

Government - Community Engagement

A comparative report on recent initiatives in the United States and New Zealand, looking at how the governments can better engage with their publics

In the past year, both the New Zealand and the United States governments' have reexamined the way in which they engage with their publics, calling for public opinion into how they can improve the relationship between government agencies and the people and communities they serve.

While each initiative has asked different questions and, it appears, will inevitably come to different conclusions, both centred around the need for government to foster a more collaborative and transparent relationship with the public, as well as strengthen trust between citizens and those who govern them.

In the United States focus has centred on opening up lines of communication and allowing the public freer access to government information; whilst in New Zealand the approach has focused on building more direct interdependent relationships between government agencies and the community and voluntary sector.

Even though New Zealand and the United States appear to have taken very different approaches for tackling similar concerns, each initiative is a worthy example of the way in which governments around the world are re-examining their relationships with their constituents and striving for a more engaged approach to politics and the running of their nations.

The below table outlines the United States' *Open Government Directive*¹ and New Zealand's *From Talk to Action: Government Engagement with citizens and communities*, and provides comments² on differences and similarities between the two initiatives.

	United States	New Zealand	Comments
1. Main Report	"Open Government Directive"	"From Talk to Action: Government Engagement with citizens and communities" <i>Note: this led to a Ministerial Cabinet paper "<u>Government Commitment to Building Strong Community Relationships</u>"</i>	See Appendix A for background information and notes on <i>From Talk to Action</i> and associated reports. The United States Open Government Directive had not been released at the time of this report's submission.
2. Lead government department	General Services Administration (GSA) and the Office of Management and Budget, alongside the newly appointed Federal Chief Technology Officer (CTO)	Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector (OCVS), Ministry of Social Development	The agencies who are responsible for the reports appear to indicate what each

¹ At the time that this report was submitted, 4 December 2009, the United States' *Open Government Directive* had not been released - all information in this report was gauged from pre-released documents, the White House Open Government website and articles.

² All comments and observations are the opinion of the author, made from reading through materials about the two initiatives.

		<i>Note: The paper was provided to OCVS by the Building Better Government Engagement (BBGE) reference group, which was set up by OCVS to provide advice on ways to enhance central government engagement with citizens and communities.</i>	government wants from their initiative (as will become clear later in this report) – New Zealand has a very strong focus on the community, while the United States has a strong technology and information access focus.
3. Scope	Federal government initiative	Nation-wide central government initiative	
4. Country background	Type of government: Constitution-based federal republic Population: 307,212,123 (July 2009 est.)	Type of government: Parliamentary democracy Population: 4,213,418 (July 2009 est.)	
5. Background	<p>One of President Barack Obama’s first official acts was to issue a memorandum on Transparency and Open Government, on 21 January 2009, directing the person in the new position of federal chief technology officer to recommend within 120 days steps agencies should take to <u>foster collaboration, participation and transparency</u> in government.</p> <p>President Obama stated: “My administration is committed to creating an unprecedented level of openness in Government. We will work together to ensure <u>public trust</u> and establish a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration. Openness will strength our democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in Government.”</p> <p>The memorandum called for the instillation of three main principles in the working of the government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Transparency</u> – to enable greater accountability, efficiency, and economic opportunity by making government data and operations more open • <u>Participation</u> – to create early and effective opportunities to drive greater and more diverse expertise into government decision-making • <u>Collaboration</u> – to generate new ideas for solving problems by fostering cooperation across government departments, across all levels of government and with the public <p>Aneesh Chopra was confirmed as Chief Technology Officer on 21 May 2009, the</p>	<p>On 20 – 21 June 2007, a national forum involving the community and voluntary sector and government was held in Wellington. The main goals of the forum were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enable sector organizations to discuss ways to address cross-cutting issues affecting the sector and share their proposals with government agencies and Ministers • To establish an enduring process for engagement between the sector and government to improve relationships <p>Participants called for the public service to <u>improve consultation processes</u> and <u>create a more respectful and collaborative culture of engagement</u>. In response, OCVS undertook work to improve government understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good practice in building relationships • Methods of dialogue and deliberation • The value of collaborative approaches to decision-making <p>It is believed that strong community-government relationships, and effective community engagement, can enhance community capacity to address issues, <u>strengthen trust</u> in government, improve government transparency, and create better-informed and more sustainable policies.</p> <p>Increasingly there is an emphasis in government on <u>developing collaborative processes and partnerships</u>. Citizens have a right to <u>participate</u> in defining the problems and decisions that affect them, whether</p>	<p>In both instances there was seen to be a need to better government <u>transparency</u>, foster a more <u>collaborative</u> relationship between government and citizens and create more avenues for citizens to <u>participate</u> in decision-making, as well as strengthen <u>trust</u>.</p> <p>Collaboration appears to be one of the most important terms in the decision to move forward with both nations initiatives.</p> <p>Other related terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teamwork - Partnership - Group effort - Association - Alliance - Relationship - Cooperation <p>All these terms point to working together towards active participation or engagement. It implies a step further from consultation, which in turn has been viewed as</p>

