Putting integrity at the core of how public organisations operate

An integrity framework for the public sector

This integrity framework aims to support senior leaders and those in governance roles to take a whole-of-organisation approach to building and maintaining a culture of integrity. It is focused on reducing any gap between the culture an organisation wants to have and its actual practice.
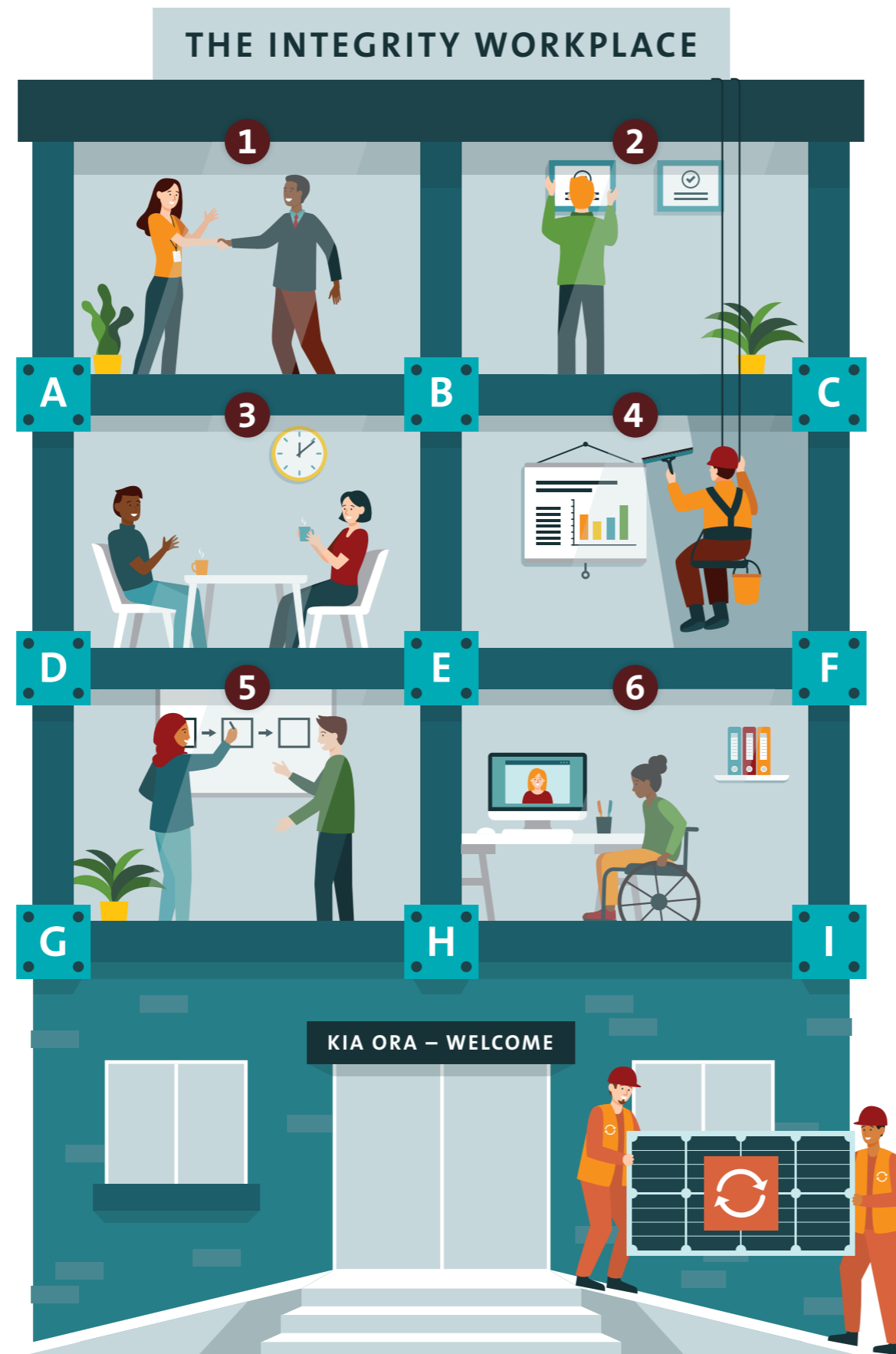
Research has found that:

...the most effective strategy to embed a culture of integrity within the organisation is to combine compliance instruments to control unethical behaviour with an integrity approach to stimulate ethical behaviour.

And, importantly:

This requires time and reinforcement through multiple parts of the organisation to make it an integral part of the day-to-day decisions, staff behaviours, and the operating environment.[1]

The framework set out here is an integrated approach to examining the values, systems, and norms in a workplace. It's about identifying the key activities and ways of working that help to build and sustain integrity across the whole organisation. All the components that follow are required and need to reinforce each other. They should be explicitly designed and monitored as a coherent system of improvement.

We encourage public organisations to adopt and adapt the components of this framework for their own unique environment and use it to keep reviewing progress toward embedding integrity into everyday practice.

1   Bushell, J, Cain, C, Duncan, L-A and Lasthuizen, K (2021), *HUMANGOOD: A field guide to ethical leadership*, Brian Picot Chair in Ethical Leadership Aritahi, Wellington School of Business and Government Ōrauariki, page 81.

THE INTEGRITY WORKPLACE

KIA ORA – WELCOME

The framework is made up of three components

The ways of working

The framework starts with **six ways of working.** The ways of working represent how a public organisation can go about doing the work of building a culture of integrity. The ways of working shift the focus from simply improving control systems and requiring compliance to building an organisation that has integrity in all the ways it operates.

1 Ongoing commitment
2 Build alignment
3 Prioritise relationships
4 Provide transparency
5 Make it easy
6 Be inclusive

The building blocks

The **nine building blocks** of the framework are what a public organisation should have in place. They are the key intervention points or activities that, when connected and build on one another, lead to the best results in strengthening an organisation's integrity system. When working on the building blocks, it is essential to also embed the ways of working.

A   A statement of values
A statement of what your organisation stands for and the culture you seek

B   Ethical leadership
Visible practising and role-modelling of ethical behaviour

C   A code of conduct
A translation of the values into behaviours

D   Policies and procedures
Values embedded into the day-to-day activities and long-term culture of an organisation

E   People processes
Values are factored into and reinforced by the behaviours that organisations recruit for, reward, and encourage

F   Listen up/speak up
When someone speaks up, the organisation listens and responds appropriately

G   Integrity roles and responsibilities
Roles and responsibilities for managing integrity are assigned across the whole organisation

H   Measuring and reporting progress
Evaluating whether the desired culture is being demonstrated and can be seen through staff behaviours and work processes

I   Assurance and accountability
Adequate independent oversight 'of the whole' by those charged with governance

Continuous improvement

Integrity is not a destination; it is a process whereby an organisation continually looks for ways to do better.

The culture of an organisation will change and evolve in response to changing circumstances or work pressures. Policies and practices need to be regularly reviewed, lessons need to be learned and fed back into systems improvements, and changes need to be communicated to ensure transparency and accountability.