Leadership Capability Profile

Revised November 2009
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Introduction

The Leadership Capability Profile was developed and introduced into the New Zealand Public Service in 2003.

It has been updated and refreshed in 2009 and aims to outline the skills and capabilities required to lead effectively in the State Services. It describes the personal attributes combined with leadership capabilities to enable high potential, high performing individuals to be successful in leading and managing complex organisations.

This refreshed Leadership Capability Profile takes account of international research in Leadership and is aligned to the competencies required of chief executives and senior leaders.

The Leadership Capability Profile can also be used to inform relevant and appropriate development opportunities for individuals, as well as provide support for talent identification programmes within agencies. It can be used as a self assessment tool for aspiring senior leaders and should enable clear identification of development opportunities for the individual. It can provide an individual’s manager with suggestions as to how to support individual development.

New Zealand Public Service leaders must:

- have the required PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES
- develop and apply LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES, which are
- tested, grown and shaped through EXPERIENTIAL DEVELOPMENT to
- deliver RESULTS for all New Zealanders.
New Zealand Public Service Leaders manage the business and lead the change

Personal Attributes & Leadership Capabilities are tested, grown and shaped through experiential development in …

Evidenced through:
• High Learning Agility (intellectual, results, people, change), and
• Identified as having the potential to lead

Relevant circumstances:… Public Sector … Private Sector … Voluntary/social settings … Iwi/hapu roles … Overseas experience … Stretch assignments … Special projects … Influential people … Influential events

Demonstrating:
• Strategic skills
• Operating skills
• Organisational positioning skills

Deliver results for all New Zealanders

• Contribute to achievement to outcomes
• Develop current and future organisational capability
• Public Service is regarded as trusted and acting in a spirit of service
How the Leadership Capability Profile works

Given there cannot be a single prescription for leadership, the State Services Commission has identified the personal attributes and leadership capabilities that we expect of our leaders. This is set out in this Leadership Capability Profile.

**Personal Attributes**

Leaders must have certain personal attributes\(^1\) to be able to perform effectively in a New Zealand Public Service leadership role. These attributes are a mixture of ability and experience, and may require considerable time, effort and expense to develop.

**Learning Agility**

Exceptional leaders display a high level of learning agility. They adapt quickly to new situations, learn fast, extract and apply learnings from experiences and achieve results. Learning agility encompasses intellectual, results people and change agility.

**Personal and interpersonal skills**

Leaders display strong interpersonal skills, draw on a wide range of communication skills to inform and listen, include and engage, persuade and influence co-workers, staff and the organisation’s social and political communities.

They know themselves well, are open to criticism and seek feedback. They learn from their mistakes, are adaptive and strive constantly to develop themselves. They can be counted on to remain calm and hold things together in tough times. They are not prone to defensiveness, frustration, nor easily knocked off balance.

They are good listeners and can easily establish rapport with people from all walks of life. They hire for variety and diversity and build relationships of trust and respect with colleagues, the public, Ministers and staff. They can be direct and diplomatic, and can resolve differences without damaging relationships. They are collaborative and value others’ contributions. They create a climate in which people feel motivated to do their best, ensuring people like working for and with them.

**Courage**

Leaders can be counted on to step up when times are tough, and in the face of political tensions and public scrutiny. They do not shirk personal responsibility. They anticipate potential conflicts and make conscious choices about the approach they will take. If conflict arises they look for common ground; surfacing and working with differences equitably and calmly. They are willing to take the lead on controversial issues. They read situations and people accurately. They are a good judge of people and are able to clearly see their strengths and limitations.

** Honour and Integrity**

Leaders consistently behave in an honest, ethical and professional manner. They promote and advocate the highest standards of personal, professional and organisational behaviour, and evaluate the performance of the organisation and staff against those standards and values. They deliver on their promises and are direct and truthful in their dealings with others. They keep confidences and admit mistakes. They do not misrepresent themselves for personal gain and are widely trusted.

