

July 2009

From talk to action

Government engagement with citizens and communities

Building Better Government Engagement
Reference Group

Final Report

The views in this report are those of the Reference Group and are not Government policy.

This report is provided by the Reference Group to the Office of the Community and Voluntary Sector, administered by the Ministry of Social Development.

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1. Conclusion

1.1 The proposition – key messages

The Building Better Government Engagement (BBGE) project seeks to identify actions for building skills, knowledge and values in the public service about effective engagement with citizens and communities.

The project reference group has prepared this final report for the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector, so that the recommendations can be conveyed to the Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector.

The reference group has a **vision** where:

Central government engages effectively with citizens and communities, recognising the interdependence of government and communities in achieving the best outcomes for society.

After considering feedback on the BBGE discussion document *It's More Than Talk*, the reference group confirms that the **core issue** being addressed by the project is that:

Central government agencies are not yet sufficiently committed to, and skilled at, collaborating with citizens and community organisations in order to jointly tackle societal problems.

This document outlines recommendations for addressing this core issue. In considering these actions, the following key themes need to be taken into account.

The complex environment needs multi-sector responses

To address complex social, economic, and environmental issues it is essential that multi-lateral relationships are formed across central government agencies, local government, the community and voluntary sector, and businesses. Effective engagement is key to achieving this collaboration.

Citizens are at the centre

Active, engaged citizens are core to addressing societal issues. However, many citizens feel disengaged from the processes of government, with some communities particularly marginalised. Citizens have a right to be involved in decisions that affect their lives, and should be viewed as active participants rather than passive recipients.

Good engagement is essential

Benefits of effective engagement include strengthened public trust in government, greater government transparency, enhanced civic capacity to contribute to decision-making, and policies based on better information and wider consensus.

High level commitment is needed

Government needs to show leadership by setting out an expectation of effective relationship-building and engagement processes by government agencies. Chief executives should also lead the way in creating a government culture of collaboration and participation, and regularly account for their agencies' performance in this area.

Government engagement practices need to improve

Government agencies need to reflect principles of effective engagement in their internal and external behaviours. Investment in effective engagement is important, to ensure that resources are not wasted on ineffective processes, and decisions are more robust, enduring, and broadly accepted. Skill development is needed in areas including:

- effective planning for, and evaluation of, community engagement processes
- different methods of dialogue and deliberation
- partnership brokering
- online engagement tools
- tikanga Māori and implications of the Treaty for consultation and engagement
- the specific needs of different population groups
- listening skills, facilitation, presentation skills, and conflict resolution.

Discussion is needed about where decision-making power lies

Feedback called for more empowerment of communities to make their own decisions, with more resources devolved to local government and community organisations. This highlights fundamental questions of when decisions should be made by central government, local government, or community and voluntary organisations.

Community capacity is vital

Community organisations need resources and skills to be able to participate in government-led processes, and run their own engagement processes to address local issues. Government agencies need more understanding of community-led development so they can interface with communities in ways that empower local action.

1.2 Recommendations

The following actions are recommended. The reference group recognises that any commitments to action will need to be agreed by the government agencies concerned and their respective Ministers.

The agencies to lead each action are listed in brackets. A key to agencies follows.

Government commitment

- develop a set of principles for effective engagement for endorsement by the Prime Minister and Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector (OCVS)
- amend the CabGuide to provide greater encouragement to agencies to involve community voices in policy development (DPMC)

Culture change within government agencies

- develop guidelines for government agencies on how to give effect to principles of good engagement (OCVS)

Accountability

- develop accountability mechanisms for regular reporting by government agencies on how community relationships and effective engagement processes are supporting their outcomes (SSC)
- undertake a rolling programme to evaluate progress by government agencies in effectively engaging citizens and communities in policy development and service delivery decision-making (OAG)

Support for capability building within government

- enhance www.goodpracticeparticipate.govt.nz including addition of interactive functions such as engagement planning tools (OCVS)
- continue to provide guidance to government agencies on good practice in online engagement (SSC)
- review the widely used Lominger competencies to ensure sufficient emphasis is placed on staff being skilled in engagement (SSC, OCVS)
- extend OCVS seminars on good practice in engagement to locations outside of Wellington (OCVS)
- approach tertiary institutions to encourage development of locally designed training courses on community engagement (OCVS)
- develop short presentations for government agency induction programmes on ways to build stakeholder networks and effective community engagement (OCVS)
- finalise the draft guide to employee volunteering within the public service (OCVS, SSC)
- explore the potential for a central hub for providing mentoring advice and guidance for government agencies on effective engagement (SSC, OCVS)

