

Meeting paper

MFAT Board

Governance Review – Report to Board

Meeting date	27 July 2022		
Status	New proposal		
Action required	For decision		
Submitted by	Kim Duncan, Senior Adviser, Governance David Wood, Principal Adviser	DCE P DCE P&O	s9(2)(a)
Meeting attendee/s	Kim Duncan David Wood		
Summary of issue and purpose of paper	<p>Following two previous reviews of the Ministry's Governance Framework (an external review conducted by Deloitte in 2017 and an internal review in 2019), the Ministry committed to ongoing assessments of the framework to ensure it is fit for purpose and operating effectively.</p> <p>This paper sets out the recommendations from an internal review of the Ministry's Governance Framework, with the major change being the establishment of an International Development Cooperation Committee (IDCC).</p>		
Major risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • s9(2)(g)(i) • • 		

- The Investment Committee’s capacity to undertake impartial scrutiny could be compromised by heavy reliance on expertise in AMD and IMD. It is proposed that up to two external members be appointed to reinforce the committee’s independent scrutiny, and that PDS Division takes steps to build its portfolio management expertise.
 - The proposed disestablishment of the Network Assessment Committee (NAC) may be seen as diminishing the leadership’s focus on post resilience and well-being. However, network and post assessments and advice produced by SORD will still be regularly considered by two MFAT committees.
- MFAT units affected**
- All divisions / staff that are involved with the Ministry’s existing Governance Framework.
- Resource implications**
(including cost of proposal and source of funding)
- External members will incur costs in the order of \$5-8,000 per annum for each member. It is proposed these costs be absorbed within baseline budgets, as follows:
 - PDG for external members of the IDCC;
 - DCE P&O for external members of the INV;
 - PEP in P&O for the external member of the HSWG.
- Consultation Undertaken**
- Governance Committees – Chairs and Chair Advisers
 SLT members
 Peter Taylor, Jared Kane (PEP)
 Tamsin Lakeman (SORD / NAC)
 Morag Wiley and Christina Edmonds (Mātauranga Māori)
 Craig Bennett (AUR)
 John Capper (DCI)
 Llewellyn Roberts, Hannah Brownsey (DEVPP)
- Other relevant internal units and external stakeholders
- Mike Cosman, External Member of Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board:

1. **Agree** that the default core membership of MFAT governance committees is three Tier 2 members and three Tier 3 members, in order to accommodate the likelihood of absences arising from offshore commitments; **YES / NO**

2. **Agree** to strengthen the oversight, transparency and portfolio governance of the International Development Cooperation (IDC) appropriation by:
 - a) establishing an International Development Cooperation Committee (IDCC), with the Terms of Reference set out in Annex A; **YES / NO**
 - b) appointing up to three independent, external members to the IDCC, to strengthen critical capabilities (e.g. Iwi perspectives, Pacific nations perspectives, portfolio governance, and development); **YES / NO**
3. **Agree** to retain the Strategy and Policy Committee (SPC), with the Terms of Reference set out in Annex B; **YES / NO**
4. **Agree** to consolidate the governance of financial, human resource, and organisational strategies, plans and policies by:
 - a) establishing a Resources and Organisational Development Committee (ROD), with the Terms of Reference set out in Annex C; **YES / NO**
 - b) disestablishing the Resources Committee, with its financial and human resources responsibilities assigned to ROD, and its asset management and capital project responsibilities assigned to a new Investment Committee (Recommendation 5); **YES / NO**
 - c) disestablishing the Coordination and Performance Committee (CPC), with its responsibilities assigned to SPC and ROD; **YES / NO**
 - d) disestablishing the Network Assessment Committee (NAC), with regular reporting on the resilience and wellbeing of the post network being assigned to ROD and the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Governance Group (recommendation 6); **YES / NO**
5. **Agree** to strengthen the Ministry's portfolio-level governance of the Ministry's assets and capital expenditure by:
 - a) establishing an Investment Committee (INV) to oversee the portfolio of capital projects and programmes, and the planning and management of assets over their life cycle, with the Terms of Reference set out in Annex D; **YES / NO**
 - b) disestablishing the Operational Investment Board (OIB), with its responsibilities reassigned to the Investment Committee and individual project/ programme steering groups; **YES / NO**
 - c) appointing up to two independent, external members to the INV to strengthen the Committee's capacity to exercise independent scrutiny and assurance over the capital portfolio and projects; **YES / NO**

6. **Agree** to retain a Health, Safety and Wellbeing Governance Group with the Terms of Reference set out in Annex E; **YES / NO**
7. **Agree** that the core membership of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Governance Group comprise:
EITHER
- a) all of the Senior Leadership Team, on the grounds they are considered to be officers under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015; **YES / NO**
- OR
- b) the default core membership for other committees – three Tier 2 members and three Tier 3 members; **YES / NO**
8. **Agree** to introduce a “Te Ao Māori assessment” section in the template for Board and Committee reports; **YES / NO**
9. **Agree** that where a cross cutting issue cannot be resolved by an individual committee, a meeting of Committee Chairs (the Chairs Group) be convened to formulate a proposal for consideration by the MFAT Board; **YES / NO**
10. **Agree** that the Chair Advisers should strengthen their collaboration to: **YES / NO**
- lift the quality of papers,
 - promote consistent approaches to triaging papers to be considered by committees vis-à-vis line managers; and
 - support Chairs in the resolution of cross-cutting issues.
11. **Agree** to build the Ministry’s governance capability by strengthening the induction of new members, and the ongoing training for all committee members; **YES / NO**
12. **Note** that the cost of independent external members is around \$5-8,000 p.a. per member, with these costs being met by: **YES / NO**
- PDG for external members of the IDCC;
 - DCE P&O for external members of the INV;
 - PEP in P&O for the external member of the HSWG.
13. **Agree** that the new governance arrangements should come into effect from 1 October 2022, to provide the time needed for implementation activity, including internal communications, selection of committee members, and inductions. **YES / NO**

Report

Background

1. The Ministry's Governance Framework was introduced in February 2016 and has undergone several reviews since. In late 2017 Deloitte were commissioned to determine if the Governance Framework was operating effectively and meeting the Ministry's needs for oversight of strategic performance, and to determine if there were any enhancements the Ministry should consider to optimise performance.
2. The Deloitte review concluded that the Governance Framework was operating effectively and (generally) meeting the Ministry's needs for oversight of strategic performance. Recommendations were provided to improve how governance was understood, including a more consistent governance style between committees.
3. Following the Deloitte review, an internal review was conducted in 2019 – focused initially on identifying and managing gaps in the Board's monthly and forward agenda.
4. With a new Chief Executive, changes to SLT and a challenges to the global operating environment which has seen the Ministry pivot and adapt – it is an opportune time to assess the existing Governance Framework to ensure it remains fit for purpose and is operating effectively.
5. A paper was submitted to the Board in February 2022 outlining the intention of this further review with a report to be provided to the Board in July 2022.

Stakeholder Engagement - Approach to Review.

6. The offices of DCE Policy and DCE People and Operations have led an internal review of the Governance Framework. The objective is to confirm the Ministry has arrangements for effective governance to ensure visibility of key issues for the Board, and to do this within a structure that is orthodox and not unnecessarily complicated.
7. Employing a stakeholder engagement approach and considering the recommendations and observations made from the previous reviews, there has been a series of consultations with key stakeholders since March 2022.
8. The review has considered the committees which make up the Governance Framework (Strategy and Policy Committee – SPC, Coordination and Performance Committee – CPC, Resources Committee – RC, and the Health and Safety Well-being Committee – HSW) as well as the Network Assessment Committee (NAC) and the Operational Investment Board (OIB) which support the Governance Framework.
9. Consultation has primarily occurred with internal staff (including Committee Chairs, Committee Chair Advisers and SLT) – and the external adviser who sits on the HSW Committee.
10. There has been close engagement with PDG colleagues on the proposal to establish an International Development Cooperation Committee.
11. In addition the review included consultation with the Programme Manager and Principal Adviser for Mātauranga Māori to consider recommendations from the Rata / Heslop Report which inform the Mātauranga Māori Implementation Programme.

