



# Starting a network at MBIE

This is an introduction to guidance and direction for people who are interested in setting up a network at MBIE. It's based on joined knowledge from starting our existing networks. Apply what seem relevant to your group for its stage of growth. For example In the first instance your group may be informal, one person arranging meetings from time to time for a common interest. Defining your common interest might be all you need.

## Why it's important

Our organisational development priorities help us focus on the things we need to do to make MBIE a great place to work.

Inclusion and Diversity is one of our organisational development priorities. It's about valuing our people and aiming to reflect the communities we serve. Understanding and embracing our diversity is crucial to growing our positive workplace culture. Inclusion promotes belonging, purpose and a sense of wellbeing.

Celebrating who we are, as well as the work we do, helps make MBIE a great place to work.

## Expectations of all networks

Activities and their members must operate within MBIE policy and maintain alignment to the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy and organisational strategy. This provides assurance to your sponsor and helps us sing from the same page.

Being in an MBIE network shouldn't affect your ability to work in your substantive role. Please discuss the involvement with your manager to assess how you can take part during work time. An example could be adding activities to your development plan to compliment skill sets you might be trying to grow or improve on.

## Setting up your network

Find a minimum of four to six people that will be able to dedicate an initial burst of time to starting up the network. You will start as a self-elected committee, and will need to consider at a future date as membership grows if an election based committee would be more suitable.

Speak with your manager about the network concept and agree with them the flexibility you think you will need to establish the network. Stewardship activities are seen as an important part of being an employee at MBIE, and network contributions that are aligned with MBIE outcomes can be balances with the role you have been recruited for. We recommend looking for opportunities to integrate network contributions into your personal development plan.

Discuss between your volunteers what guidance they have been provided by their managers eg some areas of MBIE are roster based and will need notification prior to the roster period if they are completing a non-core activity.



Start by sitting down as a group to define your terms of reference before you launch your network or establish your first event, request a sponsor or request a design icon.



## Guidance

### The focus of your group

We recommend that you consider the following as you are forming your group:

- How and why you the network should exist
- How and why you will support MBIE to learn about people in your group and how people at MBIE best support you. Allies are important.
- Stand for something rather than against something. Take an inclusive network approach.

### Official Information Act (OIA) awareness

Please be professional public servants. Write emails and make decisions with the OIA in mind – will what you're saying hold up to public scrutiny?

Conducting network activity on MBIE systems means that your network will not be exempt from the Official Information Act. This means anyone can requests information relating to networks, however as with all OIA requests, we would make an assessment at the time of request about the feasibility of withholding information where privacy is concerned.

You can approach the Privacy team for guidance if you have a particular concern.

As a result we strongly suggest that as part of network activates that staff avoid:

- the use of personal e-mails to conduct network business
- activist activities or strong political stance

If an OIA impacts your network and you believe information should be withheld or declined, contact your senior sponsor who would be responsible to make a decision. Ministerial Services and Legal Services will be able to assist the decision-maker (eg sign-out manager) in the normal way.

### SLT Sponsor for your group

You are not required to have a sponsor but research shows that strong sponsorship is critical to Network success within organisations.

SLT are committed to showing support for our networks publically and within MBIE where there is alignment with the organisation and its outcomes. For us to do this well, they need to know how the group aligns to MBIE, linked relationships, key messaging and events you would like them to attend. You can communicate these via your sponsor and their EA.

## Funding

Funding for events will be the responsibility of your sponsor. We recommend signalling your funding needs a year in advance to your sponsor by May each year to assist them in planning their budget.

As a guide, here are some approximate costs:

- Screen savers cost 250.00 (this is for each period you would like the screen to be loaded for)
- Guests speakers can cost between \$500 and \$8000
- Print of 5000 stickers approx. \$500 to \$1000
- Distribution list charge approx. 1c for every person who receives an email.



## Terms of Reference

They may feel like a painful thing to create but it is a helpful way to define what your groups is and isn't. It show people what your intent is so they can decide how and if the will support you.

There are other benefits:

- create a touchstone for your members and your sponsors to hold each other to account and keep you focused on what matters to the group
- assist comms and design in creating aligned content
- enable your committee and supporters to align to your purpose with confidence
- enable some consistency as committee members come and go

Your terms of reference may be relatively short at first, setting out how you will align to MBIEs outcomes and what the aims and objective for the network initiation is. You can amend them at any time by agreement of your committee as your network takes shape. Ensure you inform your sponsor and the inclusion and diversity programme manager of changes.

Things to consider including in your terms of reference:


- What are the benefits it will provide?
- How will you align to MBIEs outcomes?
- What are your aims and objective for the network?
- Do you want your group to be involved in reviews of key policies or processes, service deliver or consulting? If not, where do you advise MBIE to go for advice?
- Are there any external groups you want to partner with?
- What is your commitment to connecting with other networks?
- What is the minimum commitment you want from committee members?
- What is the vote requirement for changing the TOR?
- What will let you know your network is successful? Can we measure it?
- What is the structure for the group?
- What are the core values of the group?
- What steps need to be taken to achieve the group's mission?
- What are the short and long term goals of the group?
- What resources are needed for each goal?
- Who will take the lead and implementation of each goal?

## Events, comms and marketing

Our comms support person is Edd Brooksbank.

**Planning:** We will ask in the last quarter of each year what you plan to celebrate in the coming year. We recommend looking for partnership opportunities with our other networks wherever possible. Ensure as you are planning events that you consider how you will promote your event and book comms support early. We can encourage attendance at events through The Link, photocopy areas and pin boards and manager communications. Please avoid kitchen cupboards and the lifts. Check out this [great check list](#) on planning events. It has an external event focus, so some items will not be relevant for internal events.