Building coordination and collaboration

- investigate mechanisms for promoting and populating the Consultations page at <http://newzealand.govt.nz> using “feeds” from government agency websites (DIA)
- continue to provide tools and resources to support central government and local government collaboration and effective delivery of national goals and community priorities (DIA)
- publish on-line case studies of collaborative approaches to problem solving involving central and local government, iwi/Māori and communities (DIA)

Engagement with iwi/Māori

- develop guidelines for government agencies on engagement with Māori (TPK)
- provide good practice seminars on engagement with iwi/Māori (TPK)
- develop a network for Māori engagement specialists located in government agencies (TPK)

Diversity considerations

- note that government agencies should take an active role in ensuring they engage appropriately with diverse communities
- note the importance of population ministries/offices supporting the capacity of the public service to engage appropriately with diverse communities
- present to other government agencies on MPIA’s framework for engaging with Pacific communities (MPIA)

Support for community-led development

- include community organisation staff in seminars on good practice in engagement (OCVS)
- analyse, and provide case studies of, the government role in supporting successful bottom-up projects that have been initiated, led and owned by communities (DIA)

Championing this work

- strengthen OCVS capacity to undertake the proposed tasks (MSD, SSC)
- establish an external “champion group” to support implementation of the report’s recommendations (OCVS)

Key to agencies

DIA	Department of Internal Affairs
DPMC	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
MPIA	Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs
MSD	Ministry of Social Development
OAG	Office of the Auditor-General
OCVS	Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector
TPK	Te Puni Kōkiri
SSC	State Services Commission

2 Background – the project process

The BBGE reference group comprises nine people, from community and government agencies, with particular interest and expertise in community engagement (see Appendix A). The group is providing advice to the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector (OCVS) on ways to enhance central government engagement with citizens and communities.

In December 2008, the reference group's discussion document *It's More Than Talk* was released. This looked at:

- what community engagement is, its benefits, and different levels of engagement
- a wide range of issues in government engagement
- current engagement-related projects and practices
- possible actions to improve engagement practices.

Over the following three months, feedback was sought via:

- written submissions
- five meetings held with invited participants from the community and government sectors in Waitakere, Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch
- one meeting with a Wellington-based government stakeholder engagement managers' network
- the "Bang the Table" website, which provided for on-line discussion.

Details of the feedback is contained in a separate document *Talkback*.

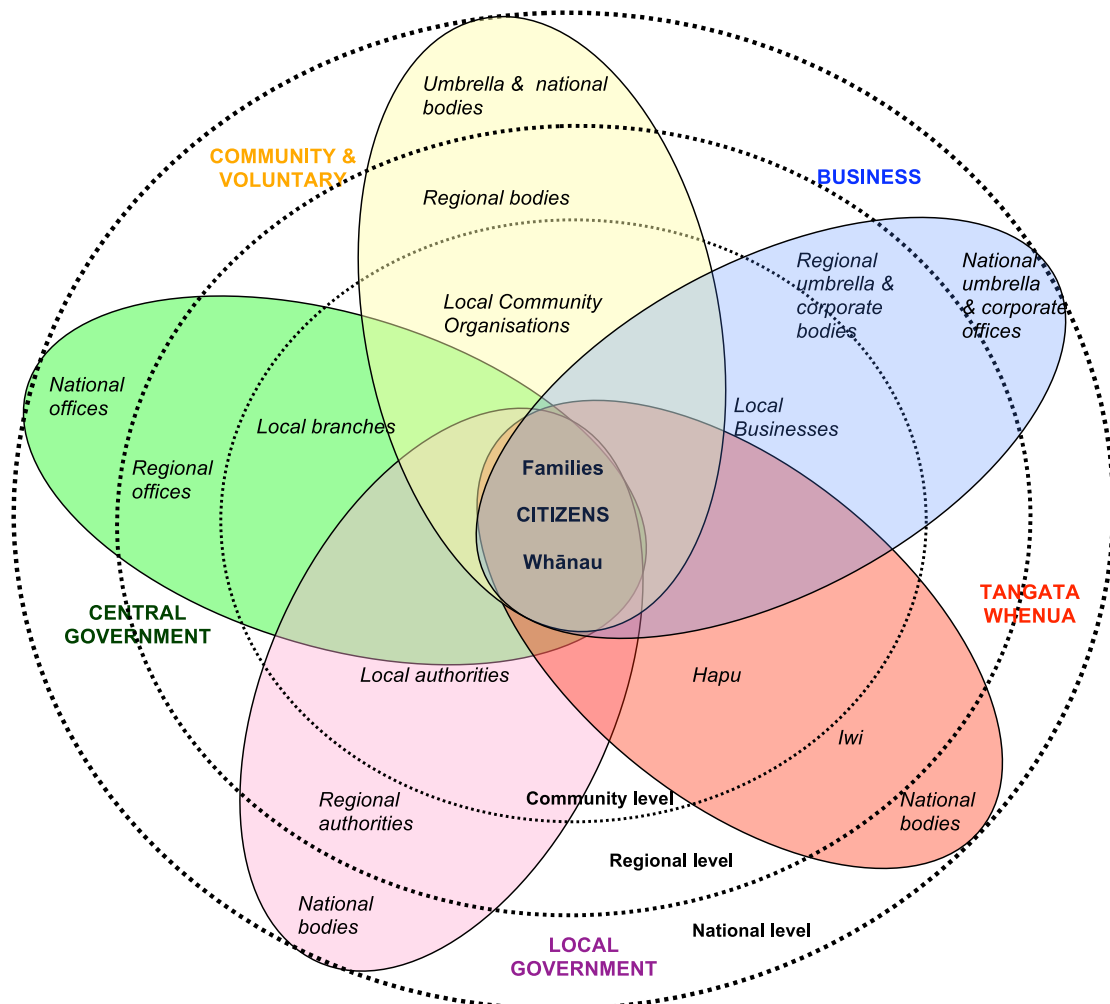
From Talk to Action summarises the reference group's conclusions about the actions needed to build a more participatory culture within government agencies, where citizens and communities are more effectively engaged in decision-making. *It's More Than Talk*, *Talkback* and this document can be found on www.ocvs.govt.nz.