**Energy and drive**

Leaders are energetic, determined, highly motivated, action-oriented, committed to excellence and results. They consistently and constantly strive for better performance, balanced with a concern for people and due process. They don’t give up in the face of resistance or setbacks and adapt their approach if appropriate.

Indicators of these personal attributes are listed in Personal Attributes and Leadership Capabilities

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Leadership Capabilities

Brief descriptions of the elements of these leadership abilities\(^2\) are tabulated below.

Indicators of these Leadership Capabilities are listed in Personal Attributes and Leadership Capabilities.

**Strategic Skills**
Senior leaders possess a depth and breadth of knowledge. They are intellectually sharp, and deal with concepts and complexity comfortably. They have a strong grasp of key trends and issues facing their agency and the wider State sector, and develop long range strategies and plans. They probe deeply into issues without losing sight of the bigger picture. They learn quickly when facing new problems and are comfortable handling risk and uncertainty. They are willing to experiment and are open to change. They are future oriented and take a broad perspective on issues, analysing both successes and failures for clues about how to improve. They create a compelling vision and inspire others to support that vision.

**Operating Skills**
Leaders create focus within their organisations and get things done. They find ways to eliminate roadblocks and zero in on the vital few issues that require their attention. They understand organisational processes and identify systemic opportunities for synergy and integration. They create strong teams by empowering people, fostering open dialogue, effectively allocating resources and ensuring that individuals work together. They use teams to work across boundaries and accomplish integrated tasks and sustained coordinated efforts. In doing this, they continually support the development of their senior team; coaching them and providing opportunities that will stretch them.

**Organisational Positioning Skills**
Leaders understand the political and organisational context within which they work. They are sensitive to political processes and anticipate risks and how others may respond. They can manoeuvre through complex political situations effectively and quietly whilst maintaining Public Service standards of political neutrality. They know how to get things done within the political and organisational context and understand the origin and reasoning behind key policies, practices and procedures. They understand how to work with and within different organisational cultures.

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Pathways and experiential development

The aim of the Senior Leadership and Management Development Strategy is to develop leaders who have the personal attributes combined with strong leadership capabilities to deliver results for all New Zealanders.

The Leadership Capability Profile considers an aspirant leader’s journey and illustrates the diverse pathways to becoming a Public Service leader. Our future leaders must have the ability, aspiration and engagement to be successful. They gain depth and breadth of experience through a range of different learning and work experiences in organisations and the community. This experience in a variety of job challenges leads to skills growth and encompasses the following four elements:

- diverse experience - gained from exposure to significant people, different communication styles, ways of communicating and interacting with diverse opinions in a variety of settings.
- experience with adversity – making sound decisions where there is inadequate information, difficult and complex circumstances, and significant pressures of time and resource
- variety of experience – of challenging business events and activities
- intense experience - with significant external pressure and scrutiny.

Further information on experiences and pathways and suggestions for relevant development activities are included in the Profile Experiences, Pathways and Development Activities.

Results expected of New Zealand Public Service leaders

An effective New Zealand Public Service leader is identified as a person who draws on all of their personal attributes and leadership capabilities to deliver the results expected.

Effective performance as a leader is also determined by the soundness of judgments made and in the quality of interventions and interactions. Longer term, the effects of these will be shown in the organisation’s performance, both in terms of what it delivers as a sole entity and in collaboration with other agencies.

Successful leaders will be able to provide evidence of their personal participation and contribution to the achievement of:

- outcomes for New Zealanders
- the development of organisational capability, including people, resources, systems, structures, culture, leadership and relationships
- the New Zealand Public Service being regarded as trusted and acting in a “spirit of service”.

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Personal Attributes and Leadership Capabilities - Indicators

Senior leaders require well developed personal attributes and strong leadership capabilities.

*Personal Attributes*

*Learning Agility*

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<th>Definition:</th>
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The characteristics of learning agile people are elaborated below.

