Te Korowai Whetū
Social Cohesion

Social Cohesion

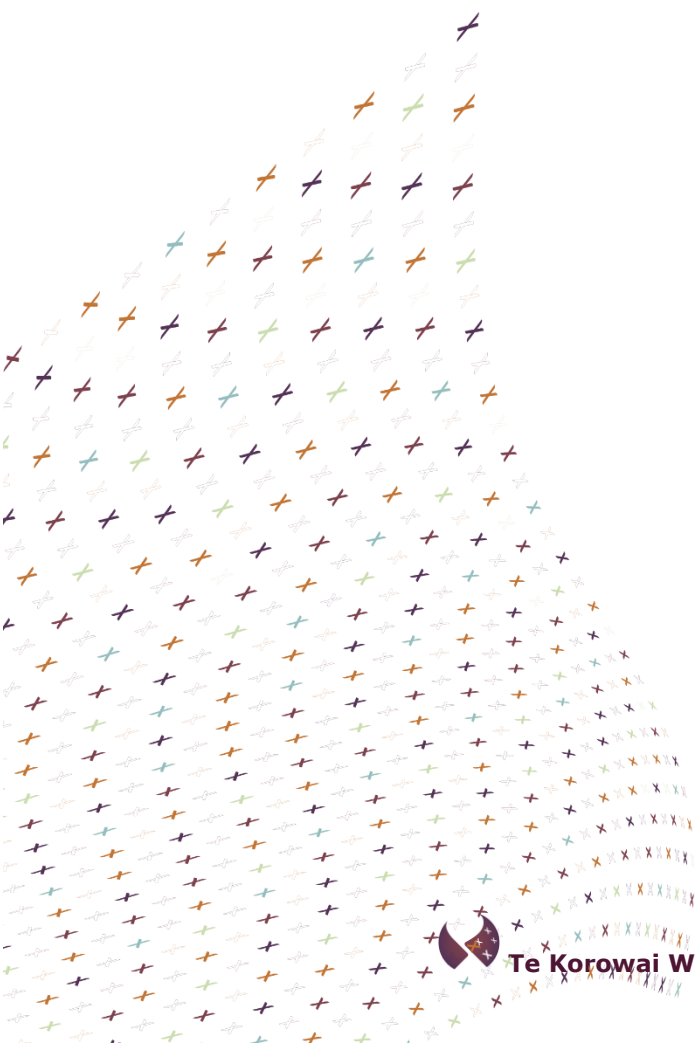# Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion Policy Guide

Social Cohesion in
Aotearoa New Zealand

Table of contents

Using this policy guide

What is Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion Policy Guide?

This Policy Guide supports you as policy analysts to conduct social cohesion analysis when developing policy advice or reviewing policy settings, by helping you to apply Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion Strategic Framework to your work.

It provides key questions and prompts across three phases of the policy development process: 'defining the problem and setting objectives', 'developing policy options and making recommendations', and 'implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the preferred policy option'. The aim of these questions is to help you to determine the impacts of your policy work on social cohesion and to maximise the potential to strengthen social cohesion through your work.

Limited time can often be a challenge when developing policy. In case of tight timeframes, we encourage you use the quick reference guide to conduct social cohesion analysis.

We recommend you read through the full guide when you do have time, in order to be better prepared for future policy projects.

How do I use this guide?

This guide is most effective when used alongside Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion Strategic Framework. The questions in this guide will prompt you to refer to the strategic framework to support your thinking.

This guide does not stand alone and should be used alongside existing resources. In particular, it does not replace more substantive Te Tiriti o Waitangi analysis required to ensure that the terms set out in Te Tiriti for a sustainable Māori-Crown partnership are embedded in your work. This guide can also be a helpful starting point to help you consider policy impacts on particular population groups but is complementary to other existing tools that can help you to work through these considerations in more detail.

What should I keep in mind while using this guide?

The policy process is not always linear. In your work, you may need to move between different stages of the process to provide robust, fit-for-context advice. We encourage you to refer to relevant sections of this guide at the initial stages of each of the phases, and to revisit stages when you can.

A background to social cohesion

Social cohesion is a concept with a lot of history. The first definition of social cohesion dates to 1897[1] and over the years, many social scientists, academics, and policy professionals have explored the concept of social cohesion and built on it further.