	<p>same day the report was initially due to be released.</p>	<p>directly or via community and voluntary organizations.</p> <p>The Building Better Government Engagement (BBGE) reference group was established in 2008 to provide advice to the OCVS on ways to enhance central government engagement with citizens and communities. It is an advisory group to the Government and the views expressed within <i>From Talk to Action</i> are those of the Reference group and are not Government policy.</p> <p>The BBGE concluded that, “while there are good examples of central government engagement with communities, <u>central government agencies are not yet sufficiently skilled at, or committed to, collaborating with citizens and communities.</u>”</p>	<p>a move away from a one-way relationship where the government gives information to the public without expecting an active response.</p>
<p>6. What is the report?</p>	<p>Prior to the release of the report, in September 2009, Chief Technology Officer Aneesh Chopra said the Open Government Directive would outline steps federal agencies need to take to “hardwire the capability” for transparent, collaborative, participatory government into their processes.</p>	<p><i>From Talk to Action: Government engagement with citizens and communities</i> is the final report from the Building Better Government Engagement (BBGE) reference group. The report outlines recommendations from the reference group as to how government can more effectively engage with citizens and communities, and led to a Cabinet paper <i>Government Commitment to Building Strong Community Relationships</i> which was presented to Parliament by the Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector.</p>	<p>The New Zealand report, <i>From Talk to Action</i> was not developed by a government agency, and represents the views of the Reference group, so cannot be viewed as government policy but did directly influence Cabinet action and future work.</p> <p>Where as, the Open Government Directive was a White House project and could be taken to represent future government policy.</p>
<p>7. Audience</p>	<p>The report focused on how government agencies can be more transparent, participatory, and collaborative with the <u>general public</u> – in particular it appears to be geared towards creating a freer flow of information between <u>individuals</u> and government agencies.</p>	<p>The report and following process focused on the relationship between the government agencies and <u>community and voluntary organisations.</u></p>	<p>While both initiatives are focused on how to make the government engaged better with the public, they have taken very different approaches. The United States initiative has attempted to go directly to the public and open up the way in which people access government information. The New Zealand initiative has</p>

			<p>focused more on how Government can improve its relationship and engagement with community organisations, which in turn should improve government – public engagement by association.</p>
<p>8. Timeframe</p>	<p>21 January 2009 President Obama issued a memorandum on Transparency and Open Government calling for an “Open Government Directive” recommending the steps agencies should take to foster collaboration, participation and transparency in government. The President gave the person in the new position of federal chief technology officer 120 days to issue the directive.</p> <p>21 May 2009 Initial deadline for the Open Government Directive</p> <p>21 May 2009 Aneesh Chopra confirmed as Chief Technology Officer (CTO)</p> <p>21-28 May 2009 Online public brainstorm (see section 9)</p> <p>2-14 June 2009 Discussion phase (see section 9)</p> <p>15-19 June 2009 Drafting phase (see section 9)</p> <p>Post-20 June 2009 The CTO was to work with the Office of Management and Budget and the General Service Administration to develop formal proposals for open government.</p> <p>10 October 2009 White House Officials release statement saying that the directive is to be issued in as soon as two weeks.</p> <p>3 November 2009 The Office of Science and Technology Policy said through its Twitter feed that the President would release the Open Government Directive in mid-November.</p>	<p>20 – 21 June 2007 National forum involving the community and voluntary sector and government</p> <p>2008 The Building Better Government Engagement (BBGE) reference group was established to provide advice to the OCVS on ways to enhance central government engagement with citizens and communities.</p> <p>December 2008 Discussion paper <i>It’s More Than Talk</i>, which was developed by the BBGE reference group, was released for public comment and feedback was gathered over a three month period (see section 9)</p> <p>July 2009 The final report, <i>From Talk to Action: Government engagement with citizens and communities</i> was presented to the Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector</p> <p>31 August 2009 The Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector presented a ministerial paper <i>Government Commitment to Building Strong Community Relationships</i> to Cabinet</p> <p>11 November 2009 A National Community-Government Forum, held in Wellington, was an opportunity for the community sector, government officials, the Prime Minister and Ministers to discuss the Government’s response to report (see section 17)</p>	<p>The time made available for public comment in the United States was limited (online brainstorm lasting one week) suggesting that only those who were already well prepared, and perhaps well-connected, would have had the opportunity to take part.</p> <p>Aneesh Chopra was confirmed as Chief Technology Officer (CTO) on the same day (May 21) that the Open Government Directive was originally due to be released, which was also the day that the online brainstorm session was launched. It is fair to assume that the late appointment of the CTO is a significant reason as to why the directive has not been released as of December 4. Yet, his office was prepared to launch the initial stage of public comment, the online brainstorm, which begs the question why public consultation was not started earlier.</p>

