

Excellence assessment guidelines

Road Efficiency Group Te Ringa Maimoa
Excellence Programme

Road Efficiency Group

Te Ringa Maimoa



**NZ TRANSPORT
AGENCY**
WAKA KOTAHĪ

Overview

Our ability to thrive in a changing environment often comes down to our individual adaptability and the support and guidance of those around us.

A strong team culture paired with having the right skills and abilities around the table within road controlling authorities (RCAs) and maintenance teams plays a critical role in delivering the right community outcomes – especially during periods of change.

Excellence in this environment is not about gold-plating or even extraordinary performance. Excellence is a commitment to finding fit-for-purpose, cost-effective solutions and consistently doing the little things to a high standard across key areas of the business.

The effect of these efforts delivers the meaningful outcomes for our communities and enables us to increase trust, confidence and value for money in transport investment.

Excellence Programme

The Road Efficiency Group Te Ringa Maimoa (REG) Excellence Programme is built on this definition of excellence – one that is driven by a culture of continuous improvement and shared outcomes for every member of the team, from leadership of the organisation through to contractors doing maintenance work on our roads.

As with all growth opportunities, transport and maintenance teams need to understand their strengths and have a clear, realistic and well-supported plan in place to address areas that need improvement.

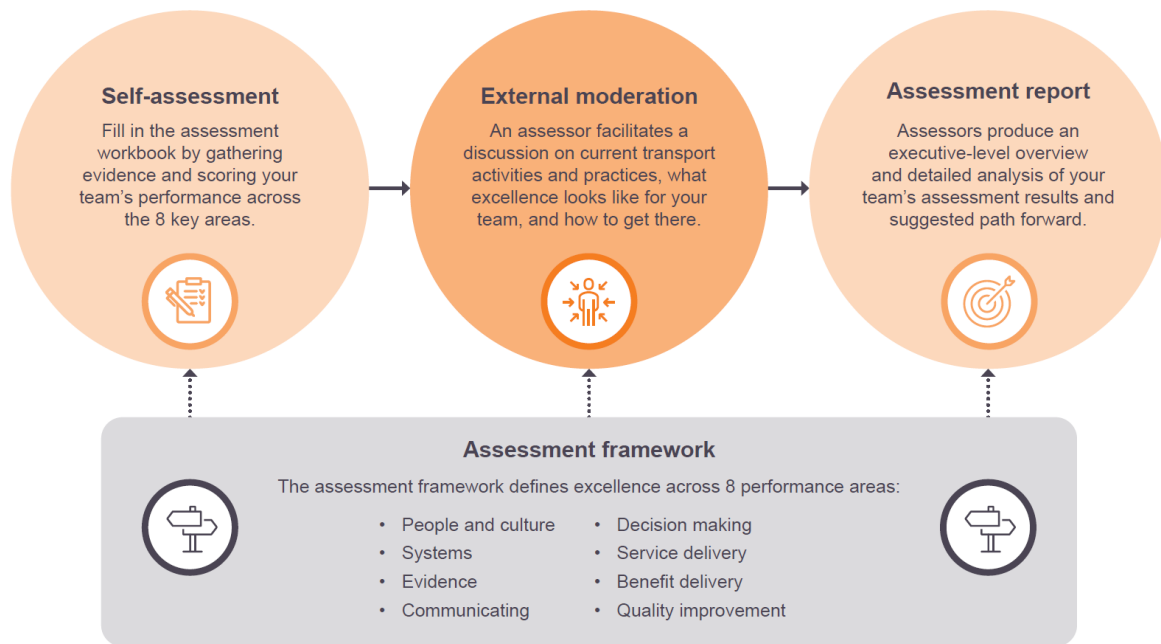
The Excellence Programme includes the Excellence assessment, asset, activity and maintenance management plan (AMP) reviews and corresponding current and future reporting in Transport Insights.

Excellence assessment

The assessment is the cornerstone of the Excellence Programme. It gives your team a clear understanding of their performance across eight critical areas of business and transport delivery – your business/team systems, evidence and data, communication, decision making, service and benefit delivery, people and culture, and the tools that are already in place for continuous development.

The assessment process is led by our team of assessors, who are experienced facilitators.

Following a self-assessment and external moderation your team will receive a report with your overall excellence score as well as current and target scores for the eight performance areas. Recommended improvement actions provide a starting point for your improvement planning.



