

MĀTAURANGA AND MODERNITY: BLENDING TRADITION AND TECHNOLOGY TO CREATE INCLUSIVE DIGITAL FUTURES FOR AOTEAROA

RESEARCH INNOVATION COUNCIL ANZ BRIEF | VOL.6

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



On 4 November, 2024, a collaborative forum convened at the **Victoria University of Wellington**, drawing together senior public sector leaders, academic experts, and industry representatives to discuss strategies for advancing digital innovation and improving service delivery. The discussions were framed around the GX5 model, which focuses on five core government service priorities.

The Chatham House session brought together 20 senior leaders, including **40% from Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and C-Level positions** such as Chief Technology Officer (CTO), Chief Information Security Officer (CISO), and Chief Digital Officer (CDO). The remaining 60% comprised Directors managing critical portfolios across key government agencies and departments. Integrating expertise from across sectors, **Victoria University** curated three academic leaders to join, and five AWS industry partners (**AWS, Datacom, Freshworks, Grant Thornton, Okta**) helped further shape the discussion on practical problem solving and sectoral collaboration.

These leaders oversee strategic areas including digital transformation, data security, education technology, environmental policy, housing innovation, and regional governance. Collectively, they are responsible for driving initiatives that enhance citizen-focused digital services, address systemic inefficiencies, and enable data-driven decision-making.

Keynote discussions highlighted the critical role of cross-sector collaboration, leadership, and innovative approaches in navigating challenges such as workforce constraints, trust, and resource sharing. Participants examined the implementation of GX5 priorities, with a particular focus on leveraging digital identity and inclusive service design to build scalable, citizen-centric solutions tailored to New Zealand's unique needs. The forum underscored the importance of integrating Mātauranga Māori, fostering collaboration, and embracing emerging technologies like AI to achieve long-term transformation goals.

By **Patrick Joy** | Head of Research & Analysis | [Public Sector Network](#)

READ THE WHITEPAPER
WHAT IS THE GX5?



FIVE DIGITAL INITIATIVES
TO BOOST PRODUCTIVITY

THE GX5 | RESEARCH BRIEF



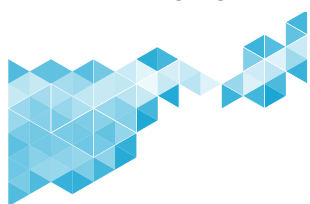
KEY THEMES AND INSIGHTS

THE ROLE OF Ā MĀORI PERSPECTIVES IN PUBLIC SERVICES

- Participants emphasised the importance of ensuring Ā Māori representation in decision-making processes. This inclusion aims to embed mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) in governance frameworks.
- The need for culturally appropriate and community-driven solutions was underlined, with examples of integrating tikanga Māori (Māori customs) into policy design and service delivery.
- A call to action for public services to adopt ‘through service, leadership’ principles to build trust and strengthen community engagement.

COLLABORATION AND SILO-BREAKING

- Collaboration was recognised as both an opportunity and a challenge. Participants stressed the importance of fostering partnerships across government, academia, and industry.
- Insights included establishing dedicated inter-agency teams or “partnership offices” to facilitate resource sharing and collective problem-solving.
- Examples of successful collaboration included shared initiatives addressing life events like transitioning to higher education or managing health records.



DIGITAL IDENTITY AND DATA STEWARDSHIP

- Digital identity was identified as a critical enabler of equitable and efficient public services. Participants highlighted challenges in adoption, such as public trust, siloed data, and the need for cultural inclusivity.
- Discussion included leveraging verifiable credentials to ensure data security while empowering citizens to control their information.
- Participants noted the potential productivity and equity gains from adopting unified digital records, particularly in sectors like health and social services.

LEVERAGING EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

- AI’s role in enhancing service delivery was explored, particularly as agents to support citizen interactions with government systems. However, ensuring AI’s trustworthiness and mitigating biases were critical considerations.
- The concept of “digital co-pilots” to assist citizens in navigating life events was highlighted as an opportunity to reduce bureaucracy and improve outcomes.

ACTIONABLE FRAMEWORK: 3-2-1 MODEL

- Three: Identify three insights or opportunities to share.
- Two: Take two actionable steps to bring back to respective organisations.
- One: Commit to one transformative initiative for change.

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

EMBED Ā MĀORI LEADERSHIP:

- Establish mechanisms to ensure sustained and meaningful Ā Māori representation in governance and decision-making.
- Promote mātauranga Māori as a guiding framework in policy and service innovation.

ADOPT COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURES:

- Create cross-agency teams dedicated to addressing systemic challenges like siloed data and service inefficiencies.
- Develop shared funding mechanisms to incentivise joint projects across government and academia.

PRIORITISE DIGITAL EQUITY:

- Implement a unified digital identity framework with verifiable credentials.
- Ensure digital platforms address diverse user needs, especially marginalised communities, through co-design and inclusive testing.

INVEST IN AI-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS:

- Develop AI tools to streamline service delivery, focusing on areas like telehealth and public records management.
- Pilot AI applications in controlled environments to address concerns around bias and transparency.

CONCLUSION

This roundtable underscored the critical role of collaboration, inclusivity, and innovation in transforming the New Zealand public sector. By embracing a shared vision, leveraging indigenous knowledge, and adopting advanced digital tools, stakeholders can drive systemic change that benefits citizens and strengthens trust in public institutions.