Given the multitude of benefits socially cohesive societies enjoy, social cohesion has been of increased policy interest since the mid-1990s. However, defining and measuring social cohesion has been an ongoing challenge due to the complexity of the concept, the different contexts in which definitions are developed, the different purposes for measuring social cohesion, and the availability of consistent, accurate, and continuous data.

Equitable access to key determinants of wellbeing

Benefits from diverse cultural strengths

Effective operation of commerce

Resilient and stable communities

Examples of how social cohesion benefits societies

Considering social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand

With Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Aotearoa New Zealand has a unique context for considering social cohesion. While Te Tiriti sets the terms for an ongoing and sustainable partnership between Māori and the Crown, over the last 30 years the diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand's population has increased significantly in terms of ethnicity, culture, gender identities, religion, values, languages spoken, ages, sexual orientation and whānau structure[2]. This presents new, complex challenges and opportunities for creating and maintaining a socially cohesive Aotearoa New Zealand.

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1 French sociologist Émile Durkheim defined social cohesion in 1897 as a characteristic of society that shows the interdependence in between individuals of that society. Durkheim coined to social cohesion (1) the absence of latent social conflict (any conflict based on for e.g., wealth, ethnicity, race, and gender) and (2) the presence of strong social bonds (e.g., civic society, responsive democracy, and impartial law enforcement).

2Report: Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019

Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion

Defining social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand

Social cohesion was a key topic of interest in the Report on Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain, which made several recommendations to strengthening social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand. This included coordinating a whole-of-government approach to building social cohesion, and developing a social cohesion strategic framework and monitoring and evaluation regime with appropriate measures and indicators of social cohesion.

In response to these recommendations, MSD undertook extensive engagement with diverse communities to explore how social cohesion was understood in Aotearoa New Zealand and what the key challenges to social cohesion were.

MSD used the definition of social cohesion included in the Report of the Royal Commission as a starting point to define social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand. This definition was developed by Professor Paul Spoonley, Robin Peace, Andrew Butcher and Damian O'Neill, and is endorsed by Cabinet. It describes a socially cohesive society as one in which all individuals and groups have a sense of:

1. *Belonging*: a sense of being part of the community, trust in others and respect for law and human rights;
2. *Inclusion*: equity of opportunities and outcomes in work, income, education, health and housing;
3. *Participation*: involvement in social and community activities and in political and civic life;
4. *Recognition*: valuing diversity and respecting differences; and
5. *Legitimacy*: confidence in public institutions

This definition largely resonated with those who participated in the social cohesion engagements and was therefore foundational to developing Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion Strategic Framework.

Some other key insights from the engagement included:

- Need to value diversity
- Need to consider how intersecting identities create compounding negative experiences and additional challenges
- Need for any work to strengthen social cohesion to be adequately informed of Māori rights and interest

You can read about our engagement findings in the 'What we've heard' document.

Learnings from engagement were used to develop a range of tools and resources to strengthen social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand, which include a strategic framework (illustrative version), a measurement framework, a government work programme, and information sheets designed for local government, businesses, cultural sector, communities, and individuals.

The baseline report (summarised version) establishes what social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand looks like currently and provides a starting point for measuring social cohesion over time.

Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion Strategic Framework

The strategic framework provides a roadmap for supporting progress towards the vision for a socially cohesive Aotearoa New Zealand, enabling us to coordinate our efforts around a common goal to maximise impact.

Our **vision** is a society in which all "**people, whānau and communities are thriving together**". To realise this vision, we need to focus on achieving five key outcomes, which define a socially cohesive Aotearoa New Zealand as a society in which people, whānau and communities:

- Are connected and feel like they **belong**
- Are willing and able to **participate**
- Are included and experience **equity**
- Are **recognised** for who they are and **respect** others
- **Trust** each other and institutions

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is viewed as the blueprint of social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand and is foundational to any approach to define and improve social cohesion.

Alongside taking a Te Tiriti o Waitangi centred approach, the strategic framework takes a human rights approach to social cohesion by building on the principles of equity, participation, respect, and eliminating discrimination.

The **focus areas for action** help us prioritise and target activity towards key changes that need to take place to achieve the shared vision.

