



## Key Positions Questions & Answers

### 1. *What is a key position?*

Following the passage of the State Sector Amendment Act (2013) into law, the State Services Commissioner (the Commissioner) now has the ability to designate roles within a Public Service department or departmental agency, after consulting with the relevant Chief Executive, as a key position. A role is designated as a key position because it is critical to the Public Service, or because of its potential to develop senior leaders.

A chief executive may only appoint to a key position with the Commissioner's agreement.

### 2. *Why are key positions necessary?*

Key positions were created as a result of the *Better Public Services* (BPS) Advisory Group report that found there was a lack of 'bench strength' across senior levels of the Public Service. Key positions recognise these concerns by enabling the Commissioner to work together with chief executives to build the leadership strength of the Public Service.

### 3. *How many key positions are there?*

There are currently 88 key positions. The list will be reviewed in six months and it is expected that this list will change over time.

### 4. *Where do I find a copy of that list?*

It is publicly available on the State Services Commission's website.

### 5. *How did you decide which positions were on the list and which were not?*

The roles included on the list were the result of extensive consultation with Chief Executives. They include a mix of strategy, operational, policy, and functional leadership positions. Roles that directly impact on New Zealand's emergency response operations are also included. The final decision on which positions to include is made by the Commissioner.

### 6. *Why do some government agencies have no key positions in their structure?*

The number of designated key positions reflects a small proportion of the total positions in the Public Service and centres on those roles that have a significant impact across the system and are critical to achieving government priorities, delivering operational services or emergency response.

7. *Why are only 29 agencies covered for this list when the State Services Commissioner's mandate has been widened under the new legislation?*

The key positions provision only applies to departments or departmental agencies within the Public Service.

8. *Does this undermine the role of Chief Executives to appoint their own staff?*

The Commissioner's involvement in the recruitment process will help to ensure that a system-wide view is considered when an appointment is made. The Commissioner's involvement is designed to ensure that the system's Chief Executives are:

- effectively planning the succession pipeline for the system's most critical roles
- using experience in these roles as a way of developing a pool of system leaders for the future
- taking a more intentional approach to developing the system's leaders.

9. *What if the Commissioner says no to a candidate or prefers another candidate?*

The Commissioner, or his designate, will be involved throughout the recruitment process in order to ensure agreement with the Chief Executive at the appointment stage. Ongoing conversations between the Chief Executive and the State Services Commission will help to ensure that disagreement doesn't occur at the final step in the recruitment process.

10. *Where does the Commission/Commissioner come in on the process? The beginning, middle, or end? Is it just a final tick?*

Chief Executives will keep the State Services Commission informed during the recruitment process to determine the level of the Commissioner's involvement. This level of involvement will vary from role-to-role but at a minimum will require the Chief Executive to obtain the Commissioner's agreement before appointing into a key position.

The Commissioner's oversight of the appointment process gives the SSC a more active role in succession planning for the system's most critical roles and enables the SSC to use these positions in order to more actively develop leaders with the capabilities required of the Public Service of the future.