

CODE OF CONDUCT



Te Tauākī Whanonga mō te Rāngai Tūmatanui
The Code of Conduct for the Public Sector



New Zealand Government
Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa

**This Code is for all of us
and sits at the heart of our
work, guiding what we do
and how we do it.**

**We must know it and hold
ourselves accountable to it,
wherever we work.**

Kupu Whakataki | Foreword

We live in an ever-changing world where the principles and values that underpin this Code are essential – they are the foundations for trust and confidence in the work we do and how we serve New Zealand and its people.

Integrity is not a one-off task – it is an ongoing obligation for us as public servants. Acting with integrity strengthens relationships, improves services, and makes a real difference in our communities. This defines the Public Sector and gives meaning and purpose to our work. It is important that we are all on the same page when it comes to what integrity means in a contemporary and evolving Public Sector.

The Code reinforces our responsibility to serve the government of the day professionally, while maintaining the trust of future governments and the public. It also sets clear expectations for leadership which includes fostering a positive, safe workplace culture that encourages speaking up and addressing integrity concerns appropriately.

Integrity is at the heart of being a public servant. Our Public Sector is internationally recognised for its professionalism and integrity – a reputation built on strong standards of conduct. Each of us plays a vital part in upholding these standards and serving New Zealanders with integrity and professionalism.



Sir Brian Roche KNZM
Te Tumu Whakarae mō Te Kawa Mataaho
Public Service Commissioner | Head of Service

Kupu Whakataki | Introduction

Te Tauākī Whanonga mō te Rāngai Tūmatanui
The Code of Conduct for the Public Sector (the Code) sets the standards of integrity and conduct across the **Public Sector**.

It provides a shared foundation and commitment to integrity and conduct and reinforces that our work for the public is unique, meaningful and based on trust.

The Code is for all **public servants** and sits at the heart of our work. **We** must know it and hold ourselves accountable to it, wherever we work. The Code outlines standards that should be applied with judgement and with regard to the role of the Public Sector in:

- acting with integrity and a spirit of service to the community
- supporting parliamentary democracy
- maintaining the trust and confidence of the public in all that we do, and
- supporting the Crown in its relationships with Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi | the Treaty of Waitangi, in the context of our work roles.

Note: **Bolded terms** are defined in the glossary.

Ngā Mātāpono, Ngā Pou Our Values and Our Principles

The Public Service **values** and **principles** form the framework for the standards in this Code.

Ngā Mātāpono | Our Values

Our values guide how we behave in every interaction. They are:

- **Trustworthy** – to act with integrity and be open and transparent
- **Respectful** – to treat all people with dignity and compassion and act with humility
- **Impartial** – to treat all people fairly, without personal favour or bias
- **Accountable** – to take responsibility and answer for our work, actions, and decisions
- **Responsive** – to understand and meet people’s needs and aspirations.

Ngā Pou | Our Principles

Our principles are foundational pillars that guide how the Public Sector works to achieve its purpose. They are:

- **Political neutrality** – to act in a politically neutral manner
- **Free and frank advice** – when giving advice to Ministers, to do so in a free and frank manner

- **Merit-based appointments** – to make merit-based appointments (unless an exception applies under the Act)
- **Open government** – to foster a culture of open government
- **Stewardship** – to proactively promote stewardship of the Public Sector.

Te Hāngaitanga Scope and Application

The Code is issued by the Public Service Commissioner and sets **standards** of integrity and conduct under section 17(1) of the Public Service Act 2020 (the **Act**). It replaces the *Standards of Integrity and Conduct*, formerly issued under section 57 of the State Sector Act 1988.

The Code includes guidance that relates to the standards which is issued under section 19 of the Act. This guidance complements [He Aratohu | A guide for public servants on matters of integrity and conduct](#), in particular:

- *Guidance* on topics such as the Public Service principles, general elections, social media, and **sensitive expenditure**
- *Model standards* that set expectations for the Public Sector, including on **conflicts of interest**, speaking up, positive and safe workplaces and chief executive gifts, benefits, and expenses.

It is recognised that some of the standards may have limited relevance to parts of the Public Sector.

For example, some public servants have no direct interaction with Ministers or the public. Where that may be the case, we still need to consider how the standards may apply, given we all ultimately serve the Government and New Zealanders.