3 The context

3.1 Multi-sector collaboration

This project began with a focus on government agencies. However, government agencies must be viewed in the context of other sectors, which also play vital roles.

To address major issues facing the world, central government agencies need to form effective relationships with local government, the community and voluntary sector, tangata whenua, and businesses. No one sector has all the answers. Increasingly, there is an emphasis on collaborative processes and partnerships.



This diagram shows the different but inter-linked sectors and different layers - national level, regional level and local level. It is by working together that we can find ways to tackle complex and challenging issues that require long term thinking, and where the identification of a widely shared and sustainable approach is vital to success. Responses to climate change and the current global recession are examples of such issues.

To collaborate effectively requires communication skills and a real willingness to listen and learn from each other. It requires shared goals, openness and clarity about respective roles. Benefits of cross-sector partnerships include:

- opportunities for each sector to bring skills and interests to complex situations
- ability to mobilise more resources by combining technical, human, and financial skills
- greater awareness of priorities, needs, and roles of each sector
- dynamic networks for channelling influence, information and policy impact
- opportunities for innovative leadership
- replacement of conflict by collaboration.¹

3.2 Engaged citizens

At the heart of the picture are citizens. Citizens have a right to participate in defining and resolving the social, environmental, and economic issues that affect them. They may do so in a myriad of ways, such as voting, writing submissions, participating in meetings, and initiating local projects. Often their efforts are collectively channelled through community and voluntary organisations.

Central government and local government seek to represent and mediate the interests of citizens. While central government has fewer legislative requirements than local government to consult citizens and communities, there are good reasons for ensuring the public are able to participate. Benefits include:

- enhanced democracy by broadening citizens' ability to influence decisions
- strengthened public trust in government
- responsiveness to calls for greater government transparency and accountability
- greater civic capacity to respond to issues
- improved policies, by tapping into greater reservoirs of experience and creativity
- strengthened evidence base for policy making
- greater understanding of how policies can be adapted to local circumstances
- reduced implementation costs.

This project advocates a participatory democracy where citizens have active involvement in identifying and solving problems. Many citizens feel disengaged from the processes of government, with some communities particularly marginalised. Communities of the future will need greater capacity for self-sufficiency, along with skills in building bridges between communities.

¹ From presentation by Trish Hall, Thought Partners, to OCVS seminar 19 June 2009

3.3 Where should decision-making lie?

The feedback included a number of calls for more devolution to enable greater community control over decisions. This indicates a recognition that central government cannot and should not initiate, or be in charge of, all initiatives that impact on local communities.

The feedback raises fundamental questions about the nature of our democracy and the extent to which citizens and communities are empowered to participate in decision-making. For instance:

- when should Government make decisions?
- when should decisions and resources be devolved to local government?
- when should decisions and resources be devolved to community and voluntary organisations?

Community-led activity reduces reliance on the state, and provides solutions that best represent local circumstances. On the other hand, centralised decision-making has some efficiencies in a country of relatively small population, and in situations where equity through national standardisation of policies is desired.

The reference group sees value in wider discussion of the meaning, pros and cons of “subsidiarity” – an organising principle that suggests that matters ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest or least centralised authority.²

“Two major trends in modern government are converging – effectiveness and civic engagement...

