



YEAR END: Commitment 7 - Improving policy practices

Date: March - June 2018

Lead agency: Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

To ensure that policy advice to government is better informed by insights from those most affected by government policy and programmes, by input from diverse points of view, and by data and evidence.

Milestones		Stage
1	Map evidence and insights ecosystem, existing practice, expertise and guidance sources	
2	Test buy-in and support for all-of-government guidance	
3	Design prototype and refine the format of the guidance for optimal usability	
4	Co-produce contents with, and for, the government policy community	
5	Launch and commence change management and communications campaign	

 underway

 completed

 some delays.

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN DOING?

Release 1 of the Policy Methods Toolbox went live on the DPMC website on Tuesday 22 August 2017, thereby successfully achieving the milestones for Commitment 7 in the National Action Plan 2016 - 2018. The online Toolbox (Release 1) encompasses:

- Start Right (light-touch project management tools for policy project initiation)
- Behavioural insights
- Design thinking
- Public participation.

For each of these types of tools, the online content in the Toolbox encompasses:

- Why you should use it

- What it involves
- What you will get out of it
- Ideal circumstances for use
- Limitations
- References, guides and key readings
- Tools or concepts
- Case studies
- Centres of expertise
- Community of practice

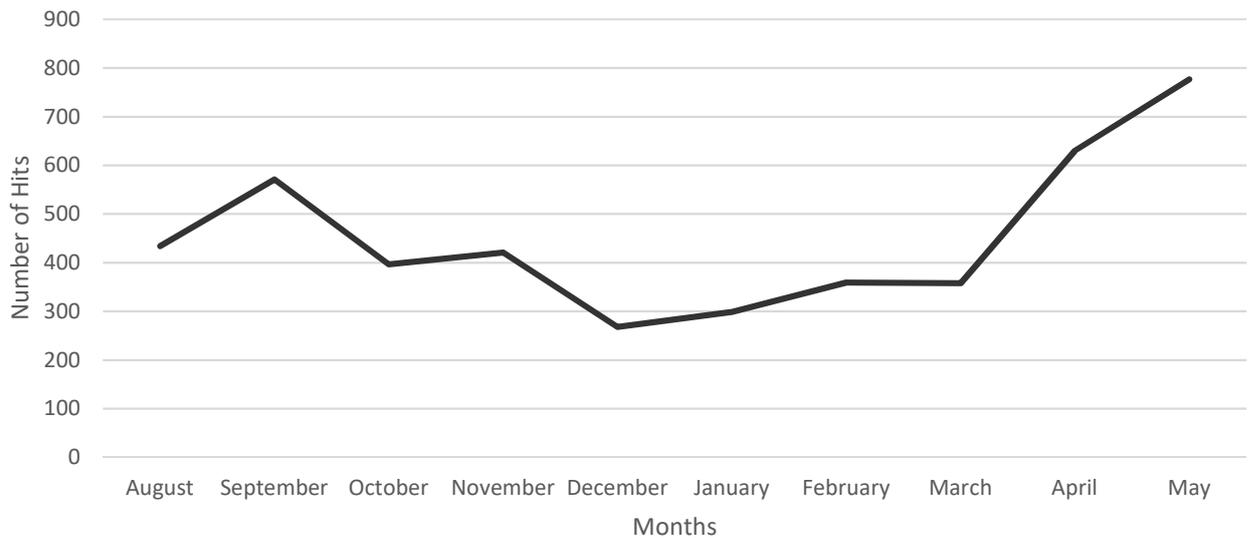
Since August 2017, the Policy Project has taken every opportunity available to us to promote the Toolbox (Release 1), as well as how these methods can apply to policy development to deliver great advice informed by evidence and insights by those affected by government policy.