Application

Under section 17(2) of the Act, the Code applies to the **Public Sector** and all **public servants** (see glossary for definitions).

Under section 18(1) of the Act, the Public Sector and public servants must comply with the standards of integrity and conduct outlined in this Code.

Implementation

Public Sector organisations may apply additional or detailed standards to their organisation that are consistent with this Code – for example, through an organisation code of conduct adapted to their context. They are also expected to maintain policies and procedures in their organisations that support compliance with the Code.

Effective date

The Code takes effect on **30 March 2026**.

Intersection with legal requirements

If there is a conflict between this Code and legislation, the legislation will prevail. Public Sector organisations are subject to varying accountabilities as set out in legislation. The Code is not intended to undermine any of these legislative requirements.

Ngā Paerewa | Our Standards

Ngā Mātāpono | Our Values



- 1. We are honest and professional.
- 2. We act lawfully and use public power fairly and reasonably.
- 3. We avoid work and non-work activities that may compromise our ability to do our job.



- 4. We recognise and uphold the dignity of every person.
- 5. We contribute to a positive and safe workplace culture.
- 6. We act with care and respect, and do not behave in ways that are inappropriate or could harm others.



- 7. We act objectively and do not allow our personal beliefs, interests, activities, or relationships to impact our work.
- 8. We disclose our relevant interests and manage all conflicts of interest appropriately.
- 9. We never misuse our position for personal gain or to benefit or disadvantage others.
- 10. We decline gifts or benefits that place us under any actual or perceived obligation or influence.



- 11. We are open to scrutiny and can account for what we do.
- 12. We treat our organisation's information and resources with care and use them only for proper purposes.
- 13. We aim to improve the performance and efficiency of our organisation.



- 14. We take the time to listen to and understand people's circumstances and needs.
- 15. We aim to collaborate and engage meaningfully with New Zealanders to design policies and deliver services that meet their needs and aspirations.

Ngā Pou | Our Principles



- 16. We act in a politically neutral manner, which enables us to effectively serve current and future governments.
- 17. We respect the authority of the government of the day.



- 18. We support our organisation to provide Ministers with timely, robust, and unbiased advice.



- 19. We are fair and robust in our recruitment and selection processes and must give preference to the person who is best suited to the position.



- 20. We aim to make government information, decisions, and services transparent, accessible and available.



- 21. We manage and care for the Public Sector, so that it may continue to meet the needs of New Zealanders now and into the future.



Ngākau Pono Trustworthy



*Being trustworthy means being dependable,
acting responsibly and with the utmost integrity.*

Ngā Paerewa | The Standards

1. We are honest and professional.
2. We act lawfully and use public power fairly and reasonably.
3. We avoid work and non-work activities that may compromise our ability to do our job.

Being honest and professional

Being honest and professional means being open, telling the truth, and doing the right thing – even when it’s hard. We take care in our work, are transparent about what we do and take responsibility for our actions and decisions. We are competent and professional and use skill and care in performing our roles and engaging with others. Being honest means we never engage in fraud, corruption or bribery.

Acting lawfully

We earn trust by following the law and acting with integrity. This means meeting our legal obligations – including those outlined in laws, regulations and contracts – while also considering what is ethical and the right thing to do. We consider available options to ensure outcomes are fair, reasonable and lawful. Acting lawfully includes enforcing laws and regulations to protect the safety, rights and wellbeing of New Zealanders.

Using public power fairly and reasonably

To be trustworthy, we must be both fair and reasonable when we exercise **public power**. This means our processes are fair, transparent and easy to understand, which can include:

- giving those who may be affected by our actions and decisions a reasonable opportunity to be heard, and providing reasons for our decisions

- making decisions without bias and predetermination, and
- acting reasonably by ensuring our decisions are justifiable and based on facts, evidence and clear reasoning.

Avoiding activities that may compromise our ability to do our job

Our organisations can be concerned about what we do at work or outside work, if it:

- compromises our ability to do our job
- impacts our ability to protect and advance the interests of New Zealand and New Zealanders, or
- is unlawful or harmful, breaches trust or confidentiality or is offensive.

We must act responsibly so our behaviour doesn’t compromise the credibility or integrity of our organisation or the Public Sector. This may include carefully considering our use of social media and other online platforms or engaging in secondary employment or other public activity.