The challenge for governments is to move the public beyond what we referred to as the dependency issue, that is, the tendency to look on government as the primary decision maker and problem solver. The old days when government planning and policy-making were the sole responsibility of government officials are gone.

Today, there is a role for the public in making choices, developing plans and taking action for the achievement of important societal goals. To do that, government must assume a new role as more of a facilitator and less of a decision maker.”

Don Lenihan, New Brunswick Public Engagement Initiative

http://www.ppforum.ca/sites/default/files/final_report_public_engagement_eng.pdf

² Definition from Wikipedia

4 What needs to happen

4.1 Government commitment to effective engagement

During the BBGE consultation, uncertainty was expressed about the Government's overall view of community/public engagement. Ministers appear to differ in their views on the value of this. Feedback confirmed that messages from "the top" are needed that make clear a Government commitment to building active relationships, multi-sector collaboration, and effective engagement with citizens and communities.

This report promotes the value of participatory democracy on the basis that effective government engagement with civil society will result in improved outcomes for society. The Government can provide signals about the importance of effective community engagement through statements in key speeches, and ongoing resourcing for good practice initiatives. But it can go further.

One way to reinforce Government's commitment would be to develop and endorse a set of principles for effective engagement. Existing international examples of principles for engagement could be leveraged. An example from the OECD is attached (Appendix B). This outlines ten guiding principles for engaging citizens. Principles for New Zealand would need to be developed in dialogue with citizens and communities. Various methods could be used for this, including an online wiki.

Another action would be to amend the Cabinet Office instructions to government agencies about consultation during development of Cabinet papers. The CabGuide includes a section on "consultation with interest groups". In addition to acknowledging the need to follow any statutory requirements for consultation, this section states:

"It may be appropriate to consult outside interest groups when developing policy. This should be discussed with the Minister's office beforehand. In some circumstances, this consultation may be more appropriate after the policy has been considered by Cabinet."

There is also a requirement in the CabGuide's standard format for Cabinet papers that "if outside interest groups have been consulted, provide details. If such consultation is intended after decisions are made, comment on that". The reference group believes that, to improve policy development, these guidance tools could provide greater encouragement to agencies to involve community voices in policy development.

Recommendations:

- develop a set of principles for effective engagement for endorsement by the Prime Minister and Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector (OCVS)
- amend the CabGuide to provide greater encouragement to agencies to involve community voices in policy development (DPMC)

In the United States, President Obama has created an Office for Public Engagement and issued a memorandum to departments on the need for Government to be participatory and collaborative. An online brainstorming session, has been underway to gather citizens' ideas on open government.

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Transparency_and_Open_Government

4.2 Culture change within government agencies

A general view expressed during the BBGE consultation was that central government agencies do not have sufficient organisational commitment to achieving genuine, effective community engagement.

Public servants commented that there is a desire to serve the public well, but time and money constraints often affect the ability to follow good practice. There was concern to avoid “talk fests”, particularly in the current economic climate. However, sustainable outcomes are often best achieved when there is carefully planned engagement.

Leadership teams set the culture of government agencies. A commitment to effective engagement needs to be clear from the top of the organisation, and modelled through internal behaviours. Open, inclusive, respectful, collaborative management styles create a positive atmosphere which in turn influences how external relationships are conducted. Community organisations and citizens need to be seen as valuable partners and treated accordingly.

The earlier proposal of Government-endorsed principles for engagement, could be supported by a set of guidelines to advise government agencies on ways that a commitment to effective engagement can be implemented. The guidelines could include information about how to embed good engagement by:

- evidence of a commitment to effective engagement within strategic planning documents
- management styles that model inclusive and trusting relationships
- identification of staff to act as engagement champions
- project planning that builds in engagement in the early stages and includes evaluation processes
- planning to meet the needs of different population groups
- recognition of engagement competencies and community sector understanding in recruitment, performance assessment, induction and training
- encouragement of secondments, short-term job swaps, and employee volunteering, to enhance public servants’ understanding of community organisations.

Recommendation:

- develop guidelines for government agencies on how to give effect to principles of good engagement (OCVS)

4.3 Accountability

There was a strong message during the BBGE consultation that government agencies need to be accountable for how well they engage citizens and communities during the development of policy and services. There was concern that some government agencies will not take this area seriously unless they know their performance will in some way be monitored and assessed. While some agencies are in fact taking strong steps to perform well in external relationships, the overall picture is not clear and more information and evidence is needed, on a regular basis.

There are various possible vehicles for requiring responsiveness and ascertaining progress by government agencies in building better engagement. Some options are:

- the State Services Commissioner’s performance agreements with chief executives
- Ministerial Letters of Expectation to chief executives, which are generally focused on areas of greatest risk
- Cabinet minute instructions to government agencies
- government agency annual reports to Parliament, which report on activities to meet Statement of Intent goals
- Audit Office reports
- periodic evaluations by an identified government agency
- independent reviews commissioned by individual agencies of their own performance.