1  **Intellectual agility**

**Indicators**

- Brings a fresh perspective to situations (eg stretches others’ thinking about how to view issues and new ways forward)
- Displays comfort with complexity and ambiguity, and can provide leadership in such situations
- Can explain their thinking to others (i.e. the frameworks they use to analyse issues and make decisions)
- Displays well-developed analysis and critical thinking skills (eg uses appropriate analytical lenses to view issues, can swiftly get to the heart of an issue, considers immediate and long term consequences, considers a range of information and options when evaluating issues)
- Makes sound and timely decisions balancing analysis, judgement and intuition
- Displays a high level of curiosity (ie keen to learn about self, others and ideas)

2  **Results agility**

**Indicators**

- Inspires others to perform above their usual level of performance (i.e. drives a culture of excellence and high performance)
- Demonstrates the gravitas to inspire and builds confidence in others.
- Achieves results under new and/or tough conditions
- Demonstrates drive, flexibility and adaptability

3  **People agility**

**Indicators**

- Is self aware, open-minded and understands others
- Deals with conflict constructively and is a skilled communicator
- Demonstrates political agility and operates comfortably in a variety of roles

4  **Change agility**

**Indicators**

- Learns quickly in new situations and nimbly integrates and applies new information and learnings
- Adapts quickly to novel and changing situations
- Seeks out new and challenging experiences and operates outside their ‘comfort zone’
Personal and Interpersonal Skills

**Definition:**
Leaders display strong interpersonal skills, draw on a wide range of communication skills to inform and listen, include and engage, persuade and influence co-workers, staff and the organisation’s social and political communities.

They know themselves well, are open to criticism and seek feedback. They learn from their mistakes, are adaptive and strive constantly to develop themselves. They can be counted on to remain calm and hold things together in tough times. They are not prone to defensiveness, frustration, nor easily knocked off balance.

They are good listeners and can easily establish rapport with people from all walks of life. They hire for variety and diversity and build relationships of trust and respect with colleagues, the public, Ministers and staff. They can be direct and diplomatic, and can resolve differences without damaging relationships. They are collaborative and value others’ contributions. They create a climate in which people feel motivated to do their best and people like working for and with them.

**Indicators**

**Communication**
- Communicates with impact in both written and oral situations (eg in individual, group and public speaking situations, communication is clear and succinct, confident, engaging, articulate, logical, energetic, open)
- Listens to understand
- Interested in and able to see situations from others’ perspectives
- Alert to cues to tailor communication style and adapts approach accordingly
- Demonstrates interpersonal diplomacy (eg is sensitive and respectful of others)
- Employs effective influencing strategies that are compelling and fit-for-purpose

**Managing relationships**
- Connects and establishes rapport with a wide range of people
- Invests time building effective internal and external relationships
- Handles conflict effectively (eg, nips issues in the bud, displays objectivity and sensitivity, defuses hostilities, and seeks common ground)
- Displays team player skills (eg adopts a consultative, non-territorial, collegial approach, has the trust and support of peers, enjoys working as a member of a team, comfortable playing different roles in a team)
- Makes people feel valued and appreciated for their contribution
- Reaches negotiated positions without damaging relationships
### Self-management

**Definition:**
Leaders can accurately evaluate and modify their performance based on their own insights and feedback from others. They have a track record of seeking to develop and improve themselves. They also effectively manage the pressures and work demands of a senior leadership role.