Benefits to your team

Underpinning any high performing team is trust, cooperation and the willingness to grow and improve over time. The Excellence Programme and assessment help teams start or continue this journey.

Completing the assessment offers a strong foundation to grow capability, with a clear performance benchmark and goals to work towards over time. Additional REG tools and guidance are available for improving key areas, such as activity/asset management planning, procurement, stakeholder communication, data quality and asset performance reporting.

- Benchmark your team's performance across eight key areas.
- Identify your team strengths and opportunities for improvement.
- Agree what excellence looks like for your team.
- Develop a clear starting point for your improvement planning.
- Understand your team's level of self-awareness.
- Create a pathway towards building a culture of trust, cooperation and continuous improvement.

About the assessment

Defining excellence

The Excellence framework underpins the assessment process and provides a holistic view of transport activity management, considering organisation-wide enablers for success and desired transport outcomes.

The framework is designed by sector professionals and informed by internationally recognised assessment principles. It uses a RADAR (results, approaches, deployment, assessment and refinement) approach to evaluating performance.

The framework is designed to be flexible and relevant to a range of RCA and maintenance contract team experiences, and defines what excellence looks like across 8 key areas of the business – people and culture, systems, evidence, communicating, decision making, service delivery, benefit delivery and quality improvement.

Each area has a set of criteria that the team is scored against. The criteria have been defined by transport and learning and development experts and cover the areas where performance is critical to achieve transport and activity management excellence. For detailed information about each performance area, see *Appendix A*.



People and culture – the values, attitudes and behaviour of people within the team and wider organisation.



Systems – the interconnected framework of accountabilities, timeframes, processes, policies and practices that enable a team/organisation/sector to function effectively.



Evidence – the data and information that accurately represents a situation and facilitates evidence-based decision making.



Communicating – defining audiences and the use of clear language to help improve understanding and inspire action.



Decision making – the art of using data and information to select an option that best addresses issues and leads to the realisation of appropriate outcomes and benefits.



Service delivery – the provision of advice, information, guidance and/or physical works consistent with the identified outcomes and requirements.



Benefit delivery – the realisation of benefits as an outcome of works and services delivered and in particular; the benefits identified in the strategic case.



Quality improvement – the process that moves an organisation towards improved outcomes and fit-for-purpose delivery processes.

Self-assessment

The team completes the self-assessment questionnaire. The questionnaire goes through each of the 8 performance areas and asks a series of questions. The team scores themselves using the 1-5 scoring descriptions and defines the outcome they'd like to work towards and a target score.

The team completes the questionnaire to the best of their ability, gathering evidence along the way to share with the assessors ahead of the external moderation workshop. Unlike an audit, the evidence shared in the self-assessment process is just to help improve the assessors understanding of the team's transport activities and practices and helps generate deeper discussions during the workshop.

The output of the self-assessment questionnaire are current and target scores on a scale of 1-5 for each of the criteria across the 8 performance areas. For example, see a sample self-assessment result for *people and culture* below.

Instructions for completing the self-assessment will be delivered along with the questionnaire.

People and culture assessment criteria	Question to prompt thinking	Self-assessment score	Target score
A1 Resource planning	What evidence is available to show that the RCA has identified the resources required to deliver the desired AMP outcomes?	2.00	4.00
A2 Workforce planning	How does the RCA demonstrate their knowledge of current capacity & capability, required capacity & capability and their action plan to address gaps?	1.00	3.00
A3 Cultural alignment	How does the RCA demonstrate the cultural alignment of the organisation to their desired outcomes?	3.00	4.00
A4 Enabling people to succeed	How does the RCA demonstrate how they empower employees to perform well within the transport/roading activity team?	3.50	5.00
A5 Leadership	How do senior leadership contribute towards achieving organisational excellence?	3.00	4.00
A6 Organisational culture	How does the organisation develop a culture that is consistent with its values, and encourages learning and innovation, as well as the achievement of strategic goals?	3.00	4.00

Table 1: Example of self-assessment for people and culture performance area.

External moderation workshop

The external moderation workshop is run over two days. The workshop is facilitated by an experienced assessor and workshop observer from REG. The purpose of these two days is to provide an objective review of the self-assessment scores, confirm fit-for-purpose targets and identify actions the team can take to reach those targets.

The workshop is designed to be collaborative, and the more people from the transport and asset management team you can bring along, the better. The assessor aims to create an environment where open and honest conversations can happen, and people feel comfortable to respectfully challenge one another's thinking. The approach is designed to demonstrate the power of a continuous improvement mindset and shed light on the team's strengths, while creating a clear improvement pathway.