Whakarangatira Respectful



Being respectful involves recognising the inherent dignity of every individual, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Ngā Paerewa | The Standards

- 4. We recognise and uphold the dignity of every person.
- 5. We contribute to a positive and safe workplace culture.
- 6. We act with care and respect, and do not behave in ways that are inappropriate or could harm others.

Recognising and upholding dignity

We recognise and uphold the dignity of every person by treating them with respect and fairness. This means being considerate in our actions and words, regardless of someone’s background, situation, beliefs, or role. We actively listen, value different perspectives and acknowledge the contributions of others. By doing so we serve the people of New Zealand in a way that is fair and respectful.

Positive and safe workplace culture

A positive and safe workplace culture is where people feel valued, supported and motivated to do their best work. It’s shaped by shared values, attitudes, standards and behaviours that promote wellbeing and productivity. In this environment, we feel comfortable sharing ideas and concerns without fear of judgement or retaliation, and we are receptive and respectful of others in return. We all have a role in creating a positive workplace culture where everyone feels they belong. This is particularly important for those of us in a leadership role.

Inappropriate or harmful behaviours

We must be respectful when interacting with our colleagues and the public.

We never engage in bullying, harassment (including sexual and gender-based harassment), racism, unlawful discrimination, coercion, exploitation, or other forms of harmful or inappropriate behaviour. If we see anyone in the Public Sector acting in these ways we respond promptly and appropriately, unless it is unsafe to do so. We don’t cover it up.

Any person affected by inappropriate or harmful behaviours has the right to choose whether to take action and their organisation should have regard to that choice before deciding what action it can or should take.



Ngākau Tapatahi Impartial



Being impartial means that our work, actions, and decisions are free from personal bias, or unjustified prejudice or preference.

Ngā Paerewa | The Standards

- 7. We act objectively and do not allow our personal beliefs, interests, activities, or relationships to impact our work.
- 8. We disclose our relevant interests and manage all conflicts of interest appropriately.
- 9. We never misuse our position for personal gain or to benefit or disadvantage others.
- 10. We decline gifts or benefits that place us under any actual or perceived obligation or influence.

Acting objectively

We act objectively when making decisions. Our decisions are fair and based on available facts and evidence, rather than our own personal opinions or biases. Acting objectively means considering all available and relevant information before making a judgement or decision.

Disclosing relevant interests and managing conflicts

We make sure our personal interests – like activities or relationships – don’t interfere with our ability to perform our roles fairly. If something could be, or is, a **conflict of interest**, we tell our manager and work together to record and manage it. We recognise that circumstances change, so we will regularly discuss, review and update our interests.

Not using our position for personal gain or to benefit or disadvantage others

We never misuse our position for personal gain or unfairly advantage or disadvantage others in our work. We take care with spending and make sure funds and resources are used appropriately by our organisation. We ensure there is no misuse of funds or position to benefit ourselves, family, friends or other individuals, groups or organisations.

Gifts and benefits

Regardless of their value, we should generally decline gifts or benefits that place us under any actual or perceived obligation or influence. Gifts should only be accepted in limited situations that are clearly defined. For example, accepting a gift such as koha or other cultural gifting may be appropriate where declining could cause offence, be considered inappropriate, or harm relationships with our partners or stakeholders.

We follow our organisation’s policies, including keeping records of all gifts or benefits offered to us, declined or accepted. We must act with the highest integrity if receiving or giving any gifts, benefits or hospitality, as these can be perceived to unfairly influence our work.



Whaiwhakaaro Accountable



Being accountable means we are responsible for what we do. We work to the best of our abilities and can answer for our work, actions, and decisions.

Ngā Paerewa | The Standards

11. We are open to scrutiny and can account for what we do.
12. We treat our organisation's information and resources with care and use them only for proper purposes.
13. We aim to improve the performance and efficiency of our organisation.

Being open to scrutiny and accountable for what we do

We must be able to explain our decisions and actions to the people affected by them and to the public. We can do this through:

- keeping accurate records of our decisions and actions
- providing information about our decision-making to individuals, and
- providing authorised information on organisation websites, other digital channels like social media, and in official information responses.

Even when we work carefully, mistakes may happen. If we make a mistake, we are open about it, take responsibility for it, fix it quickly and share what we've learned so others can improve too.

