

Purpose

This is advice on supporting **employee-led networks**. This is one of the five Papa Pounamu mandatory requirements that agencies are expected to plan and report on. Advice is available for each of the mandatory requirements:

- Cultural Competence
- Addressing Bias
- Inclusive Leadership
- Building Relationships
- **Employee-led Networks**

The five mandatory requirements are designed to complement and work together with existing diversity and inclusion commitments to make the most positive impact across all diversity dimensions.

What is an employee-led network?

An employee-led network (ELN) is a co-ordinated group of employees who voluntarily come together around common objectives. Our public service employee-led networks promote and support the goals and needs of diverse communities who are employed in the Public Service.

Why are employee networks important?

Employee-led networks play a significant role in creating inclusive workplaces. They can provide a sense of belonging for our public service employees. An employee-led network can also provide a space for employees to have their voices heard. Employee-led networks can increase engagement, productivity and encourage innovation.

Employee-led networks can contribute to the attraction and retention of diverse workforce talent. They can support professional development and give visibility of emerging talent and future leaders.

How can the Public Service actively encourage employee-led networks?

Across the Public Service there are a variety of employee-led networks, from those that are just starting out to those that are well established.

Supporting employee-led networks can take many forms. This support could include, but is not limited to:

- senior leadership engagement
- working with an executive sponsor
- resourcing and encouraging networks
- enabling all staff to attend network meetings
- enabling representation in cross-agency networks.

To make positive progress in supporting both existing and new employee-led networks, agencies must intentionally plan, do and report.

Planning

Each agency will need to assess and determine the best approach for how their organisation provides support to employee-led networks. During the planning stage engage with the existing employee-led networks to find out what would be most helpful to them.

The levels of engagement and support will look different for each agency and for each employee-led network. This will be based on the size of the agency, current relationships, the existing level of organisational engagement and the maturity of the network. All agencies should outline their planned approach to engaging and increasing support of ELNs in their forward annual plans.

Example – we are a small agency, so we partnered with another agency on one of our three networks. All new and existing employee-led networks have an executive sponsor. For the partnered ELN, the executive sponsor is from the other agency. All ELNs have access to communications support, resourced to engage with members and projects. We are planning to refresh our induction programme and will share information about ELNs to new staff.

Doing

Agencies are expected to actively engage with, support and resource employee-led networks. Agency's systems and structures should be set up to enable the effective functioning of employee-led networks. Leaders should 'walk the talk' by creating a positive culture that employee-led networks can thrive in.



In smaller agencies, other approaches may be appropriate. This may include having a single executive sponsor for all ELNs, joining up with another ELN across the system or in close geographical proximity.

Support can be offered in a variety of ways, such as:

- Leaders actively seek out ways to understand and promote the value ELNs provide to diverse groups and the agency.
- Ensuring that all employee-led networks have an executive sponsor who can provide support, remove barriers and create opportunities.
- Encouraging ELNs to share their views and recommendations, including providing updates, to the senior leadership team.
- Making sure that feedback and recommendations from ELNs is treated as a valuable contribution and acting as appropriate.
- Giving recognition of the work that an ELN and its members do towards supporting the agency's diversity and inclusion objectives.
- Enabling cross-agency representation and participation in cross-agency ELNs events.

Example – our leaders encourage the establishment and development of ELNs. Our agency also visibly supports ELNs. The time that it takes to be a member of an ELN and the commitment to ELN matters is viewed as authorised time that makes a valuable contribution to our agency. We provide internal communication support and provide administration support to help ELNs when they undertake network activities.

Reporting

In Annual Reports, agencies will be expected to include specific evidence or examples of action that demonstrates progress to actively engage, support and resource employee-led-networks.

Agencies should also report on how it takes account of the views and recommendations of ELNs when making decisions. Agencies can provide a summary of key highlights and achievements for employee-led networks.

Example – Three new networks were established bringing the total number of employee-led networks to eight. Seven of the employee networks have an executive sponsor; the remaining network wishes to be informal. All people leaders have supported staff to participate in network activities.

ELNs made the following recommendations, that will be implemented:

- *a new mentoring programme for disabled employees (planned for next quarter),*
- *a space for faith observance,*
- *celebration of community languages that is now included in the agency's diversity and inclusion calendar.*

For further information please visit [Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#) or contact the [Diversity and Inclusion Team](#).

Resource on employee-led networks

A resource with further information on developing and strengthening employee-led networks can be found [here](#). This covers key topics of interest to agencies and public servants. It links to templates that can be adapted to suit specific needs.