Further work is needed to determine the best approaches. Accountability would need to be balanced with the need to avoid overly-onerous compliance or meaningless “tick-box” responses.

Recommendations:

- develop accountability mechanisms for regular reporting by government agencies on how community relationships and effective engagement processes are supporting their outcomes (SSC)
- undertake a rolling programme to evaluate progress by government agencies in effectively engaging citizens and communities in policy development and service delivery decision-making (OAG)

4.4 Capability building in government

Participatory democracy and active citizenship can be enhanced if government agencies ensure staff are skilled at fostering external relationships and running engagement processes.

It's More Than Talk recognised that many government agencies already take steps to enhance the effectiveness of their relationships and engagements. This is illustrated by:

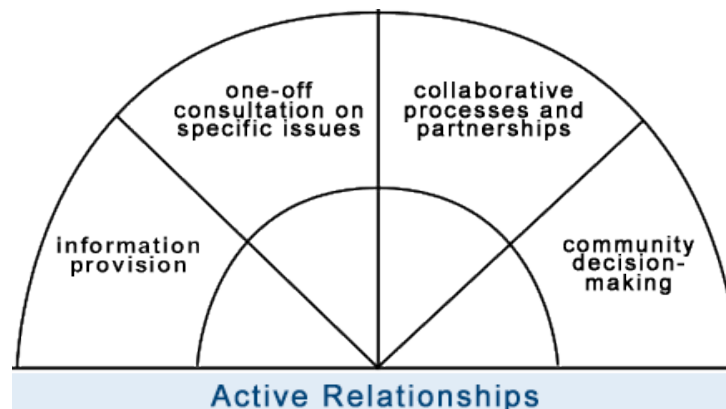
- various government agencies employing stakeholder engagement managers to foster effective engagement in their organisations
- various guidelines and toolkits, many of which relate to engagement with particular population groups or sub-sectors
- case studies of effective government engagement processes on http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/Main_Page and www.goodpracticeparticipate.govt.nz
- examples of effective engagement highlighted through OCVS Good Practice in Action seminars.

However, there was broad concern that:

- good practice is often not followed – for example, consultation processes that are only token, involvement of communities too late in the process (that is, not at the problem definition stage), and lack of feedback on how input was used
- engagement skills are not sufficiently valued in human resource management processes
- wider understanding is needed of methods for dialogue, deliberation and public engagement
- the term “partnership” is used loosely without real appreciation of the need for equity, transparency and mutual benefit.

Staff need to understand that community engagement occurs along a continuum – from simply providing information, to consultation (where decisions still ultimately lie with government), to partnership (where power is shared), to devolved decision-making. This is shown in the following diagram from www.goodpracticeparticipate.govt.nz:

Figure 1: A Spectrum of Public Participation



Source: www.goodpracticeparticipate.govt.nz

The future challenge for government is to work more in the space of collaboration, partnering and support for community decision-making.

Recommendation:

- enhance www.goodpracticeparticipate.govt.nz including addition of interactive functions such as engagement planning tools (OCVS)

Skills needed

Teams within government agencies need to include, or have ready access to, staff with skills in:

- understanding the value and purpose of community and citizen engagement
- identifying and building relationships with key stakeholders
- the inform-consult-partner-empower spectrum
- tikanga Māori and te reo, and the specific needs of different population groups
- effective planning for community engagement processes
- different methods of dialogue and deliberation
- brokering partnerships across sectors
- online engagement tools
- approaches to evaluating community engagement processes
- active listening, rapport building, conflict resolution
- facilitation and presentation skills.

Human resource policies need to give sufficient weighting to engagement skills within recruitment and performance assessment processes. Induction programmes for staff, and policy analysis training could usefully include material on identifying stakeholders and building effective relationships.

It's More Than Talk included an online Appendix 3 outlining characteristics of staff who engage effectively, and provides a useful steer to competencies that could be measured. “Lominger” competencies are promoted by the State Services Commission to human resource teams within government, and it would be useful for these to be reviewed to consider whether engagement skills are adequately included.

Recommendations:

- develop short presentations for government agency induction programmes on the ways to build stakeholder networks and effective community engagement (OCVS)
- review the widely used Lominger competencies to ensure sufficient emphasis is placed on staff being skilled in engagement (SSC, OCVS)

³ <http://www.ocvs.govt.nz/work-programme/three-key-projects/building-better-government-engagement.html>

Building online engagement capability

It is now possible for agencies to make engagement with large numbers of people possible and affordable through use of social media tools. For example, a review of the Police Act via an online wiki attracted nearly 24,000 visits in eight days.