Treating information with care

We handle information responsibly. This means only collecting what we need, using it for the right reasons and storing it securely.

We must only obtain and use information for proper purposes. We comply with all legal and other requirements about information, including privacy, confidentiality, commercial sensitivity, classifications and national security, official information, and third-party access.

We never make deliberate and unauthorised disclosures or 'leak' non-public information that is in our care, or that we have access to. We must be careful about who we share information with and safeguard sensitive government information.

Treating resources with care, including using public money responsibly

We are responsible for using public money and resources wisely and the public trusts us to do so. We act prudently, honestly and responsibly when dealing with public funds within our control. We must also use our work time wisely and only use our resources for proper purposes, while safeguarding them against waste, abuse or neglect.

We follow government spending rules and financial management legislation, keep adequate records, and use fair and transparent procurement processes to ensure value for money.

Aiming to improve the performance and efficiency of our organisations

We aim to improve our organisation's performance and efficiency by looking for ways to improve what we do and how we work. We can do this by:

- collaborating effectively with others
- working to the best of our abilities
- embracing innovation, for example, responsible use of new technologies
- identifying ways to streamline processes and deliver timely services, and
- providing opportunities for feedback from the people we interact with to help improve our work.



Āta Whakarongo Responsive



Being responsive is about active engagement and collaboration with people, groups, and communities.

Ngā Paerewa | The Standards

14. We take the time to listen to and understand people's circumstances and needs.
15. We aim to collaborate and engage meaningfully with New Zealanders to design policies and deliver services that meet their needs and aspirations.

A people-centred approach – listen and understand

We take time to listen and understand people's needs so we can respond with the right advice and services. This also means providing people with useful information and support and delivering services that are timely, easy to use/access and effective.

We build trust by being responsive and intentional in our interactions. We adapt our approach to the situation and any changes in a person's circumstances or context. We also seek feedback so we can continue to improve.

Collaborate and engage on policy and service design and delivery

When designing policies and services, we do our best to identify relevant stakeholders, partners and communities for collaboration. We aim to provide them with information and opportunities to engage with us so we can understand their views, needs and aspirations. Doing this helps us design services that work well for different people and communities.

Collaboration and engagement help us to improve outcomes for New Zealanders. We can achieve this by:

- sharing knowledge, fostering innovation, and learning from each other
- supporting better coordination and delivery, and
- being flexible and adapting to change.



Te Noho Taiapa Political Neutrality



Political neutrality¹ is about serving New Zealand’s democratically elected government to the best of our professional abilities, irrespective of our political opinions.

Ngā Paerewa | The Standards

- 16. We act in a politically neutral manner, which enables us to effectively serve current and future governments.
- 17. We respect the authority of the government of the day.

Public servants have the same rights to freedom of expression and political activity as other New Zealanders under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990. We must exercise these rights in a way that doesn’t affect our ability to do our work in a politically neutral way. This doesn’t prevent us from all political participation, but there are some things we should think about when engaging in political activity that might impact our role as a public servant. These include:

- the seniority of our role
- the nature of our work, and
- the scope and scale of the proposed political activity.

Political neutrality when performing our roles at work

Being politically neutral helps keep the work of Ministers (setting policy direction, making decisions, and advocating for government policies) and our work (providing advice, implementing policy, and delivering public services) distinct.

Political neutrality requires us to be particularly careful with:

- our approach to advertising and publicity

- engaging with Members of Parliament and political parties
- our use of organisational social media and media comment
- what we do and say around the general election period, and
- appearing before select committees.

Political neutrality for public servants as individuals

Being politically neutral at work doesn’t generally stop us from being politically active outside of work in our own time. But when we’re being politically active outside of work, we must not represent or give the impression that we represent our organisation or disclose or use confidential government information. Sometimes there may be circumstances where it’s difficult to reconcile your personal political interests with performing your Public Sector role.

In particular, those of us who are senior public servants or work closely with Ministers should consider public perception and exercise additional judgement and care when being politically active outside of work.

¹ The guidance in this section reflects more comprehensive guidance on political neutrality contained in Te Kawa Mataaho | [Guidance on Public Service Principles](#)

Political neutrality for members of a profession or a statutory role

If we are **members of a profession** or have a statutory role that involves public advocacy, we need to fulfil our professional obligations or statutory role while staying politically neutral. We have the same rights to political activity as other public servants while also having the same requirements to exercise those rights in a way that doesn't affect our ability to do our work in a politically neutral way.

