

March 2026

DOC's Treaty Operating Model

Guiding the way for the Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai to be an honourable Treaty partner



DOC kaimahi at Te Pūkenga Atawhai held at Hongoeka Marae. Photo: DOC

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Version	Date	Author	Description of activity/changes
1.0	31/3/2026	Treaty Relationships Group	Endorsed by Senior Leadership Team

Penny and Sheridan's foreword

He anamata mō te oraanga o te taiao – Working together for conservation in Aotearoa New Zealand

*Ko te ao mārama e koropupū ake nei, hei oraanga mō tātau katoa,
Ko te hau tūrama o Te Ao Tūroa e pupuri nei i te mauri o te whenua,
E hāpai ana tātau i te kaupapa tiaki, kia ū, kia mau, kia ea,
Kia tipu, kia rea te oraanga o te taiao mō ngā whakatipuranga.*

When we honour the Treaty in our everyday work, conservation and our taiao thrives. We build stronger relationships, make clearer decisions and get better results for nature when we work in true partnership.

We want to acknowledge the good work that has already brought us this far. Many of our teams, leaders, Treaty partners and kaimahi have been working hard over many years to build relationships, strengthen trust and weave te ao Māori into the heart of conservation. This progress gives us a strong foundation and deserves recognition.

Where we are now

Right now, we and our Treaty partners agree that the way we work together could be stronger and more consistent. In some places, partnership is strong; in others, it's harder, and we don't always have a shared understanding of what matters most. Our systems don't always make it easy for our people to build good relationships, deliver on our commitments or implement the holistic intent of Treaty settlements. This puts our credibility as an honourable Treaty partner at risk, and we're committed to changing that.

Why we're confident about the future

Even with these challenges, there's also real hope. We're building a much clearer picture of what needs to change. Over the past few years, our team has listened closely – to iwi, hapū and whānau, to our kaimahi across Aotearoa and to our leaders. Their experiences, insights and aspirations have shaped this model and give us confidence that the direction we're taking is grounded, thoughtful and the right next step for us all.

Why we need a new Treaty Operating Model

The model strengthens the leadership role of the Treaty Relationships Group, Te Pae Whaitake. It does this by setting clear standards, leading DOC's Treaty strategy, and giving the rest of DOC clearer guidance and support.

This means people across DOC can do Treaty work with more confidence and consistency – knowing what's expected, where to go for advice, and how their work connects to the bigger picture. Over time, this helps us build stronger, more trusted relationships with hapū and iwi, and deliver better outcomes for conservation.

Everyone has a role in this future

Treaty work supports all of DOC – in every region and business group. The Treaty Operating Model helps make sure everyone knows what's expected, where to get help and how to give effect to the Treaty in their day-to-day work.

Being an Honourable Treaty Partner

Our vision: Through honourable Treaty partnerships, we take action to protect and restore the nature and heritage entrusted to us for the wellbeing of Aotearoa. This means building strong relationships, working proactively, and leading with honesty, care and respect.

To get there, the Treaty Operating Model focuses on three areas:

- **Strategic intent:** This is our shared direction and helps kaimahi understand what being an honourable Treaty partner looks like in practice and how we'll know we're making good progress.
- **Better relationships:** Supporting kaimahi to build strong and consistent relationships across regions and teams.
- **Stronger assurance and monitoring:** To support good decisions, spot risks early and back kaimahi when things are complex.

These three key areas are supported by our key enabler: **Te ao Māori capability** – guidance, tools, training and advice staff can use in their roles.

What success looks like

We want a future where DOC listens with care, does what we say we'll do, values te ao Māori knowledge and creates a safe place for learning – even when the work feels new or challenging.

We'll know we are succeeding when:

- our Treaty partners trust us
- the right people are doing the right work in the right places
- our relationships are built on shared goals and aspirations – and not just on obligation
- hapū and iwi can lead kaupapa that matter to them and can see their aspirations reflected in conservation priorities and outcomes.

Where we're heading

This journey will take time, but our direction is clear. The intent is transformational and must be so as we head closer towards 2040, 200 years since the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi | the Treaty of Waitangi. But our progress will be pragmatic, sustained and practical to bring all of DOC with us. We're building strong, connected and future-focused systems that reflect the hopes and aspirations we share with our Treaty partners for the good of conservation. This is a future that is better for us, better for our partners and better for nature and heritage. And we'll shape it together.

Haumi ē, hui ē, tiakitanga ē



Penny Nelson

Director-General of Conservation



Sheridan Smith

Deputy Director-General, Iwi Strategy and Partnerships

Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kahungunu

Executive summary

The Treaty Operating Model explains how DOC will work with Treaty partners in a more confident and consistent way to protect nature and heritage across Aotearoa.

The Treaty Operating Model is DOC's way of being an honourable Treaty partner. It makes partnership the normal way DOC plans, makes decisions and delivers work every day—so good practice does not depend on people trying to make it work on their own. But, rather, our direction is clear, we know what good looks like, and our systems and processes help us to get there.

In short, this model changes three areas

- **Clearer strategic intent for better conservation outcomes** – Treaty partners will be involved earlier, while ideas, priorities and trade-offs are still being shaped. Aspirations and perspectives inform strategy, policy, planning, and delivery, and the Treaty Relationships Group leads DOC's strategic priority to be an honourable Treaty partner.
- **Better relationships** – roles and responsibilities will be clearer. Day-to-day relationships at place are led by Regional Operations, relationships that deliver projects or initiatives regionally and locally are led by the relevant business groups, and the Treaty Relationships Group support systems and tools for engagement, Treaty settlement oversight, monitoring and risk, so DOC works more consistently together.
- **Greater follow-through and visibility** – expectations are reinforced to be clear about what DOC can and cannot do, how we'll know if we're successful, raise issues early, follow through on commitments, and keep our Treaty partners informed of progress and decisions.

What stays the same and what changes

What stays the same: DOC's purpose and legal role stay the same. Strong place-based relationships still matter, DOC's conservation mandate remains, and the commitment of our people and partners is unchanged.

What changes: partnership will be built into DOC's day-to-day work more deliberately and consistently. DOC will move from a more reactive approach (where practice can vary) to a more strategic, joined-up and planned way of working—shaped early by Treaty partner aspirations.

Treaty Relationships Group will play a stronger role in system leadership, assurance and support, while delivery responsibility remains with the relevant business groups and day-to-day relationships remain the responsibility of the regions.

Why this change is needed now

DOC's Treaty responsibilities continue to grow. Treaty settlements have increased in number and complexity, expectations for caring for te taiao are rising and resources are limited. The Treaty Operating Model helps DOC be clearer about strategic intent, strengthen relationships and better understand how progress is tracking over time.

What this means for partners and staff

For our Treaty partners, it means being involved earlier and having greater visibility of what DOC is delivering. For DOC staff, it means clearer guidance, better systems and more confidence about what good practice looks like. Overall, the Treaty Operating Model supports DOC to be a more predictable and trustworthy Treaty partner, delivering better outcomes for nature, for Treaty partners and for future generations.

Our strategic priority to be an honourable Treaty partner

Through honourable Treaty partnerships, we take action to protect and restore the nature and heritage entrusted to us for the wellbeing of Aotearoa.

This means working in ways that recognise the value of our Treaty partners in conservation, and ensuring their aspirations meaningfully shape how DOC plans, decides and delivers its work. The model has used the term Treaty partners throughout but refers specifically to hapū and iwi where appropriate. This recognises the practical reality that DOC works differently with hapū and/or with iwi specific to context.

DOC plays an important role in a conservation system where Treaty partner aspirations and settlement commitments influence how we protect and restore nature, heritage and visitor experiences. Being an honourable Treaty partner requires more than good intent. It means that in practice we:

- make decisions with a clear understanding of hapū and iwi responsibilities and aspirations so our ways of working and our conservation outcomes give effect to section 4 of the Conservation Act
- talk with our Treaty partners early - locally and nationally - being honest about what we can and can't do
- follow through on settlement commitments
- support hapū and iwi to exercise kaitiakitanga in their rohe
- ensure relationships endure beyond individual roles and leadership changes, building trust and respect
- help our people feel confident and work in a consistent way (reduce dependence on individual staff and support innovative and effective approaches).

We will know we are delivering on this intent when our Treaty partners experience DOC as predictable, trustworthy and capable of delivering on commitments across the motu.

Achieving this strategic intent requires clear end-to-end systems, strong capability, defined accountability and consistent ways of working across DOC. The following sections set out what needs to change to support this.

