



Australian Government

Australian Public Service Commission

AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

CAPABILITY REVIEW RESPONSE

September 2023



To position the APS workforce for the future to ensure it meets the demands and expectations of the Australian Government and people

The Australian Public Service continues to face many challenges, such as changing community expectations of Government, rebuilding public trust and institutional integrity in the APS, achieving net zero, digital transformation and the adoption of artificial intelligence, workforce mobility, and competition for diverse skills and talent. In addition, the APS Reform agenda builds on a range of reform efforts to date and is repositioning the APS to be future fit and capable of adapting and evolving to meet changing and rising expectations. To address these issues, the APS needs a strengthened Australian Public Service Commission, fulfilling a central role in Government to steward the APS.

Capability reviews are valuable resources for building organisational capability to better position departments and agencies for the future. The APSC Capability Review made a range of findings that fall into two broad categories:

- improving the APSC's value proposition, influence and impact across the APS, and
- improving how we operate as an agency including how we plan, prioritise and resource, and how we attract and retain the right people to deliver our services.

The APSC Capability Review findings inform work currently underway within the APSC to build capability and reposition the organisation to ensure we are well placed to deliver on our forward agenda. This will support our efforts to deliver the Government's APS Reform agenda, strengthen integrity across the APS, strengthen our commitment to a diverse workforce that represents the Australian community, and ensure the APS has the capability to meet future challenges and achieves outcomes for the Australian community.

The findings of the APSC Capability Review will guide us to become a stronger central agency and better partner to APS entities. Building the APSC's capability will take time, effort and commitment, and we are taking a staged approach to transformation. The change will be managed in a way that supports psychological safety and strong engagement with our staff.

The APSC has commenced a project to assess our future state and strategic priorities, setting out a roadmap for change. This project will be completed in late 2023 and will inform specific actions of the APSC Capability Review Response. Accordingly, this Response will be iteratively updated after completion of the project. Further updates will be provided in future Corporate Plans and Annual Reports.

The APSC's initial focus will be on making improvements with immediate impact and benefits for our people and stakeholders. We will then progress to longer term initiatives. In response to the APSC Capability Review findings, we have identified a range of key actions in priority areas, many of which have already commenced.



Dr Gordon de Brouwer
Australian Public Service Commissioner

What does success look like after implementation of the Capability Review Response?

We are a trusted and credible adviser for our Ministers and APS entities on workforce matters.

We provide clear, authoritative service wide guidance and policy to APS entities and support implementation.

We are focussed and deliberate in our engagement through networked partnerships and unified engagement.

We understand the needs of the Australian community and APS entities.

We build whole of APS capability where the APS needs it.

We uphold and lead on integrity in the APS and meet our legislative obligations.

We are a model APS employer, with the right people, with the right skills, in the right place, to deliver on our priorities.

We have a clearly prioritised agenda that is aligned to our legislative responsibilities and vision.

Our operating model is optimal to deliver on our priorities.

Our people have the confidence, systems and tools to do their work.

The APSC will evaluate the success of the implementation of actions through the following:

Surveys

- APS Agency Survey – used to ascertain the capability needs of entities and whether entities utilise our workforce products.
- Annual Client Survey – used to understand stakeholder views from Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries Talent Councils.
- APS Stakeholder Survey – periodic surveys to seek stakeholder views on the APSC's services.

External Engagement

- Annual engagement / interviews of key stakeholders – many provided feedback through the Capability Review process so it is important to ascertain whether the APSC is meeting expectations.
- Feedback from the Minister for the Public Service and the Assistant Minister for the Public Service.
- Engagement with APSC information, education and communications.
- Agency-specific questions in the APS Employee Census focussing on the internal actions / shifts we are trying to achieve.

Internal Engagement

- Internal employee surveys – periodic surveys of our employees on organisational issues.
- Feedback from the SES Diversity Champion Networks.

Actions are organised across the five domains and will be delivered over five years