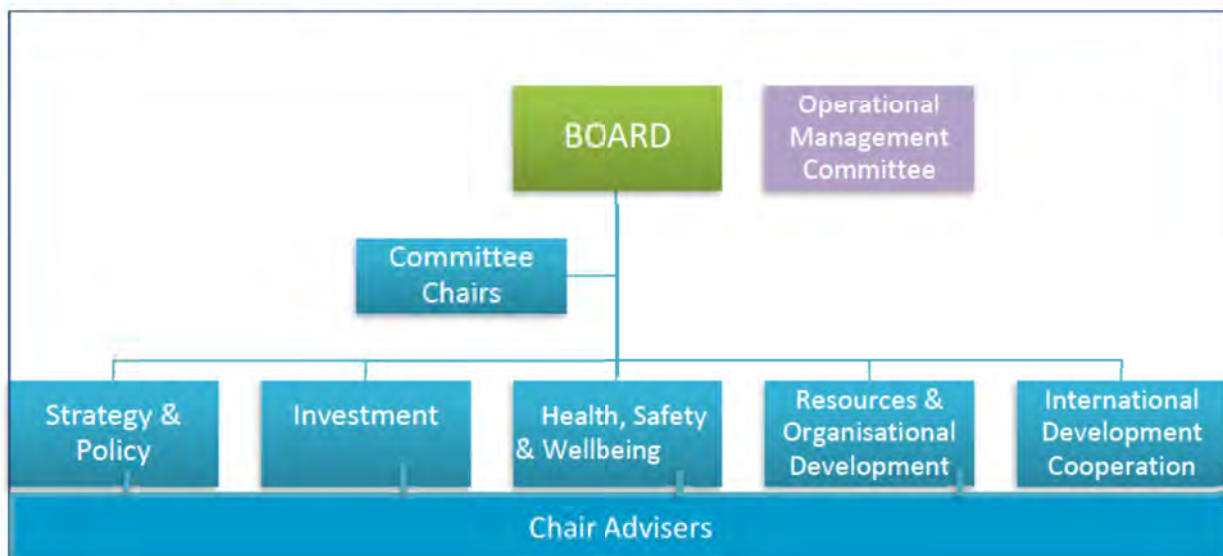
12. The review has also considered any legislative requirements the Ministry may have (i.e. the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015).

13. By engaging and consulting with stakeholders, we have framed the approach to:

- *Assess* the current framework and understand what works well, and identify where there are areas or gaps of concern which might hinder the framework.
- *Address* the points raised - either as something that works well and which could be duplicated, or an area identified that needs to be re-worked to improve the framework.
- *Progress* to provide recommendations and options which address any issues raised as part of the overall assessment exercise.

14. This approach has allowed us to develop some key themes of feedback we felt required attention – primarily planning and resourcing tensions, duplication across committees and desire for more clarity (on roles, responsibilities and decision making), which informs our recommendations for the evolution of the governance framework.

MFAT Governance Framework – Proposed Structure



15. The International Development Cooperation Committee (IDCC) is the major addition to the governance framework, and reflects the need for strong portfolio governance of the \$1 billion per annum IDC appropriation spend, and the need for senior leaders to have greater visibility of the portfolio.

16. The framework retains the SPC, with some additional responsibilities transferred from the CPC. Other responsibilities of CPC, along with the responsibilities of the RC, OIB and NAC are assigned across two new committees – Resources and Organisational Development (ROD) and Investment (INV).

17. Changes are also proposed to the membership and responsibilities of the HSW Committee, to maintain a high profile on this critical area and support our obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.

18. Annexes A to E provide Terms of References for the proposed committees. Further supporting commentary is provided in this paper.

International Development Cooperation

19. Since 2015 PDG has been on a journey of continuous improvement, implementing ten year country strategies, four-year country plans, programme governance¹, and developing a business-case approach that has resulted in a stronger focus on delivering outcomes while managing higher levels of international development cooperation (IDC) spend.

20. The next step in the IDC governance journey is to bring Ministry wide visibility and assurance of the IDC spend. This is now pressing given the IDC appropriation has grown to over \$1 billion per year over the triennium. The rapid scaling up of our climate finance activity, and need for effective responses to increased geopolitical competition, underscore the need for stronger connections and alignment across our diplomatic, trade, economic, climate change, environment, security and IDC activity. There is a compelling case for broadening the interests and perspectives at the IDC governance table.

21. PDG recommends that the MFAT Board creates an International Development Cooperation Committee (IDCC) tasked with:

- monitoring the performance of IDC portfolio delivery against the Ministry's strategic outcomes,
- strategic risk management and mitigation,
- advising financial delegation holders on IDC investments,
- advising financial delegation holders on the shape of the portfolio and its alignment with strategic outcomes.

22. Terms of Reference are attached as Annex A.

23. At its simplest, the IDCC will have accountability for the full investment outcomes and performance of the IDC portfolio. This encompasses all the projects, programmes and disbursements funded through the IDC appropriation. Adopting a portfolio-wide lens will ensure an active approach is taken to ensuring new investments, and the projects and programmes in development or in flight, are aligned with Aotearoa New Zealand's strategic interests. It also will provide assurance that issues and risks related to portfolio performance are escalated to decision makers in a timely manner.

24. Portfolio governance usually includes taking decisions on new investments, and making changes to the shape of the portfolio by terminating individual programmes or projects, shifting funding across programmes, and rescheduling the implementation of activity. For the IDCC the capacity to take decisions on the portfolio will be constrained by current IDC delegations, as most decisions on the IDC appropriation are taken by the Minister or Cabinet.²

¹ PDG has Four-Year Plan (4YP) governance groups whose primary responsibility is to govern the progress and outcomes of 23 4YPs. The decisions made regarding the establishment of an IDCC will not affect the operation of these groups.

² Under the *Financial Delegations for International Development Cooperation Non-Departmental Activities* the financial authority to approve a Crown Activity Business Case is:

- Cabinet for expenditure of \$25 million and above
- Minister of Foreign Affairs for expenditure up to \$25 million

Given this, the IDCC's role will be to make recommendations within the financial delegation of the Deputy Secretary, PDG and advise other financial delegation holders on new investments and changes to the IDC portfolio. This includes the Chief Executive, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cabinet.

25. Elevating IDC governance to a dedicated MFAT Board committee and applying portfolio governance and management techniques will:

- Increase the transparency and alignment of this investment portfolio across MFAT;
- Ensure discussions are strategic, future focused and aligned, but appropriately independent from the operational day to day management of the portfolio.

How the IDCC fits into the governance framework

26. The IDCC's responsibilities creates interdependencies with other committees, especially the SPC.

27. SPC oversees foreign, security, trade, climate change, development and consular policy, including in the Pacific. This includes leading the development of MFAT's strategic framework, strategic intentions, regional strategies, ten year country strategies, and frameworks for strategic topics, including the Climate Finance Strategy. SPC also considers specific policy issues, including those with an IDC dimension. Unless specifically commissioned through the SPC, each foreign policy group is expected to make case-by-case judgments about whether an issue is significant enough to warrant SPC consideration.

28. The IDCC will have responsibility for the oversight of regional and country four year plans (4YPs), informed by the directions set through the SPC.

29. The IDCC also needs to work within the financial, human resource and corporate policy settings approved by the ROD. Decisions on the shape of the IDC portfolio could have flow on implications for the corporate capability needed to support PDG operations, the mix of foreign policy and specialist capabilities, and the mix of open tenure, fixed term and contractual positions. The PDG leadership team needs to work through both the ROD and IDCC to ensure there is good alignment between corporate settings and portfolio decisions.

30. PDG, through its Leadership Team, will remain responsible for:

- The development of strategic policy (both foreign policy and development strategy) advice to SPC;
- Advice to IDCC on appropriations, the balance of the portfolio and other portfolio performance advice/ assurance; and
- Delivery activity against Pacific foreign policy and the IDC through the current management mechanisms

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- MFAT Chief Executive for expenditure up to and including \$7 million
 - Deputy Secretary, PDG for expenditure up to and including \$5 million
 - Divisional Manager for expenditure up to and including \$1.5 million

IDCC membership

31. Ideally, the membership of the IDCC should bring experience and skills in public sector governance, portfolio governance, Iwi perspectives, Pacific Nations perspectives, and technical expertise on the IDC and Pacific foreign policy.

32. Given this, PDG recommends bringing in external members to facilitate an 'outside in' lens across the performance of the portfolio, as well as enriching the governance capability and expertise at the table. The technical area of greatest need is likely to be portfolio governance. For external members the careful management of any actual or perceived conflicts of interest will be critical, particularly for candidates actively engaged by, or associated with, our development cooperation partners.

33. A staged approach is recommended for the appointment of external members. This reflects practical considerations, such as security clearance processes and the need to mature the IDCC's processes. We therefore propose that at the establishment of the IDCC, one external member is appointed. External members will not be liable for any financial decisions made across the IDC portfolio, as the IDCC will be an advisory committee to financial delegation holders.

