

**Appendix 4**  
**Chief Executive Communications Induction Package**

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## **1. Purpose**

This paper represents recommendations to the State Services Commission (SSC) Communications Review Steering Committee on the Induction package on the communications function for newly appointed public service chief executives.

This paper provides the basis for the tools for the induction package.

## **2. Recommendation 6**

An induction package on the communications function be prepared and piloted for all newly appointed public service chief executives, in conjunction with the State Services Commission's Manager, CE Services, and Agency Performance Improvement.

## **3. Introduction**

Communications is an integral part of the operating environment for government agencies. The Official Information Act 1982 and New Zealanders' increasing expectations around the accessibility and transparency of government means that chief executives need to ensure that communications is an integral part of their business.

The communications function in the New Zealand public sector is defined as:

*“The public sector communications function enables the effective flow of information and ideas between an agency and its internal and external publics, to facilitate participation, service delivery, and informed decision-making, and to build accountability and trust in government.*

*This is achieved by developing, delivering and evaluating public agency communications based on good practice communications techniques, supported by the principles of integrity and neutrality of the public service.”*

Chief executives are also responsible, under section 57A of the State Sector Act 1988, for ensuring their departments comply with the Standards of Integrity and Conduct. Setting and maintaining expectations around the Standards is part of the overall communications function.

#### 4. Managing the Elements of Communications and Managing Expectations

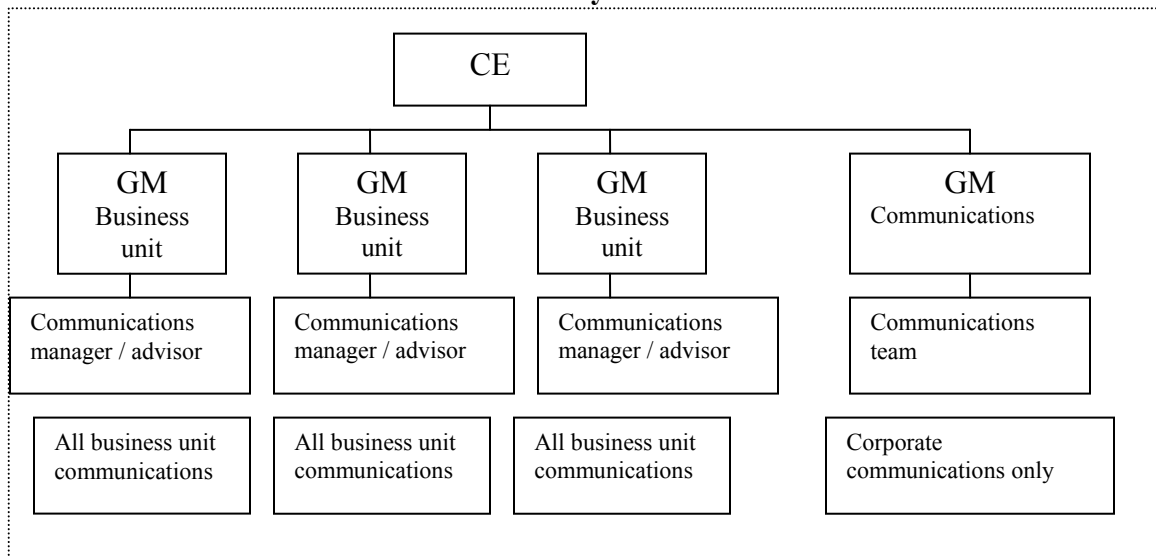
##### Governance

The chief executive must determine the form and function of the communications role and where communications is placed within the department.