	<p>4 December 2009 Open Government Directive not yet released.</p>		
<p>9. The Report Process</p>	<p>1. The Federal Chief Technology Officer (CTO), along with the General Services Administration (GSA) and the Office of Management and Budget sought public input, through the use of online tools, into how to better collaboration, participation and transparency in government. All consultation was carried out online.</p> <p>2. Three-phase consultation process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase One – Brainstorm: An opportunity for the public to share ideas and recommendations on how to make government more open. This phase ran from 21 – 28 May 2009, as an online brainstorming session, which allowed the public to submit ideas, discuss and refine others’ ideas, and vote the ideas that they thought were best to the top of the list. The National Academy of Public Administration, a Congressionally chartered, non-profit, non-partisan institution, on behalf of the White House, hosted the brainstorming session. • Phase Two – Discussion: Dig deeper on the ideas and challenges identified in phase one. This phase ran from 3 – 13 June 2009. • Phase three – Draft: Collaborate on crafting constructive proposals to address challenges from the Discussions phase. A wiki, where the public could participate, was used to draft language for the recommendations. This phase ran from 15 – 19 June 2009. <p>3. Feed back from the three-phase online consultation was then collated and reviewed by the CTO</p> <p>4. The final report was yet to be released at the time that this report was submitted.</p>	<p>1. The Building Better Government Engagement (BBGE) reference group comprised of nine people from community and government agencies, each of whom have a particular interest and expertise in community engagement. The group put together a discussion paper, <i>It’s More Than Talk</i> looking at options for building knowledge, skills and values about effective community engagement within the public service.</p> <p>2. <i>It’s More Than Talk</i> was released in December 2008, and over the next three months public feedback was sort via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written submissions • Five meetings were held with invited participants from the community and government sectors, in five main cities • One meeting with a Wellington based government stakeholder engagement managers’ network • On-line discussion forum on the website ‘Bang the Table’ <p>3. Feedback collected during the consultation process (see below) was collated and reviewed by the reference group and the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector.</p> <p>4. The final report, <i>From Talk to Action: Government engagement with citizens and communities</i> was reported to the Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector in July 2009.</p> <p>5. On 31 August 2009, the Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector presented a ministerial paper, <i>Government Commitment to Building Strong Community Relationships</i>, to Cabinet, which outlined a programme of action in response to the <i>From Talk to Action</i> report by BBGE and a <i>Good Intentions</i> report by the Association of Non-Governmental Organisations of Aotearoa (ANGOA). From this Cabinet report it was agreed that a Community-Government forum was to be held to discuss the possible development of a Relationship Agreement to replace the 2001 <i>Statement of Government Intentions for an Improved Community-Government</i></p>	<p>The United States initiative was limited to online engagement and lacked face-to-face discussion; while the New Zealand initiative utilised a range of different engagement tools – online discussions, face-to-face forums and written submissions.</p> <p>The timeframe for gathering information was very limited in the United States’ initiative and focused on new technology – what about those communities and people who did not have internet access, or were unaware that the consultation process was being carried out?</p> <p>In New Zealand, only 5 face-to-face meetings were held in main urban cities – however it could be assumed that the relative small size of country would hopefully mean than rural communities were able to attend and represented in discussions.</p> <p>The size of the United States, geographically and population, would make any consultation difficult to conduct in a short amount of time.</p>