IDCC Support

34. In addition to normal secretariat support, the IDCC will need support from a portfolio management function so that it can make well-evidenced decisions. This will be delivered by DCI Division within PDG. New products and tools will need to be built over time to give full visibility of a balanced and categorised portfolio pipeline, with a focus on impacts and outcomes as well as on dollars spent. DCI have started to look at improvements to activity management practice and are exploring the establishment of a Portfolio Management Office function.

Strategy & Policy

35. Our assessment is that the SPC is fit for purpose and a highly valued committee within the governance framework. No major changes are proposed to its mandate (see Annex B), though we recommend adding the following responsibilities, some of which currently fall within the brief of CPC:

- public diplomacy (described as "strategic communications" in the CPC terms of reference);
- Oversight of major diplomatic initiatives, events, and campaigns,
- Oversight of the quality of policy advice and diplomatic practice, and initiatives to sustain high levels of performance in these areas

36. The oversight of policy advice and diplomatic practice will be the most challenging new responsibility. It requires the committee to agree on what good diplomacy looks like, and how to measure it. Notwithstanding these technical challenges, advances in this area are likely to generate significant payoffs in terms of workforce capability and maintaining the Ministry's social licence with Ministers and the public.

Resources and Organisational Development

37. The key responsibilities of the ROD consolidate the responsibilities currently held by the RC and CPC, and adds responsibilities related to:

- organisational resilience and post network assessments,
- the evolution of the Ministry's operating model,
- major corporate policies.

38. The committee's brief is wide ranging, and it is likely to have a heavy workload. Ensuring the workload is manageable will require rigorous triaging to determine which papers need to be considered by ROD vis-à-vis line managers. This includes discouraging divisions from putting up papers simply to 'take soundings' with senior leaders. The focus needs to be on taking decisions.

39. The Terms of Reference are attached as Annex C.

Investment

40. The governance of MFAT's capital investment portfolio and assets is currently shared between the:

- Resources Committee, which is responsible for oversight of the investment portfolio, portfolio prioritisation/rebalancing, new investments, and asset management, and
- Operational Investment Board (OIB) which reports to the Resources Committee, and oversees existing programmes/projects in flight, takes corrective measures within its delegations, approves the minor capital works programme, and scrutinises business cases prior to their submission to the Resources Committee.

41. Our engagement has highlighted a number of challenges with the current arrangements, including:

- Unclear boundaries between the two bodies in areas such as business case scrutiny and approval,
- Evidence of inconsistent application of business case and project methodologies in the papers submitted to the bodies,
- A concern the OIB may be highly dependent on the technical expertise provided by the P&O divisional leaders (AMD, IMD, SEC, FIN), which may come at the cost of impartial scrutiny,
- Persistent patterns of project under-expenditure against budget, which raises questions about the real time oversight of the portfolio.

42. To address these concerns it is recommended that:

- a dedicated Investment Committee be established to oversee the portfolio of capital projects and programmes, and the planning and management of assets over their life cycle,
- the OIB is disestablished, with its responsibilities reassigned to the Investment Committee and individual project/ programme steering groups.

43. Concern has been raised this change will create an artificial distinction between capital and operating expenditure, as the two are inter-dependent. There is also a risk creating an Investment Committee pre-empts recommendations that may arise from the forthcoming Review of Portfolio Management commissioned by AUR. Notwithstanding this, we see merit in standing up a dedicated committee focused on lifting the Ministry's performance in capital portfolio management. Assigning responsibility for capital portfolio and asset management to the proposed Resources and Organisational Development (ROD) would, at this point, create an unwieldy workload for that committee.

44. Ensuring the Investment Committee has the capacity to exercise independent scrutiny and assurance over the capital portfolio and projects is critical, and is likely to require:

- appointment of one or two security-cleared independent external advisers to support the committee's work, with expertise in capital portfolio management and/or functional areas such as property or ICT;
- steps to provide assurance the Portfolio and Delivery Services (PDS) Division has the capacity to provide free and frank portfolio management advice to the Committee.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

45. Consideration has been given to assigning the responsibilities of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) Committee to another Committee, or to the MFAT Board. It is recommended that a dedicated health, safety and well-being governance body be retained. Doing so ensures there is appropriate focus and profile on this critical function, and provides assurance that the obligations of officers under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA) are being met.

46. We recommend a number of changes to the existing arrangements, reflecting WorkSafe guidance^[1] and advice from PEP and the Committee's external adviser, Mike Cosman. This is reflected in revised new terms of reference (see Annex E) and includes:

- Labelling it as a "governance group" to distinguish it from the MFAT Health and Safety Committee created under the HSWA – the latter comprises worker representatives and Ministry management,
- Including all senior leaders who are considered by the Ministry to be officers under the HSWA – this is SLT members as they exercise "significant influence over the management of the business".
- Adding a number of responsibilities from a "Model Terms of Reference" published by WorkSafe – this includes using the group as a forum for the professional development of officers on their due diligence duties,
- Shifting the meetings to a quarterly format to economise on the time of Tier 2 members and to reinforce the focus on governance, assurance and values rather than matters that should be the prerogative of management and/or the Health and Safety Committee,

^[1] *Health and Safety - A Good Practice Guide for Public Service Chief Executives and Officers, 2018, WorkSafe*

47. It is recommended that the independent external adviser remains on the governance group, as this is considered best practice.

48. The inclusion of all SLT leaders in the governance group is a judgement call. If there are other mechanisms already in place to support SLT leaders to fulfil their legal obligations – such as regular, substantial health and safety discussions at the MFAT Board – then the need for full SLT membership on the governance group is less of an imperative.

Other Key Considerations

Mātauranga Māori

49. The Governance and Strategy Workstream for the Mātauranga Māori Implementation Programme recommends that the Ministry needs to define Mātauranga Māori and Te Tiriti expertise required for governance bodies, define governance bodies accountabilities and define how these requirements can be met. The latter point is key in terms of how the Ministry's governance framework will be structured to accurately reflect and incorporate Mātauranga Māori.

50. We are not making any immediate recommendations at this stage, as key Mātauranga Māori leadership decisions are due to be made in September. Those decisions may set the context for further consideration on governance implications.

51. As an initial suggestion however, we would recommend introducing a 'Te Ao Māori impacts' section in governance report templates. This would not have to be mandatory but would work to encourage thinking and generate discussion about Mātauranga Māori for our governance processes.

Committee Membership

52. Each governance committee is chaired by an SLT member, and has a combination of Tier 2 and Tier 3 staff. Currently there is one external member of a governance committee – the HSW Committee has an industry expert.

53. Tier 3 membership is typically reviewed annually. However the Covid-19 Pandemic has impacted this with most committee members being consistent over the past two years. Pre pandemic, an expression of interest is sought from Tier 3 staff interested in membership on the governance committees – the renewal of Tier 3 membership provides those staff an opportunity to experience the challenges of enterprise-led governance and leadership.

54. A recommendation from the Deloitte review was to improve the visibility of the Ministry's governance framework across the organisation, and that further governance training and education should be considered as means to achieve this. As a key component of an evolving talent management strategy (to be established under the Resources and Organisational Development Committee – see Annex C), membership of the governance committees should employ an approach which aims to develop and strengthen the governance capability of the Ministry. Ongoing support, education and training should be provided to committee members to ensure this can be achieved. We consider this an opportunity to ensure the Ministry understands the purpose, benefit and value of the governance framework.

55. Tier 2 membership requirements are clear and fit for purpose, although we propose to redistribute Tier 2 commitments across the governance committees – to account for an

increase in scope for some committees, and to ensure an appropriate focus on critical governance issues (i.e. HSW).

56. The proposal to lift the Tier 2 membership of committees from two to three (and to eight for HSW, including the CEO) has raised a concern about the additional workload being placed on Tier 2 leaders. The overall impact is summarised in the table below. The changes reduce the number of committees with SLT members from six to five due to the disestablishment of the OIB and NAC. The number of individual Tier 2 member commitments increase from 130 to 164 per annum, though the number of discrete meetings decrease from 56 to 48 per annum. On balance, the benefits of increasing Tier 2 membership are likely to outweigh the costs – an improvement in governance oversight and better coverage in anticipation of more Tier 2 leaders being unavailable for meetings due to offshore commitments.

	Current SLT Members	Frequency per annum	Total	Future SLT Members	Frequency per annum	Total
SPC	2	11	22	3	11	33
RC	2	11	22			0
CPC	2	11	22			0
OIB	2	11	22			0
NAC	5	6	30			0
HSW	2	6	12	8	4	32
ROD			0	3	11	33
INV			0	3	11	33
IDCC			0	3	11	33
Total		56	130		48	164

57. Our engagement with SLT has included feedback which indicates there is desire for increased visibility across all the governance committees, where there are topics of direct interest to SLT members. This can be achieved by pre circulating agendas and papers with SLT, along with an open invitation to all SLT members to attend the committee meetings of interest.