How we work across DOC's Treaty responsibilities

These guiding principles set out how DOC works across its Treaty responsibilities. Together, these principles support early risk identification, constructive resolution of issues and enduring relationships with Treaty partners. They guide our approach, grounded in context, state of relationships and work programmes:

- conservation outcomes are better with our Treaty partners
- we trust our leaders to model being an honourable Treaty partner and we trust our people want to do the right thing
- our work makes it easier for our people and our Treaty partners
- Treaty commitments are foundational; relationships are transformational
- conservation is bigger and more enduring than DOC; we all win when conservation wins
- we address disagreements early, respectfully and in good faith, while working through difference
- we seek to understand all perspectives then make decisions and take action.

What do we need to get there?

DOC has made progress as a Treaty partner, and we have achieved a lot together. However, our partners tell us that the experience of working with DOC varies across the motu. Our people say that our current systems, roles and expectations aren't always clear or easy to navigate and it's not always clear what good looks like or how we know we're making progress.

The context we work in continues to change. More hapū and iwi are moving through settlement with the Crown, aspirations for te taiao continue to grow, and DOC faces increasing pressure on priorities and resources.

We've listened to our partners

Partners have asked for clearer expectations, more consistent engagement and a DOC that follows through on commitments.

We've listened to our kaimahi

Kaimahi told us that expectations aren't always clear, capability is mixed and systems don't always support good Treaty practice. Kaimahi want clearer guidance, better tools and a way of working that makes partnership easier, not harder.

We've listened to our leaders

Our leaders told us that we need clearer roles and responsibilities, and stronger alignment across business groups. Without consistent systems, it is hard to provide assurance, intervene early or support genuine partnership and long-term outcomes.

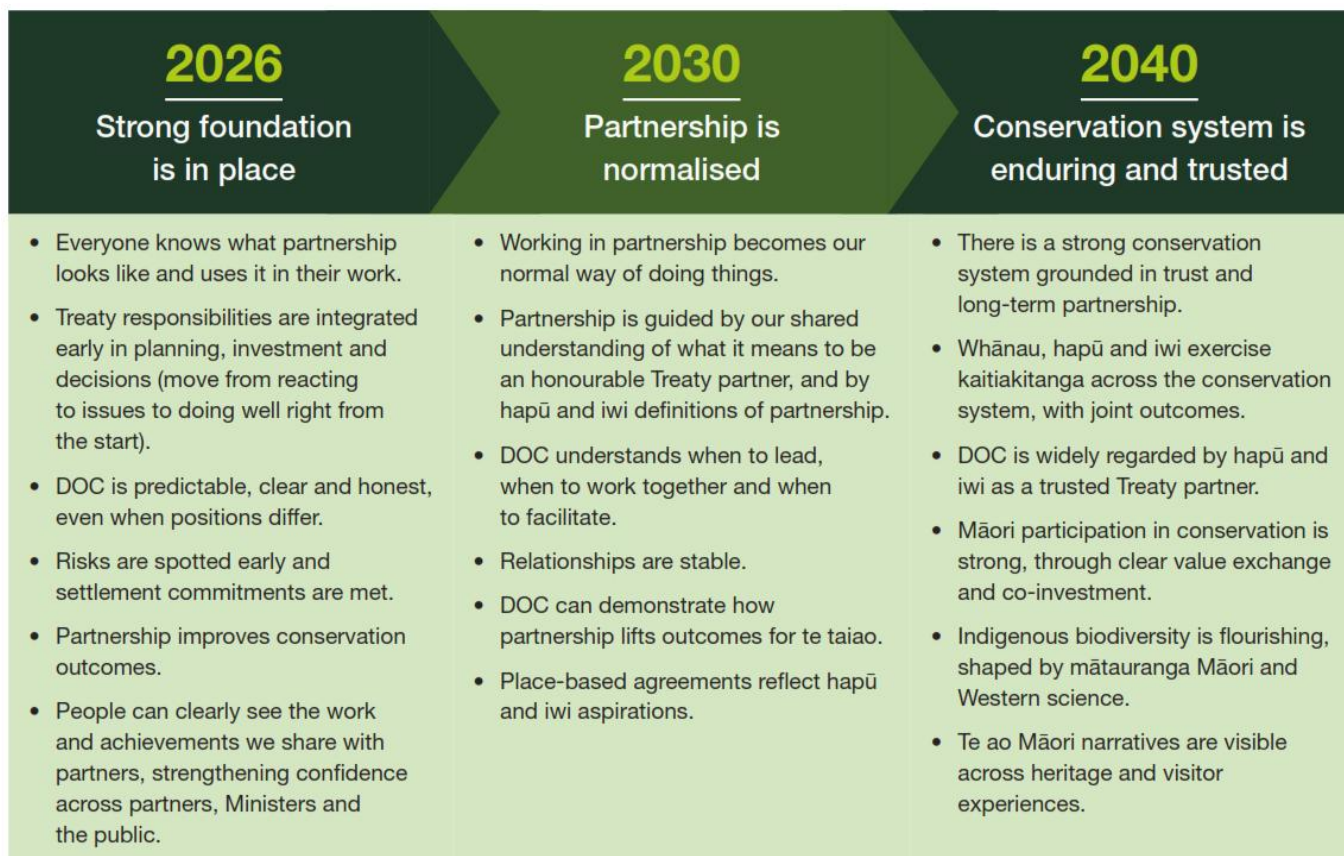
The message is clear

No matter who we spoke with, the message was consistent: **"If DOC wants to be an honourable Treaty partner, partnership must be part of how we work every day."**

How will the Treaty Operating Model help?

The model strengthens leadership, clarifies roles, fills system gaps and supports our people to work confidently and consistently with hapū and iwi.

The model sets out a clear staged pathway to 2040 – 200 years since the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi | the Treaty of Waitangi.



The Treaty Operating Model

The Treaty Operating Model brings together the key system changes needed for DOC to work confidently and honourably with hapū and iwi. The model is organised around three key impacts – **Strategic Intent, Relationships, and Assurance and Monitoring** – that together strengthen how DOC plans, delivers and assures its Treaty work. Te ao Māori capability underpins the whole model.



The sections that follow describe each key impact in more detail, including the functions, responsibilities and changes required to turn this model into everyday practice.



Key Impact 1: Strategic Intent

Overview

Strategic Intent ensures te ao Māori is genuinely valued in DOC's work by providing a clear, shared direction for how we work with our Treaty partners. This change is needed because Treaty responsibilities are not always applied consistently, creating uncertainty, uneven practice and risk to relationships. Strategic Intent addresses this by:

- setting clear expectations for Treaty-related work
- defining roles and responsibilities so we act as 'One DOC'
- supporting professional practice by growing understanding of te ao Māori and how it guides conservation
- setting clearer, measurable outcomes so that we know how we are making progress over time.

The bigger picture

The strategic problem statement

DOC doesn't yet have a clear and shared understanding of the value that te ao Māori knowledge, skills and practice bring to conservation. Without understanding and working with hapū and iwi through and beyond Treaty commitments, and enabling them to apply their knowledge, mātauranga and expertise, DOC's ability to achieve its long-term vision – Te Oranga o te ao Tūroa – is limited.

Theory of change

If the Treaty Operating Model leads DOC to understand and apply te ao Māori knowledge and supports hapū and iwi to exercise their knowledge, mātauranga and expertise,
then DOC will deliver stronger conservation outcomes,
because our work is more effective when it gives effect to partnership aspirations and Treaty commitments.

Outcomes

Through this key impact:

- Te ao Māori shapes strategic conservation leadership.
- DOC has the right people in the right roles with the right skills to apply te ao Māori confidently.
- Partners trust DOC to deliver on its responsibilities.
- Māori land makes a significant contribution to indigenous biodiversity outcomes.

Indicators and measures will be developed during implementation.

Priorities

Strategic intent focuses on four priority areas:

- **Strategic leadership** – Lead DOC's Treaty strategic direction in our Māori-Crown responsibilities.
- **Te ao Māori professional practice** – Strengthen DOC's understanding of giving effect to Treaty principles (section 4) and settlement responsibilities in everyday practice.
- **Trusted partnerships for impact** – Build systems that support strong hapū and iwi partnerships.
- **Whenua protection through Kawenata** – Use Kawenata to protect the natural, cultural and spiritual values of the land while honouring rangatiratanga.

Functions, responsibilities and activities

Treaty Relationships Group leads Strategic Intent of the Treaty Operating Model, ensuring te ao Māori and Treaty partner aspirations have a strong and consistent role in DOC's vision, strategy, policy design and systems. Other groups, including the Office of the Director-General, Regional Operations, Biodiversity, Heritage and Visitors, and Public Affairs, retain accountability for delivery within their portfolios.

