

Democracy and Participation Reference Group Terms of Reference

Introduction

1. Taituarā is a national membership organisation. Our vision is *“professional local government management, leading staff and enabling communities to shape their future”*. Taituarā exists to build capability within the local government sector, and to provide sector leadership in the issues of relevance to local government professionals.
2. In undertaking its core businesses Taituarā relies on the input of local government professionals to help it:
 - identify the training and professional development opportunities and good practice that build the capability of the local government sector; and
 - provide technical and policy advice to support Taituarā’s sector leadership activity.

Purpose

3. The purpose of the Taituarā Democracy and Participation Reference Group (DPRG) is to
 - a. Assist the local government sector to achieve high standards in the conduct of democracy services and governance support activity
 - b. in conjunction with other agencies, enhance public understanding of the role of local democracy within New Zealand’s system of governance, and public participation of local democracy.

Scope

4. In promoting its purpose DPRG shall focus on:
 - a. identifying and promoting leading practice in democracy and governance support in line with the agreed Taituarā workplan endorsed by the Executive Board
 - b. assisting local authorities and democracy/governance support staff to meet the requirements of the Local Government Act, Local Electoral Act, LGOIMA and any other associated statutes and regulations in line with the agreed Taituarā workplan endorsed by the Executive Board, and
 - c. identifying policy and practice issues relating to the conduct of the democracy services and developing appropriate responses from a managerial and

operational perspective, in line with the agreed Taituarā workplan endorsed by the Executive Board

- d. working with other agencies on programmes or projects that build community understanding of, and capacity to participate in, the local democratic process in line with the agreed Taituarā workplan endorsed by the Executive Board
- e. working with other agencies on programmes or projects which include effective means for building the capacity of Māori to contribute to, and encouraging the participation of Māori in, these processes, in line with the agreed Taituarā workplan endorsed by the Executive Board
- f. working with other agencies to promote participation in the local democratic process in line with the agreed Taituarā workplan endorsed by the Executive Board.

Responsibilities

5. In giving effect to its purpose DPRG shall be specifically responsible for:
 - a. monitoring the environment within which local authorities operate for relevant issues impacting on the democracy and governance support function including proposed legislative change and developments in overseas jurisdictions
 - b. preparing and presenting submissions representing local government sector concerns from a management and operational perspective to appropriate organisations and Ministers in accordance with Taituarā's submission process
 - c. monitoring current practices and providing managerial and operational advice to local authorities on issues within its area of focus. This may involve the preparation of good practice guidance, tools, training and mentoring
 - d. participate in programmes that build community understanding of, and capacity to contribute to the local democratic process
 - e. develop and maintain co-operative working relationships with the local government sector and other organisations that have related interests.

Accountability

6. DPRG is accountable to the Taituarā Chief Executive, and may not undertake any action not in accordance with these terms of reference without the approval of the Chief Executive.
7. DPRG must prepare a proposed annual work programme, in line with the agreed Taituarā workplan endorsed by the Executive Board. That proposed work programme will include sufficient detail of financial, staffing, and consultancy needs to enable accurate costing of the proposals.

8. DPRG must provide the Chief Executive with a report on its activities, at least once per year, or at other times as the Chief Executive determines. In turn, the Chief Executive will report to the Executive Committee

Powers

9. In fulfilling its purpose and responsibilities, DPRG may;
 - a. appoint advisory groups to cover subject areas of particular interest
 - b. appoint working groups or teams
 - c. recommend when specialist advisors could support the Taituarā work programme.
10. In fulfilling its purpose and responsibilities, DPRG must
 - a. ensure that its activities do not conflict with the policies and procedures of Taituarā
 - b. ensure that its advice meets any Taituarā standards for policy advice.

Membership

11. The Taituarā Executive may, at its discretion, appoint the Chair and Deputy Chair of Reference Groups. All other reference group members will be appointed or removed by the Chief Executive. Any vacancy on DPRG may only be filled by the Chief Executive having first called for nominations from amongst the membership of Taituarā.
12. Members of DPRG must be a full member of Taituarā. Members of any subcommittees or project teams need not be members of Taituarā. The appointment of members from outside the sector to a subcommittee (other than observers appointed under paragraph 14) will require the approval of the Chief Executive of Taituarā or their nominee.
13. Except as provided above, DPRG may appoint and remove members to advisory groups or project teams as it sees fit
14. At its discretion, DPRG may invite representatives from other organisations to attend meetings in an "observer" capacity. Observers will have speaking rights, but may not move or vote on recommendations. Participation in meetings by observers does not bind those organisations to any statement, submission or other release or publication, however issued, by the DPRG and may not to be taken as the position of any or all of the other participating organisations.

Review of Terms of Reference

15. DPRG will review these Terms of Reference in accordance with Taituarā processes not less than once every three years. At this time it may make recommendations to the Chief Executive that it considers will ensure that DPRG meets its purpose.
16. The Chief Executive may review these Terms of Reference at any time.