58. Changes to HSW Committee will see a number of Tier 3 staff no longer required for membership. This should be handled carefully from a change management perspective, to avoid any perception it reflects a judgement about the performance of current members.

Chair Advisers

59. The role of the Chair Adviser was also considered – they play a key 'triage' function in assessing requests and papers to determine 'management vs. governance'. This function could be enhanced more (in consultation with Chairs) given the anticipated increase in scope and papers to some of the committees.

60. Protocols and processes on how to achieve this will need to be established by the Chair Advisers. Whilst not wanting to create additional work for these roles, given the increase in scope for some of the committees - there is opportunity for the Chair Advisers to work collectively to avoid duplication and maintain a governance filter across papers. The Chair Advisers will also play a role in supporting meetings of the proposed Chairs Group.

Planning-Resourcing Nexus

61. The current governance framework decouples business planning (led by SPC) from resourcing decisions (led by Resources Committee), and this creates tensions because the business planning process regularly identifies a business requirement for more open tenure FTE than can be funded through available Crown revenue. Resolving this tension can be time and resource intensive, with decisions taken late in the planning cycle.

62. There are a number of options for trying to better integrate the planning and resourcing decision cycle in the new governance framework. This includes consolidating business planning and resourcing under one committee, convening joint sessions of SPC and ROD, introducing cross-memberships of SPC and ROD and escalating issues to the MFAT Board. With respect to the latter option, there is a risk that if this is done in an unfiltered way the Board will be drawn into the minutiae of the issue at hand. An intermediate step would be to institute a Chairs Group charged with bringing a proposal on the resolution of cross-cutting issues to the MFAT Board for decision. The Chairs Group would only be convened as needed, and would be serviced by the Chairs Advisers group. While business planning and resourcing issues might be expected to dominate the agendas of the Chairs Group, it should be an option available for the resolution of any cross-cutting issue.

Maintaining a Focus on the Offshore Network

63. The Covid-19 Pandemic flipped the Ministry in an unprecedented direction – with significant and unknown implications for our people on and offshore. Reaction was swift and decisions were made at pace to keep Ministry staff and New Zealanders overseas safe.

64. The Network Assessment Committee (NAC) was established in January 2021 (replacing its predecessor *Return to Post Sub-Committee*) as a mechanism to ensure coordination and alignment of decisions which affected the offshore network, in response to the pandemic. It focused on delivering advice to the network on pandemic related issues (i.e. Post / staff resilience, working from home and returning to the office) as well as other Health and Safety topics, including post assessments.

65. As the Ministry (both on and offshore) transitions towards a less acute pandemic operating environment, the NAC is now meeting every six weeks. Whilst the work conducted and products are valuable – our conclusion is that the business requirement for the NAC is not pressing. We therefore recommend the disestablishment of the NAC, with network and post assessments being considered by the ROD and the HSWG. In the event there is a business requirement to stand the NAC up again, it remains a viable option.

International Development Cooperation Committee

The International Development Cooperation Committee (IDCC), on behalf of the MFAT Board, has accountability for the full investment outcomes and performance of the International Development Cooperation (IDC) portfolio, and provides advice to financial delegation holders on new investments and the rebalancing of the portfolio to achieve the government's strategic outcomes. The IDCC will be guided by MFAT's strategic framework, strategic intentions, regional strategies, ten year country strategies, and specific frameworks for strategic topics.

Key responsibilities

- The shape, balance and prioritisation of the IDC portfolio and the alignment with strategic outcomes
- The performance of the IDC portfolio against strategic outcomes
- Strategic portfolio risk management and mitigations
- Oversight of key investment areas and/or activities that are critical to whole of portfolio performance
- Advice to financial delegation holders in relation to investment decisions and the shape of the portfolio, reflecting a strategic view of the whole portfolio

Committee membership

- Three Tier 2 members (including Chair)
- Three Tier 3 members
- Up to Three Independent, External members
- Divisional Manager, Capability & Insights (ex officio)

Authority and delegation

The MFAT Board delegates the "power to act" to the International Development Cooperation Committee to make recommendations on the shape, balance and prioritisation of the IDC portfolio, within the delegations held by the Deputy Secretary, Pacific and Development Group (PDG). Where individual investment decisions, including substantive changes to Activity Business Cases, exceed the delegations of the Deputy Secretary PDG the IDCC is an advisory body to the relevant delegation holder.

The IDCC is expected to consider and act upon matters within its jurisdiction; provide reports to the MFAT Board on decisions taken, direction and advice provided; and refer matters beyond the Committee's authority to the MFAT Board for consideration.

Operations and Secretariat support

- Chair Adviser tbd
- Secretary tbd
- Secretariat OCE Team Administrator
- Role Advice and services to the Chair on preparations for, and conduct of the meeting, as follows:
 - Advice on the acceptance and content of submissions,
 - Development and promulgation of the meeting agenda,
 - Assembly and distribution of papers for the meeting,
 - Maintenance of the forward agenda,
 - Maintenance of an action log,
 - Development of minutes and reports for Chair approval,
 - Promulgation of actions and decisions

Advice and support to divisions and Ministry staff preparing submissions for the meeting

Participation in meetings of Chair Advisers about the triage, assignment and quality control of submissions to meetings
- Cycle The Committee will meet monthly, on the third Wednesday of the month, or as often as the Chair determines.

Annex B**Strategy & Policy Committee**

The Strategy and Policy Committee, on behalf of the MFAT Board, oversees Ministry strategic and business planning; reviews developments and strategies related to foreign, trade, international security, development, trade and consular policy; manages strategic policy risk; and oversees initiatives to sustain high quality policy advice and diplomatic practice.

Key responsibilities

- Development and maintenance of organisational strategic and business plans, including:
 - MFAT's strategic framework,
 - MFAT's strategic intentions,
 - Developing and refreshing the MFAT Four-year Plan, and
 - Overseeing and improving the planning process,
- Oversight of the development of major strategies and policies, including those relating to:
 - foreign policy (bilateral, regional, multilateral),
 - international security and disarmament,
 - international development cooperation,
 - trade,
 - climate change,
 - consular services,
 - public diplomacy,
- Oversight of major diplomatic initiatives, events, and campaigns,
- Ensuring MFAT's strategic policy environment is robust and coherent, including:
 - Identifying where new policy is required,
 - Commissioning significant pieces of longer-term strategic policy thinking,
 - Providing guidance on more situational, but substantive, policy issues that may arise, and
 - Overseeing policy risks in the enterprise risk register
- Oversight of the quality of policy advice and diplomatic practice, and initiatives to sustain high levels of performance in these areas

Committee membership

- Three Tier 2 members (including Chair)
- Three Tier 3 members

Authority and Delegation

- The MFAT Board delegates the “power to act” to the Strategy and Policy Committee with respect to issues relating to the development of Ministry strategic and business plans; and significant developments in foreign, security, trade, and development policy, and initiatives to enhance the quality of policy advice and diplomatic practice.
- The Committee is expected to consider and act on matters within its jurisdiction; provide reports to the MFAT Board on decisions taken and direction provided; and refer matters of strategic importance to the MFAT Board for its consideration.

Operations and Secretariat support

- Chair Adviser SAPD Unit Manager
- Secretary SAPD Policy Officer
- Secretariat OCE Team Administrator
- Role Advice and services to the Chair on preparations for, and conduct of the meeting, as follows:
 - Advice on the acceptance and content of submissions,
 - Development and promulgation of the meeting agenda,
 - Assembly and distribution of papers for the meeting,
 - Maintenance of the forward agenda,
 - Maintenance of an action log,
 - Development of minutes and reports for Chair approval,
 - Promulgation of actions and decisions

Advice and support to divisions and Ministry staff preparing submissions for the meeting

Participation in meetings of Chair Advisers about the triage, assignment and quality control of submissions to meetings

- Cycle The Strategy and Policy Committee will meet monthly, on the first Tuesday of the month, or as often as the Chair determines.

Resources and Organisational Development Committee

The Resources and Organisational Committee, on behalf of the MFAT Board, oversees the Ministry's resourcing, major organisational strategies and initiatives, corporate policies, compliance with accountability expectations, Crown entity monitoring, New Zealand Inc. leadership, and operational risk.