The GX5 framework's priorities resonated throughout the discussions, highlighting the potential of unified efforts in digital identity, data sharing, and citizen-focused services. While this brief captures high-level insights, a separate white paper will delve deeper into GX5's application and outcomes in the New Zealand context.

As one participant aptly summarised, "Through service, we achieve leadership."

FUTURE FOCUS AREAS

Digital identity and verifiable credentials: The discussion highlighted the importance of user-controlled data sharing and the potential benefits of a national digital identity system.

Life event-based service integration: The idea of a "digital co-pilot" that can integrate services across agencies based on life events was raised. Explore research and pilot projects in this area to improve citizen-centric service delivery.

Productivity gains through digital transformation: The discussion covered several high-impact areas like planning, transport, and business compliance where digital transformation could drive significant productivity gains. Further research could be undertaken to quantify these benefits and developing implementation roadmaps.

Data stewardship and privacy-preserving data sharing: The need for robust data governance models that address privacy concerns while enabling efficient data sharing was highlighted.

Cross-agency collaboration platforms: Improving visibility and sharing of innovative initiatives across the public sector was identified as an important focus area.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Public Sector Network thank all participants, with special recognition to the Hon. Victor Dominello, Ember Advisors, AWS and partners, and the host universities for their invaluable contributions. The insights shared at these events will guide the next chapter of digital transformation in Australia and New Zealand.

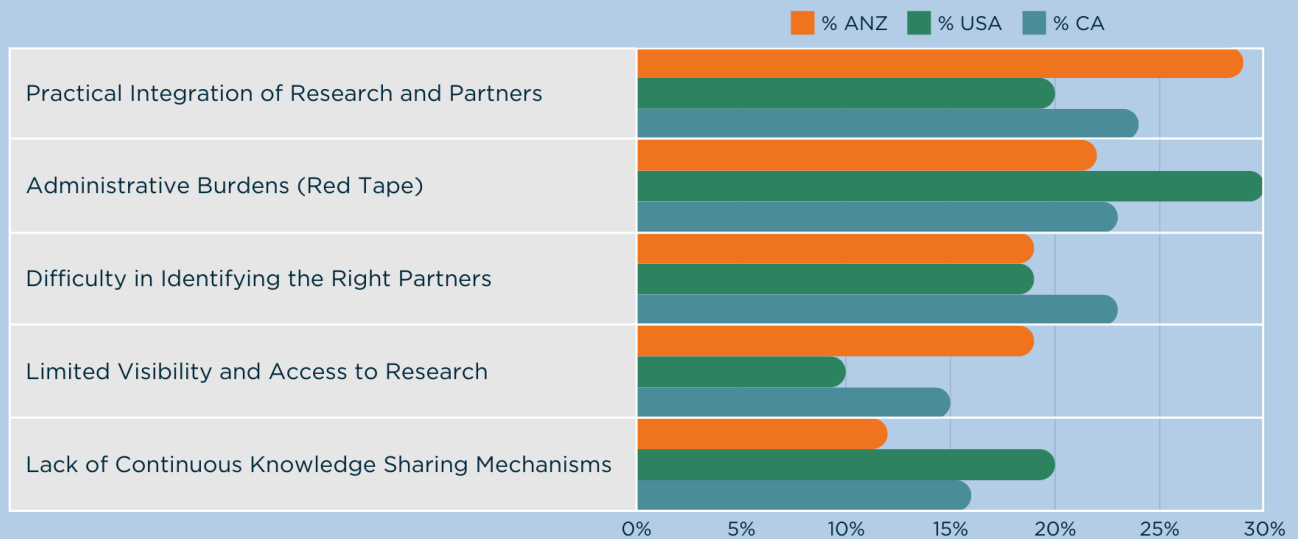
ABOUT THE RESEARCH INNOVATION COUNCIL

Connecting government, industry and academia: we've been able to engineer a new program antithetical to the classical red tape, administration, and risk-aversion that impedes innovation.

Our program offers senior executives a unique opportunity to gather monthly for PSN-facilitated roundtable sessions with colleagues, academics, and technologists. We run the program at no cost to government executives or academics, and provide attendees a private online group on our global insights exchange platform, access to research briefs, and expert engagement with PSN analysts and facilitators.



Greatest challenge partnering with Academia or Industry



Source: PSN Research Innovation Council Survey 2024. Total Sample Size: 188 ANZ/ 83 USA/ 80 CA Gov Executives

ABOUT PUBLIC SECTOR NETWORK

Public Sector Network is a research company that represents public sector professionals across Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the USA. It develops roundtables, seminars, and conferences to suit current areas of interest to government agencies and their suppliers.

PSN's growing community spans across federal, state, and local government departments, healthcare, and education, allowing members to share information, access the latest in government innovation, and engage with other like-minded individuals on a secure and closed-door network.

AUSTRALIA / NEW ZEALAND

P +61 2 9057 9070

E INFO@PUBLICSECTORNETWORK.COM.AU

USA

P +1 (647) 969 4509

E HELLO@PUBLICSECTORNETWORK.COM

CANADA

P +1 (647) 459 8904

E CONTACT@PUBLICSECTORNETWORK.CO

Public Sector Network (Australia) Pty Ltd

ABN - 46 617 870 872 20-40

Meagher Street, Chippendale, Sydney NSW 2008, Australia



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