The output of the external moderation workshop is a set of external moderation scores and agreed target scores for each performance area criteria, average scores for each performance area and spider graph that helps visualise the team's level of self-awareness and difference between their current and target scores.

See below for examples of the criteria scores and improvement actions, performance area scores, and how this information is displayed in the spider graph.

	1-2 Minimum standard	2-3 Needs improvement	3-3.75 Competent	3.75-4.5 High performing	4.5-5 Sector leading
Performance area	External moderation		Self-assessment	Target score	
People and culture	2.92		2.58	4.00	
Systems	3.29		2.71	3.88	
Evidence	3.41		2.82	4.23	
Communicating	3.58		3.67	4.50	
Decision making	3.33		2.54	3.88	
Service delivery	3.22		2.39	4.11	
Benefit delivery	2.92		2.17	3.50	
Quality improvement	3.25		2.56	4.00	

Table 2: Example of complete scores for the 8 performance areas.

People and culture assessment criteria	External moderation	Self-assessment	Target score	Improvement actions
A1 Resource planning	3.00	2.00	4.00	Conduct a gap analysis to understand current and future resourcing requirements to meet expected funding challenges within 3,10 and 30 years.
A2 Workforce planning	1.00	1.00	3.00	Formalise your approach to workforce planning and development. Emphasis should be placed on meeting future demand and using emerging technology for data collection and analysis.
A3 Cultural alignment	3.00	3.00	4.00	Introduce organisational values into RCA documents such as the AMP, communication plan and procurement strategy.
A4 Enabling people to succeed	4.00	3.50	5.00	Formalise engagement with similar RCAs beyond the neighbouring districts.
A5 Leadership	3.50	3.00	4.00	Encourage senior leadership to participate more in planning community engagement.
A6 Organisational culture	3.00	3.00	4.00	Create more structured feedback system to improve knowledge sharing and idea generation within the organisation.

Table 3: Example of complete set of scores for performance area criteria and suggested improvement actions to help the team reach their target scores, as provided in the assessment report.



Graph 1: Example of the spider graph shared with the team at the close of the two-day external moderation workshop.

Assessment report

Following the external moderation workshop, the assessor prepares your assessment report. This report is designed to provide a high-level overview of your scores and performance and a detailed report of the agreed improvement actions to inform your team’s improvement planning.

The report introduces an overall excellence score and target. The *overall excellence score* is calculated using weighted scores from each performance area¹. The score is on a scale of 1-100, within one of five bands. Each band provides a high-level description of the organisation. The *overall excellence target* is what excellence looks like for the team/organisation. The target is calculated using the weighted target scores from each performance area. See the table below to see an example of the overall excellence score and target score.

The report comes with a companion 2-page report summary to share with your executive leadership team, governance members and elected officials. The 2-pager describes your team’s strengths and key opportunities for improvement and provides a high-level overview of the scores. See *Appendix B* for an example of the 1-pager.

¹ The weighting is based on the relationship between assessment criteria in each performance area. Criteria with strong linkages to criteria in other performance areas have less of a weighting than those that are more unique. More details on how this weighting is done can be provided upon request.