Six **focus areas for action** sit below the outcomes to help us prioritise and target activity towards key changes that need to take place to achieve the shared vision.

Four **enablers for social cohesion** describe ways to make sure that work to strengthen social cohesion is as effective as it can be, because *how* we do things matters as much as *what* we do.

What can government do to strengthen social cohesion?

While action to strengthen social cohesion is supported by multiple groups across society, including communities, businesses and the arts sector, government can make specific contributions to social cohesion through the laws and policies that it develops. This includes, for example, through developing fair policies to help tackle different forms of discrimination and ensure equitable access to housing, employment, education, and health services.

The way in which government develops laws and policies can contribute to social cohesion. For example, undertaking meaningful consultation and ensuring the transparency of processes can contribute to the social cohesion outcomes of trust, participation and recognition and respect.

By considering social cohesion in the policy process, you will also work towards incorporating the Public Service values into your work and toward fulfilling the Crown's commitments under Te Tiriti o Waitangi through working to address historical and ongoing injustices which have created barriers to social cohesion for Māori.
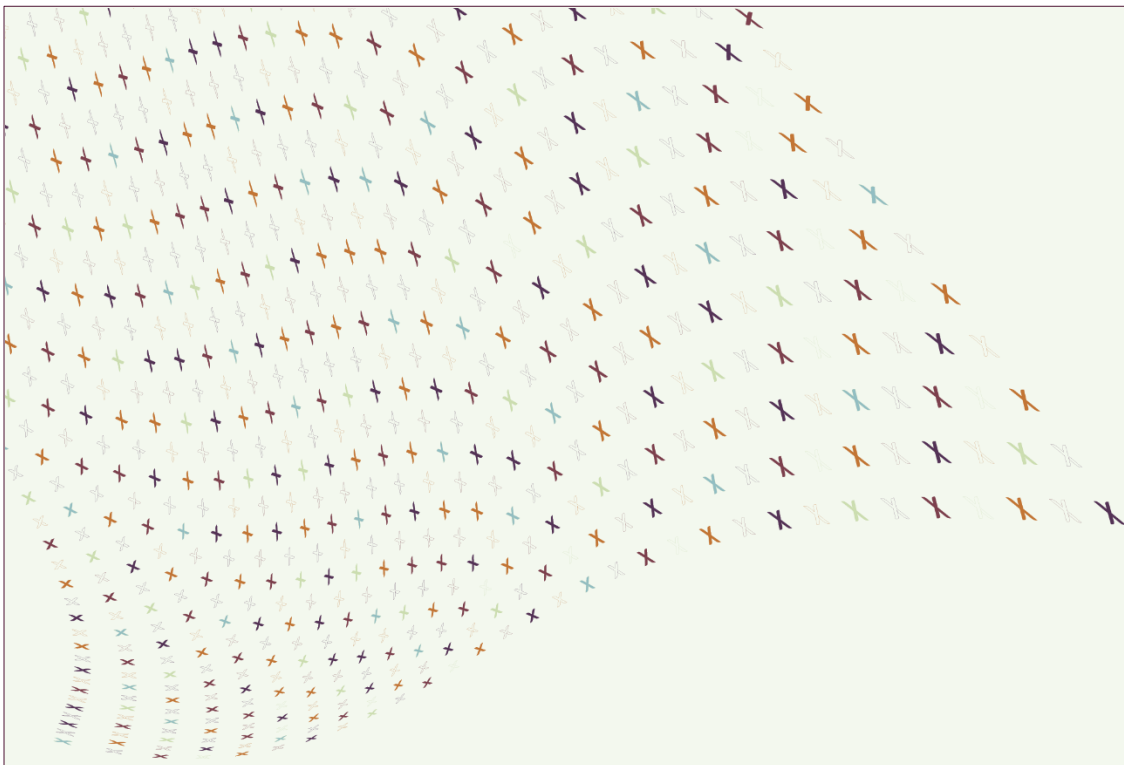
Undertaking social cohesion analysis across the policy development process

Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion Policy Guide

Phase 1: Defining the problem or opportunity and setting objectives

This phase of the policy process involves working to understand the problem or opportunity that you are looking to address and determining the desired objectives and outcomes for your policy work. During this phase you will:

- Identify how your work could impact social cohesion outcomes
- Identify challenges to social cohesion that you could target through your policy work
- Understand how you could gather additional information to better understand your work's potential impact on social cohesion

Understanding the potential impacts of your work on social cohesion at an early stage will give you a strong foundation across the policy development process, helping you to maximise your work's impact on strengthening social cohesion.

