

# STATE SECTOR ACT REFORM FACTSHEET: Leadership of the Public Service

STATE SERVICES COMMISSION  
TE KAWA MATAAHO



Strong system-focused public service leadership is needed to improve outcomes for all New Zealanders. It also supports future-proofing the New Zealand Public Service, helping reaffirm and preserve the key elements that have helped win its strong international reputation for integrity, effectiveness and responsiveness.

## Major decisions

New legislative provisions to support this system-focused leadership include:

- establishing a **Public Service Leadership Team (PSLT)** of chief executives. This will work as an executive team to support a unified Public Service. It will be led by the Public Service Commissioner
- strengthening leadership of the centre through the Public Service Commission
- a **senior leaders' strategy** that develops a strong group of senior leaders who can lead or move across boundaries and take a broad range of experience and skills into chief executive roles in the future. This will develop the role of the existing Public Service Leaders Group
- creating **functional chief executives** and other mechanisms to lead system improvement.

## What it means for public servants

The Public Service will shift from a strong focus on agency leadership to also targeting system leadership. This is about culture and behaviour first, rather than rigid systems and processes.

Chief executives have already started to lead together for the system. This will be formalised as the new Public Service Leadership Team and will help public servants build on this collective way of working.

Existing functional lead roles will be given more consistent mandates for leading across the system. System leads will be able to be appointed based on functional experience and expertise, instead of needing to be an agency chief executive.

The senior leaders' strategy will support the exchange of ideas and help solve system-wide issues beyond agency boundaries. This will also create a broader range of public service leadership opportunities. There will be transparent mechanisms enabling senior leaders to identify development opportunities and move between roles, while upholding the principle of appointment on merit.

## Questions and answers

### *Is there going to be a senior leaders' service?*

No. The legislation will not set out a structure or process change for the employment of senior leaders. Instead, the senior leaders' strategy will be co-designed in partnership with chief executives and senior leaders

### *What is the senior leaders' strategy expected to cover?*

It will address both the development of leadership capability and how to meet the needs of the system.

The Commissioner will be able to issue standards and guidance to put the strategy into action, and chief executives will be required to make appointments and deploy leaders according to the strategy.

### *When will this strategy be in place?*

We expect the Bill enacting this to come in before the end of 2020. A formal strategy will not be launched until after that time. The strategy development begins at this year's Public Service Leaders Summit on 3 July. We will take the time necessary to get it right.

### *Will senior leaders have a say on when they move across the system into another role?*

Yes. The agreement of relevant chief executives and the individual concerned will be necessary.

### *What will be the structure of the Public Service Commission?*

The Commission will be led by the Public Service Commissioner and up to two statutory Deputy Public Service Commissioners. The current model only provides for one statutory deputy.

### *What's the purpose of the Public Service Leadership Team?*

The PSLT is building on progress made towards a more collective approach to system issues. The PSLT brings together public service chief executives and other senior leaders to focus on the interests of the whole system rather than those of a single agency. Providing for a PSLT in legislation is a way to embed this collective way of working and ensure that it is sustainable.

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### ***If chief executives are required to work collectively will this affect how they lead their agencies?***

Agency chief executives will still have individual responsibilities and will continue to be focused on delivering results as agency leaders. The PSLT is about chief executives working together as part of the system and as a team to improve how the system operates.

### ***Why do we need functional chief executives?***

More integrated services for New Zealanders are possible through functional leadership that focuses on system improvements across the State Sector, such as improved digital and data systems. They will also support improving interoperability across the system in a way that benefits all agencies.

### ***Who will functional chief executives be responsible to?***

They will be responsible to the appropriate Minister for their functions. They will be appointed by the Public Service Commissioner.

**For more information on the State Sector Act reform, and the full series of factsheets, please visit the [SSC Website](#).**