<p>SECTOR LEADING 80-100</p>	<p>These organisations have a shared purpose and clear vision that is widely understood within the team. The individuals within the organisation demonstrate the values of trust, confidence, service delivery and transparency. People are at the heart of the business.</p> <p>In these organisations, there is a strong commitment to continuous improvement and future investment. They invest in the things that matter to the community and communicate the value of their proposed investments throughout the entire planning and funding process.</p> <p>There is a high usage of benefits data and information to identify land transport problems and benefits. Measures of success are clearly defined. There is robust reporting to show the value that an investment is delivering to the community.</p> <p>All decision-making contributes to an effective, efficient and safe land transport system, and enables effective reporting on how the organisation is giving effect to the GPS and strategic priorities.</p>	
<p>HIGH PERFORMING 60-80</p>	<p>These are progressive organisations that demonstrate confidence in planning and delivery. They have a strong culture of innovation and transparency. There is acknowledgment from peers that they are more than just competent.</p> <p>These organisations actively seek improvement opportunities in decision-making and delivery. They build high performing teams who have the skills, experience to recognise and resolve issues in a constructive and progressive way.</p> <p>Investment reflects the things that matter to the community, and this is clearly communicated. There is good use of benefits data and information to identify land transport problems. There is effective reporting to show the value that investment is delivering to the community.</p> <p>Most decision-making contributes to an effective, efficient and safe land transport system and enables effective reporting on how the organisation is giving effect to the GPS and strategic priorities.</p>	<p>Excellence target 68</p>
<p>COMPETENT 40-60</p>	<p>These organisations demonstrate a strong degree of competency and comfort with current delivery. Staff are capable and take pride in their work. They deliver well; however, they may not consistently innovate or demonstrate robust decision making, good communication, confidence and/or transparency.</p> <p>These organisations seek out opportunities for continuous development, but it is not seen as a consistent feature of their delivery model.</p>	<p>Excellence score 56</p>
<p>NEEDS IMPROVEMENT 20-40</p>	<p>These organisations demonstrate a commitment to improvement, delivery, robust decision making and development; however, they have a focus on process and outputs. This focus may be to the detriment of future thinking. There is a tendency to deliver what is known and understood, which can sometimes be to the detriment of a continuous improvement model.</p>	
<p>MINIMUM STANDARD 0-20</p>	<p>These organisations delivery as required, to a minimum acceptable standard without a commitment to continuous improvement.</p>	

Table 4: Example the overall excellence score and target score, as provided in the assessment report.

Next step

The Excellence Programme project manager will be in touch shortly with the information you need to start the self-assessment. They are the best person to contact if you have any questions at all throughout the assessment.

Additional information

There is more information available if you're interested in doing a deep dive into the assessment framework or want to share general information about the assessment with others.

- [Excellence assessment webpage](#)
- [Assessment framework information](#)
- [Excellence assessment overview](#)
- [Excellence assessment FAQs](#)
- Case study: [West Waikato NOC](#)
- Case study: [Upper Hutt City Council](#)

We look forward to working with you!

Denis Lewis
Project Manager, Excellence Programme
Road Efficiency Group Te Ringa Maimoa
027 446 9673
denis.lewis@auxilium.co.nz

Andrew McKillop
Programme Director
Road Efficiency Group Te Ringa Maimoa
andrew.mckillop@nzta.govt.nz

Appendix A: Excellence assessment framework

Performance area	Definition	Desired outcome	Definition of excellence	Framework criteria	Link to REG asset management competencies (v1.6)
People and culture	The values, attitudes and behaviour of people within the organisation.	Positively motivated and capable people, owning quality outcomes.	Teams and organisations achieving excellence in people and culture will have a vision for what needs to be achieved. They will be motivated, passionate and constructive, with high job satisfaction. They will be using the systems they have built; their roles will be clear, and they will be contributing to continuous development. Critical thinking is embraced in these teams and people understand the need for and engage in change processes.	Culture, leadership, capability, resourcing, succession planning, structure, collaboration, knowledge management, utilising asset management competency framework	2.1 provide organisational leadership to deliver asset management outcomes 2.2 enable people to perform well 2.3 develop and champion an organisationally defined culture 3.3 expectational knowledge
Systems	The interconnected framework of accountabilities, timeframes, processes, policies and practices that enable an organisation/sector to function effectively.	Fit for purpose planning and delivery of optimal community outcomes.	Systems excellence is achieved when the sector and organisation's systems effectively support people to know exactly why, what, how and when services are required. Systems that perform at this level will facilitate a sound evidence framework and communications. They will support decision making and the delivery of outcomes leading to the realisation of benefits and meeting KPIs. Systems at this level will integrate with national, regional and local policies and show how these policies apply to local decision-making.	Line of sight, imbedding ONF, use of BCA principles; reporting; levels of service framework; technology; integrated approach from strategic planning to delivery; inputs/process/outputs; IIMM and ISO standards; Treasury AMP maturity assessment.	1.1 apply organisational strategic plan to asset management 3.1 conceptual knowledge 3.3 expectational knowledge 4.1 define the scope of an asset management system 4.3 identify risks and opportunities 4.4 define asset management objectives 5.1 define processes and methods employed in managing assets over their life cycles 5.3 define options analysis 5.5 financial and non-financial implications of an asset management plan 5.6 development of long-term works programmes (3, 10 and 30 years) 6.6 implement quality management (includes quality, environmental, and health and safety management)