Key responsibilities

- MFAT financial strategy, planning and controls, including:
 - Internal budget development processes
 - External budget estimates processes, including Performance Measures
 - Monthly financial performance monitoring
 - Budget reprioritisation (incl. OBU/MBU processes)
 - Value for money (VfM) initiatives
- Human resource management, including:
 - MFAT capability frameworks and initiatives
 - Employee engagement
 - Positive workplace culture
 - Workforce planning
 - Staffing establishment
 - Talent management
 - Recruitment, Progression and Promotion Cycle
- Organisational resilience and post network assessments
- Evolution of the Ministry's operating model
- Emergency response and business continuity
- Digital strategy
- Ministry carbon emissions reduction plan
- Major corporate policies, including, but not limited to:
 - Security policies, standards and assurance
 - Privacy policies, standards and assurance
 - Data and information management policies, standards and initiatives
- Annual Report and Ministry performance reporting
- Audit and risk management
- Oversight of entities and boards for which MFAT is responsible
- New Zealand Inc. leadership

Committee membership

- Three Tier 2 members (including Chair)
- Three Tier 3 members

Authority and Delegation

- The MFAT Board delegates the 'power to act' to the Resources and Organisational Development Committee with respect to issues relating to the effective and efficient use of Ministry resources, organisational strategies and initiatives, corporate policies, and the management of risk.
- The Committee is expected to consider and act on matters within its jurisdiction; provide reports to the MFAT Board on decisions taken and direction provided; and refer matters beyond the committee's authority to the MFAT Board for consideration.

Operations and Secretariat support

- Chair Adviser Senior Adviser, Governance (DCE-P)
- Secretary Senior Adviser, Governance (DCE-P)
- Secretariat OCE Team Administrator
- Role Advice and services to the Chair on preparations for, and conduct of the meeting, as follows:
 - Advice on the acceptance and content of submissions,
 - Development and promulgation of the meeting agenda,
 - Assembly and distribution of papers for the meeting,
 - Maintenance of the forward agenda,
 - Maintenance of an action log,
 - Development of minutes and reports for Chair approval,
 - Promulgation of actions and decisions

Advice and support to divisions and Ministry staff preparing submissions for the meeting

Participation in meetings of Chair Advisers about the triage, assignment and quality control of submissions to meetings

- Cycle The Resources and Organisational Development Committee will meet monthly, on the second Tuesday of the month, or as often as the Chair determines.

Investment Committee

The Investment Committee, on behalf of the MFAT Board, oversees the portfolio of capital projects and programmes, and the planning and management of assets over their life cycle, in line with the Ministry's Strategic Framework.

Responsibilities

- Development of the Long-term Investment Plan (LTIP) and Four Year Capital Plan
- Establish standards, processes and policies for capital project business case development, delivery, closure, and benefits management
- Oversee capital portfolio delivery and performance
- Approve material changes to the portfolio, including the addition, re-scoping, re-sequencing, and termination of initiatives
- Approve the terms of reference for the steering committees of individual projects, including delegated tolerances for approving variations to timing, cost, scope, quality, and benefits
- Approve the Minor Capital Works budget and programme
- Oversee preparations for, and improvements arising from, the Investor Confidence Rating (ICR) process
- Approve communications on portfolio progress
- Oversee asset management planning and performance

Committee membership

- Three Tier 2 members (including Chair)
- Three Tier 3 members
- External Independent Adviser
- Divisional Manager, Portfolio and Delivery Services (ex officio)

Authority and Delegation

- The MFAT Board delegates the 'power to act' to the Investment Committee with respect to issues relating to the LTIP, Four Year Capital Plan, and capital portfolio delivery and performance.
- The Committee is expected to consider and act on matters within its jurisdiction; provide reports to the MFAT Board on decisions taken and direction provided; and refer matters beyond the committee's authority to the MFAT Board for consideration.

Operations and Secretariat support

- Chair Adviser Principal Adviser, Strategic Investment (DCE-P)
- Secretary Group Business Manager (DCE P&O)
- Secretariat OCE Team Administrator

- Role
- Advice and services to the Chair on preparations for, and conduct of the meeting, as follows:
- Advice on the acceptance and content of submissions,
 - Development and promulgation of the meeting agenda,
 - Assembly and distribution of papers for the meeting,
 - Maintenance of the forward agenda,
 - Maintenance of an action log,
 - Development of minutes and reports for Chair approval,
 - Promulgation of actions and decisions
- Advice and support to divisions and Ministry staff preparing submissions for the meeting
- Participation in meetings of Chair Advisers about the triage, assignment and quality control of submissions to meetings
- Cycle
- The Investment Committee will meet monthly, on the third Tuesday of the month, or as often as the Chair determines.

Annex E**Health, Safety and Wellbeing Governance Group**

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Governance Group, acting as Officers under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA), monitors critical health and safety risks and holds management to account for the delivery of services and strategic initiatives that support the health, safety and wellbeing of our people.

Key responsibilities

- Approve the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy;
- Monitor the current state of health, safety and wellbeing across the Ministry;
- Enquire about critical health and safety risks, ensuring any residual risks are tolerable after the application of controls;
- Enquire about overlapping HSWA duties with other persons and agencies, ensuring the roles and responsibilities of all parties are well defined;
- Monitor delivery of the health, safety and wellbeing programme and strategic initiatives, including KPI achievement and reporting;
- Monitor compliance with legislation, standards and government expectations;
- Health, safety and wellbeing capacity and capability building;
- The asset management impacts associated with health, safety and well-being
- Review learnings from serious events and ensure that learnings are applied and shared;
- Enquire about the resourcing, training and support provided to the Ministry's health and safety committees and representatives;
- Undertake officer professional development activities which satisfy the due diligence duties of officers under the HSWA.

Governance Group membership

- Chief Executive and Secretary (Chair)
- Deputy Chief Executive, People & Operations
- Deputy Chief Executive, Policy
- Deputy Secretary, Asia and Americas Group
- Deputy Secretary, Europe, Middle East and Australia
- Deputy Secretary, Multilateral and Legal Group
- Deputy Secretary, Trade and Economic Group
- Deputy Secretary, Pacific and Development Group
- Mike Cosman (External Adviser)
- Chief People Officer, People Division (Ex-Officio Observer)

Authority and Delegation

- The Governance Group has the authority to collectively exercise the *due diligence* duties of officers under the HSWA. This includes:
 - approval of health, safety and well-being strategies,
 - implementation of Ministry plans;
 - coordination of effort within the Ministry, across Government, and with partners and stakeholders;
 - management of risk;
 - Ensuring appropriate resourcing is allocated to the management of risk.

Operations and Secretariat support

- Chair Adviser Head of Health, Safety and Well-being (PEP)
- Secretary TBC
- Secretariat OCE Team Administrator
- Role Advice to the Chair on preparations for and conduct of the meeting

Participation in meetings of Chair Advisers to triage, assign and benchmark the quality control of papers

Preparations for, and actions subsequent to, the meeting as follows:

- Advice to authors on the content of their papers as they are being prepared
 - Development and promulgation of the meeting agenda
 - Assembly and distribution of papers for the meeting
 - Maintenance of the forward agenda
 - Maintenance of an action log
 - Development of minutes and reports for Chair approval
 - Promulgation of actions and decisions
- Cycle The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Governance Group will meet quarterly, on the first Friday of May, August & November, and the second Friday of February, and on other occasions as the Chair determines.

Lessons from the COVID-19 Response



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's involvement in the New Zealand COVID-19 Response, June 2020 - June 2022.

Introduction and Acknowledgements

The Ministry's COVID-19 response has been an all-of-Ministry effort. It has not just involved those staff assigned to roles in the "steady state" structure or on secondment to other agencies. Staff across the entire Ministry and post network have had to adapt and respond to the impacts of COVID-19, in many cases while carrying staffing gaps.

This exercise has not attempted to capture the breadth of this work, or draw conclusions about the effectiveness or impact of our diplomatic and development engagement off-shore. Instead it has focused on identifying lessons from the Ministry's contribution to the All-of-Government (AoG) response over the period 1 June 2020 - 30 June 2022 which would be relevant should we need to undertake a similar response in future.

In undertaking this exercise to identify lessons from the "steady state" response, we have engaged with over 160 staff members who were involved with our COVID-19 response. Just as it has throughout the last two years, this has enabled us to gather a wide range of perspectives.

We acknowledge all those who contributed observations on the COVID-19 response, including workshop participants and those who took part one-on-one.

We particularly recognise workshop coordinators from CON, ECO, PDG, PRD and the COVID-19 Response Secondee cohort for their support in identifying key participants, facilitating constructive conversations and reviewing the insights we identified.

We are also grateful to Divisional Managers (ECO, CON, PRD, SORD, AUR), PDG Leaders and our colleagues in CPCD for reviewing outcomes from the workshop processes.