Citizens are increasingly comfortable with using social media tools, as shown in the success of TradeMe, Wellington City Council's e-petitions page, and their use during the Victorian bush fires. People are coming to expect to be able to communicate with government using these tools and government needs to be ready to respond.

The State Services Commission has in recent years provided valuable guidance on online engagement through a web resource, seminars and support for a community of practice. The BBGE reference group is aware that fiscal pressures put in doubt the continuance of this work within the State Services Commission. Guidance in this area needs to continue.

Recommendation:

- continue to provide guidance to government agencies on good practice in online engagement (SSC)

Training and learning

It's More Than Talk also noted that:

- there are no New Zealand qualifications designed around community engagement
- there are few opportunities for training in public engagement
- working with communities builds skills and understanding but few government agencies have policies on employee volunteering
- engagement with stakeholders is not a critical part of most formal induction processes.

Opportunities for ongoing learning about engagement practices are needed. The OCVS has recently commenced a seminar series on good practice in community engagement. To date this has, however, only been available in Wellington. Access to such events should be available far more widely.

A guide to employee volunteering for government agencies was drafted by OCVS in 2008 and will be a useful contribution when it is completed.

Another positive sign is that networks for engagement specialists have recently started to emerge. These include the Building Better Connections engagement specialists' network within government and the New Zealand branch of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). While these networks have limited resources, they wish to collaborate on some of the proposed actions below.

Recommendations:

- approach tertiary institutions to encourage development of locally designed training courses on community engagement (OCVS)
- extend OCVS seminars on good practice in engagement to locations outside of Wellington (OCVS)
- finalise the draft guide to employee volunteering within the public service (OCVS, SSC)
- explore the potential for a central hub for providing mentoring advice and guidance for government agencies on effective engagement (SSC and the OCVS).

4.5 Better coordination and communication

During the BBGE consultation, a number of comments focused on the need for better coordination and communication:

- within central government
- between central government and the community and voluntary sector
- between central government, iwi, and local government
- between national and regional offices of government agencies.

Examples of coordinated effort are:

- Local Services Mapping - a community planning process that brings central and local government, iwi, funders, and social service providers to address the social needs of families
- the Interface Facilitation Team at the Department of Internal Affairs which is working to strengthen central and local government relationships, and document collaboration between central and local government in solving complex issues
- the Northland Intersectoral Forum - this uses a collaborative approach across central and local government to foster Tai Tokerau's social development and economic growth, and includes community involvement
- Mayor's Taskforce for Jobs which involved local government as a conduit for reaching young people, with central government providing resources to undertake the work
- Community Outcomes Bay of Plenty is a collaboration between central and local government, working together to achieve environmental, economic and social wellbeing with communities in the Bay of Plenty
- many committees and advisory groups bring together people from different sectors.

However, continual effort to coordinate is needed. Improved communication between and within sectors would build mutual understanding and reduce relationship tensions. Stronger links could also reduce duplication of effort. This project heard concerns about:

- community frustration over multiple, seemingly overlapping consultations resulting in consultation fatigue
- insufficient systems for conveying issues from the community level to central government
- the need for national offices to conduct relationships with regional offices in a way that recognises and takes account of the impact that national decisions can have on diverse local communities
- central government staff needing to draw more on the knowledge and networks of regional offices, local government and/or community and voluntary organisations when seeking to engage at the local level
- central government needing to better understand local government's powers and responsibilities, and how local government works, so new policies do not unwittingly create compliance and implication costs at the local level.

Coordination within central government

Central government agencies could coordinate better if there was an easier way to find out what engagements other agencies are undertaking. One possible action is to use the existing central government website where the public and government agencies can find out what consultations are happening across government. The Consultations page at <http://newzealand.govt.nz> has links to some government consultations. However, many agencies do not use “feeds”, consultations are scattered around their websites or their consultations are not placed online.

Responsibility for the site is currently transferring from the State Services Commission to the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA). The reference group suggests that DIA investigate mechanisms for promoting and populating this part of the site. This may require capability building within agencies to enable them to put their consultations online in a standardised format.

Recommendation:

- investigate mechanisms for promoting and populating the Consultations page at <http://newzealand.govt.nz> using “feeds” from government agency websites (DIA)

Ongoing effort is needed to bring together agencies from across different sectors and different parts of government to share experiences and information. The seminars and other capacity resources mentioned in the previous section are useful for fostering communication and coordination.

Central government-local government coordination

In addition, the Interface Facilitation Team at DIA has a specific role in strengthening central and local government relationships. Closer relationships can potentially:

- build central government understanding about how to approach local government when planning delivery of national policies and programmes or imposing new functions for local government
- improve efficiency through coordination of policy and service development and delivery
- improve local authorities’ ability to respond to central government policy initiatives.

