed of progress. They also need to think about how they will sustain the project.

Good environmental outcomes can take time to achieve. Governance arrangements and participants will change. Some participants might see significant change to their roles. This means that people need to be flexible and willing to adapt. It also means that they need to be prepared to review their co-governance arrangement from time to time to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and continues to meet the parties' aspirations.

Co-governors also need to plan for the long term, including thinking about succession management to ensure that the right people continue to be appointed. This is why effective relationships are so important. They allow the parties to maintain a shared understanding as the work, and the people involved, change.

Overall lessons

The lessons that could help to achieve successful co-governance are:

1. Develop good relationships.
2. Be prepared to work together, listen and learn from each other, and go the extra mile to understand each other's perspective and reach compromise where needed.
3. Work out a shared understanding of purpose and check understanding from time to time.
4. Agree how to work together, including deciding what form of governance will work best.
5. Take the time to plan and set up processes.
6. Understand the extent of decision-making powers and clearly define roles and responsibilities.
7. Find people with the right experience and capacity, such as strong leadership skills, and governance or management experience, and who have the time to be involved.
8. Keep the public informed of progress and what is being achieved.
9. Provide assurance that finances are well managed.
10. Plan how the project can be sustained through its lifetime.

Vital statistics:

- 68 pages
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- Contact: reports@oag.govt.nz