

**PACIFIC**  
**consultation**  
**GUIDELINES**



MINISTRY OF PACIFIC ISLAND AFFAIRS



# PACIFIC consultation GUIDELINES



MINISTRY OF PACIFIC ISLAND AFFAIRS  
*Activating Pacific opportunities - its skills, resources and prosperity*

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## CONTENTS

Forward .....	2
When Would You Consult?.....	3
What Would You Consult About? .....	3
But Remember Pacific Peoples Are Diverse ....	3
Try To Remove The Barriers For Pacific Peoples To Participate .....	4
Use A Variety Of Methods .....	4
Prepare A Consultation Plan - Here Is A Checklist.....	5
Helpful Contacts .....	5

**FORWARD**

It is hard to develop effective and comprehensive policies without direct involvement with the people whose responses, behaviour and attitudes will ultimately make the policies work. Consultation is not just a statutory requirement. It is one of the prerequisites for good and smoothly implemented policy-making.

Good consultation amongst Pacific peoples involves the creation and the maintenance of relationships. It involves a significant investment at the outset because consultation amongst Pacific peoples is time consuming. But the return on your investment is high indeed and lasts for a very long time - repaid many times over. So take the time to observe protocols which uphold spirituality through prayers, recognition of church and community leaders and through thank you gestures or koha.

**BE SURE YOU FULFIL ALL THE LEGAL REQUIREMENTS...**

- Setting out a proposal early in the process which has not yet been decided upon;
- Approaching the process with a genuinely open mind;
- Giving all the information which participants need, presented in a way which is right for them;

**BE SENSITIVE TO PACIFIC VALUES**

- Allowing enough time, on their terms;
- Reaching a final decision in light of what they have said, without raising false expectations;
- Explaining the final outcome to people so they can see how their participation contributed; and
- Being clear about what is and is negotiable and what is being presented just for information for purposes.

Indeed, if you do not follow this process, especially ensuring that the group is sufficiently informed, you will not meet the legal requirements.

**BE GENUINE - CONSULTATION IS AN ETHICAL PROCESS**

Communities frequently tell of consultation process which are unethical and which diminish mutual trust between Government and its citizens. Consultation is much more than participation. Consultation involves presenting information in a way which all participants understand, recording their responses, and altering policy as a result of these responses. Consultation involves serious ongoing obligations to the people consulted. It is a process done in utmost good faith, not to be undertaken for the sake of it. If you do not need, and are unlikely to use the response, ask yourselves if you should be doing it at all.

<i>Pacific peoples...</i>	<p>...tend to be motivated by individual benefit within a wider value of communications;</p> <p>...are likely to see mutual help as bringing future security more effectively than individual policies;</p> <p>...like to take time to properly understand and come to a consensus view;</p> <p>...emphasise spiritual dimensions and see the church and pastor as very important;</p> <p>...highly value reciprocity and give and expect thank you gestures; and</p> <p>... may pay greater respect to the authority and value status specific in their nation.</p>	<i>so maybe...</i>	<p>...a policy option which fails to see the individual as part of family, community or society may not work;</p> <p>...a view of “rational” individually-focused behaviours will have limited application;</p> <p>...you may not get quick advice or decisions, especially if you do not listen attentively;</p> <p>...the spiritual and holistic dimensions of a policy issue will be very important;</p> <p>...you should always observe protocols and give a form of koha following consultation; and</p> <p>...you should uphold the value of status and authority on their terms as well as your own.</p>
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**WHEN WOULD YOU CONSULT?**

- Early on in the process so you capture relevant data and Pacific peoples’ more intangible issues associated with the problem;
- When you genuinely do not know the best answer; and
- When you think you know the right answer but have not tested it amongst people with different ideologies and values from yours and those who will respond to your policy.

**WHAT WOULD YOU CONSULT ABOUT?**

- Everything where cultural values and socio-economic disadvantage are likely to impact on the outcome;
- Those policy issues which are framed in the prevailing or majority ideology but may not fit with the values/incentives relevant for the recipients of the policy;
- Any policy issues where Pacific peoples currently have poor outcomes compared with other groups in the population;
- Any policy which focuses on poor urban localities; and
- Any policy where the mechanisms of service delivery is a critical issue.

**BUT REMEMBER PACIFIC PEOPLES ARE DIVERSE**

<p><i>Pacific peoples relate to both traditional and mainstream organisations;</i></p>	<p>They straddle both western and Pacific cultures and adopt the mores and norms of each at different times depending on the issue - don’t assume that all groups have an inflexible or entirely common set of beliefs.</p>
<p><i>Pacific peoples are dealing with inter-generational and cultural transformation;</i></p>	<p>They are grappling in their own homes with the transition between traditional practices of Pacific born people and the New Zealand- born young people thoroughly socialised to New Zealand norms - try and be sensitive to their need to accommodate and to evolve in an environment of change.</p>
<p><i>Each Pacific nation is different and within each nation there is diversity;</i></p>	<p>The status, authority, tradition, obligations and power structures are different in each group - don’t assume that any one Samoan view of the world is like that of a Cook Island person or Niuean; check it out.</p>
<p><i>Many languages are relevant; and</i></p>	<p>English is often the most comfortable language for a group, but older Pacific peoples can often only participate effectively when their own language is used - don’t assume; check out and give choices.</p>
<p><i>Pacific peoples want to be empowered to solve the multiple problems associated with their social and economic disadvantage.</i></p>	<p>Cultural differences are important for running a successful consultation process, and policy solutions which directly address the economic and social disadvantage of Pacific peoples are the important ones; suggest an option which enables them to determine the solution.</p>