Recommendation:

- continue to provide tools and resources to support central government and local government collaboration and effective delivery of national goals and community priorities (DIA)
- publish online case studies of collaborative approaches to problem solving involving central and local government, iwi/Māori and communities (DIA).

4.6 Engagement with iwi/Māori

The Treaty of Waitangi places an additional responsibility on government to facilitate Māori participation in policy development and service delivery. There is a distinction between engagement with Māori as Treaty partners under Article 2 and Māori rights to be consulted as citizens under Article 3.

All staff who engage with iwi/Māori need understanding of kawa (protocols) and tikanga (customs). Some agencies employ specialist advisers to advise staff on engagement with iwi/Māori, and advice can also be obtained from Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK). Some additional actions by TPK could assist in building public service capability in this area.

Recommendations:

- develop guidelines for government agencies on engagement with Māori (TPK)
- provide good practice seminars on engagement with iwi/Māori (TPK)
- develop a network for Māori engagement specialists located in government agencies (TPK)

4.7 Diverse population groups

The BBGE report *Talkback* noted that some communities feel particularly marginalised in government policy development processes, for instance people with disabilities, young people, senior citizens, and people in rurally remote areas. Feedback indicated that these communities want more effort to be taken to ensure their voices are heard and responded to.

Similarly, particular consideration needs to be given when engaging with Pacific communities and other ethnic groups. Culturally appropriate engagement models ensure that different traditions and perspectives are respected, and ensure that the focus of discussion is on priorities those communities have identified themselves. It should not be assumed that everyone speaks English, and interpreters may be required.

There are many community and voluntary organisations that can help guide government agencies that wish to engage with their particular constituencies. ChangeMakers Refugee Forum has issued *Standards for Engagement: Guidelines for Central and Local Government and NGOs Working With Refugee Background Communities*. Population ministries and offices have a number of initiatives, including these examples:

- the Ministry of Youth Development has a range of initiatives to encourage youth participation in decision-making, such as Youth Parliament
- the Office for Disability Issues has various guides and online information on consultation and communication with the disability sector
- the Office for Senior Citizens has a Volunteer Community Coordinator Programme involving a network of volunteers who gather input from older people on policy issues
- the Office of Ethnic Affairs' work includes training in Intercultural Awareness and Communication for government agencies
- the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs is currently developing a community engagement framework to guide its own work, and this could be of value to other government agencies.

These population-based ministries/offices have valuable roles in supporting their constituent communities to understand government and Parliamentary processes and how to be involved, and in advising other government agencies on inclusive approaches. This project has not been able to fully investigate ways that government agency responsiveness to the different population groups could be enhanced. Capacity issues may affect the likelihood of any additional initiatives at this time.

Recommendations:

- note that government agencies should take an active role in ensuring they engage appropriately with diverse communities
- note the importance of population ministries/offices supporting the capacity of the public service to engage appropriately with diverse communities
- present to other government agencies on MPIA's framework for engaging with Pacific communities (MPIA)

4.8 Support for community-led development

There is an increasing interest in locally-based initiatives. One example is *Inspiring Communities*, which connects local initiatives of people working together from all corners and sectors. Transition Towns is another example, and involves communities working together to create local resilience in response to the challenges arising from climate change and resource depletion⁴. Other developments include local Time-Banking⁵. These initiatives indicate a desire by citizens to work together to directly influence and shape their communities. This moves the role of government towards that of partner and participant and away from needing to have all the responsibility and all the answers.

The reference group sees a need to re-invest in, and encourage government understanding of, community-led development. More information needs to be available on good practice examples where government has supported locally-owned initiatives in an empowering way. DIA is a lead government agency in supporting community-led development and could provide information on key principles and case studies.

Community organisations have similar needs for training in engagement as public servants. Joint training or seminars would provide cross-fertilisation of ideas, and build mutual understanding. As mentioned earlier, it would be useful for OCVS seminars to be available for community and government staff outside of Wellington. Staff exchanges between government and community organisations can also increase skills and mutual understanding, as provided for in the DIA Community Internship scheme.

Recommendations:

- analyse, and provide case studies of, the government role in supporting successful bottom-up projects that have been initiated, led and owned by communities (DIA)
- include community organisation staff in seminars on good practice in engagement (OCVS)

⁴ See <http://www.inspiringcommunities.org.nz/index.html> and <http://www.transitiontowns.org.nz/>

⁵ See <http://www.timebanks.org/>

4.9 Supporting active citizenship

Finally, this project acknowledges the importance of building the capability of citizens to take active roles in local and national decision-making. Initiatives to support this include:

- the Growing Active Citizens project co-ordinated by Local Government New Zealand has produced useful school resources *Kids Voting* and *Youth Citizens' Juries*
- Electoral Commission resources *Active Voices* and *Taking Part*
- the site <http://newzealand.govt.nz> information on Parliament and government agencies
- Ministry of Youth Development resources to build youth participation
- adult and community education courses that promote input to democratic processes.