Professional codes of ethics or obligations – such as those for medical, accounting, social work and legal professions – apply alongside this Code. If there is inconsistency or conflict between our professional obligations and this Code, we need to raise it with our organisation.

Members of a profession may wish to comment publicly in a professional capacity on matters within their areas of expertise or experience including on work-related matters. When considering this we should:

- be open and honest with our organisation, and consider any legal requirements that may apply

- not enter into debate criticising or advocating for particular politicians or political parties, and
- exercise care if commenting on Government or party-specific policies.

Our organisations should have policies and procedures that outline what members of a profession should do if they wish to make a public comment. If we are a spokesperson for a professional body, our comments should clearly be made on behalf of that professional body.

If our professional member or statutory role obligations are also legislative requirements, those will prevail over this Code, although any inconsistency should still be raised with our organisation.

Respecting the authority of the government of the day

Through our work we support the government of the day to develop and implement its policies. We must respect the authority and decisions of the Government and Ministers as elected representatives. We must act in a way that maintains the trust and confidence of the Government while ensuring the same relationship can be established with future governments. We must follow lawful instructions from Ministers, irrespective of our own political opinion.



Tohutohu Hāngai Free and Frank Advice



Free and frank advice is about organisations providing advice to Ministers without fear or favour, using our best professional judgement.

Te Paerewa | The Standard

18. We support our organisation to provide Ministers with timely, robust, and unbiased advice.

Providing free and frank advice

Free and frank advice supports Ministers to make good decisions and gives the public confidence that those decisions are well informed. Our organisational **leaders** are responsible for ensuring that free and frank advice is given to Ministers by their organisations.

Providing free and frank advice is about focusing on our Minister's objectives while being honest, politically neutral, free from undue influence, and constructive about the best ways to achieve their objectives. This may mean we need to respectfully and professionally challenge our Minister's understanding or initial preference. We aim to include a range of perspectives in our advice, canvassing options and informing Ministers about the pros, cons, uncertainties and consequences of the decisions they are being asked to make.

If our job involves providing advice directly or indirectly to Ministers, we need to be mindful of context, including demonstrating awareness of, and responsiveness to, the priorities of the government of the day. Free and frank advice means that we provide the relevant information, evidence and analysis needed to deliver clear, objective and effective advice. We take a 'no surprises'² approach by promptly advising on significant matters within our Minister's portfolio responsibilities, particularly where those may be controversial or may become the subject of public debate.

² See: Solicitor-General's Guidance (2023) [Chief Executives and the 'No Surprises' Principle](#); The [Cabinet Manual](#) (2023) also outlines requirements under the 'no surprises' principle.



Kopounga Whai-painga Merit-based Appointments



Merit-based appointments are an essential cornerstone of our professional and politically neutral Public Sector.

Te Paerewa | The Standard

19. We are fair and robust in our recruitment and selection processes and must give preference to the person who is best suited to the position.

Making merit-based appointments

Merit-based appointments help us recruit, attract and select the best people to work in the Public Sector, building a workforce that has the experience and expertise to improve the lives of New Zealanders.

Those of us who are leaders need to ensure our organisation upholds the principle of merit-based appointments and must make merit-based appointments unless an exception applies under the **Act**.

This means if we have a role in employee recruitment, promotion and selection, we must:

- identify the skills, responsibilities and effort necessary to perform the role
- ensure appointments are made through a fair, open and contestable process, and are free from patronage, favouritism or prejudice, and
- follow our organisation’s internal policies and ensure independence, confidentiality, fairness and transparency in the appointment or promotion process.



Kāwanatanga Tuwhera Open Government



Open government strengthens democracy by improving transparency and understanding of how government works, facilitating public participation and accountability of the Government to its people.

Te Paerewa | The Standard

20. We aim to make government information, decisions, and services transparent, accessible and available.

Our roles in open government

Open government means we aim to enable public participation by being proactively transparent about our work and how government functions. Where possible we look for ways to improve the accessibility and availability of information and services.

There are rules, frameworks and processes that support open government and transparency, such as:

- access to information through the Official Information Act 1982 or Privacy Act 2020, and proactive release of information
- consultation frameworks to support public feedback
- co-designing services with communities, and
- how we provide advice, for example, accessible formats.