Performance area	Definition	Desired outcome	Definition of excellence	Framework criteria	Link to REG asset management competencies (v1.6)
Evidence	The information that accurately represents a situation and facilitates evidence-based decision making.	Robust evidence	Evidence is fit for purpose, accessible, usable, accurate, and timely.	Fit for purpose evidence base; data quality; collection and reporting of ONF performance metrics; demand and growth; data systems integration and effectiveness; customer/stakeholder satisfaction; utilising analysis tools; benefit realisation reporting is modelled in evidence; confidence of evidence; understanding of the gaps/issues.	3.1 Conceptual knowledge 3.2 Factual knowledge 3.4 Methodological knowledge 4.2 Identify stakeholders and their requirements 4.4 Define asset management objectives 4.5 Identify investment needs and constraints 4.6 Define an asset management system performance framework 7.1 Design and develop performance measures that effectively drive performance improvement
Communicating	The use of clear language to help improve understanding and inspire action.	The audience being communicated with understands what it is about.	Excellence is achieved when clear information is available to all the interested parties at a level they can easily comprehend and pass on if necessary.	Investment story; key messages by audience; engagement strategy; communications with executive teams and governance; executive summary; structure of AMP (use of principles); link to GPS, NLTP, RLTP, LTP; communication of REG outcomes; communication with contractors and consultants; consultation with customers.	4.2 Identify stakeholders and their requirements
Decision making	The art of using data and information to select an option that best addresses issues and leads to the realisation of appropriate outcomes and benefits.	Good quality infrastructure that cost effectively meets the needs of current and future communities.	Excellence is achieved when informed, defensible decisions are consistently made. Those decisions are based on robust evidence resulting in effective asset life cycle management that delivers the required levels of service at optimal whole of life investment.	Use of ONF in decision making, use of RCA KPIs, links to NZTA assessment processes, links to RCA processes, forward works programme, linking evidence to decisions and forward works plan, intervention/ selection/ improvement.	1.1 Apply organisational strategic plan to asset management 4.1 Define the scope of an asset management system 5.2 Define methods and criteria for decision-making and prioritising activities and resources
Service delivery	The provision of advice, information, guidance and/or physical works consistent with the identified outcomes and requirements.	Value-based delivery of defined customer outcomes	Fit for purpose procurement strategies and smart buyer capabilities are delivering procurement objectives and community outcomes.	Procurement strategy, smart buyer approach, contracts; procurement strategies and smart-buyer self-assessment tools; contracts; embedding AMP outcomes; ONF into procurement; contract management / GA / operational improvement.	4.7 Define the planned approach to procurement 5.4 Determine resource requirements 5.7 How assets are operated and maintained 6.1 Design assets 6.2 Create, acquire, and dispose of assets 6.3 Carry out inspections and defect management 6.4 Develop short-term works programmes 6.5 Prepare and deliver works programmes

Performance area	Definition	Desired outcome	Definition of excellence	Framework criteria	Link to REG asset management competencies (v1.6)
Benefit delivery	The realisation of benefits as an outcome of works and services delivered and in particular; the benefits identified in the strategic case.	Problems are addressed and identified benefits are delivered	The problems, benefits and outcomes are clearly stated. The delivery of benefits identified in the strategic case are supported by evidence and learning is being assimilated into the organisation as well as shared across the sector.	Strategic case (problems and benefits), LTP/AMP outcomes, delivering on customer outcomes, delivering on customer levels of service.	5.8 Decide how the results will be evaluated 7.2 Evaluate and report on the effectiveness of the processes for managing risks and opportunities 7.3 Evaluate performance against asset management objectives 7.4 Evaluate performance of the asset management system
Quality improvement	The process that moves an organisation towards improved outcomes and fit-for-purpose delivery processes.	Striving to deliver the best for their community	The organisation is learning and evolving, and where opportunities to learn from progress and mistakes are encouraged and taken up across the organisation.	AMP improvement plan; identification of gaps; identification of opportunities and risks; innovation.	7.5 Manage an improvement plan 8.1 Create a continuous improvement environment 8.2 Identify and develop improvement opportunities 8.3 Evaluate and prioritise improvement opportunities 8.4 Implement continuous improvement initiatives 8.5 Monitor results and sustain improvement

Appendix B: Sample 2-page report summary

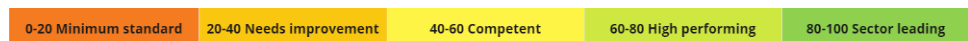
[RCA or NOC] Excellence assessment summary

The Te Ringa Maimoa Excellence Programme helps organisations achieve excellence in transport activity management by assessing their transport activity and practices. The assessment uses sector-developed standards to measure performance and encourage alignment between organisation goals and national, regional, and local policy and objectives, all with a focus on community outcomes and benefits delivery.