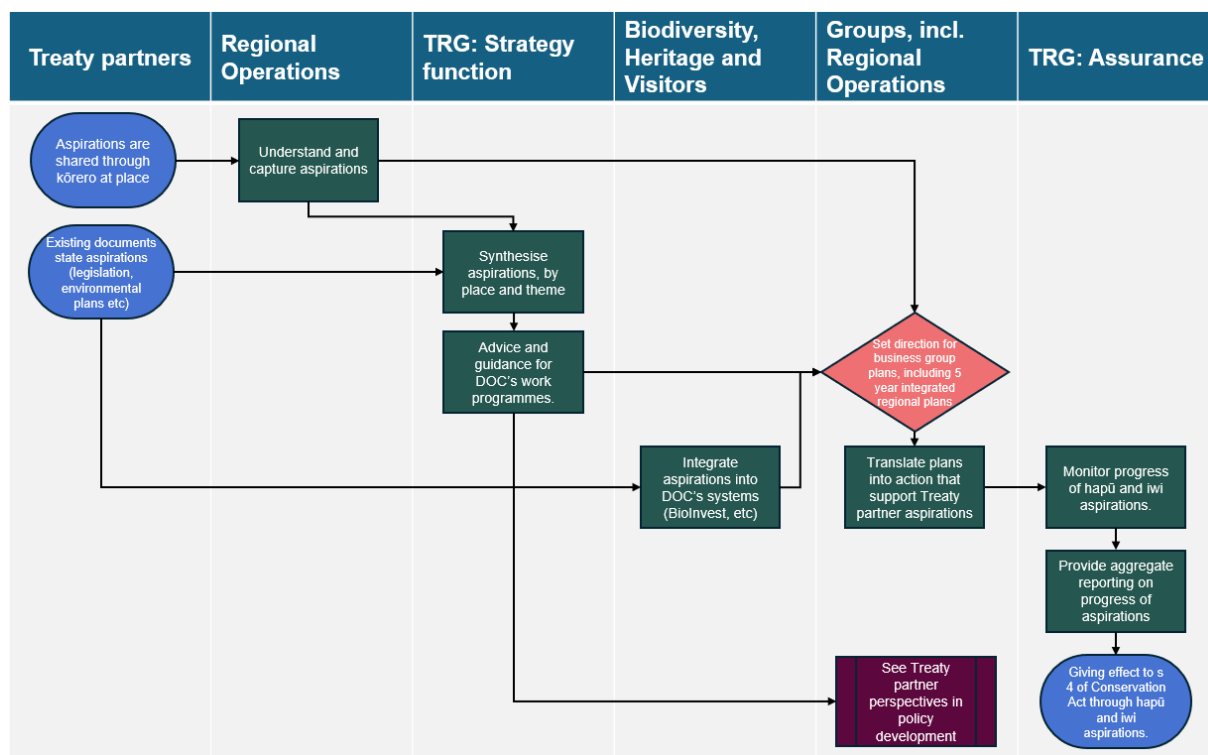
Functions	Group lead	Activities
DOC's overall strategy	Office of Director-General	Sets DOC's overall organisational-wide vision, purpose and strategic outcomes across all of DOC's functions (nature, heritage, visitor, Treaty, etc).
DOC's Treaty strategic direction	Treaty Relationships, supported by Office of D-G	Defines DOC's Treaty outcomes with wider organisation, with the intent that they are integrated into the overall DOC strategy, establish indicators, measures and intervention logic mapping, and guide alignment across regional plans.
Treaty partner aspirations heard, understood and captured	Regional Operations	Hearing and understanding aspirations through day-to-day trusted relationships. This understanding then helps to inform priorities, planning and delivery.
Treaty aspirations and national priorities	Treaty Relationships	Synthesise and share iwi aspirations, connect national and local contexts, support organisational understanding of aspirations, provide strategic policy guidance, and advice on the development of key planning and priority tasks.
Stewardship and trusted advice	Treaty Relationships	Provide strategic Māori-Crown advice with a long-term outlook, bring te ao Māori perspectives into DOC-wide strategy and policy discussions, and partner with business groups to integrate these perspectives into their work.
Response development	Treaty Relationships	Improve handover from negotiations to implementation, define criteria and strategic settings for the Treaty Implementation Fund, clarify the interplay between Te Haeata and WSR tools, and improve data systems to track progress and identify gaps.
Treaty Implementation Fund (national level)	Treaty Relationships	Set national criteria and strategic settings, oversee the funding panel and reporting, ensure investment supports delivery of Treaty commitments across business groups.
Treaty Implementation Fund (regional level)	Regional Operations	Consolidate reporting on outcomes achieved, support planning teams to move toward outcome-focused delivery and report progress through national systems.
Treaty partner perspectives in policy development	Policy	Treaty partner perspectives are deliberately built into DOC's policy development process, from early problem definition through to implementation.
Integrating aspirations into DOC's systems	Biodiversity, Heritage and Visitors	Ensuring that our Treaty partner aspirations are integrated, where and as appropriate, into our key planning systems such as BioInvest.

Communication and storytelling	Public Affairs	Capture and share honest, meaningful stories that show our Treaty journey, highlight lessons learned and support organisational learning and confidence across DOC.
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Change: Understanding and applying Treaty partner aspirations

The process below describes how DOC brings Treaty partner aspirations into prioritisation, decision-making and delivery as a core part of giving effect to section 4 of the Conservation Act. This process includes kōrero and relationship-based trust at place, through to synthesis and strategic direction, to planning, investment, delivery and feedback.

Aspirations are part of DOC's priorities and trade-off decisions. Regional Operations play a central role in hearing and understanding aspirations through trusted relationships at place. Treaty Relationships Group supports synthesis, coordination and assurance so insights inform strategy, portfolios and planning tools. Together, the process supports informed judgement, learning over time and consistent contribution to giving effect to Section 4.

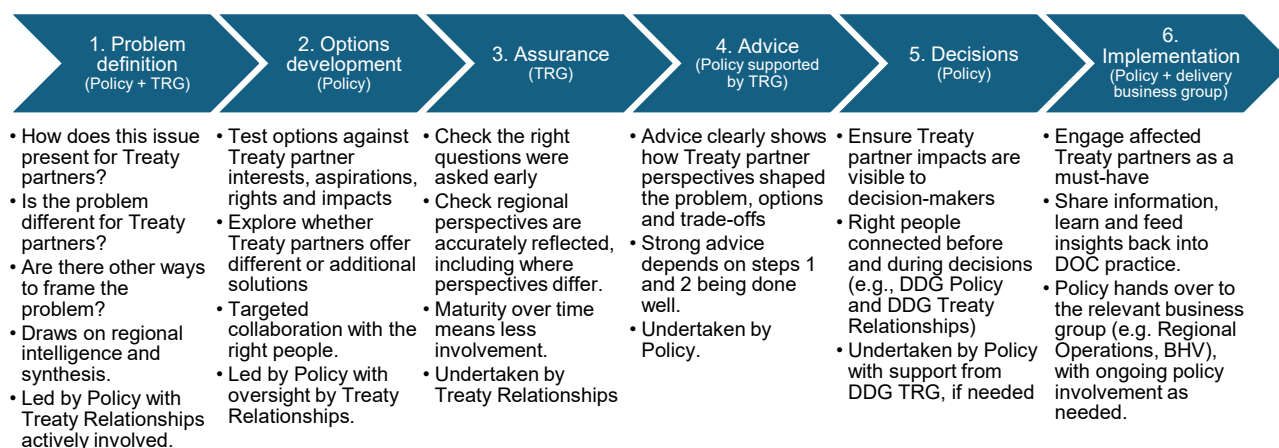


Change: Treaty partner perspectives in policy development

The process overleaf illustrates how Treaty partner perspectives are deliberately built into DOC's policy development process, from early problem definition through to implementation. It reflects a shift towards learning earlier, and more consistently, from relationships at place, so Policy can understand the range of Treaty partner interests, impacts and potential solutions before options are formed or advice is given.

Treaty partner perspectives are not singular. Hapū and iwi may experience policy issues differently, hold distinct aspirations, or identify different risks and solutions, particularly for national-level policy matters. This process is designed to ensure those perspectives are sought early, understood in context and made visible in policy advice.