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini

My success is not mine alone, but it is the strength of many

- COVID Policy and Coordination Division (CPCD), June 2022

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Glossary

AoG	All of Government - the collaborative effort put in place across agencies to coordinate the New Zealand COVID response
BEB	Border Executive Board
COVAX	COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access, abbreviated as COVAX, directed by the GAVI vaccine alliance, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and the World Health Organization, alongside key delivery partner UNICEF
DPMC	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
ECC	Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) - a dedicated facility for managing MFAT-coordinated responses to emergencies such as humanitarian and consular emergencies
EHEF	HOM or Embassy fund - the EHEF mechanism has been used differently throughout the pandemic and is now more in the bilateral space to manage
IDC	International Development Cooperation
MBIE	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
MOH	Ministry of Health
NAB	National Assessments Bureau
NRG	National Response Group
Post Data Tracker	Formerly the Single Source of Truth (SSOT), the Post Data Tracker is a data collection system consisting of excel worksheets with standardised data fields that posts are requested to update weekly
QFT	Quarantine-Free Travel
Steady State	Post-ECC period of crisis management
WTO	World Trade Organization

Lessons Identified from the COVID-19 Response

We have identified lessons from the Ministry's COVID-19 response in six key areas. Our research shows that when we did these things during the "steady state" phase (July 2020 to July 2022), positive outcomes were achieved. Those lessons are (see also Figure 1):

1. **Strategise:** Crystallising objectives and articulating a strategy helps us navigate uncertainty.
2. **Collaborate:** Collaborating, internally and externally, from the outset achieves better outcomes and ultimately saves time.
3. **Define & share our value:** Seizing opportunities to add value helped to enhance our reputation and build our capital.
4. **Influence:** Deploying the diplomatic toolbox in Wellington to build goodwill helps make the Ministry a valued member of interagency groups.
5. **Inform and communicate:** Our biggest assets - and a key part of the influencing model and value proposition above - are knowledge and expertise. What we do with that informs our ability to influence, collaborate, develop foresight and add value.
6. **Resource the mahi:** Outcomes are better when we have the right people in the right places with the right tools to do their jobs effectively.

We also found that in some situations where we did not do these things, we faced difficulties as a result. Those experiences support the same conclusions. In this report, we have tended towards framing our insights in terms of "what worked" in order to provide a clearer "how to" guide for future responses.

There is significant overlap between the learnings we've identified here and those identified by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) in their concurrent report [Lessons from the Omicron Response so far](#), June 2022. This overlap suggests that many of the these insights could be applicable across a range of contexts.

Mai i te kōpae ki te urupa, tātou ako tonu ai

From the cradle to the grave we are forever learning

Purpose and scope

The purpose of this document is to:

- Identify lessons from the Ministry's participation in the New Zealand government's domestic COVID-19 response during the "steady state" phase (i.e. from June 2020 - June 2022).
- Provide guidance for ongoing management of COVID-19 issues and a practical guide in case the Ministry needs to scale up its effort in future as the result of a resurgence.
- Provide insights for a future crisis (pandemic or otherwise) that necessitates standing up a Ministry team to work in an AoG context.
- Provide input to the Ministry's ongoing work to build organisational resilience.

Methodology

We utilised the methodology developed by the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR)¹ to identify lessons from across the Ministry. This is a well-tested and robust methodology relevant to the management of COVID-19. It was also used in the AoG lessons exercise.

We facilitated ten online workshops to collect observations from participants involved in the Ministry's COVID-19 Response, centred around four questions:

- What worked well?
- What surprises did you have to deal with?
- What would you do differently if you had the chance for a do-over?
- What systems and processes helped or hindered you do your job well?

We also received observations via email and in person. Participants included staff who have worked in CPCD or on COVID-19 issues elsewhere in the Ministry including CON, PRD, ECO, TPND, ORD, AUS, DCI, DEVPP, GDS, PHM, PACREG, PACPF, PACMM, DS PDG, post representatives and others.

Workshop topics included:

- Borders
- Consular
- Coordination (CPCD)
- Economic Resilience
- Information Sharing
- Pacific Economic Support/Recovery
- Pacific Health Preparedness and Response
- Protocol
- Secondments
- Vaccines

We synthesised these observations² by identifying themes and developing insights.

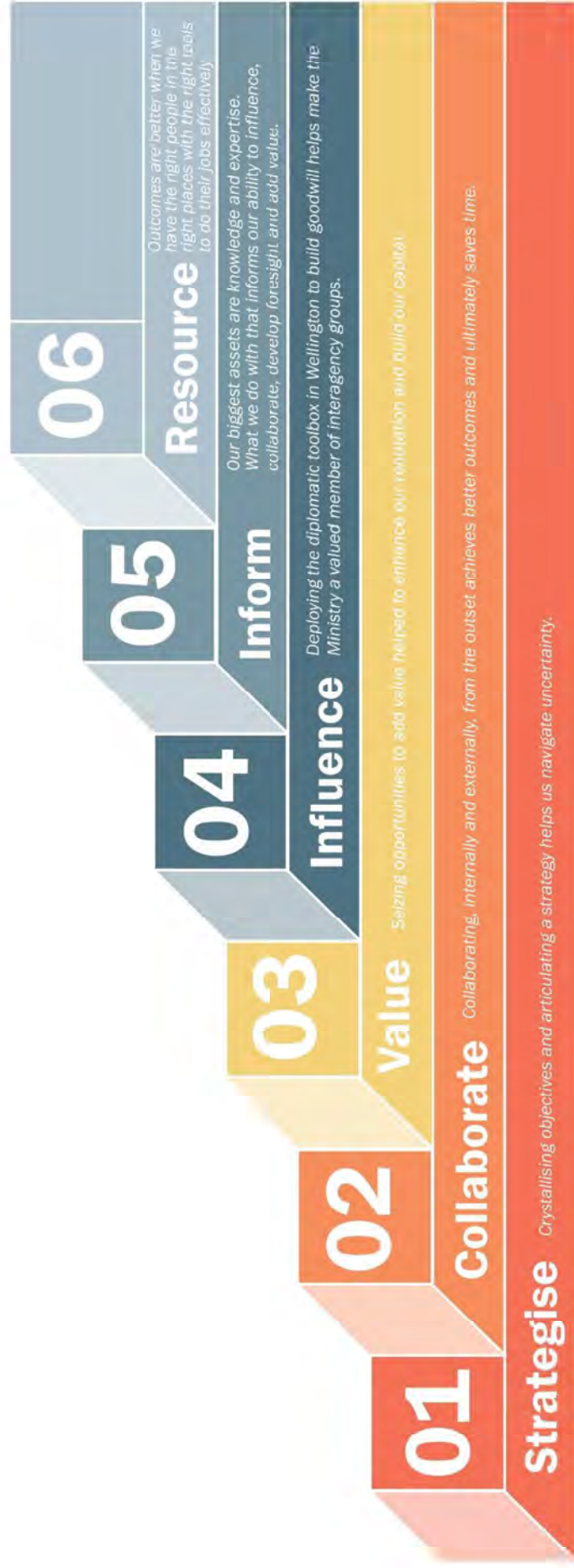
These insights were tested with COVID-19 work stream leads in two plenary workshops where the opportunity was provided to reflect on Ministry-wide coordination, coherence and operational issues.

¹ Further details can be found in the [AIDR Lessons Management Handbook](#).

² Observations can be accessed at [this link](#).

Figure 1. COVID-19 Response: Internal lessons identified

We have identified six components to a successful “steady state” response.



Strategise

Crystallising objectives and articulating a strategy helps us navigate uncertainty.

We found that setting out our key priorities and objectives early helped us to communicate clearly internally, with Ministers and other agencies; secure mandates; plan ahead; and get out in front of challenges.

What worked in the COVID context

- Prioritisation of COVID response in the Ministry's Strategic Framework.
- **s9(2)(g)(i)**
- Early development of the vaccines international engagement strategy and endorsement by the Strategy and Policy Committee.
- Participating in Vaccine Taskforce and ongoing MOH vaccine strategy development.
- Securing Cabinet mandate for resilient Pacific, Antarctic and global pandemic contribution interests.
- Identifying upcoming challenges so we could set objectives, prepare or pivot (e.g. pivoting the IDC programme).
- Investing in the design of QFT and a new border system with Australia paved the way for QFT arrangements with some Pacific countries and ultimately, the Reconnecting New Zealanders approach.

What didn't work in the COVID context

- Sometimes being reactive and looking for short-term solutions conflicted with the full range of Ministry interests.
- **s9(2)(g)(i)**

Case study: Standing up QFT with Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu

In July 2021 the Government needed to address labour shortfalls in the horticultural sector, reduce pressure on MIQ facilities and support economic recovery in the Pacific. Cabinet charged the Ministry with leading discussions with Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu to set up QFT from at least one country within six weeks.