Active citizenship also includes the giving of time and donations to support neighbours and community organisations. The Promoting Generosity project convened by the OCVS, Volunteering New Zealand and Philanthropy New Zealand is focusing on this area.

The reference group endorses the value of initiatives that empower citizens with knowledge about democratic processes and encourage all citizens to contribute to building the strength of their communities.

4.10 Championing this work

The reference group recognises that implementation of these recommendations will require championing by a government agency. The focus and experience of the OCVS makes it best positioned to do this. However, the capacity of this Office to undertake the recommended tasks will need consideration.

Similarly, the reference group believes that, during the initial implementation phase of the recommendations, value would be added by the establishment of an external champions group, drawn from appropriate non-governmental sectors. The group would have the purpose of providing ongoing advice on, and oversight of, the implementation process.

Recommendation:

- strengthen OCVS capacity to undertake the proposed tasks (MSD, SSC)
- establish an external "champion group" to support implementation of the report's recommendations (OCVS)

Appendix A: Reference group

Members

Sue Driver	ChangeMakers Refugee Forum
Tony Mayow	Community Waitakere
Charlie Moore	Families Commission
Tina Reid	NZ Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organisations
Mary-Jane Rivers	Inspiring Communities (Community-Led Development Trust)
Anne Shaw	Department of Internal Affairs
Laura Sommer	State Services Commission
Roger Tweedy	Wellington City Council
Hata Wilson	Te Puni Kōkiri

Project manager

Diana Suggate	Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector
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Project members

Judith Le Harivel	Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector
Hannah O'Donnell	Department of Internal Affairs

Appendix B: OECD guiding principles for open and inclusive policy making

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/20/3/42658029.pdf>

OECD countries recognise that open and inclusive policy making increases government accountability, broadens citizens' influence on decisions and builds civic capacity. At the same time, it improves the evidence base for policy making, reduces implementation costs and taps wider networks for innovation in policy making and service delivery.

These Guiding Principles are designed to help governments strengthen open and inclusive policy making as a means to improving their policy performance and service delivery.

1. Commitment

Leadership and strong commitment to information, consultation and active participation in policymaking is needed at all levels – from politicians, senior managers and public officials.

2. Rights

Citizens' rights to access information, provide feedback, be consulted and actively participate in policy-making must be firmly grounded in law or policy. Government obligations to respond to citizens when exercising their rights must also be clearly stated. Independent institutions for oversight, or their equivalent, are essential to enforcing these rights.

3. Clarity

Objectives for, and limits to, information, consultation and active participation during policy-making should be well defined from the outset. The respective roles and responsibilities of citizens (in providing input) and government (in making decisions for which they are accountable) must be clear to all.

4. Time

Public consultation and active participation should be undertaken as early in the policy process as possible to allow a greater range of policy solutions to emerge and to raise the chances of successful implementation. Adequate time must be available for consultation and participation to be effective. Information is needed at all stages of the policy cycle.

5. Objectivity

Information provided by government during policy-making should be objective, complete and accessible. All citizens should have equal treatment when exercising their rights of access to information and participation.

6. Resources

Adequate financial, human and technical resources are needed if public information, consultation and active participation in policy-making are to be effective. Government officials must have access to appropriate skills, guidance and training as well as an organisational culture that supports their efforts.

7. Co-ordination

Initiatives to inform, request feedback from and consult citizens should be co-ordinated across government units to enhance knowledge management, ensure policy coherence, avoid duplication and reduce the risk of “consultation fatigue” among citizens and civil society organisations. Co-ordination efforts should not reduce the capacity of government units to ensure innovation and flexibility.

8. Accountability

Governments have an obligation to account for the use they make of citizens’ inputs received through feedback, public consultation and active participation. Measures to ensure that the policy-making process is open, transparent and amenable to external scrutiny and review are crucial to increasing government accountability overall.

9. Evaluation

Governments need the tools, information and capacity to evaluate their performance in providing information, conducting consultation and engaging citizens, in order to adapt to new requirements and changing conditions for policy-making.

10. Active citizenship

Governments benefit from active citizens and a dynamic civil society, and can take concrete actions to facilitate access to information and participation, raise awareness, strengthen citizens’ civic education and skills, as well as to support capacity-building among civil society organisations.