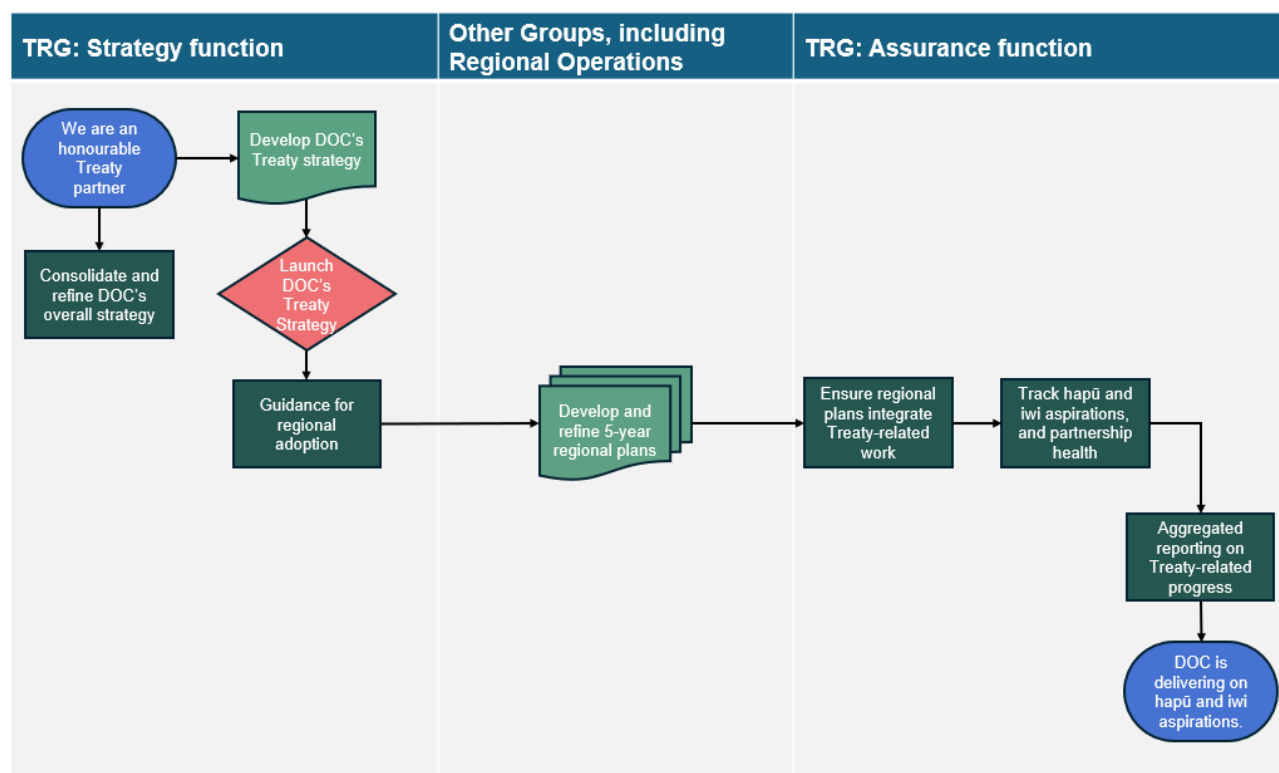
The process clarifies roles across Policy, Regional Operations and Treaty Relationships, showing how regional intelligence, coordinated synthesis and assurance support better judgement, clearer trade-offs and advice that genuinely contributes to giving effect the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.



Change: Turning Treaty strategy into action

We want to make it easier for DOC to translate strategic intent into practical, trackable action. By understanding hapū and iwi aspirations, setting goals and measures, and aligning regional planning, DOC can more clearly see how everyday work contributes to long-term outcomes.

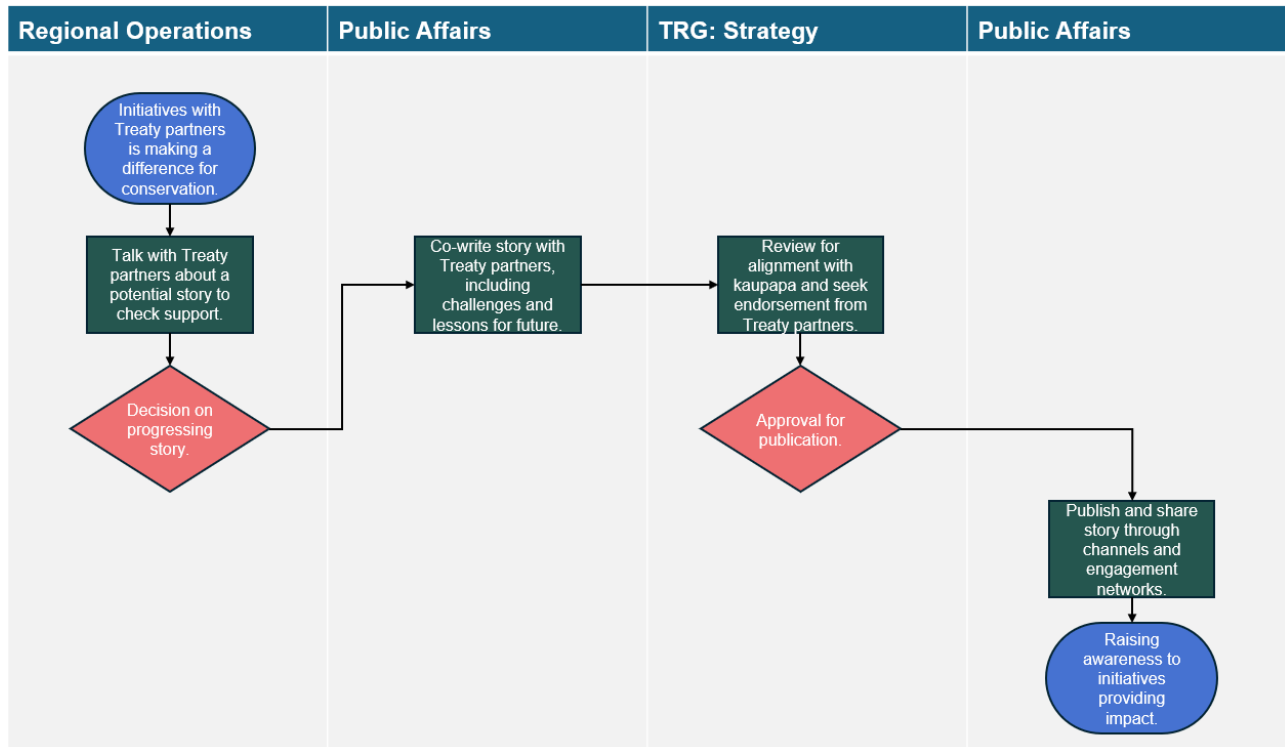
Responsible: TRG – strategy function | **Accountable:** TRG Deputy Director-General | **Support:** Regional Operations, BHV, Organisation Support, Policy



Change: How we share DOC-Treaty partner stories internally

We want to strengthen how DOC shares partnership experiences internally, so our people can see what good partnership looks like in practice, learn from challenges and apply those lessons in their own work. These stories are not about success alone. They are about learning, improvement and building confidence across DOC. Sharing real partnership experiences will help make Treaty work visible across the organisation, show how aspirations, commitments and outcomes connect in practice and help normalise Treaty partnership as part of everyday work.

Responsible: Public Affairs | **Accountable:** TRG Deputy Director-General | **Support:** Regional Operations, Treaty Relationships.





Key Impact 2: Relationships

Overview

Strong, enduring partnerships with Treaty partners are essential to achieving better outcomes for nature. These relationships are built on trust, clarity and delivery – and are strengthened when DOC is predictable, honest and consistent in how it works with Treaty partners.

DOC's relationships with Treaty partners are grounded in Treaty responsibilities, including settlement commitments and the requirement to give effect to Section 4 of the Conservation Act. They also extend beyond formal obligations, where there is mutual desire and benefit in working together to achieve shared conservation outcomes and agreeing to disagree where there isn't.

These relationships are highly contextual. They are shaped by factors such as settlement status, place-based priorities, history, capacity, unresolved issues and shared aspirations for the future.

Through this key impact, the model positions DOC as a more effective and trusted partner by ensuring:

- **clear ownership** – each work programme has a business group lead. That lead is responsible for the strategic relationship with hapū and iwi and is accountable for delivering outcomes. This clarity helps ensure the right people are doing the right work, that we hold up our side of the partnership, and that we are clear about the conservation value we bring to and receive from the partnership.
- **at-place leadership** – Regional Operations leads day-to-day relationships and delivery at place. Other relationships are built on this and are additional to the day-to-day relationship, not in place of.
- **aspirations first** – partner aspirations make up an important part of the relationship and the conservation work carried out at place.
- **feedback loops** – partner feedback and relationship maturity guide improvement over time.

Together, these elements support relationships that are grounded in shared purpose, able to navigate differences honestly, and focused on delivering real outcomes for conservation.

The bigger picture

Conservation aspirations – DOC's role

DOC stewards the conservation system, but we don't and can't achieve conservation outcomes alone. Treaty partners have responsibilities at place and aspirations for the future. Hapū and iwi may want to:

- work alongside DOC on shared conservation priorities
- lead kaupapa that matter most to them (spanning social, cultural, economic and environmental interests)
- pursue aspirations that sit outside DOC's priorities.

These aspirations will not always overlap with DOC's work programmes. When they do, partnership can significantly lift outcomes for conservation. Where they do not, DOC commits to being transparent, respectful and honest about what is possible, while maintaining relationships grounded in trust.