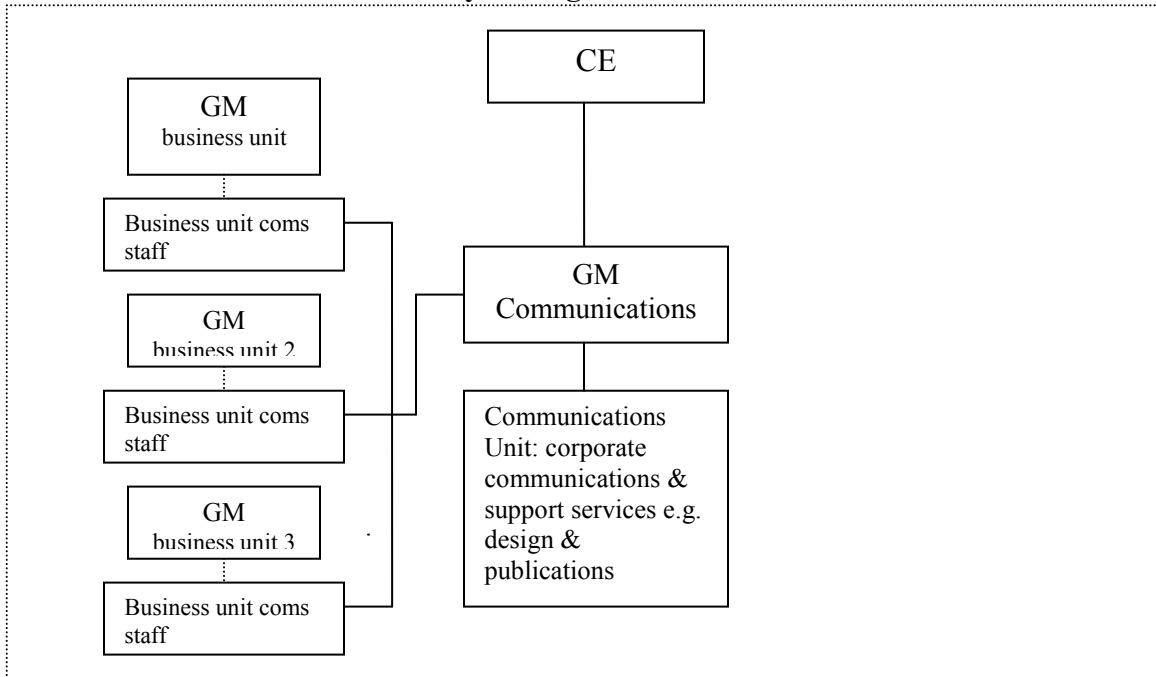
- The decision on where communications sits in an organisation will vary according to function, as operational agencies and policy agencies may have different communication requirements and priorities, and the specific set of challenges that the chief executive and agency are facing
- Provide clear strategic direction on agency objectives and what is required of agency management and staff.
- There are some tools developed as part of the *Communications Function Review* that can assist with these decisions (see Good Practice Communications Units).

There are three models that the communications function can be organized according to. Strengths and weaknesses of each are discussed in full in Appendix 7 of the *Communications Function Review*.

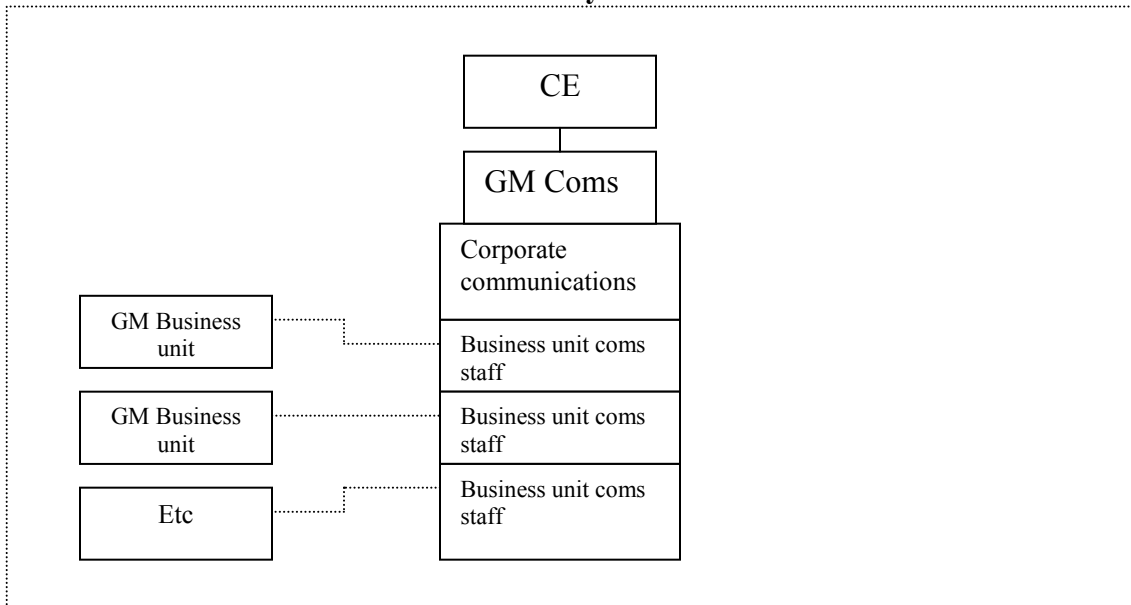
##### Model 1: Fully distributed



### Model 2: Centrally managed / distributed workforce



### Model 3: Fully centralised



### Political neutrality

State sector agencies are apolitical and the actions of the chief executive and those working in the State Services must always be apolitical.