		<i>Relationship</i> (see section 15).	
<p>10. Questions posed to the public</p>	<p>Under phase one of the consultation process, the type of comments the White House were looking for included, “innovative approaches to policy, specific project suggestions, government-wide or agency-specific instructions, and any relevant examples and stories relating to law, policy, technology, culture, or practice”.</p> <p>The online brainstorming site outlined some questions in an attempt to stimulate ideas and comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How might the operations of government be made more transparent and accountable? - How might federal advisory committees, rulemaking or electronic rulemaking be better used to drive greater expertise into decision-making? - What alternative models exist to improve the quality of decision-making and increase opportunities for citizen participation? - What strategies might be employed to adopt greater use of Web 2.0 in agencies? - What policy impediments to innovation in government currently exist? - What is the best way to change the culture of government to embrace collaboration? - What changes in training or hiring of personnel would enhance innovation? - What performance measures are necessary to determine the effectiveness of open government policies? 	<p>In the discussion paper, <i>It’s More Than Talk</i>, the BBGE reference group suggested options for building engagement skills, knowledge and values in the public service. The report looked at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What community engagement is; its benefits; and different levels of engagement - A wide range of issues in government engagement - Current engagement-related projects and practices - Possible actions to improve engagement practices <p>The groups asked for public comment about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you think the engagement issues outlined in Section 2 (“Issues in government practices”) are accurate? - Do you agree with ideas for the way ahead in Section 4 (“Current engagement-related projects and practices”)? - Do you agree with the summary of possible actions in Section 5 (“Government commitment; organisational commitment; building government capability and building community capability”) and if so, which do you consider to be the top priorities? 	<p>The New Zealand initiative focused on first-hand engagement between government and communities and how this relationship could be improved – encouraging working together. The questions from the United States initiative centred more on policy and government functioning aspects – it seemed to be more focused on opening up the lines of communication between the government and individual citizens and organisations, but not necessarily direct engagement in the same way the New Zealand initiative appeared to be.</p>
<p>11. Public response to process</p>	<p>The online brainstorm, from 21 – 28 May 2009, generated 4,205 ideas and comments, under five primary topic areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transparency (1,614) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making data more accessible (983) • Making Government operations more open (528) • Records management (103) - Participation (722) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New strategies and techniques (463) • New tools and technologies (156) • Federal Advisory committees (23) • Rule making (80) - Collaboration (294) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between federal agencies (36) • Between federal, state and local governments (87) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 105 people attended the six face-to-face meetings - 28 written submissions; four from central government, three from local government, 18 from community and voluntary organisations, and five from individuals - The ‘Bang the Table’ online discussion had comments posted by 34 people and was viewed by 1,376 unique visitors 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public-private partnerships (93) • Do-it-yourself government (78) <p>– Capacity Building (285)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring & recruitment (53) • Performance appraisal (39) • Training & development (60) • Communications strategies (51) • Strategic planning & budgeting (82) <p>– Legal & Policy Changes (635)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal & policy challenges (635) <p>– (Uncategorised) (655)</p>		
<p>12. Proposals</p>	<p>Prior to the release of the report, in September 2009, Chief Technology Officer Aneesh Chopra said that among other things the Open Government Directive would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require agencies to release more data in machine-readable formats for public consumption, including interactive Websites <p>Despite President Obama’s memorandum asking for recommendations as to what agencies should take to foster collaboration, participation and transparency in government, current focus so far appears to be centered predominately on opening up lines of communication and allowing the public freer access to government information.</p>	<p><i>From Talk To Action</i> overview of recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government commitment • Culture change within government agencies • Accountability • Support for capacity building within government • Building coordination and collaboration • Engagement with iwi/Maori • Diversity considerations’ • Support for community-led development • Championing this work 	<p>At the writing of this report, the United States’ Open Government Directive was not yet release, so it was not clear what the concrete proposals would be, However, from news reports and speeches by the CTO in recent months it appears that the directive’s proposals will focus on access to information and opening up technology – this appears to satisfy only part of Obama’s request for a more collaborative, participatory and transparent government.</p>
<p>13. Comments & concerns over proposals</p>	<p>Sean Moulton, director of federal information policy at accountability group OMB watch, has said that comments made about the not-yet-released directive had a decidedly technical focus that concerned him. OMB watch prefers proposals that would change the fundamental management of information in government, not just the publishing of information. In response Greg Parsto, director of Institute for Health and Public Service Value at consulting firm Accenture, said he got the sense that the directive was not being driven by technology but by a desire to forge relationships with individuals and communities. “It’s not just about releasing information – it’s about eventually creating partnerships,” he said.</p> <p>Another question that has been raised is, how will the administration and the public know</p>		