DOC's role is to:

- engage early to understand aspirations and context
- be clear about statutory responsibilities and constraints
- support partnership where there is mutual benefit
- enable hapū and iwi leadership where appropriate
- navigate difference in ways that protect long-term relationships.

The relationship model

DOC's relationships with hapū and iwi operate at different levels, depending on the nature of the kaupapa, decision-making authority and delivery context. The model clarifies who leads, who supports and who is accountable at each level.

Deputy Director-Generals may delegate authority to appropriate roles within their business group, while remaining accountable for outcomes and ensuring decisions are made consistently with the Treaty Operating Model.

	Relationship level	Responsibility	Accountability
Treaty Partner Aspirations Responsibility and Accountability: Deputy Director-General, Treaty Relationships Group	Director-General relationships	Treaty Relationships	Director-General
	Programme or initiative-level relationships	Business group work programme lead	Deputy Director-General lead
	Day-to-day relationships	Regional Operations	Regional Operations

Core relationship behaviours

The following behaviours underpin how DOC works with hapū and iwi across all relationships, regardless of settlement status or location:

- do what we say we will do
- be clear about expectations
- listen to understand aspirations
- value contributions and knowledge
- be open, flexible and willing to manage risk
- be honest when we disagree
- deliver meaningful outcomes for conservation

Strategic levers of change

The following levers strengthen DOC's ability to build and maintain effective relationships over time:

- **clarity of roles and responsibilities** – every work programme has a named kaupapa lead
- **delivery on commitments** – Treaty settlement commitments are planned, tracked and delivered
- **stronger systems and guidance** – staff have clear escalation pathways, shared context and access to cultural and conservation expertise
- **progress tracking** – DOC can see what it is trying to achieve, how work contributes to outcomes and whether we're on track (TRG provides this guidance and assurance to the organisation)
- **business partnering** – hapū and iwi aspirations are actively connected into DOC's wider work programmes
- **storytelling and visibility** – real examples, supported by data and lived experience, show what good partnership looks like, and demonstrates the conservation value derived from stronger partnerships
- **continuity** – systems help relationships to endure beyond individual roles and leadership changes.

Decision-making where there is no clear agreement

The Treaty Operating Model works to build shared understanding and align interests of stakeholders. We recognise that will not always be possible. The Model is equally applicable with some supportive principles (see page 6 and overleaf) focusing on where we lack a clear path forward.

Where agreement is not reached, statutory decision-makers retain authority. Decisions are guided by legislation – including section 4, documented consideration of Treaty partner perspectives and commitments (Deeds of Settlement, Accords) and clear escalation pathways to the relevant Deputy Director-General.

Where there is disagreement internally (within DOC)

1. Seek to understand all perspectives first, identifying what has led to the disagreement
2. Understand what legislation permits and requires DOC to do
3. Understand what the Government requires DOC to do
4. Use the Treaty Operating Model first principles to guide decisions to be made by the responsible DD-G.

Where there is disagreement externally (with our partners)

1. Seek to understand all perspectives first, identifying what has led to the disagreement
2. Understand what legislation permits and requires DOC to do
3. Understand what our partners' commitments and responsibilities require them to do, working closely with Regional Operations
4. Understand what the Government requires DOC to do
5. Use the Treaty Operating Model first principles to guide decisions to be made by the responsible DD-G.

A disagreement (or misalignment) is neither final nor binary. The nature of our relationships is that we will continue to seek to understand each other, find alignment and reconcile different views.

Functions, responsibilities and activities

- **Work programme leads** – business group leading work is accountable for strategic relationships and integration of aspirations and concerns into the specific programme of work.
- **Regional Operations** – leads day-to-day and regional relationships, delivers locally, manages unplanned engagement and accountable for Accord responses.
- **Treaty Relationships** – provides frameworks, coordination, advice, guidance and national oversight, supporting Director-General and business groups.

DG-to-Iwi Chair relationships are recorded by the Office of the Director-General and supported by Treaty Relationships and relevant business group(s).

Functions	Group lead	Activities
Accords and Crown-Māori relationships	Treaty Relationships	Support enduring partnerships through coordination, national oversight and trusted advice, maintain visibility of accords, national-level commitments and across other government agencies.
Negotiations to implementation	Treaty Relationships	Support clear transition from settlement negotiation to long-term partnership, provide guidance to regions and business groups.
Māori partnerships and aspirations	All – work programme lead	Ensure hapū and iwi aspirations are reflected in work programmes, integrate aspirations into planning and delivery where appropriate, and ground decisions in statutory instruments such as area plans.
National office relationship support	Treaty Relationships	Provide coordination, guidance and consistent frameworks for national relationships, including clear entry/exit processes.
Engagement system	Treaty Relationships	Provide frameworks, tools and guidance for tikanga-based engagement, risk management and escalation, improve visibility of key relationships related to environmental restoration and settlement commitments; support consistent, context-relevant communication.
Consultation	All – work programme lead	Lead statutory and non-statutory consultation relevant to DOC decisions, ensure national consistency where

		required, and maintain visibility of cross-agency consultation activity.
Accord responses	Regional Operations	Ensure transparent, timely responses to Accord-related matters at place, coordinate input across DOC.
Reactive/unplanned engagement	Regional Operations	Identify emerging issues early and support rangers with clear escalation pathways.
Concessions	Biodiversity, Heritage and Visitors	Analyse concerns and identify opportunities, including for Māori-led tourism.

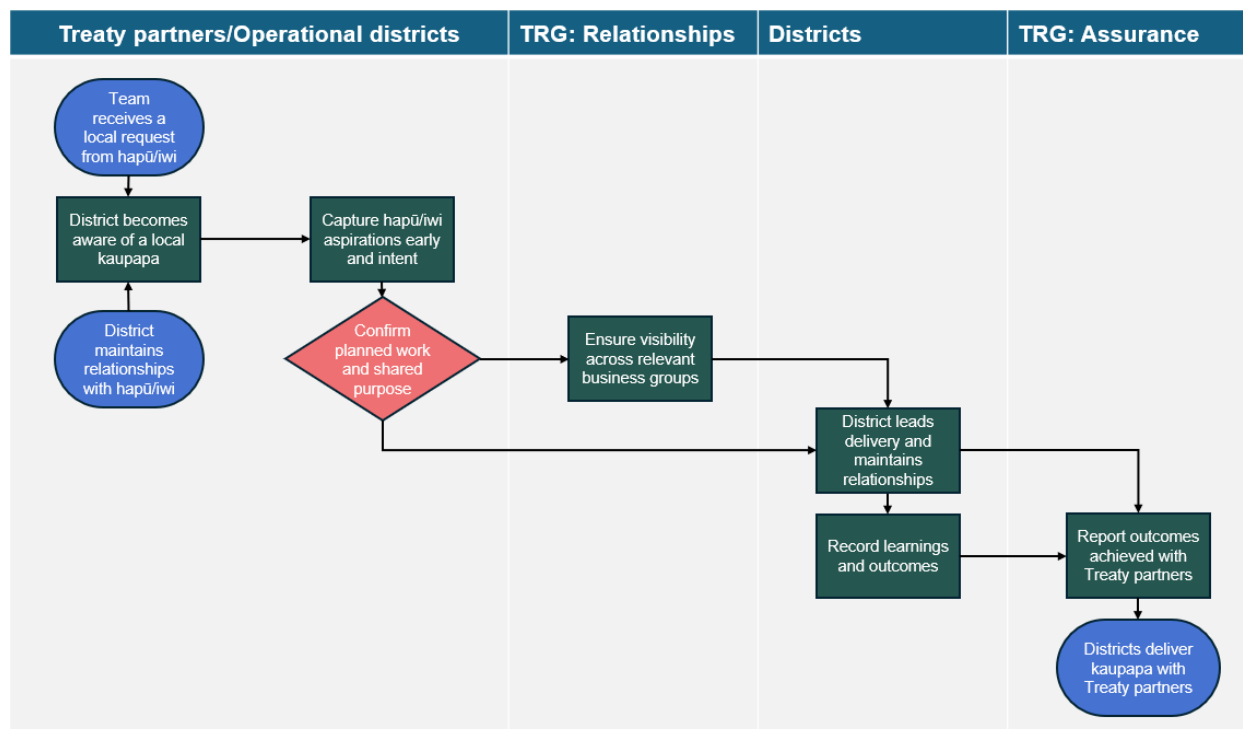
Change: Treaty partner relationships process

We're introducing a clearer, more consistent approach to how DOC works with Treaty partners, so relationships sit at the right level, are supported appropriately and deliver better outcomes for conservation.

District-level kaupapa

District-level relationships are the foundation of DOC's partnership with hapū and iwi. They focus on day-to-day relationships, local conservation delivery and understanding aspirations, risks and opportunities early.

