

Attachment Two: Terms of Reference for Local Government External Advisory Group

Draft Terms of Reference

Background

The Local Government External Advisory Group (EAG) is established to provide advice to governance of the Local Government Reform programme.

Purpose

The EAG is to provide governance advice for the Local Government Reform programme and support the Elected Member Steering Group and other project groups to develop a robust proposal and evidence base for local government reorganization that meets central government and Northland's objectives, design principles and quality standards.

Its role is to provide:

- *Governance assurance* - provide independent expert assurance and advice on project direction and the robustness of key project outputs, including alignment with central government requirements and how stakeholder, community, and iwi and hapū relationships are reflected in these arrangements.
- *Operational guidance* – provide advice to the CE Forum to ensure project delivery is fit for purpose.
- *Confidence building* – provide assurance to elected members that any proposals and recommendations have been robustly developed and are sufficient to enable commitment and progress.

Responsibilities

The scope of the EAG's role is to provide independent expert assurance to the Elected Member Steering Group and CE Forum, as they oversee the development of reorganisation proposals and the associated supporting analysis and evidence base.

It will operate in a collaborative, transparent and constructive manner, offering independent, best practice, and evidence-based oversight, advice and review.

The scope of work will include:

- *Independent feedback and assurance*: review technical analysis, investigations, research and the evidence base developed to support reorganisation options / plans
- *Risk oversight*: oversight of and advice on the management of key project risks
- *Community engagement*: input into a communications strategy and engagement planning
- *Advocacy*: promote and socialize the programme's progress, plans, strategies with Central Government
- Any other roles and responsibilities allocated by Elected Member Steering Group and / or the CE Forum.

Delegations

The EAG has no decision-making authority; its recommendations are advisory only and do not form part of governance or decision-making.

Membership

Four external members are proposed though more could be considered subject to agreement of the Steering Group if required to achieve the skills and expertise required to effectively deliver on its role and scope of works.

The Mayor of Whangārei District Council will be an observer.

The members will appoint a Chair among themselves at the first meeting.

Appointment process

Members will be appointed by the Steering Group through a transparent, openly advertised, and merit-based process that ensures the right balance of independence, skills and expertise. Appointments will be made in line with the following principles:

- Open and objective candidate identification, including open referral, public advertising or targeted search, to ensure a wide and diverse pool of candidates
- Appointments will seek diversity of skills, perspectives, and backgrounds to strengthen the Group's effectiveness
- Conflict of interest disclosures managed from the outset.

Meetings

- The EAG will meet as required, and this is expected to be aligned with key project milestones.
- Meetings are not open to the public and depending on their purpose will be attended by the Governance Steering Group, Chief Executives of participating councils, the Cross Council Project Team and secretarial staff.
- Meetings may also be attended by council and / or external subject matter experts with approval of the Chair.
- A quorum for meetings will be a majority of appointed members including the Chair or Delegate.
- Recommendations by the EAG will be made by consensus where possible, or by majority vote if consensus cannot be reached. Chair has casting vote.
- Agendas will be approved by the Chair and minutes will be recorded for all meetings.
- Secretariat services for the EAG are to be provided by Whangārei District Council.

Confidentiality

All EAG discussions are confidential unless otherwise agreed. Any material provided to or prepared by the EAG is subject to release under LGOIMA.

Remuneration

All EAG Members will be remunerated in accordance with Whangārei District Council's applicable remuneration policies and procedures.

Reporting and Resourcing

The EAG will report to the Local Government Reform Elected Member Steering Group meetings as required, copying the CE Forum and Project Manager to ensure alignment between governance and operations. The Chair or delegates may be invited to attend SG meetings where appropriate.

The EAG's operational communications will be provided through the CE Forum.

The Group will be given reasonable access to information, personnel and external advice necessary to perform its role effectively. Requests for additional resources will be considered by the CE Forum.

Term and disestablishment

The EAG will be disestablished by decision of the Local Government Reform Elected Member Steering Group.

Review and amendments

- The effectiveness and relevance of these Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually, or at any time as needed in response to changes to relevant legislation or government policy or direction by the CE Forum or Local Government Reform Elected Member Steering Group.
- Any proposed / recommended amendments to these Terms of Reference are to be approved by decision of the Local Government Reform Elected Member Steering Group.