	that transparency is having a beneficial effect on government services?		
<p>14. Current government commitment (as of Nov 2009)</p>	<p>After issuing the memorandum, the Obama administration took a number of steps to release more information to the public, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launching Data.gov, Recovery.gov and IT Dashboard websites; • Agreeing to release White House visitor logs; • Promising to accelerate Freedom of Information Act requests 	<p>On 31 August 2009, cabinet considered the paper, <i>From Talk To Action: Government Commitment to Building Strong Community Relationships</i>, which proposed a programme of actions to strengthen government engagement with citizens and communities.</p> <p>The cabinet paper noted that a relationship agreement could include a joint vision for working together, respective roles and responsibilities and commitments from both sides.</p> <p>Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed that a national Community-Government Forum in November 2009 would discuss development of a Relationship Agreement to replace the 2001 <i>Statement of Government Intentions for an Improved Community-Government Relationship</i> – section 15. • Agreed that the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector (OCVS), assisted by the State Services Commissions and Te Puni Kokiri, and in consultation with the Treasury and Office of the Auditor-General, will assess how community relationships can be included in wider work around improving and measuring government performance, by 30 November 2010. • Agreed that OCVS and the Cabinet Office would work to clarify guidance in the <i>CabGuide</i>³ regarding consultation with community and voluntary organisation on policy proposals. <p>That OCVS develop a set of Principles for Effective Engagement, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Balancing the value of inclusive and collaborative practices with the need for efficiency where issues have already been well canvassed. – Development through focus groups and online consultation. <p>Review of the <i>CabGuide</i> – currently unclear about whether or how community and voluntary organizations can be consulted on</p>	

³ The CabGuide is a website developed by the Cabinet office, which sets out advice to public servants on the procedures and operation of the New Zealand Cabinet, Cabinet Committees and Executive Council. <http://cabguide.cabinetoffice.govt.nz/>

		Cabinet papers.	
15. Steps forward		<p>Kia tutahi – Standing Together National Community-Government Forum</p> <p>On 31 August 2009, cabinet considered the paper, <i>From Talk To Action: Government Commitment to Building Strong Community Relationships</i>, and agreed that a national Community-Government Forum would be held to discuss future action.</p> <p><u>Face-to-face forum:</u> The Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector, Hon. Tariana Turia, hosted a national forum on 11 November 2009. It provided an opportunity for the community sector, government officials, the Prime Minister and Ministers to discuss the Government’s response to the BBGE’s report <i>From Talk to Action</i> and ANGOA’s report <i>Good Intentions – As Assessment of the Statement of Government Intentions for an Improved Community-Government Relationship</i>.</p> <p>The forum focused on possible development of a Relations Agreement to replace the 2001 <i>Statement of Government Intentions for an Improved Community-Government Relationship</i>, which outlines the government’s commitment to building strong and respectful relationships with the community and voluntary sector.</p> <p><u>Forum Participants</u> Participants included community and voluntary organisations, government agencies, the Prime Minister and Ministers; there were 225 participants at the forum.</p> <p>As numbers were limited, people were chosen to balance a range of representation from different localities, sub-sectors of the community sector and population groups (Maori; Pacific peoples; Ethnic minorities; disabled people; women; youth and children; and older people).</p> <p><u>Online discussions:</u> Community Central (an online space for people working in tangata whenua, community and voluntary organizations, public health workers, advocates and others in Aotearoa New Zealand) and the Community</p>	