Identifying impacts on social cohesion outcomes

Using the strategic framework, answer the questions below to understand which social cohesion outcomes are most relevant to your policy work.

- Consider the direct and indirect impacts, positive and negative, your issue is having or will have on **all** the social cohesion outcomes outlined in the strategic framework. For example, you could consider the following questions while assessing impacts on the outcome of '**belonging**':
  - o Would this work impact identified population groups' social networks and support systems? If yes, how?
  - o Would this work impact the places people, live, work, play, or learn in? If yes, how?
- Are there likely to be any unintended consequences or risks for the social cohesion outcomes?
- Which social cohesion outcomes will your work prioritise and why?

> ### Different groups of people may be impacted in different ways
>
> Policies are often designed as 'neutral' to be equal, but this doesn't necessarily make them equitable and can perpetuate systemic barriers. Therefore, it is important to assess how your policy would impact different population groups.
>
> For example, when thinking about impacts that a policy problem or opportunity might have on a person's or group's experience of **equity**, you could ask yourself:
>
> - Which group(s) of people are being impacted by this policy or service?
> - Are different groups of people being impacted differently? If so, why?
>
> Consider impacts on Māori, Pacific people, ethnic, faith groups, women, LGBTQUI+, disabled people, migrants, older and younger people, and rural communities.
>
> If your policy issue is likely to have impacts on specific groups, refer to the range of tools and resources available, for example Kapasa and Bringing Gender In available on CabGuide that have been developed to assess population-specific impacts.
>
> Te Tiriti analysis can help identify how your work can contribute to meeting the Crown's responsibilities under Te Tiriti and

Identifying challenges to social cohesion and guiding future action

How we do things is often as important as what we do. Use the questions below to think about key challenges to social cohesion that your work could target and how you can contribute to the focus areas for action outlined in the strategic framework.

- How does your work impact the focus areas of action in the strategic framework? Are there any current actions that could be exacerbating negative impacts on people or groups? For example, think about how people or groups may be:
  - Experiencing discrimination or prejudice within your policy
  - Facing challenges in accessing services provided within your policy context
- What systems, structures, or processes are enabling these issues? For example, how might structures or systems be maintaining or exacerbating inequities, such as from colonisation or discriminatory practices?
- How could you address these challenges through your work?

Gathering additional information to better understand potential impacts on and existing challenges to social cohesion

The questions below can help you think about how to use the enablers for social cohesion when developing your understanding of key social cohesion impacts and challenges.

- What additional data or research would contribute to understanding the impacts of the work on the social cohesion outcomes? Consider:
  - How could you use qualitative data alongside quantitative data to get a fuller picture of the policy landscape?
  - How are you ensuring that your data sources are inclusive?

Inclusive research and data support the development of socially cohesive policies

Inclusive research and data can help develop policies, strategies, and products that are aligned with community needs and aspirations.

Quantitative data can provide an objective view of the context at a macro level.

Qualitative data provides rich insights into lived experiences which can be used to design interventions and formulate equitable policies that are effective in meeting diverse community needs and aspirations.

Using both quantitative and qualitative data can help build a more complete picture of your policy context.

Resources such as the Health statistics and data sets and Ethnic Communities Data Dashboard can provide different lens to developing policy options.

Stats NZ can provide customised datasets where possible, for example, work undertaken to analyse Census data using the religious affiliation dataset to examine socioeconomic outcomes for faith-based communities.

Connect with your Research and Evaluation team to understand how you can incorporate inclusive data to inform your policy work.

Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion Policy Guide

Phase 2: Developing and analysing policy options and making recommendations

This phase of the policy process involves identifying and developing a range of policy options, assessing the extent to which they address the policy problem or opportunity, and identifying a preferred course of action.