	Action	Description	Timing	
Leadership and Culture	1	Strategic assessment of future state	Develop a five year strategic vision and agenda for the APSC, including a purpose statement and strategic priorities that align with the interests and needs of stakeholders.	Initiate and complete in Year 1 Review in Year 4
	2	Strategic planning	Strengthen the connections of the APSC's strategic planning to make it relevant and actionable for business areas, including developing a clear set of priorities, aligned to legislative responsibilities and the Government's priorities and the needs of the APS.	Initiate in Year 1 and undertake annually
	3	Internal governance	Review the APSC's existing governance framework, including linkages with external governance to provide transparency of decisions. This will support information sharing and accountability.	Initiate and complete in Year 1
	4	Communication and engagement strategy	Develop an overarching communications strategy (internal and external) for the APSC to strengthen its communication approach, brand and channels into the future. The strategy will be informed by research, an assessment and evaluation of the APSC's channels, branding and communications, and engagement with the APS and public.	Initiate in Year 1 Complete in Year 2 Review in Year 5
Collaboration	5	Evidence based policy advice	Use existing data holdings and encourage innovation to support and add value to the delivery of APSC advice, services and support to APS entities and the Minister. We will share our data with external parties.	Initiate in Year 1 Complete in Year 3+
	6	Pursue stronger relationships with influence	Undertake a coordinated approach to engage with APS entities and coordinate expertise with a view to focussing effort on priority areas to influence HR policy and integrity outcomes that align to Government's priorities. Develop partnerships with APS, academia, NFPs, states and territories, and foreign governments on workforce issues and learning offerings.	Initiate in Year 1 Ongoing
Delivery	7	Optimal operating model	Implement a new operating model, including a new approach to the APSC's operations to increase collaboration and improve agility, operational control and accountability. This may result in implementing a new organisational structure to strengthen alignment across functions and increase spans of control.	Initiate in Year 1 Complete in Year 2
	8	Manage organisational performance	Amend the APSC's performance framework to better assess the effectiveness of the APSC in achieving its objectives by focussing more on outcomes progressively, including implementing an evaluation approach to ensure a consistent approach to reviewing and evaluating outcomes.	Initiate in Year 1 Complete in Year 2
People	9	Workforce strategy	Develop the APSC's employee value proposition, to be implemented through a workforce strategy setting out how we build, strengthen and future proof our workforce.	Initiate in Year 1 Ongoing
	10	Building our capability	Review the APSC's capability needs, and build organisation capability through a mix of recruitment and learning opportunities to strengthen HR expertise and other priority areas, including cultural competence and leadership.	Initiate in Year 1 Ongoing
Resourcing & Risk	11	Sustainable funding	Re-baseline the APSC's funding to align with strategic priorities, including review the APS Academy's business model and user charging arrangements.	Initiate in Year 1 Complete in Year 2
	12	Access to systems and tools	Ensure our people have the right tools, systems, policies and processes to support the delivery of work. The main focus will be project and change management, finance, procurement and IT tools.	Initiate in Year 1 Complete in Year 3+

Interaction of actions across domains

1 Strategic assessment of future state

2 Strategic planning

3 Internal governance

4 Communication and engagement strategy



5 Evidence based policy advice

6 Pursue stronger relationships with influence

Optimal operating model 7

Manage organisational performance 8

Workforce strategy 9

Building capability 10

Sustainable funding 11

Access to systems and tools 12

Each domain interacts with the others to influence the capability of the APSC and its workforce

Leadership and Culture

To provide clarity of purpose and deliver effective leadership

Collaboration

To engage with stakeholders and make positive contributions to the APS

Delivery

To deliver quality services that meet the needs of stakeholders

People

To ensure we have the right people with the right capability at the right time

Resourcing and Risk

To ensure our people have the systems and tools to support their work

Leadership and Culture

- ACTIONS:**
1. Develop a five year strategic vision and agenda for the APSC, including a purpose statement and strategic priorities
 2. Strengthen the connections of strategic planning to make it relevant and actionable for business areas
 3. Review the APSC's governance framework to provide transparency of decisions and to support information sharing
 4. Develop an overarching communication and engagement strategy for the APSC (internally and externally focussed)

DESCRIPTION

The APSC will set a five year vision that addresses strategic change drivers and aligns the focus and activities of the organisation to the interests and needs of key stakeholders.

The strategic priorities and purpose will be embedded in the APSC through structured planning and governance frameworks.

A strategic communication and engagement approach will make the APSC's strategic role and direction clear, and will provide a streamlined approach to engaging with stakeholders (link to Action 6).

EXPECTED CHANGE

- Our people and stakeholders understand the APSC's purpose, vision and role.
- Our people understand the APSC's priorities and have permission and discipline to stop work that is not considered a priority.
- Strengthened internal governance to support decision making, and communication of decisions to our people.
- The APSC has a strong brand and identity aligned to the strategic vision and purpose.

OUTPUT

- A five year strategic vision for the APSC setting out strategic priorities and purpose.
- Business and employee performance plans that align with strategic priorities.
- An overarching internal and external communication and engagement strategy.
- A brand strategy and refreshed set of brands that aligns to the core purpose and vision.
- A regular program of clear, authoritative guidance, impactful communication and meaningful engagement to APS employees, entities and stakeholders through effective channels.
- Regular finance, HR and legal reporting to the Executive to support decision making.
- Dedicated cascading governance reporting, including meeting communiques of key governance meetings.