**Comms:** ensure that all draft communications go via our comms support person to assess for risks to MBIE and if anyone should be aware of the comms before they are released. If you require an article, design support or recording of an event, book early to allow time for design and review activities.

**Lead time:** We suggest planning events well in advance (for example Diwali festival 2018 preparations begun 7 weeks prior to the festival and guest speaker events about 12 weeks in advance).

**Sponsorship attendance:** Contact the EA of the leaders well in advance to let them know about the event. Where applicable, provide some key notes to assist them if you wish them to speak a minimum of 4 business days in advance.

**Buildings:** Be conscious of our [building guides](#). These will provide you guidance on how to get support from facilities, how to book a room and what technology is available.

**Regional inclusion:** Consider how you will engage our regions in your activities. Can you:


- share resources you make by post or online.
- make your event available for people to dial in
- arrange to have details of the event available after and post it on your network page. C
- set up a regional sub committee?

Our WIL network regularly run events, if this is your first event, consider gleaning from their experience.

#### Comms templates and guides to help

- Event poster template.docx  
<http://mako.wd.govt.nz/otcs/lisapi.dll/link/27771897>
- Guide for Writing a News Item.docx  
<http://mako.wd.govt.nz/otcs/lisapi.dll/link/24376221>
- Guide to communicate an event at MBIE.docx  
<http://mako.wd.govt.nz/otcs/lisapi.dll/link/27682953>
- Internal-Communications-Plan-Template.docx  
<http://mako.wd.govt.nz/otcs/lisapi.dll/link/65660924>
- Stakeholder map template.pptx  
<http://mako.wd.govt.nz/otcs/lisapi.dll/link/74731063>
- Success story template.docx  
<http://mako.wd.govt.nz/otcs/lisapi.dll/link/26362968>
- Template for post-event news stories.docx  
<http://mako.wd.govt.nz/otcs/lisapi.dll/link/27535732>
- template for words to advertise your event.docx  
<http://mako.wd.govt.nz/otcs/lisapi.dll/link/27784252>
- Event briefing template – see WIL

#### Overcoming challenges



When faced with challenges during development, implementation, or maintenance; identify the root causes and then take steps to reduce or eliminate them.


- Define the challenge (i.e. low membership, lack of participation, etc.)
- Analyse the cause
- Explore solutions
- Decide whether the challenge is worth solving
- Implement solutions to overcome the challenge
- Consider the necessary steps to avoid similar challenges
- Reach out to other established groups or support people for guidance

### Fast track your establishment process

1. **MAKO:** set up a shared MAKO folder in our [network space](#) by contacting [mako.support@MBIE.govt.nz](mailto:mako.support@MBIE.govt.nz) . Ensure you specify any needs for restrictions.
2. **Private online conversation space:** we have a space you can request for your network to have private online discussions via The Link. You can email [TheLink@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:TheLink@mbie.govt.nz) to get this started.
3. **Network description:** We welcome you to add a description of your network to our [networks page](#) by emailing [TheLink@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:TheLink@mbie.govt.nz).
4. **Shared email:** You can request a shared email address where staff can email their requests and that you can send news letters etc from via [Self service](#)>other> shared Mailbox request
5. **Create a visual identity:** We have a visual suite that we ask you to operate within, contact our communications support person to initiate this activity
6. **Connect:** with our existing [Network](#) committees. Learn from their experience and take a look at their pages and resources. Contact [Inclusionanddiversity@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:Inclusionanddiversity@mbie.govt.nz) and let them know what you are up to. They can help identify if any other agencies have a similar network, help to encourage you on your journey and loop you into cross network meetings and activities and assist in finding your initial committee members.
7. **Distribution list:** different audiences want to know different things. Think about levels of membership and any particular things you need to know about your network members to help protect them. Do they want to be an visible or invisible member? Do they want to be a member, participate in committee, or subcommittee initiatives on a regular or ad-hoc basis?
8. **History:** start recording your history. Chances are you will be asked about your journey or will have an opportunity to enter an award because of the impact you will make. Appointing someone early on to record your history or remind members to add to it is a great way to keep your story alive over time.

### Additional support resources

- organisations looking to support networks  
<https://ccdi.ca/media/1073/20150716-ccdi-report-erg-toolkit.pdf>
- How to start a network - short  
<https://medium.com/ladies-storm-hackathons/how-to-start-an-affinity-group-at-your-office-89099eb6d49e>
- tips and case studies  
[https://www.diversitybestpractices.com/sites/diversitybestpractices.com/files/import/embdedded/anchors/files/diversity\\_primer\\_chapter\\_10.pdf](https://www.diversitybestpractices.com/sites/diversitybestpractices.com/files/import/embdedded/anchors/files/diversity_primer_chapter_10.pdf)

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- Event planning resources  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/blog/event-planning-guides-ds00/>
  - Government Women Network resources – includes mentoring guidelines  
<https://www.gwn.govt.nz/resources#network-resources>
  - Florida state university guide – how to start, best practices, membership template ideas and so much more 😊  
[https://hr.fsu.edu/\\_content/diversity/PDF/FSU\\_Affinity\\_Group\\_Framework.pdf](https://hr.fsu.edu/_content/diversity/PDF/FSU_Affinity_Group_Framework.pdf)
  - Media alerts, library resources and more  
<http://thelink/libraryonline>