

STATE SECTOR ACT REFORM FACTSHEET: The Public Service in the Regions

STATE SERVICES COMMISSION
TE KAWA MATAAHO



At a system-wide level, we are working to change the Public Service, so it operates as one, joined-up system to tackle the big, complex challenges facing New Zealand.

The future direction of a modern and agile public service, as envisioned by the State Sector Act reforms, includes the work that public servants in the regions are already doing, and ensuring they can make the connections they need to improve their service provision.

Major decisions

The Public Service needs to work differently in the regions. How they will do that depends on upcoming reports focusing on:

- Driving change through the designation of regional leaders to provide system leadership. They will have the mana and mandate for convening cross-agency decision making forums.
- Setting principles to help determine organisational boundaries (agency jurisdictions) moving towards a common basis built around communities of interest, reflecting territorial authority boundaries in general.
- Communicating public service focus areas through regional profiles and priorities for the whole Public Service. This will be developed with leaders within local government, iwi, business and community groups.
- Developing shared property and IT models to support the operation of regional offices and the greater integration of services for communities.

What it means for Public Servants

These system-level reforms will enhance how the Public Service works in the regions, starting with the skills and social sectors. A stronger regional presence is also important for the Māori/Crown relationship.

Public servants will be further supported and empowered to respond to what they see in their communities. These changes will mean that the Public Service in the regions reflects the shift towards a more unified Public Service.

This will be an opportunity for public servants to identify the best way for these changes to be implemented, to support better service provision in the regions.

Questions and answers

Are these changes part of the State Sector Act reform legislation?

No. However, this work supports the shifts signalled by the State Sector Act reforms. It is about ensuring the Public Service is making the biggest possible difference to the wellbeing of New Zealanders; delivering services that are easy to access; joined up around their needs; and serving an ever more diverse and changing community. It is also about the cultural change of ensuring all public servants feel that they are part of one system, regardless of which agency they work for. There is a Cabinet mandate to start work, with the actions contingent on the first report back, due in October.

When will these changes happen?

In 2019 – we are starting with the designation of regional leaders and the principles to consider for future boundary changes. This will enable us to work with regional leaders on the development of profiles, priorities and options to strengthen the work that is already occurring within different regions. This in turn will drive the sequence and detail of subsequent changes. There will be no changes to any boundaries at this stage.

How will organisational boundaries be changing?

Any proposals for future changes will be informed by consultation with relevant staff and communities. SSC is currently working with Land Information New Zealand to gather and analyse the current organisational boundaries of public service agencies. The maps will be used to compare boundaries with territorial authority boundaries and look at clusters of related agencies to understand where there are opportunities for improving sector connections.

Will regional offices have to move?

There are no proposals to change the location of regional offices. We are focused on how to better enable agencies to work together and improve how they use existing resources.

Over time the property locations for different agencies and offices do change. When we know that property changes are coming up for an agency we will work on maximising links to other agencies so that the community has better access to the services that matter to them.

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How will public service regional leaders be designated?

The Public Service Commissioner will work with a chief executives' group to identify existing public service regional leaders who can provide system leadership. They will be looking for people within the Public Service who have the mana and capability to lead engagement.

What is a regional profile?

Profiles include what a region is about, eg, its key sectors, along with a summary of its key indicators.

Who will be involved in making these changes?

In the first instance this is about a way of working within public service agencies, led through the work of regional leaders, supported by a group of relevant chief executives. The Public Service regional leaders will represent community views from local government, iwi, businesses and community groups, as the work develops.

How will this affect the delivery of the Provincial Growth Fund (PGF)?

Existing Provincial Growth Fund (PGF) delivery will be maintained, including the effective ongoing engagement with regional partners in delivering PGF objectives.

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