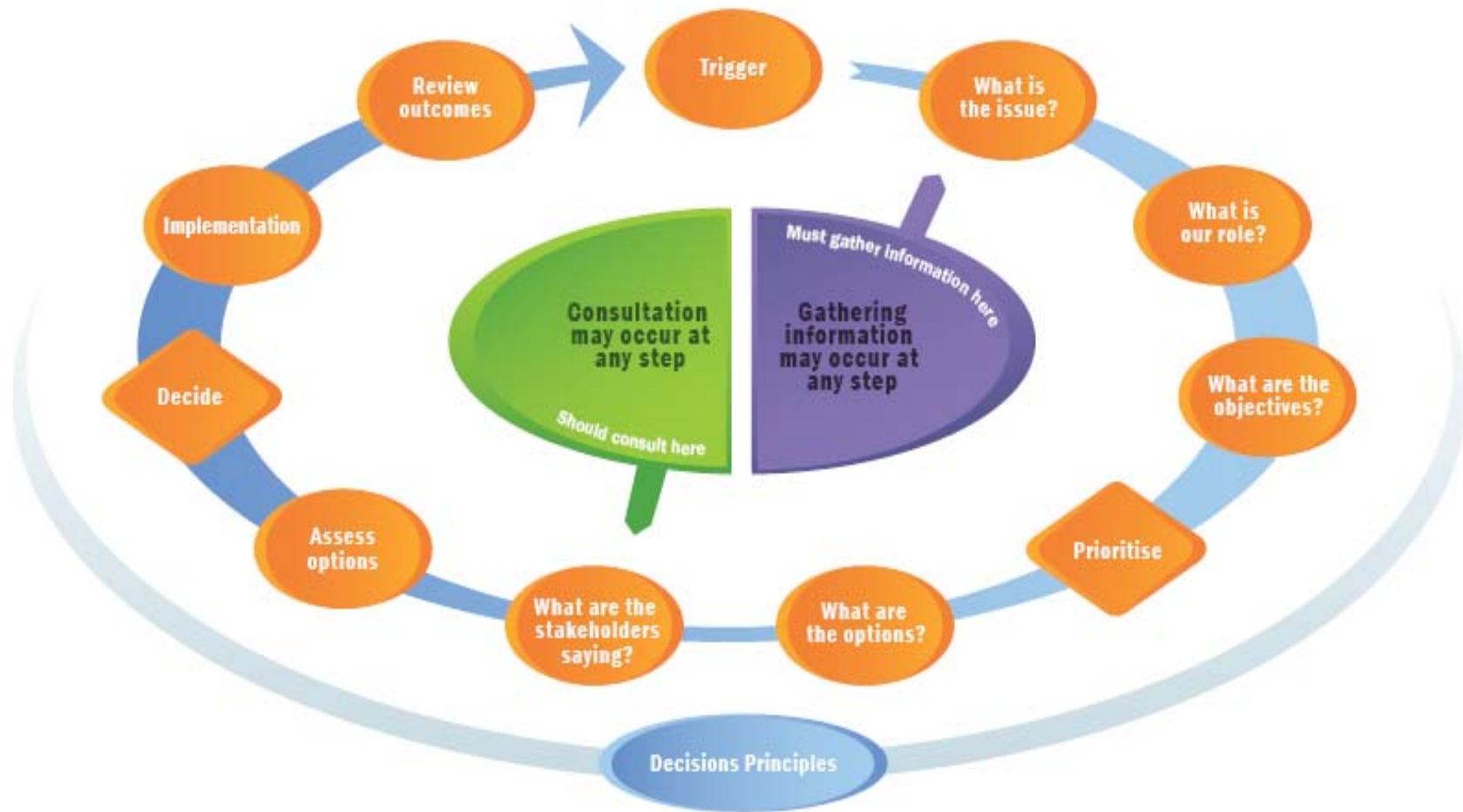


# Decisions Framework



# Decisions steps

## Gather information

Gather information throughout the whole decisions process, particularly to help define the issue and to identify and assess options.