**Indicators**

#### Personal Learning
- Displays self-evaluation skills (i.e. considers a range of factors when evaluating their performance and can accurately assess their performance in the absence of feedback)
- Displays an ongoing commitment to learn from feedback and develop themselves (i.e. seeks feedback, modifies behaviour and approach as a result of feedback, isn’t defensive, receptive to talking about shortcomings; works on compensating for weakness and limits)
- Focuses their development efforts on a mixture of development activities (i.e. reflecting on experiences to extract salient learning’s, experimenting and modifying their behaviours, gaining new experiences, increasing knowledge, etc)

#### Self knowledge
- Self-confident (i.e. can laugh at themselves, presents in a self-assured manner, takes calculated risks, achieves the right balance between being confident and humble)
- Positive and optimistic. Sees opportunities and possibilities in situations, rather than constraints, risks and obstacles
- Responds well in challenging situations (i.e. is calm, mature and level-headed, displays resilience, and a sense of perspective)
- Manages work pressures effectively (i.e. understands own stress triggers, implements strategies to mitigate stress and keep refreshed in their role)
- Displays effective work management skills (i.e. consciously plans and prioritises where they invest their time over the short and long-term, allocates an appropriate balance of time between thinking, doing and evaluating their work, effectively manages a number of competing demands, achieves the right balance between achieving through others and themselves, delivers on commitments)

### Walks with respect in diverse worlds

**Definition:**
Leaders develop, build and maintain effective relationships with Māori and cultures other than their own. They respect obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and interact appropriately with Māori taking into consideration tikanga (customs) and kawa (protocol). Leaders deal effectively with all nationalities, races, cultures, disabilities, ages and gender, and people whose actions, beliefs and ideas are different to their own.

**Indicators**
- Demonstrates an understanding of, and commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi by being responsive to Māori in the delivery of services and achieving agreed results
- Takes cultural perspectives into account in decision making and policy advice
- Engages different communities in effective consultation processes; listens to and reflects their needs in policy development, service delivery and evaluation
- Demonstrates the organisation’s commitment to respecting cultural values in service delivery and employment practices
Courage

**Definition:**
Leaders can be counted on to step up when times are tough, and in the face of political tensions and public scrutiny. They do not shirk personal responsibility. They anticipate potential conflicts and make conscious choices about the approach they will take. If conflict arises they look for common ground; resolving differences equitably and calmly. They are willing to take the lead on controversial issues. They read situations and people accurately. They are a good judge of people and are able to clearly see their strengths and limitations.

**Indicators**
- Takes and stands by difficult decisions; is willing to stand alone
- Provides a clear direction in challenging situations
- Challenges the status quo and displays a preparedness to voice an opposing view
- Gets the right balance between seeking others’ views and taking action
- Proactively addresses longstanding and challenging issues
- Comfortable and candid when outlining limits of knowledge/experience in an area (eg. will say when they do not know something, consults and seeks advice from technical experts, specialists and people with a different perspective to supplement own knowledge)
- Admits mistakes and seeks to redress these where possible

Honour and Integrity

**Definition:**
Leaders consistently behave in an honest, ethical and professional manner. They promote and advocate the highest standards of personal, professional and organisational behaviour, and evaluate the performance of the organisation and staff against those standards and values. They deliver on their promises and are direct and truthful in their dealings with others. They keep confidences and admit mistakes. They do not misrepresent themselves for personal gain and are widely trusted.

**Indicators**
- Models a high level of honesty, commitment, loyalty and integrity
- Reinforces the importance of ethical and equitable conduct in dealings with others
- Is consistent in what they say and do
- Displays personal values that are aligned with the Public Sector — spirit of service’ to the government and the citizens of New Zealand
- Keeps public and private interests separate
- Serves the government of the day implementing their policies and programmes irrespective of personal preferences
Energy and drive

Definition:
Leaders are energetic, determined, highly motivated, action-oriented, committed to excellence and results. They consistently and constantly strive for better performance, balanced with a concern for people and due process. They don’t give up in the face of resistance or setbacks; however, they are also willing to adapt their approach if necessary to achieve the desired result.