**TRY TO REMOVE THE BARRIERS FOR PACIFIC PEOPLES TO PARTICIPATE**

**HERE ARE SOME MAJOR BARRIERS:**

**SO TRY THIS:**

<i>The wrong languages;</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer English and the languages of different nations.</li> </ul>
<i>Complex, written documents full of jargon;</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer straightforward, clear, written explanations always accompanied by face to face discussion in plain English.</li> </ul>
<i>The wrong presenter;</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always find someone to help present the topic, who is well respected in that particular Pacific community.</li> </ul>
<i>Too far away from a familiar place;</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go where Pacific peoples are, where they naturally meet, perhaps connected to a church if that is familiar.</li> </ul>
<i>Misunderstanding about the role of government;</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try and make the issues real and personal to groups who may not understand how policy making happens.</li> </ul>
<i>The lack of support by community leaders.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has this group been consulted too much? Get the views and support of community leaders for the issue before you set up your fono or meeting.</li> </ul>

**USE A VARIETY OF METHODS**

- Involve the Pacific peoples informants who have an alliance/relationship with your department at the planning sessions;
- Don't ever use just one consultation method – choose at least two as each has different benefits. A public meeting or fono is rarely useful on its own;
- Always ensure the information is clear - check it out before hand with some individual Pacific peoples; and
- Allow ample time.

**YOU COULD CONSIDER USING:**

**THE VALUE OF THIS METHOD:**

<i>Focus groups;</i>	A well run focus group is very effective for debate and development of ideas. There are some excellent market research firms which specialise in Pacific peoples' consultation through focus groups. Attend the group as well, don't just leave it to the contracted research firm.
<i>Key informants - One-to-one interviews;</i>	It is valuable to check out more complex issues with individuals. But do not expect them to represent views of the wider community. Develop your own personal relationships as a department with a few key Pacific peoples for initial advice.
<i>Fono;</i>	Fono are time consuming, but very comfortable for older Pacific peoples and crucial where a policy is going to require support and implementation at a community level. Go to a fono with a Pacific person to assist and be very clear in what you say.
<i>Community leaders;</i>	Such leaders are a valuable resource who give you the perceptions of the "hidden" communities. Because non-participants within these communities are often the people most needy of good public policy, make sure the community leaders you choose live and work within these communities. (These community leaders are different from your key informants who may take a more strategic or bureaucratic view.)
<i>A project steering committee or an advisory group;</i>	Such steering or advisory committees can be very helpful in the planning stages of a consultation to decide mechanisms, key individuals and determine presentation of information.
<i>Media such as the radio; and</i>	The Pacific radio stations in Auckland, for example, are a very good medium for advertising meetings and running discussions.
<i>Surveys.</i>	Surveys give high-volume and low-quality information and do not usually get a high response as they are not the preferred medium for Pacific peoples.

## PREPARE A CONSULTATION PLAN - HERE IS A CHECKLIST

1. You have looked at the data on Pacific peoples in relation to the policy issue. You know the level of disadvantage and you understand the cultural issues in relation to the problem you are trying to solve.
2. Describe the purpose of the consultation. What do you need to know in order to progress? What is it that you can only learn through hearing the views of Pacific peoples?
3. Work out the time-frame, taking into account the steps below.
4. List the people you need to talk to. Do you need to involve different ages, gender, national groups? Do you need the feelings and reactions of those hidden communities at the grass roots? - if so, be sure you capture them.
5. Choose your mechanisms, perhaps start with some key informant interviews, follow this with two or three focus groups with different mixes of people, check out with some community leaders and with their help run a fono right at the heart of one of the localities of high Pacific population.
6. Decide on exactly what information is needed to ensure the group with whom you are consulting have what they need to advice you. Get one of your Pacific informants to check out the information you have prepared.
7. Describe how the information received will be recorded and analysed and make your plans in advance on how you will feed-back to the people involved on the outcome of their participation.
8. Evaluate the process of consultation and share what you learnt with your colleagues. Continue to build up your own network of Pacific peoples contacts. Remember that these will be ongoing reciprocal relationships, it is not just a one-off event.

## HELPFUL CONTACTS

Each key public agency will establish its own network of Pacific informants.

The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs would like to know when you are running a Pacific peoples' consultation process. The Ministry cannot run the consultation process for you but can advise on helpful resources and would be happy to do so.

### Contact:

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