

# Conversation Guide

**Your role in the ‘Machinery of Government’**



# Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to support a conversation about the concept of the 'Machinery of Government' in the New Zealand Public Sector, and why it is important to us as public servants.

We encourage people leaders to initiate an informal conversation, either 1:1 or in small groups or teams using the reflection questions and talking points provided in this guide.

This guide should create informative and reflective conversations, setting a foundation for their development as a knowledgeable public servant who understands the value of the government - public service relationship and its inner workings.

**Learning Objective:** To build understanding of the 'Machinery of Government' ('MoG') concept in New Zealand's public sector and emphasise its relevance to every public servant's role.

# Delivery

This learning could be included as a part of a regular team meeting, or as a one-off session to learn. We recommend you have a safe and quiet space to support open discussion within the group.

There are five sections to this guide. Each section has a reflection question to ask, some talking points to aid discussion, and a resource to find out more information. You do not necessarily need to ask all the questions, or in the order they are in, however we recommend establishing the current level of understanding from those participating in the conversation, prior to starting.

Before you start:

- Read this guide in its entirety
- Ask the following questions to understand what learning is needed:
  1. Are you familiar with the term 'Machinery of Government' and its purpose?
  2. Have you had any experience working with or within the structures of New Zealand's public sector?





## Section One: Introduce the Concept of the ‘Machinery of Government’

**Objective:** Establish a broad understanding of what the ‘Machinery of Government’ is.

**Reflection Questions:** What do you think the term ‘Machinery of Government’ (‘MoG’) refers to?

### Talking Points:

- **Definition:** The term describes the structures, functions, and processes that make up New Zealand’s government system, including the Public Service, Crown entities, and State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs).
- **Role of the Public Service Act 2020:** The Public Service Act provides the legislative framework for the Public Service, setting out how departments and agencies operate and interact.

**Resource:** Refer to the Public Service Commission’s [overview of ‘MoG’](#) for definitions and details.

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## Section Two: Why is understanding the concept of ‘MoG’ Important?

**Objective:** Connect public servants’ work to some of the processes and practices that support the way we think about the ‘Machinery of Government’.

**Reflection Questions:** How do you think understanding ‘MoG’ might support your work and decision-making?

### Talking Points:

- **Understanding Roles and Responsibilities:** Knowing how various parts of government operate helps public servants navigate their responsibilities effectively.
- **Collaboration Across Agencies:** Effective public service often requires cross-agency collaboration, particularly for shared outcomes (e.g., improving housing or healthcare).
- **Supporting Ministers:** ‘MoG’ understanding ensures advice provided to ministers aligns with governmental processes and priorities.
- **Navigating Changes:** Knowledge of ‘MoG’ helps public servants adapt to changes, such as departmental restructures or shifts in ministerial portfolios after elections.

**Resource:** Public Service Commission’s [Guide to the Public Service](#).

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### Section Three: Examples of ‘MoG’ in Practice

**Objective:** Make the concept relevant to everyday work.

**Reflection Questions:** Can you think of examples where understanding ‘MoG’ could make a difference in your work?

**Talking Points:**

- **Joint Ventures:** Initiatives like Whānau Ora, which involves collaboration between multiple agencies to deliver services for Māori.
- **Election Outcomes:** Following an election, departments may need to realign with new ministerial priorities, which requires understanding ‘MoG’ processes.
- **Budgeting Processes:** The coordination of funding across departments involves clear roles defined by the ‘MoG’ framework.

**Resource:** [Cabinet Office Manual \(Cabinet Office\)](#): Offers a comprehensive guide to government structures and decision-making processes in NZ.

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### Section Four: Practical Applications for Your Role

**Objective:** Support people think about activities they can undertake to improve their understanding.

**Reflection Questions:** How can you apply your knowledge of ‘MoG’ to improve your effectiveness in your role?

**Suggestions for Practical Application:**

- **Map Your Role and Relationships:** Use government org charts to understand where your agency fits in the broader system.
- **Engage in Cross-Agency Initiatives:** Identify opportunities to collaborate on government-wide priorities (e.g., child wellbeing frameworks).
- **Understand Reporting Lines:** Ensure you understand how your work supports the agency’s obligations to Ministers and Parliament.

**Resource:** Visit [New Zealand Government Directory](#) for up-to-date information on agency functions and responsibilities.

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## Section Five: Reflection and Continuous Learning

**Objective:** Reflect about what they have learned during this conversation, and plan for how they can continue their development in this area.

**Reflection Questions:** What's one thing you've learned about 'MoG' today, and how will it help in your work?

### Suggested Resources:

- **Leadership Development Centre (LDC):** Offers accessible e-learning modules tailored for public servants to understand government systems and structures. Visit the [How Our Government System Works](#) page for learning modules and insights.
  - **Public Service Commission:** Provides comprehensive resources, including guidelines on public sector responsibilities and operations. Learn more on the [Public Service Commission website](#).
  - **The Treasury:** Offers insights into cross-agency collaboration and budgetary processes critical for understanding operational dynamics. [Check the Treasury website](#) for more.
  - **Cabinet Office Manual:** Key guide for understanding government operations.
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**Ngā Tino Pūmanawa**  
Core Capability

UNIQUE SKILLS FOR ALL PUBLIC SERVANTS