- “Impartial: We must maintain the political neutrality required to enable us to work with current and future governments” (*Standards of Integrity and Conduct for the State Services*, State Services Commissioner).
- Understand the clear distinction between agency and Ministerial communications. See Relationships with Ministerial Communications Staff in the *Communications Function Review*.

### **Managing the agency’s reputation**

Managing the agency’s reputation is critical to the success, or otherwise, of the agency.

- Chief executives are expected to build and maintain a positive reputation of their agency with internal and external stakeholders. An integrated and strategic approach to all your internal and external communications is the best way to manage this asset effectively.
- **No surprises**  
Work on the basis of ‘no surprises’. Always keep the Minister informed and ensure other key people are aware of major strategic initiatives, if appropriate.
- **Media training**  
The chief executive and senior management staff will at some stage have to appear before the news media to provide the agency’s perspective. It is therefore important that the chief executive and senior spokespersons are given media training at least once a year.
- **Dealing with difficult media issues**  
If a ‘difficult’ or ‘sensitive’ media story is published it is important a brief statement is provided by the chief executive or Minister. With support from Communications, the chief executive should address the issue as openly and transparently as possible. People’s trust in their public services is assayed in these situations and it is incumbent on the chief executive to ensure that they protect the reputation of their agency as well as act in a manner that reflects well on the Public Service as a whole.
- **Risk management**  
Risk management is about being prepared and ready, ensuring key policies are in place (such as crisis management guidelines), safety checks are implemented, resources are monitored and conduct is

appropriate. A good recent example of State sector risk management was SARS.

- **Dealing with a crisis**

Effective communications is critical both internally and externally. Check that resources are sufficient for the situation. Ensure crisis management guidelines are implemented and the Minister is fully briefed on the issue. Provide clear instructions to management regarding behavior and response.

- The chief executive should front the news media if it is a serious issue. However, there may be occasions where managers are more suited to explain the details of the situation. A good example of crisis management is the way CEO Rob Fyfe managed Air New Zealand's crisis.
  - Provide as much information as you can, as regularly as you can – the news cycle is 24x7. Ensure that you have enough people to support that requirement – you can ask other chief executives to provide some communications resource if necessary.
  - Don't front the media until you are briefed on the issues and know how you will respond.
  - In the event of an all-of-government crisis that will require a coordinated multi-agency response, consult the Chair of Communications.

### **Internal communications**

Effective internal communications are critical to the success of an agency. Internal communications builds staff engagement, which contributes to productivity and improved performance, assists in achieving buy-in to change by minimizing uncertainty, helps to build a culture of inclusiveness and contributes to staff morale.

- Internal communications should be considered the primary channel for the delivery of messages about your agency, its values (brand) and vision to external stakeholders.
- It's important, when developing an internal communications programme, to get staff buy-in to the programme and to use the right channels for communicating the message.

### **Measurement Reporting**

Consider how your agency's outputs will be viewed and measured. How will you measure effectiveness? Establish key criteria for the function and clear communication around expectations for outputs and delivery.

- The Communications Review has completed some preliminary analysis of tools for measuring the effectiveness of an agency's communications, and will continue with that work.
  - The Common Measurement Tool (CMT) is one such common government framework for measurement.
  - Regular public, internal or stakeholder surveys or focus groups can all provide valuable performance information for your agency.

### **Strategic input**

Involving communications resources in early strategic and organizational decision-making processes will result in more effective internal and external communications and will lead to more coordinated communications and better stakeholder relationships.

### **Marketing and branding**

Branding and marketing help to create the public face of an agency and it shapes the way the public sees the work of that agency. Your brand is *not* the agency logo. Your brand is the collective view that your stakeholders have of your agency.

- You manage and market/promote your agency brand through ensuring consistency between your communications (internal and external) and the behaviours and values that you model and reward.

### **All-of-government communications**

The head of the communications function in your agency is part of a wider network of colleagues in the State services. Establish clear expectations about their engagement with their colleagues and participation in the work to strengthen the communications function in government and increase New Zealander's trust in their State services.