ACTIVITY

- Undertake an assessment to inform the APSC's future state, through stakeholder consultation to understand expectations from APS entities, Government, and APSC employees.
- Evaluation of the reach and effectiveness of communication and engagement channels and approaches.
- Consult with stakeholders to ensure the APSC's annual work plan is aligned with Secretaries Board and Government priorities.
- Develop a communication and engagement strategy in consultation with internal and external stakeholders, including foreign partners.
- Review all internal committees to ensure each has a clear purpose, terms of reference and strong governance arrangements.

Collaboration

ACTION: 5. Use existing data holdings and encourage innovation to support and add value to the delivery of APSC advice and services

6. Pursue stronger relationships and coordinate expertise through engagement with APS entities on priority areas, and develop partnerships external to the APS, including academia and foreign governments, to influence HR policy and integrity outcomes

DESCRIPTION

The APSC seeks to undertake a more central role in Government and better partner with APS entities to improve its understanding of their needs, support others to deliver and provide authoritative guidance and drive its implementation.

The APSC maintains a range of data sources and undertakes extensive analysis, which could be used to improve the delivery of advice and services to APS entities, and support research by external stakeholders.

Relationships based on respect, empathy and trust are at the heart of the APSC's role. To support the APS, we need to understand the business of agencies. A streamlined participatory approach to engagement is needed to strengthen relationships and enable more meaningful and purposeful interactions.

EXPECTED CHANGE

- The APSC is outwardly focussed and services are tailored to the needs of APS entities and staff.
- All APSC advice, policies, programs and services are evidenced based.
- Transparency and access to APSC data by external APS stakeholders is widely facilitated to support research.
- The APSC engages meaningfully with APS stakeholders on all workforce, people and integrity matters.
- Engagement is participatory (maximum influence by those impacted), deliberative (deep consideration) and innovative (willing to take risks and be uncomfortable).

OUTPUT

- Guidance to entities that accompanies data reporting about possible APS or APSC initiatives to address areas of concern.
- Data analytics informs advice, policies, programs and services.
- A structured program of engagement with APS employees, agencies and external stakeholders.
- An engagement approach based on the APS framework for engagement and participation.
- A regular program of clear, authoritative guidance to APS staff, entities and stakeholders through effective channels.
- Greater understanding of the future needs of APS entities.
- Greater collaboration with entities through connecting people and ideas across the APS, including through APS Academy courses.

ACTIVITY

- Promote the data, reporting and analysis available within the APSC to inform the development of advice, policies, programs and services.
- Use attendee data to inform the development and tailoring of APS Academy courses.
- Explore how the APSC's data holdings can be safely and securely shared with external parties.
- Apply user centred design to develop programs and services with stakeholders.
- Review existing engagement forums and activities across the APSC, and evaluate the effectiveness of engagement channels and approaches.
- Develop an engagement framework, platforms, forums and calendar aligned to APSC and APS priorities in consultation with stakeholders.
- Maintain an international strategy to guide the APSC's partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region.

Delivery

ACTION: 7. Implement a new operating model for how the APSC works, including potential for a revised organisational structure

8. Revise the APSC's performance framework, including our approach to evaluation, to better assess our performance

DESCRIPTION

The APSC needs a future state operating model to address current challenges and improve ways of working. We will do this by increasing mobility and moving talent to organisational priorities, removing unnecessary duplication, improving collaboration and linkages to strategic priorities and systematic approach to improving the way we work. The operating model will support the ways of working referred to in the Collaboration section.

Monitoring and evaluating the APSC's key programs and services will enable a better understanding of their impact across the APS.

EXPECTED CHANGE

- Greater sharing of information and collaboration across the APSC to facilitate a joined up approach to service delivery and policy development.
- A consistent approach to reviewing and evaluating the outcomes of the APSC's programs and services.
- Strengthened performance frameworks utilising evidence-based reporting.
- Lead by example and implement the APSC's policies, program and services provided to APS entities.
- Greater confidence among stakeholders and service users in the APSC's programs and services.

OUTPUT

- A potential new organisational structure.
- Strategic policy capability to support the work of the APSC across the APS in understanding, better supporting and engaging APS priorities.
- Enhanced intranet presence and information sharing for APSC staff.
- Strategically focussed Executive Committee and cohort meetings.
- Service and programs underpinned by better practice evaluation and/or performance monitoring tools.
- Regular progress and performance reporting of key services and programs to the Executive Board.
- Stronger performance information and measuring in the Corporate Plan.
- An integrity maturity baseline assessment.
- An integrity framework based on the National Anti-Corruption Commission best practice model.