## Consultation

Identify and consult affected parties as early as possible in the process and give sufficient time and information to affected parties. Where there is little information, consultation may need to be ongoing or occur at several points in the decisions process. Consultation may not be necessary in all cases.

- Who should be consulted and how?
- What is the objective of the consultation?
- What is the key information that needs to be provided?
- What is the scope/timeframe of the consultation?
- Do the expectations of those consulting/those being consulted align with consultation objectives?
- What are the areas of concern identified?

## Trigger

A trigger such as an incursion, new information, or a new business need should prompt the decisions process.

## What is the issue?

Explain the background to the issue, including the nature and extent of the issue and the need for action.

### *Nature of the issue*

- What is it?
- What is the underlying cause of the issue?
- What are the symptoms of the issue?
- What is the likelihood & consequence of the issue?
- What are the risks/opportunities?
- Has this been an issue in the past?
- How successful have we been at addressing it?
- What behaviours need to change?
- Who needs to change behaviour?

### *Size and scale of the issue*

- How significant is the issue?
- What is the scope of the issue?
- Who is it an issue for?
- How reversible are the impacts of the issue?
- Does consultation need to occur to help define the issue/objectives?

## What is our role?

Clarify/agree who has the mandate/duty to act.

- Do we have a legislative requirement or prearranged role?
- Is it a pre-agreed role or responsibility of another agency?
- Who is best placed to solve it?
- Do we need to agree role division between MAF and another agency?
- Who is best placed within MAF to be responsible?

## What are the objectives?

Clearly define the objective(s) to address the underlying cause of the issue in a way that does not pre-determine solutions, and is specific, measurable and achievable. State if objectives are subject to constraints like time or resources.

- How will you measure success?
- How will you know that you have achieved the desired outcome?
- Recognise that different people may have differing objectives that you may need to balance or reconcile when evaluating options
- Are there any relevant government objectives/outcomes?

## Prioritise

Assess importance of the issue using the strategic fit and net benefit criteria and decide how much effort is needed, if any.

- How important is this issue compared to other issues?
- How much effort is needed, if any?
- What is the urgency/need for action?
- What are the likely costs associated with maintaining the status quo?
- Set timeframes and the amount of analysis required
- What is the appropriate governance mechanism?
- Who should be the decision-maker?

## What are the options?

Develop and analyse realistic options for achieving the objectives and that can be implemented.

### *Develop options*

- What is the status quo?
- Is more information needed to inform development of options?
- Can the options be implemented?

### *Analyse options*

- What is the level of analysis required and timeframe?
- What are the costs and benefits of intervening/not intervening?
- Who benefits and who bears the cost of each option?
- How well do the options manage the risks?
- How will behaviours affect the level of compliance?
- Do the options address the underlying cause or the symptoms of the issue?
- What are the indicators for measuring success/performance?

## What are the stakeholders saying?

Consult with affected parties even if you have already discussed the issue with them previously. Consultation must be genuine and feedback used to inform your decision. If you decide not to consult on the options make your reasons for this decision clear.

## Assess options

Assess options against strategic fit, net benefit, feasibility, resources, and opportunities/barriers to success (see Principle 9). Discuss and agree the meaning of the criteria before assessment is made.

- What is/are the preferred option(s)?
- How well does the preferred option(s) meet the objective(s)?

## Decide on an option

Choose an option, decide what we are going to do or not do and clearly communicate the decision to affected parties.

## Implement the decision

Develop an implementation plan and take action.

- Is a communication strategy required?
- What risks may affect successful implementation?
- What review mechanisms and performance targets are needed?
- What compliance and audit is needed?

## Monitor and review outcomes

Monitor and evaluate performance, and review against the objectives. If recommendations from the review identify new information or issues these should feed back into the decisions process.