This ambitious goal required the commitment, expertise and collaboration of people across the Ministry and public service, our posts and partner governments. Support from airlines and the horticultural industry was also essential. It was *kotahitanga* in action. *Manaakitanga* was shown by everyone involved.

There were twists and turns along the way – including the Delta outbreak in New Zealand. The QFT model was designed to work with countries with a similar or lower risk profile. After numerous papers assured Cabinet that it was safe to commence QFT, Prime Ministers signed the Arrangements and the first QFT flights arrived from Vanuatu and Samoa in early October under a trial for horticultural workers only. After a month of success, New Zealand extended QFT to NZ citizens, government representatives, medical transfers and later Maraaki scholars from Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Ahead of the wider Reconnecting New Zealanders approach, QFT brought in thousands of horticultural workers, generating economic benefits for New Zealand and partners. This supported bilateral relationships and strengthened agencies' Pacific awareness.

Collaborate

Collaborating, internally and externally, from the outset achieves better outcomes and ultimately saves time.

We found that sharing ideas widely helped us leverage the power of the post network; build enduring relationships; and develop robust policy solutions that were operationally practical.

What worked in the COVID context

- A central coordination division (i.e. CPCD) to consider the big picture view, flag concerns for other divisions and be the go-to point internally and externally.
- Agreeing and clearly communicating shared purpose, objectives and responsibilities.
- Ensuring CPCD had senior managers able to engage on the Ministry's behalf.
- Maintaining continuity in key leadership roles to ensure consistency.
- Taking every opportunity to engage and share information with partner governments and responding to the needs they identified.
- Empowering working level decision making while keeping senior managers informed.
- Engaging with posts to ensure solutions accounted for "on the ground" realities.
- Connecting with other countries' vaccine taskforces to understand procurement approaches and supply/demand dynamics.
- Establishing cross-agency or cross-Ministry working groups.
- Regular inter-agency policy & operational engagement at a managerial level, to troubleshoot problems as they arose (e.g. regular Consular discussions with MIQ Operational Team, responding to the large scale operational challenges resulting from pausing QFT with Australia).

- Co-ordinating cross-agency engagement with the private sector in open, informative dialogue (e.g. key agencies' participation in panels).
- Regular cross-Ministry stand ups (initially several times a week, later weekly).
- Thematic stand-ups with posts, divisions and agencies (e.g. QFT or MOH vaccine stand-ups).
- Secondees and liaisons maintaining strong feedback channels through to the Ministry and supporting host agencies to understand Ministry perspectives.
- The Health liaison role with MOH provided a clear point of entry inward and outward, and moderated our asks of the MOH system.
- Drawing on expertise within the Ministry to problem solve (e.g. LGL on COVAX governance issues; AUR on risks of self-isolation of diplomats, CON on arrangements for flights to return New Zealanders from Australia).
- Using and adapting incident/response structures with established practices and roles to form dedicated task teams in PDG to respond to Pacific partners' COVID outbreaks.
- Embracing opportunities for innovation and flexible solutions.
- Understanding approval processes in other agencies and their impact on timeframes for policy review, which were always short.
- Recognising the extreme stress people were under and showing colleagues inside and outside the Ministry manaakitanga and understanding.
- Demonstrating manaakitanga to colleagues experiencing the pandemic in different ways, including through new post-to-post connections among consular staff.
- Professional and motivated staff committed to responding quickly to Ministerial/AoG information, policy and operational needs, even on evenings and weekends.

What didn't work in the COVID context

- **S6(a)**
- Initially it took time to understand the culture and needs of other agencies (e.g. communication styles, sign out procedures, understanding the clarity required for operational policy to be implemented at scale).
- Adhering to inflexible processes sometimes slowed us down or got in the way of achieving intended outcomes (e.g. contractual arrangements in the IDC programme).

Define and share our value

Seizing opportunities to add value helped to enhance our reputation and build our capital in domestic and international settings.

In domestic settings, we found that developing an "elevator pitch" to tell our story supports our influence and gives us clarity of purpose.

In international settings, we found that being an early mover and generous collaborator enhanced our reputation and built useful diplomatic capital.

Case study: Purchasing extra vaccines from Spain and Denmark

In August 2021 the dangerous new Delta variant was threatening New Zealand. The Prime Minister asked the Ministry to help purchase 750,000 extra doses of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine from another country in order to accelerate our roll-out.

Fortunately our international engagement strategy on vaccines positioned us well to undertake this task. We had a good understanding of global supply and our post network had already established relevant relationships to ascertain quickly which countries might have vaccine available. CPCD's high-trust relationships with MOH enabled us to collaborate efficiently in a joint MFAT/MOH task team. We worked around the clock with our posts in Madrid and Stockholm to establish the political mandate, negotiate contracts, navigate the regulatory process and problem solve a range of logistics issues to transport the highly sensitive, ultra-cold cargo to New Zealand. In less than three weeks we had enough vaccine on hand to offer vaccination to every eligible New Zealander.

What worked in the COVID context

- Taking opportunities to connect with public sector colleagues and demonstrate the value we add.
- Pitching in to achieve shared objectives in inter-agency settings.
- Working constructively with other agencies to find informal solutions on MIQ and vaccination to support the NZ Inc. network.
- Early decisions to donate vaccines enhanced our reputation and likely catalysed action by others.
- Sharing information and experience with Australia across all aspects of our response.
- Engaging openly with Singapore on challenges and our respective responses through the informal dialogue process.
- Sharing approaches to vaccine procurement and donation with other like-minded for mutual learning.
- Early Joint Statement on ensuring supply chain connectivity established a strong platform for cooperation with Singapore and work in other multilateral fora.
- Concrete support for Pacific countries' preparation and responses demonstrated whanaungatanga and strengthened relationships.

- Leadership of various QFT work streams and consultations with Australia/Pacific partners.
- Drawing on relationship capital to support the government with urgent and essential purchasing including vaccines.
- Lobbying against export restrictions on vaccines.
- Consular, Pacific and supply chain expertise.
- Actively engaging in events offshore to keep New Zealand's profile up.
- Leveraging the Ministry's relationship with the business sector to share information **s9(2)(g)(i)**
- Monitoring the international landscape and alerting others to the challenges we foresaw.
- Tailoring content to audience needs and using clear MFAT branding, ensured our reports were widely read & recognisable as Ministry products (e.g. SitRep).
- Providing secondees who were talented, reliable & fast, demonstrated the MFAT skillset.
- Using our posts to establish new relationships (e.g. with academics, Ministries of Health, vaccine companies, vaccine taskforces).
- Actively reaching out to share information with agencies working on key issues, both directly and through COVID-19 response processes.
- Consulting widely and bringing key stakeholders into the process early.

What didn't work in the COVID context

- The Ministry's interests were not always understood as being core to our domestic response.
- **s6(a)**
- **s6(a)**
- **s9(2)(g)(i)**

s9(2)(g)(i)

- Even after prioritising, we were not always able to respond positively to some requests from prioritised partners due to domestic constraints, including in the healthcare workforce which may have resulted in disappointment.

Case study: Supporting the Cook Islands

With only one COVID-19-related death, and a small number of hospitalisations, the Cook Islands is widely considered to have managed its first wave of COVID extremely well. The Cook Islands' response, dubbed "Operation Valentine", mirrored New Zealand's approach to Omicron – including testing and isolation requirements and communications.

In particular, by providing vaccines and delivery support from the New Zealand Defence Force and the Ministry of Health, the Cook Islands government was able to roll out its immunisation programme while New Zealand's own immunisation programme was gathering speed. The Cook Islands achieved very high levels of vaccination coverage in advance of the virus arriving. Likewise, the collegial support provided by the Ministry of Health (as part of the IDC funded Polynesian Health Corridors programme), helped the Cook Islands to prepare its health system for the arrival of COVID and respond effectively. Our economic support enabled Te Marae Ora to secure critical resources and supplies for its hospital and puna clinics. Prime Minister Brown acknowledged that "New Zealand was the one that really supported us in financial support to get through COVID" characterising New Zealand as being the Cook Islands "closest partner".

Influence

Deploying the diplomatic toolbox in Wellington helps build goodwill and make us a valued member of interagency groups.

We found that maintaining strong relationships and adding value where we could helped us have visibility of upcoming issues; get a seat at decision making tables; and lobby for Ministry interests.