		<p>Sector taskforce (an independent Treaty-based body of ten community representatives, established to develop the relationship between government and the sector) are both hosting online discussion about who should sign an Agreement and what should be included in one. The online discussions allow people who could not attend the forum to have a say.</p> <p>http://www.ocvs.govt.nz/news-and-updates/comm-govt-forum-2009.html</p>	
16. Online engagement	<p>Since issuing the memorandum, the Obama administration has launched Data.gov, Recovery.gov and IT Dashboard websites.</p>	<p>In reviewing the report it was noted:</p> <p>That in recent years the State Services Commission has provided valuable guidance on online engagement – this is currently under review</p> <p>That http://newzealand.govt.nz has an under-used section where government agencies can log their consultations. Greater use of this would give the public better access to information and encourage opportunities for coordination of government engagement processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Potential site for online forums <p>That online forums be used for discussing the development of a Relations Agreement, to replace the 2001 <i>Statement of Government Intentions for an Improved Community-Government Relationship</i> (section 15).</p>	
17. Future action – public service capability		<p>Quick reference guide outlining organizational processes improving community engagement, supplementing www.goodpracticeparticipate.co.nz</p> <p>OCVS-led draft guide to employee volunteering – support government agency staff gain community experience.</p> <p>Develop presentations for government agency induction programmes – on building stakeholder networks and effective community engagement.</p> <p>Extend OCVS seminars on good practice in community engagement to centres outside the capital, Wellington.</p>	
18. Media	<p>Media coverage appeared to be predominately in information / technology news sites related</p>	<p>Limited media coverage</p>	

Coverage	to government business. For example: Information Week and NextGov. The White House has put out press releases updating the public on progress on the directive.		
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APPENDIX A

From Talk to Action: Government engagement with citizens and communities

Background notes on the New Zealand report *From Talk to Action* and associated reports.

Cabinet paper

<http://www.ocs.govt.nz/documents/publications/papers-and-reports/slevel7-co09090708180.pdf>

Strong community-government relationships, and effective community engagement, can enhance community capacity to address issues, strengthen trust in government, improve government transparency, and create better informed and more sustainable policies.

Refreshing the 2001 *Statement of Government Intentions for an Improved Community-Government Relationship* (the *Statement*) – articulating a vision for working together

ANGOA suggests that a disputes resolution service be established to address conflicts between community and voluntary organizations and government agencies.

It's More Than Talk

<http://www.ocs.govt.nz/documents/work-programme/bbge/bbge-discussion-doc.pdf>

A discussion paper about options for building knowledge, skills and values about effective community engagement with the public sector

Creating a more participatory democracy, through effective government engagement with the community, has the potential to build trust in government, strengthen civic capacity and create more sustainable policy decisions.

Vision where:

Central government engages effectively with citizens and communities, recognizing the interdependence of government and communities in achieving the best outcomes for society.

By building better relationships with external parties, government agencies can increase trust in government and become more accessible and responsive to the needs of citizens.

Community engagement can be defined as:

A planned process with the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people, whether they are connected by geographic location, special interest or affiliation, to address issues

*affecting their wellbeing.*⁴

Core issue being addressed by project:

Central government agencies are not yet sufficiently committed to, and skilled at, collaborating with citizens and community organizations in order to jointly tackle societal problems.

Engagement Processes

- Public often feel that they have been given too little time to respond
- “Consultation fatigue”
- Do not always get feedback, so consultation does not appear genuine

Inform (Educate) – Consult – Partner (Collaborate) – Empower



Information provision

Sometime the public participation goal is simply to inform. At a simple level what is need to be communicated is the who, what, when, where and how of an issue.

Formal one-off consultation

Formal consultation allows a government agency to learn the views of individuals and community groups on specific issues before making a decision.

Collaborative processes and partnerships

In partnerships, the responsibility, authority and decision-making are shared more evenly than in other forms of participation. There is often an agreement between the parties to share the risks and benefits.

Community based decision-making

Community development empowers communities to identify their need, plan action, manage projects and evaluate the results of their activities.

Talkback

<http://www.ocvs.govt.nz/documents/work-programme/bbge/talkback-final-feedback-report-31-july-09.pdf>

⁴ Department of Sustainability and Environment (2005). Book 1 An Introduction to Engagement, Victorian Government, Australia.