ACTIVITY

- Review the APSC's organisational structure, including consideration of a more flexible operating model based on functions, priorities and wider spans of control.
- Forward agenda of strategic meetings aligned to priorities.
- Develop tools and forums to build capability and enable better information sharing by our people.
- Develop performance indicators that provide better measures of effectiveness and focus on outcomes.
- Apply the Department of Finance's better practice evaluation and performance monitoring tools and templates consistently across the APSC's services and programs.
- Updated intranet resources to support information sharing.

People

ACTION: 9. Develop the APSC's employee value proposition and workforce strategy setting out how we build, strengthen and future proof our workforce

10. Review the APSC's capability needs and build organisation capability through a mix of recruitment and learning opportunities

DESCRIPTION

The APSC has a number of workforce priorities that we are addressing through our workforce strategy and action plan across a 3-year horizon, to align with our Corporate Plan.

The key priorities are:

- attraction and retention of people with the right skills
- HR data quality and reporting
- performance management
- ways of working that support workforce performance.

Capability investment in our people will focus on building cultural capability and the core and critical skills needed by our workforce to deliver on the APSC's current and future priorities. This includes a priority on building HR expertise, digital and data skills and leadership skills.

EXPECTED CHANGE

- The APSC is widely regarded as a culturally safe and welcoming place to work by First Nation's people and staff from diverse backgrounds.
- A capable, engaged and diverse workforce that supports the APSC to achieve and maintain operational responsiveness and flexibility.
- Workforce planning is future focussed to support the delivery of strategic priorities and respond to emerging priorities.
- A skilled workforce that has adopted new ways of working demonstrated through joined up, confident employees.

OUTPUT

- The APSC has a refreshed set of workforce planning tools including a:
 - workforce strategy
 - workforce action plan
 - recruitment strategy
 - diversity and inclusion strategy
 - cultural capability uplift plan
 - rewards and recognition framework,
 - learning and development strategy and framework
- Updated people based policies and procedures.
- Learning opportunities for APSC staff on core and critical skills.
- Our people have greater cultural capability including the skills, knowledge and behaviours required to deliver services in a culturally respectful and appropriate manner.

ACTIVITY

- Develop people-based policy across all areas including diversity, cultural capability, talent management, flexibility and pay and conditions.
- Develop attraction and retention policies that target people with required skills and diversity.
- Review and upgrade HR systems and data to support workforce planning decisions.
- Review the performance management framework to incorporate leadership behaviours.
- Undertake a skills audit to identify gaps in core and critical skills.
- Create a learning and development framework that promotes a culture of continuous learning to develop core and critical skills and cultural capability.
- Provide development opportunities that are aligned to our skill requirements.

Resourcing and Risk

ACTION: 11. Re-baseline the APSC’s funding to align with strategic priorities, including a review of the APS Academy’s business model and user charging arrangements

12. Ensure our people have the right tools, systems, policies and processes to support the delivery of work

DESCRIPTION

The APSC needs appropriate resourcing in terms of funding, people and capital. The first step is to review the APS Academy operating model and user charging arrangements as part of a broader review of funding arrangements to transition to sustainable funding aligned to strategic priorities.

The APSC will build its enabling functions and align enabling strategies to better support our people. A key focus will be to ensure our staff have secure and fit for purpose IT services. A number of foundational technology, information and data capabilities are required to be developed. Getting the basics right will ensure the APSC is ready to pivot and respond to new and emerging challenges.

EXPECTED CHANGE

- Alignment of internal budget allocations to strategic priorities, communicated to our people.
- A consistent approach to the charging of Academy services to external entities.
- A consistent approach to the delivery of enabling services that support employees, including greater use of self-service tools and other IT tools.

OUTPUTS

- Budgets aligned to strategic priorities.
- A renewed charging model for Academy services.
- A Cyber Security Strategy and Roadmap.
- A fit for purpose case management and records management system.
- An IT strategy and technology roadmap.
- A project and change management framework.
- A risk management framework.
- Financial, contracting and procurement training for employees.
- Online forms and self-service tools on the intranet, and other IT tools.
- A capital management plan for investing in APSC systems.

ACTIVITY

- Develop an agreed user charging model in consultation with Department of Finance and Secretaries Board.
- Review the alignment of the APSC’s funding to strategic priorities to inform funding discussions with the Department of Finance.
- Review of technology and tools that support the APSC’s activity.
- Review existing enabling services policies and procedures to identify gaps that require action.
- Review records management systems and practices.
- Review the APSC’s outsource provider arrangements.