- How well does the decision meet the success/ performance criteria and objectives?
- How well does the decision respond to the risks, costs and benefits and public reaction to your actions?
- What are the intended/unintended effects of the action?
- What is the likely level of compliance?

# Decisions principles

## Process Principles

### **1. Follow the criteria and processes prescribed in relevant legislation and ratified international standards**

Where legislation prescribes the process to be followed and/or criteria to be applied for a particular decision, these must be followed and applied. International standards or treaties that have been ratified by the government must also be followed.

### **2. Analyse the issue before trying to find solutions**

Spend time identifying the 'real' issue, before thinking through solutions by:

- understanding and analysing: the issue, the context, the risks and opportunities and the objectives first; *then*
- thinking through solutions to manage the issue and assessing strategic fit, net benefit, feasibility, resources, and any other barriers for the solutions.

### **3. Decisions should be made by those best placed to do so**

Unless specified elsewhere (such as in legislation), decisions should be made by the people who have the right information, skills and incentives as they are best placed to make good decisions in that area.

### **4. Timely and well-informed**

There will always be uncertainty and lack of information, but we must make the best decisions we can with the best information available at the time. The level of information sought and analysis should be proportional to the size of the risk/opportunity identified in the available timeframe and the urgency required.

### **5. Consistency**

Follow a consistent decisions process but only to the point where it is sensible to do so. Apply decisions principles, criteria and tools consistently so that decisions do not differ in assessment approach.

### **6. Consult affected parties, including Maori**

Identify and consult those affected by our decisions, including Maori, as soon as possible in the decisions process. Give sufficient time and information to affected parties so they can provide effective feedback before final decisions are made and so they can manage their own risks and interests at the same time.

### **7. Transparency**

Tell affected parties, in plain language they can understand, what the decision is and the reasoning behind the decision so they understand the decision, the implications, and the behaviours being sought.

## Content Principles

### **8. Decisions should aim to improve New Zealand's overall economic, social, health and environmental values**

Decisions should be driven by the objective of securing positive consequences and limiting negative consequences for our economic, social, health and environmental values as a country except where there are specific government objectives, directions or statutory requirements.

All decisions by the government to intervene should be tested to check that the intervention is justified and delivers more benefits than costs.

### **9. Assess options based on strategic advantage, net benefit, feasibility, resources and opportunities/barriers to success.**

Assess options using the following criteria. Discuss and agree the criteria before assessment is made.

- Strategic fit – how well does it fit with the government's strategies and MAF's Statement of Intent and/or strategies that reflect wider Government strategies?
- Net benefit – what is the overall net benefit including costs, benefits and their likelihoods?
- Feasibility – is it feasible and what is the probability of success?
- Resources – what resources, skills and capabilities are required?
- Opportunities/Barriers – are there other opportunities or barriers to success, such as timing or the factors that cause public concern (coercion, equity, fear etc)?

### **10. Uncertainty is not an excuse for inaction**

There is always uncertainty but it should not be an excuse for unnecessary delay or indecision. Decisions should focus on what reasonable steps can be taken at the time based on the best information available at the time, while maintaining future options where appropriate. Be transparent about the uncertainties and assumptions.

### **11. Irreversibility provides a stronger case for intervention**

Where the impacts of not intervening are likely to be irreversible, there is a stronger case for intervention even when benefits only marginally outweigh costs.

### **12. Risks/opportunities should be managed by those best placed to do so**

Those with the most appropriate incentives, capability, access to resources and the best information related to any specific opportunity or risk should manage those risks/opportunities.

### **13. Favour outcome-based over prescription-based interventions**

Favour performance/outcome based interventions over prescriptive interventions wherever practicable and appropriate. This may be easier where sector groups have large well-resourced players that interact with each other. Standards should be enforceable, and should draw on existing (industry) standards as much as is practicable to minimise compliance costs and allow innovation. Try to describe criteria for equivalent ways of achieving the standard.