We should use these frameworks where relevant to our work and identify and discuss opportunities to be open with our organisation.

While being open is important, we must balance transparency with the legitimate need to keep some information confidential, for example, privacy concerns or information under active consideration of Ministers. Disclosure of government information must follow our organisation's information management policies and procedures and comply with the law.



Kaitiakitanga Stewardship



Stewardship is a proactive duty of care for something that belongs to or exists for the benefit of others, now and into the future.

Te Paerewa | The Standard

21. We manage and care for the Public Sector, so that it may continue to meet the needs of New Zealanders now and into the future.

Our stewardship role

Stewardship helps to protect the Public Sector now and into the future. Where relevant to our role, we must adopt forward-thinking planning and management practices in our work to:

- preserve and protect institutional knowledge and information, and use our assets and resources wisely
- help meet our organisation's stewardship responsibilities, including financial management, policy and regulatory stewardship, performance and sustainability
- support our organisations to have established plans that safeguard the continuity of critical services, and
- support Ministers to act as good stewards under the Act.

Long-term workforce planning and capability

Where relevant to our role, we need to anticipate, manage and plan for our future workforce so we can meet future challenges. This includes:

- encouraging knowledge sharing and retention of expertise, and supporting skills acquisition and career progression across the Public Sector
- supporting our chief executives or governance boards to develop and maintain the capability to engage with Māori and understand Māori perspectives, and
- developing long-term capability and ensuring this is embedded in our teams and processes.

Te ū ki tā tātou Tauākī **Abiding by our Code**

The Code should be read in full as the meaning and requirements for each section overlap. The standards, values, and principles should not be read as separate or isolated from the rest of the Code.

As a public servant, you must:

- ensure you read, understand, and abide by the Code, and
- adhere to any additional behavioural expectations set by your organisation.

As a leader, you must also:

- support your team and colleagues' understanding of how to comply with the Code
- encourage your team and colleagues to ask questions and raise any integrity or conduct concerns by speaking up
- deal with integrity or conduct concerns appropriately, and where applicable to your role, enforce the Code consistently, and
- foster a positive, safe, and ethical workplace culture in your organisation.

As an organisational leader of a Public Sector organisation, you are responsible for:

- the integrity and conduct of your employees, which includes ensuring they have read and understood this Code and agree to abide by it
- ensuring your organisation's code of conduct (if relevant) and policies and procedures are consistent with this Code
- enabling your employees to complete Code of Conduct learning and to regularly renew that learning, and
- ensuring your employees can obtain appropriate advice on integrity issues, including possible conflicts of interest.

Ngā Takahitanga o te Tauākī **Breaches of the Code**

Failure to comply with this Code may constitute misconduct or serious misconduct and could result in disciplinary action being taken by your organisation up to and including dismissal. Breaches of law may also result in civil or criminal penalties.

The Code is not intended to outline every possible scenario or list every behaviour or action that could be a breach. Unsatisfactory behaviour or actions not specifically listed in this Code may still constitute a breach, where they are found to undermine the Public Service values and principles. Public servants are required to exercise careful judgement that can withstand scrutiny and should seek advice early if unsure about any of the Code's requirements.

Whakaputaina he kōrero, whakapuakina ngā āwangawanga **Speak up and raise concerns**

Speaking up promptly about suspected wrongdoing shows that we care and have the courage to do the right thing. Anyone can report concerns such as behaviour or activities they feel may breach this Code to the relevant Public Sector organisation.

The process for reporting **serious wrongdoing**, and the protections available to those who report it, is outlined in the Protected Disclosures (Protection of Whistleblowers) Act 2022. This includes a list of appropriate authorities to make a report to. Criminal or unlawful activity should be reported to the NZ Police or other relevant enforcement agencies (for example, the Serious Fraud Office).

If you've raised concerns about a public servant or a Public Sector organisation and you feel the concerns haven't been appropriately managed or resolved, or you feel unsafe raising the concerns with the relevant organisation, you can report them to Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission:
commission@publicservice.govt.nz

Rārangi kupu | Glossary

In this Code, unless the context otherwise requires –

Act means the [Public Service Act 2020](#).

