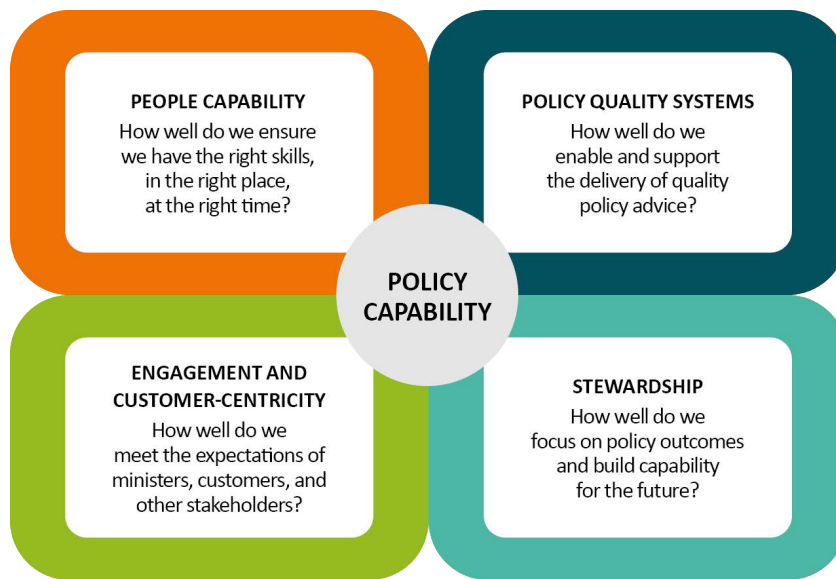## WHAT THIS TOOL IS FOR

Do you want to know if your policy team or organisation is the best it could be – both now and for the future?

The Policy Capability Framework stimulates reflection and courageous conversations about current performance. These will help identify strategies and priorities to improve your policy performance in the future.

MAIN FEATURES OF THIS TOOL

The Policy Capability Framework encompasses the four main dimensions of capability that policy leaders have identified as critical in a high-performing policy shop. For each dimension, a high-level question starts the conversation about policy capability improvement.

PEOPLE CAPABILITY
How well do we ensure we have the right skills, in the right place, at the right time?

POLICY QUALITY SYSTEMS
How well do we enable and support the delivery of quality policy advice?

POLICY CAPABILITY

ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER-CENTRICITY
How well do we meet the expectations of ministers, customers, and other stakeholders?

STEWARDSHIP
How well do we focus on policy outcomes and build capability for the future?

We have two tools available to help you apply the framework:

1 The **Policy Capability Framework: light review tool** presents the related 'lines of inquiry' from the full framework, to help you and your colleagues assess your organisation's policy capability.
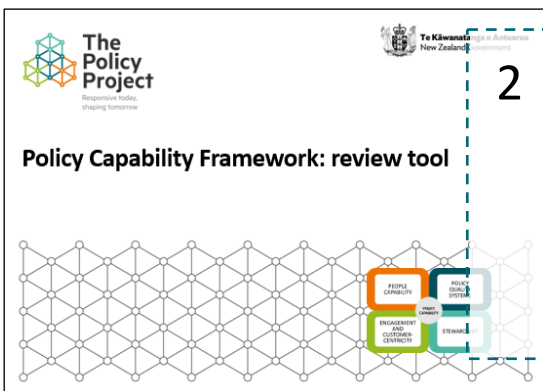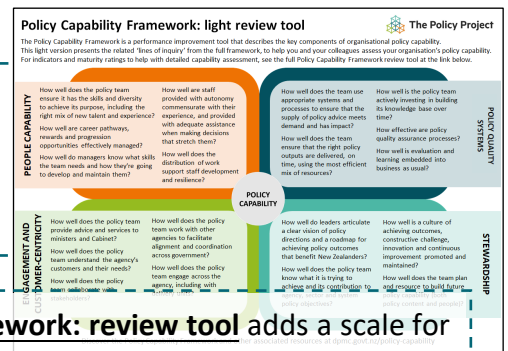
2 The full **Policy Capability Framework: review tool** adds a scale for ranking maturity. For each element of the dimensions, you'll ask:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be, and by when?
- What will we do to get there?

The answers you reach will form the basis of an action plan to improve your policy capability.

Instructions on **HOW TO USE THIS TOOL** can be found overleaf

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HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

1 Get a clear mandate from your leadership team for a policy capability review that evaluates current capability and sets a direction for improvement.

2 Decide whether to use self-review, partial external input, or an externally-led review process.

3 Ensure that policy staff feel involved in the review process ('doing with' rather than 'doing to') and that they have time allocated to participate in the diagnosis and design of improvement solutions.

4 Counsel the staff in your policy team about needing to have an open mind and being prepared to challenge themselves.

5 Apply the review tool that underpins the Policy Capability Framework. This will produce an action plan.

6 Implement the action plan in a way that engages those who need to make changes to achieve better policy performance.

This example page from the Policy Capability Framework shows its components:

- elements
- lead questions
- lines of inquiry and indicators

People capability – ensure the right skills are in the right place at the right time

Element	Lead question	Lines of inquiry / Indicators
Team make-up and diversity	How well does the policy team ensure it has the skills and diversity to achieve its purpose, including the right mix of new talent and experience?	Is there an explicit strategy for the make-up and diversity of the team (using the Policy Skills Framework)? Does it ensure the team is fit for purpose/able to deliver on strategy and priorities over time? Is there a good balance between specialists (subject matter experts providing depth) and generalists (providing breadth, including management skills)? Does the team include transformational, not just transactional, policy expertise? How is institutional knowledge maintained and built?
Career paths and progression	How well are career pathways, rewards and progression opportunities effectively managed?	Is there an explicit career progression strategy? How are high performing staff rewarded and retained? How are high potentials developed – to 'grow or go'? How well are junior staff developed to progress to more senior roles? How effective is succession planning – are (some) senior roles filled internally? How are opportunities to participate and share capability across government encouraged (including through secondments, cross-agency teams)?
Development and training	How well do managers know what skills the team needs and how they are going to develop and maintain them?	Is there an explicit staff development strategy – the 'what' (e.g. broad versus deep capability), and the 'how' (e.g. 70/20/10 model)? Do all policy staff understand the 'policy basics' (e.g. legislative and Cabinet processes, agency policy processes, analytical tools and methods, choice of policy instruments – see the Policy Quality Framework)? How well are staff provided with performance feedback that enables them to set a trajectory for developing their policy skills? To what extent is staff induction, development and training prioritised and resourced? How are staff encouraged and enabled to have good external connections (including with other agencies, stakeholders, academia and international counterparts) and to keep up with the latest thinking?
Decision rights and enablers	How well are staff provided with autonomy commensurate with their experience, and provided with adequate assistance when making decisions that stretch them?	Is responsibility for policy advice outputs/activities devolved to the lowest possible level? How are staff provided with advice, frameworks and tools to help them assume responsibility for decisions up to the level of their competence and the agency's risk management/tolerance?
Work allocation	How well does the distribution of work support staff development and resilience?	How well is work distributed amongst staff? Are there some staff that regularly have spare capacity or are regularly overloaded? Is there an overreliance on experienced 'policy stars' to keep the policy machine running (key person risk)? To what extent are core staff (versus contractors) doing the key work? How does the distribution of work (in the team, buying in expertise) support building in-house capability?

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