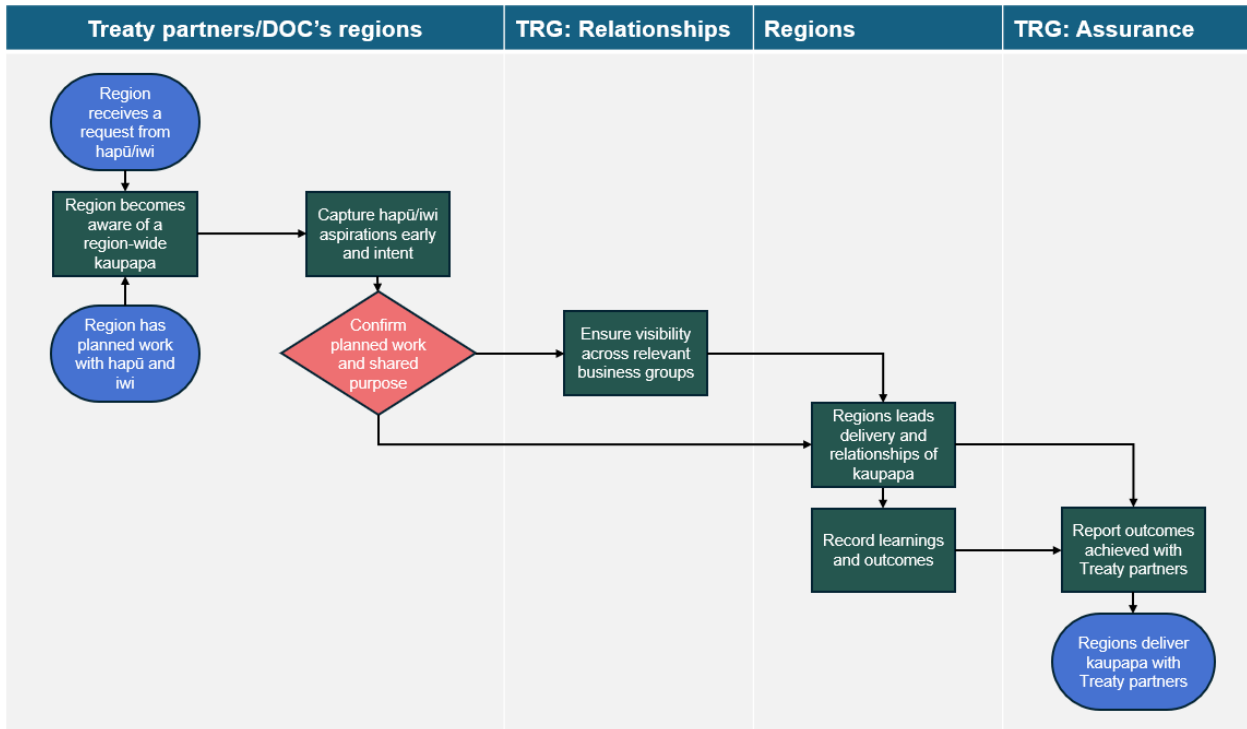
Responsible and Accountable: Regional Operations | **Support:** Treaty Relationships and other groups



Regional-level kaupapa

Supporting kaupapa covering multiple districts or require coordinated regional alignment with hapū and iwi.

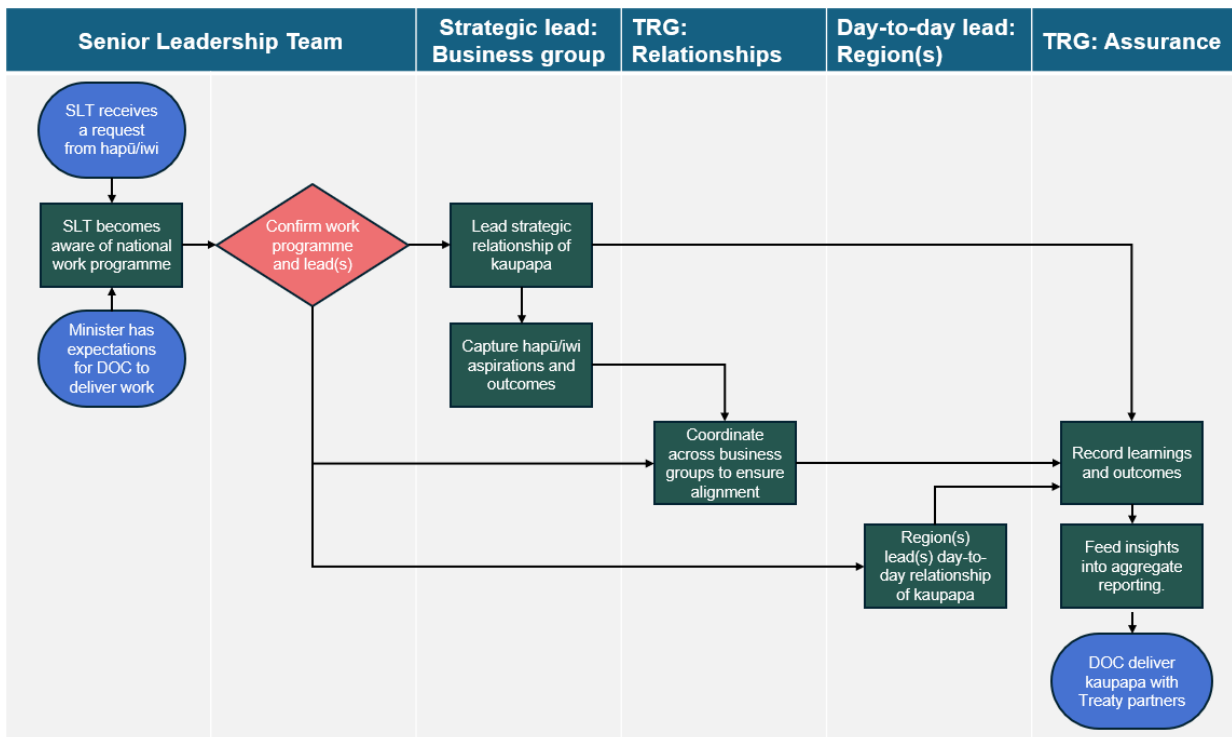
Responsible and Accountable: Regional Operations | **Support:** Treaty Relationships and other groups



Business group-level kaupapa

To ensure each national work programme has a clear identified lead accountable for the strategic relationship, working alongside Regional Operations. These relationships are additional to day-to-day relationships at place.

Responsible: Work programme lead for business group | **Accountable:** relevant Deputy Director-General | **Support:** Regional Operations, other business groups





Key Impact 3: Assurance and Monitoring

Overview

This impact strengthens assurance and monitoring without duplicating delivery accountability or strategic intent. It improves visibility of commitments, supports early risk identification and enables learning across DOC's Treaty responsibilities, giving partners, leaders and staff confidence that issues are identified and addressed before relationships are impacted.

This key impact strengthens DOC's ability to:

- clearly identify who is responsible and accountable across DOC's settlement system
- track progress from commitment through to delivery
- detect risks earlier and intervene in a timely way
- ensure insights inform policy and practice
- strengthen governance and reporting on DOC's Treaty work.

The bigger picture

The problem

DOC doesn't currently have a unified, end-to-end system to assure or monitor Treaty-related work. Reporting is fragmented, visibility of commitment varies and no single business group has a complete view of risk across negotiations, implementation and long-term relationship commitments. This limits early risk detection, strategic relationships and reliable knowledge transfer, weakening trust with Treaty partners and the confidence others have in us.

What needs to change

Treaty work needs to be fully embedded in DOC's planning and delivery systems, with clear ownership of commitments, consistent monitoring and early risk detection.

A coordinated assurance and monitoring function provides:

- a single view of commitments and progress
- clearer escalation and support pathways
- better information to inform decisions
- confidence that DOC's Treaty responsibilities are being met in practice.

End-to-end Treaty Settlement System

DOC plays a central role in Treaty settlements, particularly in cultural redress and long-term relationship commitments. For hapū and iwi, these commitments represent enduring expectations about how DOC will act as a Treaty partner over time.

To honour settlement intent and maintain trust, DOC needs a coherent, end-to-end system that ensures commitments are clearly understood, consistently delivered and supported throughout every stage. DOC does not currently have a single, joined-up system that provides visibility and assurance from negotiations through to implementation, to ongoing relationship commitments.

An effective end-to-end Treaty Settlement System makes all Treaty settlements visible, clearly allocated responsibility and accountability across DOC, supports handover from negotiation to implementation and protects settlement intent over time, beyond individual roles and leadership changes.

Success for the end-to-end Treaty Settlement System means enduring partnerships, clear accountability for all settlement commitments, long-term planning aligned with organisational goals, consistent frameworks and guidance across DOC, strong assurance, monitoring and learning, and a Treaty-literate workforce that understands DOC's obligations.