Transport teams conduct a self-assessment and undergo an external assessment, resulting in an overall excellence score and set of scores for eight key performance areas. These scores are used to develop a plan that builds on the team's strengths and prioritises their opportunities for improvement on their journey towards transport excellence.

Overall excellence score

The overall excellence score and target score are calculated using weighted scores from each performance area. The score is on a scale of 1-100, within one of five bands. Each band provides a high-level description of the organisation. The overall excellence target is what excellence looks like for the team/organisation.



CURRENT: Competent	Current score
<p>These organisations demonstrate a strong degree of competency and comfort with current delivery. Staff are capable and take pride in their work. They deliver well; however, they may not consistently innovate or demonstrate robust decision-making, good communication, confidence and/or transparency.</p> <p>These organisations seek out opportunities for continuous development, but it is not seen as a consistent feature of their delivery model.</p>	52
TARGET: High performing	Target score
<p>These are progressive organisations that demonstrate confidence in planning and delivery. They have a strong culture of innovation and transparency. There is acknowledgment from peers that they are more than just competent.</p> <p>These organisations actively seek improvement opportunities in decision-making and delivery. They build high performing teams who have the skills and experience to recognise and resolve issues in a constructive and progressive way.</p> <p>Investment reflects the things that matter to the community, and this is clearly communicated. There is good use of benefits data and information to identify land transport problems. There is effective reporting to show the value that investment is delivering to the community.</p> <p>Most decision-making contributes to an effective, efficient and safe land transport system and enables effective reporting on how the organisation is giving effect to the GPS and strategic priorities.</p>	67

Team strengths

The [RCA or NOC] team completed the Excellence assessment in April 2024. The team was engaged, thoughtful and considerate throughout the process. They provided strong evidence of their professional capability and passion for their individual roles. The team were realistic about the challenges of roading infrastructure management and their unique operational environment, allowing for constructive conversations and setting achievable goals.

The team have a clear commitment to continuous development and are open to trying new ways of working. They use recommendations from other assessments and audits to guide their improvement planning and actively work with partners, suppliers, contractors and industry groups to understand the broader context of their work and contribute back to the sector.

The transport team are focused on delivering value for money across all transport activities. They take a pragmatic approach to decision making and have processes in place for data collection and trend analysis to guide their planning processes. Reporting is in place to monitor critical risks.

Overall, the council has systems in place to understand customer, partner and stakeholder expectations and use that information to make informed decisions. This, paired with a focus on sustainable and resilient infrastructure has led to effective asset management.

Performance area scores

The assessment process is comprised of two primary activities – self-assessment and external moderation. Both activities compare a team's transport activities and practices to a set of excellence criteria across eight performance areas. Scores range between 1 and 5. A detailed description of the team's strengths and areas for improvement within each performance area is included in the assessment report.

	1-2 Minimum standard	2-3 Needs improvement	3-3.75 Competent	3.75-4.5 High performing	4.5-5 Sector leading
Performance area	External moderation	Self-assessment	Target score		
People and culture	4.58	4.17	4.67		
Systems	4.21	4.03	4.47		
Evidence	4.14	4.45	4.27		
Communicating	4.08	3.67	4.33		
Decision making	3.88	2.83	4.08		
Service delivery	4.78	3.78	4.78		
Benefit delivery	3.25	3.17	3.67		
Quality improvement	4.31	4.13	4.50		

Opportunities for improvement

- **Benefit delivery:** To effectively monitor benefit realisation, we recommend developing a process to collect both financial and non-financial performance data and use this data in benefit assessments. We also recommend clearly communicating impacts to levels of service in business case optioneering. The proposed impacts of preferred options should be clearly articulated in the AMP, including the criteria for trade-offs.
- **People and culture:** As part of continuing to bed in the new structure, we recommend the team discusses the council vision and mission, and four wellbeings and how the roading team helps bring these into effect. We also recommend having conversations about team member's personal values and how these contribute to the desired team culture and align with the organisation's values.
- **Evidence:** We recommend working more closely with other RCAs to share knowledge and learn how data and analysis (including predictive modelling) informs their decision making. We recommend sharing trend information and discussing/validating any predictions for the future.