During this phase you will:

- Develop policy options that maximise the potential for strengthening social cohesion
- Determine how different policy options could contribute to the social cohesion outcomes you identified as being relevant to your policy work
- Determine how different policy options could address the key barriers to social cohesion you identified as areas to target

By identifying positive implications for social cohesion, you can build strong policy rationale to support a recommended option. By identifying potential risks to social cohesion at this stage, you can act to address or mitigate negative impacts.

Developing policy options that maximise impact on social cohesion

The questions below can help you consider how to apply the enablers from the social cohesion strategic framework to maximise benefits to social cohesion.

- How can you consider communities as you develop policy options? Consider:
  - How you could use inclusive data from impacted groups to inform your thinking
  - How you could incorporate community-led research to help you develop options
  - Whether there are opportunities for you to engage with communities to understand their needs and aspirations, recognising that these may vary across groups
  - How you can create opportunities for communities to develop and lead on their own solutions
- Are there any other novel or innovative solutions that you could explore? Consider lessons learned from related activity carried out previously in Aotearoa New Zealand or internationally.

Community engagement supports the development of equitable policies

Communities are critical in building and maintaining social cohesion. How you consult and engage with communities contributes to social cohesion, particularly to the outcomes of participation and trust. Ongoing and meaningful consultation will help you develop sustainable and equitable solutions that meet the needs of communities, increasing communities' trust and confidence in the Public Service.

You can refer to the Community Engagement Design Tool or the Policy Community Engagement Tool alongside other tools and resources developed by The Policy Project at DPMC to assess which level of public participation might be most relevant for your work.

Resources are also available to help you engage effectively with specific communities. For example, Te Arawhiti provide tools and resources to support effective engagement with Māori, and Yavu provides guidance for engagement with Pacific communities.

 Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion Policy Guide

Assessing how the policy options impact social cohesion

Building on the analysis from Phase 1, the questions below to help you consider how a policy option impacts social cohesion and what trade-offs you would need to consider when you come to make recommendations. This analysis will be complemented by relevant, robust qualitative and quantitative evidence as well as insights you might have from using other policy tools.

- How does the policy option positively or negatively impact social cohesion outcomes? Consider this in the light of social cohesion outcomes prioritised in phase 1.
- How does the policy option address the challenges to social cohesion identified previously?
- Would the policy option have any unintended consequences or risks for the social cohesion outcomes or focus areas of action?
- If you have identified potential negative or unintended impacts, what considerations could be included within your policy option to mitigate or eliminate these impacts?
- Are the impacts that you have identified likely to be more or less severe for particular groups of people? Think about the groups identified in phase one who might be particularly impacted.
- What social cohesion trade-offs would you need to make if you progressed with this option?

Recommending a preferred policy option

Based on your analysis of the policy options, you may find that the policy option that does the most to strengthen social cohesion may not necessarily be the one that best meets all your policy objectives (your recommended option), and you may need to balance these considerations. Use the following questions to unpack this further and consider how you can communicate any trade-offs in your policy advice.

- How does your recommended option contribute to social cohesion?
- Are there any significant risks that this option could pose to social cohesion?
- If yes, how do you intend to mitigate these risks? Some potential mitigations include:
  - Adding flexibility within the policy to recognise different groups' needs and reduce negative impacts
  - Adding a monitoring element to assess social cohesion impacts to inform any future interventions that may be required.

Building a socially cohesive society is intensive and requires long-term investment

The current policy work alone may not be able to contribute to all the social cohesion outcomes, therefore, we encourage you to take a forward-thinking approach and identify ways in which your work can contribute to social cohesion in the longer-term. This could be by working with other government agencies and external stakeholders that are working towards similar outcomes, by consistently monitoring the progress made towards longer-term goals and adapting action, etc.

Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion Policy Guide

Phase 3: Implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the preferred policy option

This phase of the policy process involves developing an implementation plan, putting in place processes and structures to deliver your policy, and establishing an approach to monitoring the policy to evaluate its effectiveness. This evaluation can be used to iterate policies where necessary to improve outcomes.

This phase of the process is likely to be led by operational colleagues; however, policy staff can play a role in supporting or influencing implementation and monitoring to ensure that social cohesion continues to be taken into consideration.