Treaty Settlement Implementation Plan

DOC has a Treaty Settlement Implementation Plan to enhance our accountability for Treaty settlement commitments, give post-settlement governance entities visibility and assurance that their settlement commitments have been upheld, support staff delivering on Treaty settlement commitments and improve how we track progress.

While improvements are already underway, DOC needs to clarify accountability across each stage, strengthen knowledge transfer, integrate Treaty commitments into business-as-usual systems and strengthen coordination.

Functions, responsibilities and activities

Assurance and monitoring functions work together to provide confidence that DOC's Treaty responsibilities are understood, delivered and supported over time. These functions focus on visibility, early risk identification and continuous improvement, while maintaining clear delivery accountability at place.

- **Senior Leadership** sets the tone for Treaty expectations across DOC.
- **Treaty Relationships** leads the end-to-end Treaty Settlement System providing coordination and assurance across negotiation, implementation and long-term relationship commitments. TRG maintains visibility of obligations, supports clear handover between stages and ensures responsibilities are understood.
- **Regional Operations** manages risk at place, applying national guidance to local contexts.
- **Biodiversity, Heritage and Visitors** supports data and analytics to ensure reporting is accurate and accessible.
- **Organisation Support** provides tools, systems and capability to enable these functions.

Together, these groups establish reliable datasets, national dashboards, aggregated reporting and insights that support decision-making and continuous improvement.

Functions	Group lead	Activities
Culture and behaviour	Senior Leadership Team	Model behaviours that reflect DOC's integrity, connect, empower and achieve values, embed these expectations into everyday practice, equip staff to deliver Treaty work and clearly define accountability and responsibilities.
End-to-end Treaty Settlement System	Treaty Relationships	Provide system leadership, coordination and assurance across negotiation, implementation and long-term relationship commitments. TRG maintains visibility of obligations, supports clear handover between stages and ensures responsibilities are understood across DOC.
Risk management system	Treaty Relationships	Embed a national Treaty-related risk lens in DOC's risk and assurance framework, provide tools, guidance and tikanga-based controls, and support early identification and escalation of Treaty-related risks to prevent breaches and relationship damage.
Risk at place	Regional Operations	Regions adapt national tools to their local context and manage relationship and delivery risks using local knowledge and understanding, supported by national guidance.
Quality assurance (QA)	Treaty Relationships	Set standards for Treaty-related work, build assurance into planning and business processes, audit Treaty work, support learning and continuous improvement, share

		insights and good practice across the organisation, and ensure insights feed into planning, policy and negotiation.
Monitoring relationships and settlements	Treaty Relationships	Establish baseline systems, track partner aspirations, relationship health, and settlement obligations (using WSR and Te Haeata for settlement visibility), ensuring transparency and honourable practice over time.
Data and analytics	Biodiversity, Heritage and Visitors (Monitoring and Insights)	Maintain reliable datasets and develop centralised dashboards that provide accurate, accessible information for decision-makers, and ensure tool longevity and training are in place.
Reporting and insights	Treaty Relationships	Deliver clear national reporting on Treaty progress, provide timely insights to support decisions and drive meaningful change, and translate data into practical recommendations for SLT, business groups and regions.
Ngā Whenua Rāhui Database development	Treaty Relationships	Build and maintain fit-for-purpose systems to improve efficiency and responsiveness across work.

Change: Treaty negotiations to implementation

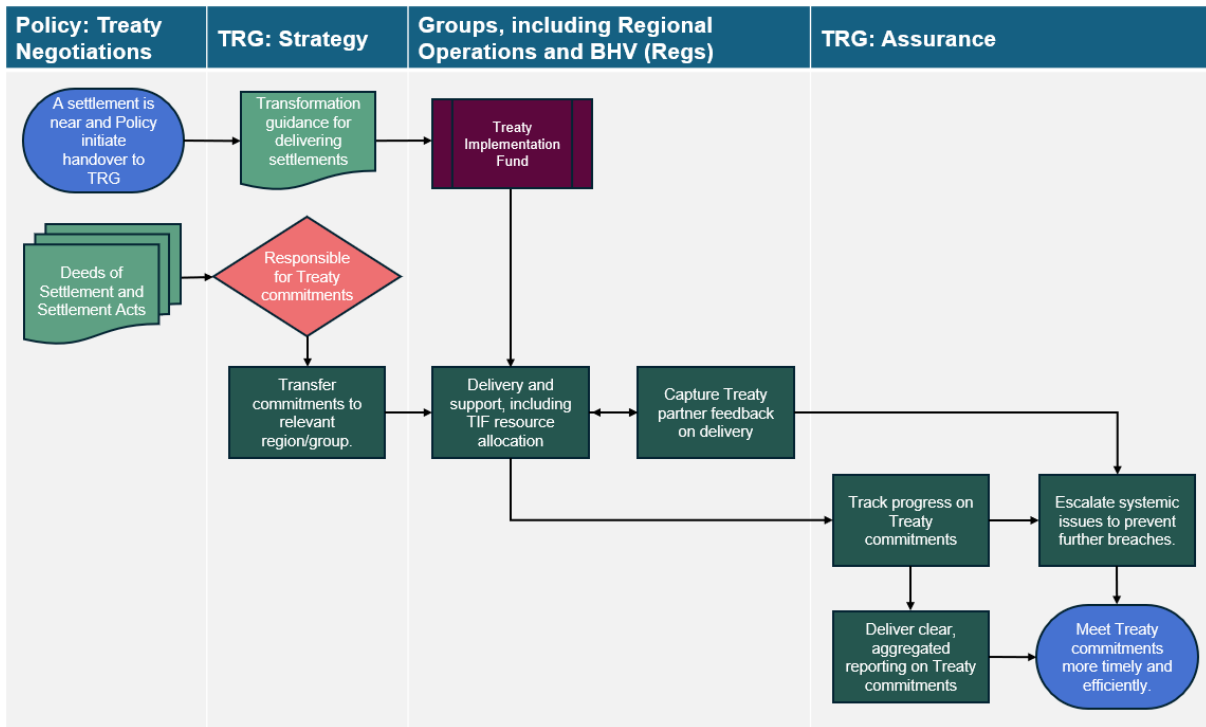
The transition from negotiating settlements to implementing them is a critical point in DOC's role as an honourable Treaty partner. For hapū and iwi, settlement commitments represent long-term expectations about how DOC will act, not just at the point of settlement but over time.

This change focuses on keeping promises in practice, through clear handover, earlier involvement and stronger visibility of commitments and risks. Under the model:

- handover from negotiation to implementation is structured
- settlement intent is clearly documented and protected
- assets associated with settlement commitments are maintained before transfer, supporting section 4 obligations
- risks are identified early, with agreed escalation and support pathways
- monitoring provides visibility and assurance.

This approach supports regions and business groups to deliver commitments confidently at place, while providing Treaty partners greater certainty and consistency over time.

Responsible: TRG – Assurance function | **Accountable:** TRG Deputy Director-General | **Support:** Regional Operations, Biodiversity Heritage and Visitors (Reg Services), Policy, Organisation Support





Key Enabler: Te Ao Māori Capability

Overview

Building te ao Māori capability lifts the confidence, knowledge and skills of our people so DOC can work effectively with our Treaty partners and uphold its Treaty and legal responsibilities. Te ao Māori capability underpins the Treaty Operating Model and enables the three key impacts – Strategic Intent, Relationships, and Assurance and Monitoring – to function in practice. The goal is a DOC that is confident and responsive.

The bigger picture

The problem

Not all kaimahi have access to or complete the development needed to build confidence in te ao Māori. Without this, Treaty considerations may not be integrated early in planning, engagement can be inconsistent, opportunities for partnership may be missed and risks to relationships and credibility increase.

Legislative and system drivers

Our responsibility to build te ao Māori capability is guided by:

- **section 14 of the Public Service Act 2020** – requires public service leaders to build capability to understand Māori perspectives and support the Crown's Treaty obligations.
- **section 9 of Te Ture mō Te Reo Māori 2016** – provides guidance to departments to be guided, as far as reasonably practicable, by principles that support the use of te reo Māori.
- **Treaty settlement obligations** – this includes supporting, where appropriate, consistent knowledge and understanding of Treaty settlement obligations, and providing assurance that our people understand, embed and deliver on those commitments.

This work aligns with public-service-wide frameworks, including Whāinga Amorangi and Maihi Karauna, and with DOC's own plans, including Te Reo Aurea and DOC's Whāinga Amorangi submission.

Measures of success

We will know te ao Māori capability is lifting when:

- kaimahi can access and complete te ao Māori capability opportunities
- leaders demonstrate higher levels of te ao Māori capability, including Treaty literacy
- kaimahi understand settlement obligations and responsibilities
- Whāinga Amorangi and Te Reo Aurea are actively monitored.