Feedback on the discussion document It's More Than Talk

- 105 people attended the six face-to-face meetings
- 28 written submissions; four from central government, three from local government, 18 from community and voluntary organizations, and five from individuals
- The Bang the Table online discussion had comments posted by 34 people and was viewed by 1,376 unique visitors

Some comments received:

- "(The paper) highlights a range of critical issues that cut to the heart of our democracy"
- Having attended a consultation meeting, one submitter said: "our written submission has been influenced by the discussion, which is a good example of effective consultation in practice."
- Importance of understanding what is "genuine" consultation (and when people do not get their own way so they inevitably criticize the process?)
- Need to encourage deliberation processes that safely bring together people from diverse backgrounds
- Need for improved practices ensuring:
 - o Engagement occurs at an early stage in any project
 - o Consultations are genuine
 - o Timeframes are sufficient
 - o Feedback is provided by government on how the information is used
- A strong call for an indication of high-level commitment to effective engagement: "There is a need for top-to-bottom commitment."
- Government agencies to individually indicate a commitment to effective engagement in strategic documents: "if there are not clear goals and performance indicators written into Statements of Intent, and other high level accountability documents, nothing will change."
- Call for joint training in engagement practice between government and community organisations

From Talk to Action

<http://www.ocvs.govt.nz/documents/work-programme/bbge/msd-from-talk-to-action-report-to-print.pdf>

"From Talk to Action: Government engagement with citizens and communities" is the final report from the Building Better Government Engagement Reference Group – the views expressed within the report are those of the Reference Group and are not Government policy. It was provided by the Office of the Community and Voluntary Sector, administered by the Ministry of Social Development.

Core issues being addressed by the project:

Central government agencies are not yet sufficiently committed to, and skilled at, collaborating with citizens and community organizations in order to jointly tackle societal problems.

The Context

Key themes taken into account:

- The complex environment needs multi-sector responses

- Citizens are at the centre
- Good engagement is essential
- High level commitment is needed
- Government engagement practices need to be improved
- Discussion is needed about where decision-making power lies
- Community capacity is vital

Multi-sector collaboration

Need for government agencies to be viewed in the context of other sectors, which also play a vital role. Form effective relationships with central government, local government, the community and voluntary sector, tangata whenua and businesses.

Engaged citizens

Citizens have the right to participate in defining and resolving the social, environmental and economic issues that affect them (through voting, writing submissions, participating in meetings, and initiating local projects). Often their efforts are collectively channeled through community and voluntary organizations.

Where should decision-making lie?

Feedback from *It's More Than Talk* included a number of calls for more devolution to enable greater community control. Community-led activity reduces reliance on the state, and can provide solutions that best represent local circumstances; on the other hand centralized decision-making has some efficiencies in a country of a relatively small population, and in situations where equity through national standardization of policies is desired.

What needs to happen?

- Government commitment
- Culture change within government agencies
- Accountability
- Support for capacity building within government
- Building coordination and collaboration
- Engagement with iwi/Maori
- Diversity considerations
- Support for community-led development
- Championing this work

❖ Government commitment to effective engagement

Messages from the “top” are needed that make a clear Government commitment to building active relationships, multi-sector collaboration, and effective engagement with citizens and communities.

Develop and endorse a set of principles for effective engagement – example OECD guiding principles for open and inclusive policymaking:

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/20/3/42658029.pdf>. Principles for New Zealand would need to be developed in dialogue with citizens and communities – this could be done in various ways including online wiki.

Recommendations:

- Develop a set of principles for effective engagement for endorsement by the Prime

- Minister and Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector
- Amend the CabGuide⁵ to provide greater encouragement to agencies to involve community voices in policy development.

❖ Culture change with government agencies

View that central government agencies do not have sufficient organizational commitment to achieving genuine, effective community engagement. Public servants have a real desire to serve the public, time and money constraints often affect the ability to follow good practice. Need for open, inclusive, respectful, collaborative management.

Recommendation:

- Develop guidelines for government agencies on how to give effect to principles of good engagement

❖ Accountability

Government agencies need to be accountable for how well they engage citizens and communities during the development of policy and services.

Recommendations:

- Develop accountability mechanisms for regular reporting by government agencies on how community relationships and effective engagement processes are supporting their outcomes
- Undertake a rolling program to evaluate progress by government agencies in effectively engaging citizens and communities in policy development and service delivery decision-making

❖ Capability building in Government

While many government agencies already take steps to enhance the effectiveness of their relationships and engagements, there is concern that good practice is not always followed – for example, consultation processes that are only token, involvement of communities too late in the process and a lack of feedback on how input was used. There appears to be a need for better incorporation of engagement skills into human resource management processes; a wider understanding of the methods for dialogue, deliberation and public engagement. The term “partnership” can also be used loosely without real appreciation of the need of equity, transparency and mutual benefit.