The engagement channels used include:

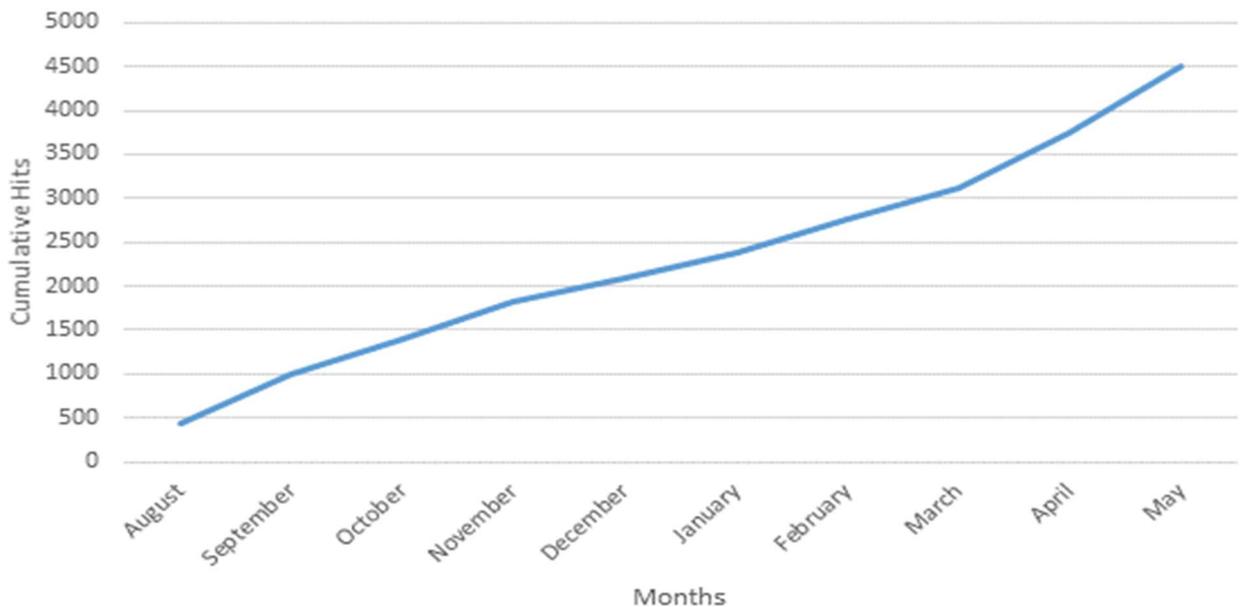
- Events with the policy community and co-hosted with academia and other organisations that relate to toolbox content. We communicate discussions from these events through ‘conversation trackers’ to enable people who did not attend the event to access the information. For example, in this reporting period we have:
 - co-hosted a roundtable with Victoria University and senior officials on protecting the interests of future generations and foresight, drawing on the Welsh approach with Marie Brousseau-Navarro (which used public participation) and New Zealand case studies (one of which used design thinking).
 - co-sponsored the first community of practice event on behavioural insights to share expertise. The event featured a range of case studies from across New Zealand and a question and answer session.
- Cross-agency policy groups we have established across the public service. This includes providing information about the toolbox to the network of policy capability leads and policy manager forums that meet and communicate on a regular basis. These groups provide an opportunity for policy practitioners to learn about good or new practices that will improve the quality of policy advice.
- Inclusion of references to the Toolbox in general presentations to specific audiences about the Policy Project (for example to the initial meeting of the Statistics New Zealand Policy Network, and in a guest lecture for the Victoria University of Wellington GOVT 522 Policy Analysis and Advising Course)
- Social media (twitter and LinkedIn) messages to reach a broader audience beyond the policy community and connect with people.

Website hits on the Toolbox have more than doubled during this reporting period, from 358 hits in March to 777 hits in May (see Graph 1 below). Cumulatively since the Toolbox went live, there have been around 4,500 website hits (see Graph 2 below), which is greater than the number of people in the policy workforce in the New Zealand public service (around 2,800).