Indicators
- Models a high level of drive and ownership for achieving challenging organisational goals (eg displays a high level of ambition for what their organisation can achieve, pushes self and others to achieve, driven to excel in whatever they take on)
- Makes the most of opportunities to achieve through individuals and teams (communicates a clear vision, delegates, shares credit for success, provides feedback and encourages ownership)
- Invests time coaching and developing others
- Displays a strong improvement orientation (i.e. continually looks at how to improve processes and work approaches, perform work more effectively)
- Motivated to lead (i.e. seizes opportunities to lead without being given the responsibility or direction)
- Enjoys achieving through people and seeing people achieve and develop

Leadership Capabilities

Strategic skills

Definition:
Senior leaders possess a depth and breadth of knowledge. They are intellectually sharp, and deal with concepts and complexity comfortably. They have a strong grasp of key trends and issues facing their agency and the wider State sector, and develop long range strategies and plans. They probe deeply into issues without losing sight of the bigger picture. They learn quickly when facing new problems and are comfortable handling risk and uncertainty. They are willing to experiment and are open to change. They are future oriented and take a broad perspective on issues, analysing both successes and failures for clues about how to improve. They create a compelling vision and inspire others to support that vision.

Indicators
- Communicates and drives the organisation’s vision, goals and objectives, aligns them with required government priorities and outcomes and with the operating environment of the NZ Public Service
- Understands the current and future business potential of the organisation and its interface with business and community
- Scans the external and internal environments and looks for opportunities in technological developments and globalisation
- Identifies priorities for change, and initiates strategies to meet the organisation’s changing environment
- Builds the right capability mix of: people, resources, systems, structures, culture, leadership and relationships to achieve future outcomes
- Ensures portfolio effort contributes to cross-government priorities, whilst maintaining the integrity of the individual organisation
- Quickly grasps the essence and the underlying structure of anything
- Acts appropriately according to the situation and is seen as considered and balanced (eg delivers tough messages in a compassionate way)
- Easily makes connections among previously unrelated notions, and comes up with new and unique ideas
- Is good at encouraging the creativity of others and demonstrates good judgement about which creative ideas and suggestions will work
Operating Skills

**Definition:**
Leaders create focus within their organisations and are results oriented. They find ways to eliminate roadblocks and zero in on the vital few issues that require their attention. They understand organisational processes and identify systemic opportunities for synergy and integration. They create strong teams by empowering people, fostering open dialogue, effectively allocating resources and ensuring that individuals work together. They use teams to work across boundaries and accomplish integrated tasks and sustained coordinated efforts. In doing this, they continually support the development of their team; coaching them and providing opportunities that will stretch them.

**Indicators**
- Measures performance against goals and evaluates results
- Anticipates & adjusts for problems & roadblocks
- Defines success in terms of the whole team
- Identifies appropriate evaluation methodologies to measure success
- Provides challenging and stretching tasks and assignments

Organisational positioning skills

**Definition:**
Leaders understand the political and organisational context within which they work. They are sensitive to political processes and anticipate risks and how others may respond. They can manoeuvre through complex political situations effectively and quietly whilst maintaining Public Service standards of political neutrality. They know how to get things done within the political and organisational context and understand the origin and reasoning behind key policies, practices and procedures. They understand how to work with different organisational cultures.

**Indicators**
- Demonstrates a deep understanding of the principles and conventions of government and the constitutional, legal and politically neutral “whole of government” basis on which the New Zealand Public Service operates (i.e., the conventions, structure, functions, and objectives of the Westminster system, MMP government and the wider cultural, economic and social environment)\(^3\)
- Works effectively within an environment where politics coupled with high public and media scrutiny are an intrinsic part of organisational life
- Can navigate complex political situations effectively and quietly
- Views corporate politics as a necessary part of organisational life and works to adjust to that reality
- Prepares advice, delivers services and makes decisions by using analytically sound, well-rounded, informed and inclusive approaches
- Demonstrates an ability to deliver results through both formal channels and the informal network
- Demonstrates an ability to take a broad perspective and examines the implications of a particular situation in terms of the wider organisational and sector context

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\(^3\) **Note:** A person joining the New Zealand Public Service at managerial level or above (from the private sector or overseas) may need to complete specific work experience and targeted development activities to develop this knowledge.