The need for staff to know that community engagement occurs along a continuum – from providing information, to consultation (where decisions ultimately lie with the government), to partnership (where power is shared), to developed decision-making – and to increase staff skills.

Recommendations:

⁵ The CabGuide is a website developed by the Cabinet office, which sets out advice to public servants on the procedures and operation of the New Zealand Cabinet, Cabinet Committees and Executive Council. <http://cabguide.cabinetoffice.govt.nz/>

- Enhance www.goodpracticeparticipate.govt.nz including addition of interactive functions such as engagement planning tools

Skills needed:

- Develop short presentations for government agency induction programs on the ways to build stakeholder networks and effective community engagement
- Review the widely used Lominger⁶ competencies to ensure sufficient emphasis is being placed on staff being skilled in engagement

Building online engagement capability:

- Continue to provide guidance to government agencies on good practice in online engagement

Training and learning

- Approach tertiary education institutions to encourage development of locally designed training courses on community engagement
- Extend the Office of the Community and Voluntary Sector's seminars on good practice in engagement to locations outside of Wellington
- Finalise the draft guide to employee volunteering within public service
- Explore the potential for a central hub for providing mentoring advice and guidance for government agencies on effective engagement

❖ Better coordination and communication

Need for better coordination and communications with central government; between central government and the community and voluntary sector; between central government, iwi and local government; and between national and regional offices of government services. This could reduce concerns such as consultation fatigue (multiple agencies going into a community to consult on overlapping issues), insufficient systems for conveying issues from communities to government, and lack of understanding from central government of the roles and responsibilities of local government.

Recommendations:

Coordination within central government

- Investigate mechanisms for promoting and populating the Consultations page at <http://newzealand.govt.nz> using “feeds from government agency websites

Central government-local government coordination

- Continue to provide tools and resources to support central government and local government collaboration and effective delivery of national goals and community priorities
- Publish online case studies of collaborative approaches to problem solving involving central and local government, iwi/Maori and communities

❖ Engagement with iwi/Maori

The Treaty of Waitangi places additional responsibility on government to facilitate Maori

⁶ Lominger competencies are promoted by the State Services Commission to human resource teams within government – outlining desirable characteristics of staff

participation in policy development and service delivery. There is a distinction between engagement with Maori as Treaty partner, under Article 2, and Maori rights to be consulted as citizens, under Article 3.

Recommendations:

- Develop guidelines for government agencies on engagement with Maori
- Provide good practice seminars on engagement with iwi/Maori
- Develop a network for Maori engagement specialists located within government agencies (already in place in some agencies such as the Department of Conservation)

❖ Diverse population groups

Noted that some communities feel particularly marginalised in government policy development processes – people with disabilities, young people, senior citizens and people in rurally remote areas.

Engaging Pacific communities and other ethnic groups also need additional consideration – including the implementation of culturally appropriate engagement models to ensure different traditions and perspectives are respected.

Recommendations:

- Note that government agencies should take an active role in ensuring they engage appropriately with diverse communities
- Note the importance of population ministries/offices supporting the capacity of the public service to engage appropriately with diverse communities
- Present to other government agencies on the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs' framework for engaging with Pacific communities

❖ Support for community-led development

Need for more locally based initiatives and to encourage government understating of community-led development.

Recommendations:

- Analyse and provide case studies of the governments role in supporting successful bottom-up projects that have been initiated, led and owned by communities
- Include community organisation staff in seminars on good practice in engagement

❖ Supporting active citizenship

Acknowledging the importance of building the capability of citizens to take active roles in local and national decision-making.

❖ Championing this work

The implementation of any of the above recommendations will require championing by a government agency; value would also be added by the establishment of an external champions groups, drawn from appropriate non-governmental sectors, who could provide ongoing advice.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen the capacity of the Office of the Community and Voluntary Sector, so it can

- undertake the proposed tasks to enhance government engagement.
- Establish an external “champion” group to support the implementation of the report’s recommendations.