Graph 1: Policy Methods Toolbox, Web Hits Per Month
August 2017 - May 2018



Graph 2: Policy Methods Toolbox, Cumulative Web Hits
August 2017 – May 2018



The Policy Project has also been supporting government agencies to implement our policy improvement frameworks. The Toolbox and the frameworks are mutually reinforcing, with the frameworks containing common themes relating to the OGP commitment around the better use of evidence and building diverse perspectives into policy:

- **Policy Quality Framework:** includes 'is informed by evidence and insights' and 'is put in context' as key determinants of quality advice – and 'we seek out diverse perspectives to add rigour to our analysis and advice' as a quality advice enabler

- **Policy Skills Framework:** identifies ‘engagement and collaboration’ and ‘evidence insights and evaluation’ as two of the key applied skills for policy practitioners – to be featured in job descriptions, recruitment, promotion and personal development
- **Policy Capability Framework:** in addition to incorporating the people skills elements touched on above, features ‘Engagement/Customer-centric: how well do we meet the expectations of Ministers, customers and other stakeholders?’ as one of the four key components of policy capability – offering ‘lines of enquiry’ and potential indicators to review and build overall organisational capability in engagement to produce quality advice.

REFLECTION: HOW DID THIS COMMITMENT CONTRIBUTE TO OPEN GOVERNMENT?

- The Policy Methods Toolbox (Release 1) was launched in late August 2017. The Toolbox improves policy practices by making information available to help policy practitioners understand, compare and select the most appropriate method for policy development.
- The first release of the Toolbox focuses on methods of policy development that involve greater emphasis on engagement with citizens and other parties external to government during the development process. These methods include behavioural insights, design thinking and public participation. The Toolbox also features a method for starting policy projects (Start Right) which creates the space for consideration of alternative policy development methods.
- The Toolbox not only responds to Open Government principles, but also demand from New Zealand government agencies. The initial focus areas of the Toolbox were based on feedback from agencies on the policy development methods they most wanted to know more about.
- The Toolbox aims to make an impact by a) promoting awareness and implicitly condoning the use of citizen-focused policy development methods, b) promoting agencies to consider alternative methods early in the policy development process (Start Right), and c) providing information on these methods, including their benefits and drawbacks. Ultimately, the success of the Toolbox depends on agencies’ uptake and use of the methods.
- In response to the Independent Reporting Mechanism Reviewer’s comments, the guidance in the Toolbox was tested with the Expert Advisory Panel. Their feedback was that the guidance was fit-for-purpose in terms of improving the knowledge of tools and techniques policy makers can use to create more open and user-led policy.
- The Expert Advisory Panel agreed with the Reporting Mechanism Reviewer that the next OGP action plan should include a commitment on collaboratively developing a process or standards for public participation in developing future policy. This recommendation is being considered as part of the process for developing the next OGP action plan.
- The Toolbox complements the wider work of the Policy Project to drive improved policy advice quality and quality of decisions in the New Zealand public sector. The Policy Project works by collaborating with government agencies, academics, non-government organisations, public and private training providers and others to support improvements to the quality of policy advice, policy capability and policy skills.
- We are working with these stakeholders to extend the content in the Toolbox (Release 1) to cover other methods such as futures thinking, research and evaluation, and diversity and inclusion. We are also working with related communities of practice to bring the guidance in

the Toolbox to life through exposure and experience of the different methods, as well as to populate new content to keep the guidance up-to-date and relevant.

LINKS

- Policy Methods Toolbox
 - <https://www.dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/policy-project/policy-methods-toolbox-0>
 - Design Thinking
 - <https://www.dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/policy-project/policy-methods-toolbox/design-thinking>
 - Behavioural Insights
 - <https://www.dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/policy-project/policy-methods-toolbox/behavioural-insights>
 - Public Participation
 - <https://www.dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/policy-project/policy-methods-toolbox/public-participation>
 - Start Right
 - <https://www.dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/policy-project/policy-methods-toolbox/start-right>
- Policy Improvement Frameworks
 - <https://www.dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/policy-project/policy-improvement-frameworks>
 - Policy Quality Framework
 - <https://www.dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/policy-project/policy-improvement-frameworks/policy-quality>
 - Policy Capability Framework
 - <https://www.dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/policy-project/policy-improvement-frameworks/policy-capability>
 - Policy Skills Framework
 - <https://www.dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/policy-project/policy-improvement-frameworks/policy-skills>