

## The principles of the public service

In the public service there are fundamental principles that guide our actions and how we work.

There are five principles.

The principles are:

- Political Neutrality
- Free and Frank Advice
- Merit-based appointments
- Open Government and Stewardship.

Let's take a deeper look into each of the five principles.

The first principle is political neutrality. Political neutrality is a fundamental principle within our Public Service. It is about the way we act as a public service to support the government of the day to develop and implement their policies.

Political neutrality is important because it ensures:

- We can serve current and future governments.
- We support the trust and confidence of Ministers and the Government.
- We maintain the trust and confidence of the public.

The next principle is Free and frank advice. Free and frank advice is about the way we provide advice to Ministers without fear or favour and using our best professional judgement. This underpins the integrity, legitimacy, and performance of New Zealand's system of Government.

Free and Frank advice is important because it ensures:

- Ministers receive full and rounded advice for their decisions.
- We give the public confidence that Ministers' decisions are well informed.
- Good policy decisions are made that optimise services and results for the people we serve.

"Although my current role doesn't involve direct contact with Ministers, it's good to know how decisions are being made across the Public Service for the people we serve."

The third principle is merit-based appointments. Making merit-based appointments means giving preference to the candidate most suited to the role. Merit-based appointments act as a safeguard to political patronage, favouritism and prejudice.

Merit-based appointments are important because they ensure:

- People are appointed through a competitive, fair and open process.
- We develop a highly capable workforce.
- Candidates best suited to the position are appointed to roles.

“To me, merit-based appointment practices reassure me that there are fair processes in place for job ads and applications and I have a fair shot.”

Next, we have Open Government. The Open government principle is about strengthening democracy in New Zealand by ensuring citizens can contribute and influence what government does and how it does it. Transparency, participation, and accountability are at the core of open government.

Open Government is important because it ensures:

- We raise public understanding of how government works.
- We promote public participation.
- We demonstrate our accountability to the public.

"This is important to me in my role – I want people to feel heard when it comes to designing services and processes that impact them most."

The final principle is Stewardship. Stewardship is a proactive duty of care for something that belongs to or exists for the benefit of others now and into the future.

Stewardship is important because it:

- Protects against short-term thinking when developing policy and making decisions.
- Enhances the capability of the public service to serve future governments and the public.
- Protects the long-term sustainability of New Zealand’s system of government.

"I show stewardship by passing on my knowledge and resources to others in my agency. This means we can support our communities now and into the future, even after I leave."

Thanks for joining me in the video about the public service principles. As a public servant, it’s important that you uphold the principles of the Public Service. As you begin your career in the Public Service, it is important that you understand what this means in your agency’s context.

Make sure you are:

- Familiar with your own agency’s guidance, policies and procedures on integrity and conduct matters
- Discussing with your manager if you are unsure about how the principles apply to your agency and your role
- Speaking up when you witness unacceptable behaviour

- Supporting those around you to uphold the principles and act.
- Seeking opportunities to learn more about what it means to be a public servant.
- Always acting professionally and with integrity.

Just like us, the Public Service is ever evolving, for all up to date guidance on Integrity and Conduct at any time check out [He Aratohu | A Guide on Integrity and Conduct](#).