What worked in the COVID context

- Being able to advise the Minister for COVID-19 Response directly including through participation in weekly meetings.
- Having coherence in the Pacific Health portfolio through Minister Sio's portfolio responsibilities.
- Consistently integrating Pacific Resilience Approach objectives into domestic policy considerations.
- Stepping in to lead bilateral and inter-agency processes on QFT.
- Secondments provided support that was highly valued and helped us form good relationships.
- Keeping secondees close **s9(2)(g)(i)** gave us expertise to draw on to formulate positions that landed better in other agencies.
- Taking up opportunities to share information, contribute ideas, alert colleagues to emerging issues and ask good questions increased our influence in domestic (e.g. NRG and BEB), bilateral (e.g. Vaccine Taskforce discussions) and multilateral settings (e.g. WTO, COVAX).
- Helping to craft solutions to problems that emerged (e.g. at border, with vaccine access).
- Consistent, coordinated communication of the Ministry's priority interests across all engagements reinforced our messaging.

- Managing expectations around what we could and could not achieve for key stakeholders.
- Investing time and resources into maintaining New Zealand's profile offshore through the post network (e.g. engagement with the New Zealand Business Roundtable in China).
- Identifying international engagement opportunities for other agencies to add value to the New Zealand response.
- Making it easy for agencies to incorporate our interests by using tracked changes rather than comments when reviewing papers; avoiding "wordsmithing"; and prioritising our feedback.
- Deploying the full gamut of the diplomatic toolbox, such as going out for coffee, personal phone calls, using zoom, in order to build and maintain relationships.

What didn't work in the COVID context

- s6(a)
- s9(2)(g)(i)
- Providing input that was not short and snappy enough to cut through in busy agencies, particularly when deadlines for comment were very short (e.g. 2-3 hours).
- Thorough internal consultation meant we often ended up with minor points of feedback. It's important to find the right balance between inclusive consultation, priorities, and the appetite for feedback.

Case study: Leveraging the New Zealand-Singapore supply chain initiative

In the early weeks of the pandemic when global supply shortages were driving increased protectionism, New Zealand and Singapore launched an initiative to ensure supply chain connectivity and remove blockages to trade in a list of essential products. This list included medicines, medical and surgical equipment. Seven other countries joined the initiative.

This concrete initiative went on to provide a platform for New Zealand to advance its interests in a variety of ways:

- it enhanced New Zealand's reputation with Singapore, and we were able to build on this to expand our cooperation to include valuable exchanges on topics from vaccines and public health measures, to border management and supply chain security;
- moving early to reduce our tariffs was a powerful tool at the WTO where we argued for keeping supply chains open and could demonstrate the New Zealand government was taking action;
- as APEC host we were able to expand agreement on the core message of this initiative to all APEC members s6(a) and
- it supported our arguments that vaccines should not be subject to export restrictions when there were risks to New Zealand's ability to access supply.

Inform and communicate

Our biggest assets are knowledge and expertise.

We found that how we communicate these informs our ability to influence, collaborate, develop foresight and add value.

What worked in the COVID context

- Effective internal communication (e.g. Stand-ups, Consular Call Script, FMs on policy developments with talking points, hyperlinks to further details and TPN & SafeTravel templates).
- Sharing information as often and openly as possible (e.g. vaccine donor coordination, AoG, BEB and NRG processes).
- Using the Post Data Tracker & weekly reporting guidance to alert posts to key issues in Wellington to target and streamline data collection from posts.
- Packaging relevant information provided by posts to increase utilisation by decision makers (e.g. Situation Report, Pacific COVID Summary, thematic FM summaries, data tables and dashboards).
- Presenting information in an easily digestible format with clear MFAT branding so that products were widely consumed and recognisable.
- Providing speedy bespoke reporting for Ministers and other agencies.
- Tracking documents that included hyperlinks to all products making re-purposing efforts easier.
- Regular secondees meetings and weekly catch-ups with home division.
- Engaging with intelligence and reporting teams in other divisions and agencies to minimise duplication of efforts s9(2)(g)(i)
- Good use of ESD's media search and other research services.
- Actively sharing unclassified material with external stakeholders, assisted by posts highlighting

particular elements suitable for external audiences.

- Drawing on intel & expertise in other agencies s6(a) and external sources (e.g. consultants, businesses, development partners).
- Regular feedback to posts to demonstrate their FMs were being used and what would be useful in future.

What didn't work in the COVID context:

- s6(a)
- While important to maintain ongoing data sets to identify trends over time, more regular reviews of the relevance and sources of data in the Post Data Tracker would have helped ease post reporting pressures.
- s6(a)

Resource the mahi

Outcomes are better when we have the right people in the right places with the right tools to do their job effectively.

We found that being clear about our priorities and freeing people up to focus on these, reduced stress, improved coherence and led to better outcomes.

What worked in the COVID context

- Resourcing a dedicated division to focus on the coordination of the Ministry's response.
- Resourcing coordination roles (e.g. CPCD, PACREG, DS PDG office, ECO).
- Using strategy to prioritise.
- Recognising that the pressure of response management makes strategy difficult and this should be borne in mind in creating staffing structures for dealing with crises.
- Continuity of key people in key roles and identifying individuals to resolve issues that arose quickly (e.g. pre departure testing, very high risk country categorisations, purchase of additional vaccines, support for Pacific countries with their reopening strategies).
- Having access to internal experts (e.g. health experts for IDC programme).
- Recognising when it's worthwhile to systematise rather than responding ad hoc (e.g. development of the Post Data Tracker).
- Conversely, recognising when a more flexible approach to existing systems would be beneficial.
- Identifying ways to work smarter not harder (e.g. templates, how-to guides, set responses).
- Maintaining resources allocated to the response long enough to see it through.

What didn't work in the COVID context

- s9(2)(g)(i)
- Staffing levels s9(2)(g)(i) and some operational teams were insufficient at certain points to manage the scale of work, leading to long hours and stress for many staff.
- s9(2)(g)(i)
- Not using rostering enough (outside of ECC contexts) to manage the impact of long hours on staff.
- Staff churn in CPCD and other divisions was a challenge (e.g. there were 42 changes of staff within the core COVID response team across CPCD and secondees). While sometimes necessary or unavoidable, managing this change created additional pressure.

Parting shots

There was much the Ministry got right in its contribution to the Government's COVID-19 response but there is always room for improvement. To strengthen our organisational resilience and better prepare for the next challenge, we think the Ministry should consider the following points about how to engage with the AoG machinery and how to manage ourselves.

The Ministry and the AoG system

- The spirit of collaboration that developed across the public sector in response to COVID-19 was one of the real benefits of the crisis. How can the Ministry contribute to the continuation of that spirit post-COVID?
- s9(2)(g)(i)
- Several agencies had information or intelligence functions (DPMC, NAB, MBIE, MoH, Customs etc). When CPCD invested in building relationships with these teams by suggesting topics for in-depth analysis, including analysts in policy discussions, discussing upcoming reporting topics and peer reviewing reports across agencies, we were able to develop solid partnerships. However, alignment could have been better with joined up pipelines and products. How can we improve relationships with other agencies' intelligence functions in future?
- We are now a member of the Border Executive Board. Even though this will increasingly focus on the policy and operational concerns in the months ahead, it is still worthwhile that we participate so that we can advance our interests in future.
- Are there opportunities to better align emergency response mechanisms across domestic agencies, including as a part of efforts to update national pandemic plans?

Within the Ministry

- Our model for dealing with crises has evolved through COVID and subsequent response events. Rather than just ECC for dealing with specific incidents, we created two divisions and added staff in key areas. With the regularity of crises affecting the Ministry's interests and the challenges the removal of staff from other parts of the business creates, should we consider stancing up an ongoing capability to deal with crises?
- De-prioritising BAU tasks frees up resource for urgent mahi and reduces stress on staff. The 2022/23 business planning instructions provide a helpful framework. Would a decision tree which used risk management tools help us prioritise work consistently? Are the same approaches suitable for all parts of the Ministry, or do operational areas such as the IDC programme require other approaches?
- We need to update our pandemic planning (original plan prepared in 2009) while COVID memories remain fresh.
- s9(2)(g)(i)
- Improvements to our data collection and management systems made an essential contribution to our COVID response (including the post data tracker, vaccine tracker, flight tracker) enabling us to quickly sort and cut relevant information. However, we were sometimes hampered by the use of complicated spreadsheets. Investment in improving data management systems, some of which is already under way, can pay off and these approaches could be useful for other reporting functions across the Ministry.
- s9(2)(g)(i)
 - Other agencies use collaboration software such as s6(a)
- s9(2)(q)(i)
 - there is room for improvement. How can we develop our capabilities across the Ministry in these areas?

Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua

I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past