Te ao Māori capability matrix

The matrix provides a structured way to understand, build and sustain Te ao Māori capability across DOC. It supports three stages:

	1) Establish	2) Strategic capability	3) Identifying gaps and uplift
Purpose	Build foundations.	Embed te ao Māori capability into systems and roles.	Target investment and refine delivery.
Legislation	Apply s 14 of the Public Service Act and s 9 of Te Ture mō Te Reo Māori.	Integrate Te ao Māori capability strategy into systems and recruitment.	Monitor effectiveness and risks.

Frameworks	Adopt Whāinga Amorangi and Māori Language plans.	Integrate into performance and workforce systems.	Monitor and priorities weaker areas.
Delivery	Maintain data-driven initiatives, including a minimum of 1hr/month learning.	Resource and plan proactively.	Target investment and evaluate impact.
Oversight	Use survey baselines for evaluation.	Track progress through dashboards.	Deep dive into directorate data and adjust plans accordingly.

Functions, responsibilities and activities

Te ao Māori capability is delivered through a coordinated approach that balances national leadership with local application. Treaty Relationships lead capability design, national delivery and system support. Regional Operations leads local delivery. All business groups are responsible for embedding capability into their work.

Functions	Group lead	Activities
Capability design, monitoring and oversight	Treaty Relationships	Develop national frameworks (Whāinga Amorangi, Te Reo Aurea), set capability expectations, monitor progress, and report on DOC's capability commitments and outcomes.
Capability procurement and delivery (national)	Treaty Relationships	Deliver national programmes such as Te Pūkenga Atawhai, create e-learning modules, implement initiatives such as Treaty training, tikanga wānanga, kura reo taiao and te reo Māori lessons, support bilingual signage and policy.
Capability procurement and delivery (business group specific)	Business Group lead	Tailor Whāinga Amorangi action plans and deliver bespoke initiatives.
Capability procurement and delivery (local and regional)	Regional Operations	Implement regional plans that reflect hapū and iwi context, and support learning at place.
Capability support	Treaty Relationships	Provide templates, guidance and tools, build and maintain nationwide kaimahi Māori network and lead events such as Ruia te kākano, Matariki.
Ngā Whenua Rāhui Fund and Hēteri-ā-Nuku Kaitiaki Programme	Treaty Relationships	Manage and support key programmes that enable iwi-led conservation initiatives, strengthen partnerships through shared governance and leadership opportunities.
Ngā Whenua Rāhui Database development	Treaty Relationships	Support training, migration and use of the database to improve efficiency, responsiveness and relationships.

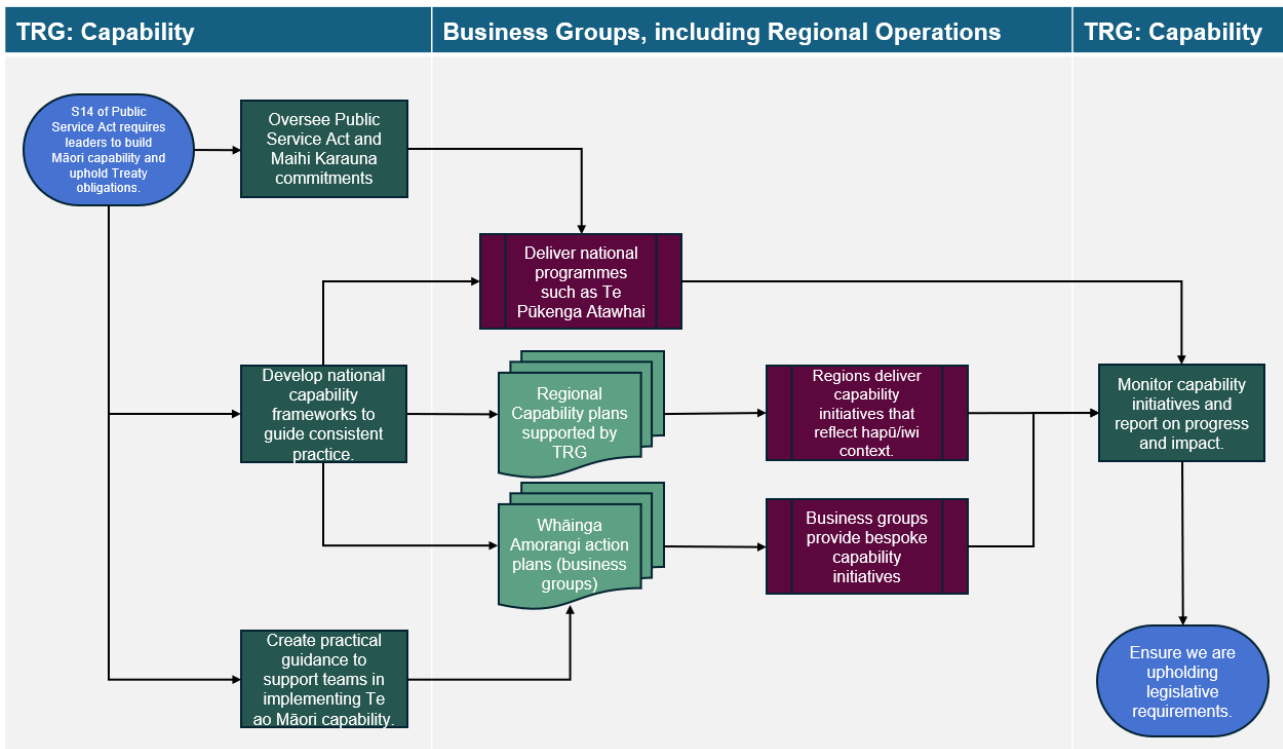
Change: Te ao Māori capability to impact

To ensure Te ao Māori capability leads to impact, DOC will design strong learning pathways, support regions and business groups to apply learning, integrate te ao Māori into planning, and track how capability improves outcomes. This cycle focuses on translating capability into everyday practice, so learning strengthens decision-making and delivery across the organisation.

Under the Treaty Operating Model:

- capability is designed and delivered through coordinated national and local programmes.
- learning is applied in roles, supported by leaders and embedded into planning, decision-making and delivery.
- practice is reflected on and monitored, using feedback, assurance and data to understand what is working.
- insights are used to refine capability investment, address gaps and strengthen impact over time.

Responsible: TRG – capability | **Accountable:** TRG Deputy Director-General | **Support:** Regional Operations, Organisation Support, Biodiversity, Heritage and Visitors



What does this mean for our partners?

The Treaty Operating Model is designed to strengthen how DOC works with hapū and iwi, so partnership is consistent, predictable and grounded in trust.

For our Treaty partners, this means greater confidence that commitments will be followed through, earlier conversations about aspirations and opportunities, stronger continuity and improved visibility of progress and delivery.

The model supports hapū and iwi to exercise their mātauranga and expertise while ensuring DOC is clear, honest and reliable in its role.

What does this mean for me and my work?

The Treaty Operating Model sets out how DOC will work more consistently with hapū and iwi across the organisation. It clarifies expectations, supports decisions and ensures Treaty partnership is part of everyday work.

For DOC kaimahi, this means clearer guidance on what partnership looks like, clearer roles, responsibilities and escalation pathways, and stronger systems that support follow-through and reduce risk. The following programmes of work support the Treaty Operating Model and help turn intent into practice:

Programme of work	Intent
Treaty strategy and direction	A single, organisation-wide Treaty strategy that shapes DOC's priorities, expectations and decision making.
Strengthening te ao Māori capability	A coordinated programme to build Treaty literacy, understanding of tikanga, te reo Māori capability and cultural confidence across DOC, as well as Treaty settlements.
Strategic relationship system	Clear ownership of relationships, guidance for engagement and shared understanding of relationship maturity.
Weaving hapū and iwi aspirations	Connecting aspirations into planning, policies and portfolio work. Includes understanding existing plans, accords, settlements and local context.
Treaty settlement implementation system	A clear end-to-end approach to delivering settlement commitments and protecting settlement intent over time.
Assurance, monitoring and reporting framework	Visibility of Treaty obligations, relationship health, early risk identification and confidence that DOC is delivering as intended.
Engagement system redesign	Practical tools and guidance that support consistent, respectful engagement and reduce duplication (for example, the Iwi Engagement Portal).
Business partnership	Ensuring hapū and iwi aspirations are part of DOC's core business planning, investment and delivery. Ensures partnership influences priorities, trade-offs and decisions across all work programmes.
Storytelling and visibility programme	Sharing real partnership experiences to support learning, confidence and consistency across the organisation.
Strengthened evidence, insights and advice	Ensure DOC's decisions and guidance are informed by reliable data, partner perspectives and lived experience from across the organisation.

Together, these programmes support DOC to work as 'One DOC', with clearer systems and stronger relationships, so we can deliver better outcomes for nature and work towards being an honourable Treaty partner.