During this phase there is the opportunity to:
- Consider how the policy can be implemented in a way that contributes to social cohesion outcomes and mitigates any risks identified to social cohesion
- Consider appropriate methods and approaches to assess social cohesion impacts of the recommended policy option

Outlining ways to maximise benefits and mitigate risks to social cohesion during implementation

The questions below will help you understand the impact of the implementation plan on social cohesion.
- How do you think implementation of the policy option could positively or negatively impact social cohesion outcomes?
- How does the implementation of the policy option address the challenges to social cohesion identified previously?
- Are there any significant risks to social cohesion that have been identified when considering the implementation? Could these risks be more or less relevant for particular population groups?
- If yes, how would you mitigate or eliminate these risks?

Meeting community needs through implementation

The way that policies and associated products are implemented can contribute to strengthening social cohesion. For example, an implementation plan that is reliable, transparent, and accessible to all relevant groups can contribute to important benefits in this area.

The questions below can help you maximise your impact on social cohesion through implementation:

- How might different communication or implementation plans be required to meet needs of different groups or people?
- Are there ways that you could empower communities to determine or support how the solution is implemented within their context?
- Are associated public facing products clear and transparent?
- Are associated public facing products available in different languages and alternate formats to ensure accessibility?

Assessing social cohesion impacts of the recommended policy option

The questions below can be used to help ensure that the data collected will be helpful in enabling an assessment of whether the policy is contributing to social cohesion as you expected.

- How can relevant qualitative and quantitative evidence be gathered to assess whether the policy is having the intended effects?
- How do you intend to assess the impact of the policy on social cohesion? Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion Measurement Framework could help as a starting point to think about potential indicators or areas to incorporate into monitoring and evaluation in your context.
- Which people or groups will need to provide input on how the policy is working?
  - Does that the approach to monitoring gather data from across all affected groups, to understand how the policy is impacting different groups?
  - Is data being gathered from people or groups who have intersecting identities?

Involving people and communities in data collection

Gathering diverse and inclusive data helps understand needs and gaps of different groups to guide prioritisation and support decision-making. Treating data that people and communities provide with respect, including being transparent about how data will be used, can help increase communities' trust in the Public Service.

The questions below can help guide your approach to developing inclusive data collection method/s:

- How are people and groups being encouraged to share their experience in accessing and using the policy?
- How are you being transparent about how the data is collected and how it will be used? Consider different groups' rights and interests in data collection and protection, for example Māori data sovereignty
- Would the approach to data collection need to be adapted to recognise the specific needs of different groups? How?

Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion Policy Guide

Want to find out more about social cohesion?

Te Korowai Whetū Tools and Resources

Te Korowai Whetū Social Cohesion tools and resources are available online and include:

- A strategic framework which sets out a vision for social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand, outlining five outcome areas for achieving this vision.
- A measurement framework which sets out indicators to help us understand and measure social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand through multiple data sources, and a baseline report which used the measurement framework to provide a starting point for measuring social cohesion over time.
- A government work programme which identifies existing activities across government that contribute to social cohesion and proposes new actions for government agencies to embed social cohesion tools and resources in their contexts.
- Information sheets for individuals, communities, businesses, local government and the cultural sector, providing practical tips and information for each group to employ in their own mahi.

Existing policy tools

This guide does not stand alone and should be used alongside existing resources. The existing policy tools listed below could be helpful as you consider the impacts of your policy and the policy process in more detail:

- **Te Tiriti o Waitangi analysis** which applies the terms and concepts in the texts of the Treaty to policy development and implementation.
- **Kapasa** – The Pacific Policy Analysis Tool which helps you incorporate the perspectives of Pacific peoples in the policy development process.
- **The Bringing Gender In tool** which helps you explore the gender impacts of your policy.
- **The Child Impact Assessment tool** which helps you assess whether proposals will impact child wellbeing.
- Rural proofing guidance to help you assess the implications of policies on rural communities.
- **The Community Engagement Design tool** or the **Policy Community Engagement tool** alongside other tools and resources developed by The Policy Project at DPMC to assess which level of public participation might be most relevant for your work.
- Tools and resources to support effective engagement with Māori
- **Yavu** which can help you with culturally responsive and sustainable engagement with Pacific communities.

Contact us on social_cohesion@msd.govt.nz for any further assistance.

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