Conflict of interest means any situation where a person’s duties or responsibilities as an employee of, or a contractor to, a Public Sector organisation conflict, or could be seen to conflict or interfere with their personal or other interests or activities. Conflicts of interest can be actual, perceived or potential.

Leader means any person who is recognised as a leader in their organisation and includes senior leaders and those with managerial responsibilities.

Members of a profession means members of an occupational group with a registration requirement under an Act for the individuals who work or practise in the occupational group.

Our means things that belong collectively to public servants and, where the context requires, includes the Public Sector.

Principles means the public service principles set out in [section 12 of the Act](#).

Public power means the authority and ability of the Public Sector and public servants to make decisions and manage public resources for the benefit of everyone. It must be used in ways that serve the public good.

Public Sector means the organisations to which this Code applies, specifically:

- a) Public service agencies (departments, departmental agencies, interdepartmental executive boards, interdepartmental ventures) and Crown agents
- b) Crown entities (other than Crown agents and excluding tertiary education institutions and school boards, and Crown Research Institutes and their subsidiaries)
- c) Companies named in Schedule 4A of the Public Finance Act 1989, and
- d) the Parliamentary Counsel Office.

Public servant means any person to whom this Code applies, specifically anyone working in the Public Sector, e.g., employees and contractors. By way of explanation, this does not include Board members of Crown entities or Directors of Public Finance Act 1989 Schedule 4A Companies, as they have their own codes of conduct issued by the Public Service Commissioner.

Public Service has the meaning given in [section 10 of the Act](#).

Sensitive expenditure means any spending by an organisation that could be seen to be giving private benefit to staff additional to the business benefit to the organisation.

Serious wrongdoing has the meaning set out in [section 10 of the Protected Disclosures \(Protection of Whistleblowers\) Act 2022](#).

Standards means the minimum standards of integrity and conduct set by the Public Service Commissioner under [section 17 of the Act](#) as outlined in this Code.

Values means the public service values set out in [section 16 of the Act](#).

We and **us** when used in this Code means all public servants and, where the context requires, also includes the Public Sector.

Your means things that individually belong, or apply, to public servants and **you** has a corresponding meaning.

Rārangi kupu mo te reo Māori

Te reo Māori Glossary

Ngākau Pono is the te reo Māori descriptor for the *trustworthy* value. It best describes dependability and integrity. In separating the two words, *ngākau* is often translated to heart or matters of the heart and *pono* to be true or truthful, honest, and sincere.

Ngākau Tapatahi is the te reo Māori descriptor for the *impartial* value. It is a translation for impartiality, integrity, being neutral, fair, unbiased, even-handed or non-partisan.

Whaiwhakaaro is the te reo Māori descriptor for the *accountable* value. Rather than a translation, it describes the action of thinking carefully, being open to scrutiny and acting responsibly.

Whakarangatira is the te reo Māori descriptor for the *respectful* value. The translation describes treating people with dignity, honour, or to revere or enable.

Āta Whakarongo is the te reo Māori descriptor for the *responsive* value. It describes the act of listening attentively. *Āta* translates to deliberately, purposefully, intentionally, with care. *Whakarongo* is commonly described as listening and hearing.

Te Noho Taiapa is the te reo Māori descriptor for the *political neutrality* principle. It is a *kīwaha* and directly translates to ‘sit on the fence.’ For clarity, this does not mean that public servants cannot hold and express political opinions. However they should consider political neutrality as part of their role as a public servant and the [Public Service Principles guidance](#) within this context.

Tohutohu Hāngai is the te reo Māori descriptor for the *free and frank* principle. Tohutohu is a translation for ‘to advise.’ Hāngai is a translation for directly and is commonly used in the *kīwaha* ‘me hāngai te kōrero’ which can be translated to keeping to the point or ‘don’t beat around the bush.’

Kopounga Whai-painga is the te reo Māori descriptor for the *merit-based appointments* principle. Kopounga is a translation for appointee, appointment or successful candidate. Whai-painga is a translation for merit-based or to be of value or benefit.

Kāwanatanga Tuwhera is the te reo Māori descriptor used for *open government*. Kāwanatanga is the translation for government and tuwhera is to open or be open.

Kaitiakitanga is the te reo Māori descriptor for *stewardship*. Kaitiakitanga in its simplest form is translated to guardianship, stewardship or trusteeship.

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