

# Regional Spatial Planning Roadshow

**Briefing Note 4: Process Agreements –**  
What are the requirements and steps in their formation

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July - August 2026



## Process Agreements - what are the requirements and steps in their formation

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***This Briefing Note is framed to support a presentation to council chief executives, tier-two leaders, planning managers, reform leads, programme managers, and officials preparing RSP committee and secretariat establishment advice. It addresses what council managers need to ensure is established through a process agreement before substantive plan drafting work begins.***

***This note draws on papers prepared to support Workshop presentations that are synthesised in a series of eight Briefing Notes on topics relevant to organisational readiness for regional spatial planning. It includes information and advice based on official sources but developed by Taituarā as an advisory Briefing Note.***

***Its statutory framing is the Planning Bill provisions as introduced to Parliament on regional spatial plans, process agreements, iwi consultation, spatial plan committees, public notification, hearings, adoption, review, and coordination documents.***

### 1. Executive Summary

*The process agreement is the operating spine and continuity mechanism before the RSP Committee or secretariat can be relied on to work at pace.* Under the Planning Bill, it is not a simple memorandum of understanding or project-start note. It is the document in which all local authorities in a region must agree how the first regional spatial plan will be prepared, who will do what, how the region will work with central government and adjacent regions, how iwi participation and existing agreements and obligations will be upheld, and how infrastructure providers, sectors, communities, and others with a strong interest will be brought into the process. For existing unitary authority regions, the process agreement will be simpler and somewhat different.

The updated Head Start and RSP Committee notes make the process agreement even more central. It is the place where the region records that current regional boundaries are the immediate RSP establishment baseline, while also setting review triggers for the Agreement if Head Start proposals are lodged, accepted in principle, altered, rejected, converted into detailed design, or legislated.

As MCERT develops the central-government operating model, the process agreement should document how the region will work with central government in practice. It should not simply list central agencies. It should provide information on intentions for a Ministerial appointee and arrangements for a collective central-government position to be formed on matters before the Committee so as to assist it and the secretariat to function, including any central government participation in the secretariat. This may include how NZTA/Waka Kotahi, Regional Public Service Commissioners and other agencies are engaged.

Funding, quorum, and voting rights for spatial plan committee members should be treated as likely contested design matters. The proposed LGA voting-rights change means the agreement and linked committee ToR

should expose any reliance on non-elected appointed members voting or counting for quorum, and should identify legally durable advisory, partnership, or statutory routes if voting membership is unavailable.

For council managers, the practical implication is that process-agreement formation is a governance-establishment task, a programme-design task, and a risk-control task. It should be settled before the region relies on the RSP Committee or secretariat to commission evidence, prepare options, engage partners, or recommend a draft plan for public notification. A weak process agreement will push unresolved role, mandate, engagement, resourcing, and dispute issues into the committee itself, at exactly the point where it will need to make strategic choices at pace.

## 2. What councils need to know now

### 2.1 The statutory minimum is already substantial

| Planning Bill requirement                                                                                                                                                                              | What it means in practical formation terms                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Key geographical areas, issues, and opportunities for the draft RSP</b>                                                                                                                             | Agree the focus of the first RSP, including whether sub-regional workstreams are needed and how they feed into one region-wide spatial plan.                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Roles of each local authority, including how they will work together</b>                                                                                                                            | Record lead, support, decision, evidence, engagement, funding, and escalation roles, including consideration of which councils will be responsible for any sub-regional workstreams. Do not leave this to custom or goodwill.                                                                            |
| <b>How local authorities will work with central government, relevant agencies, and CG entities</b>                                                                                                     | Set expectations for CG engagement, infrastructure-funding interface, agency evidence, and escalation of central-government issues.                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>How local authorities will work with adjacent regions</b>                                                                                                                                           | Agree cross-boundary issues directly with relevant adjacent-region authorities, not just within the home region.                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>How iwi partnering and participation legislation, existing agreements, joint management agreements, and Mana Whakahono ā Rohe and Treaty settlement arrangements and obligations will be upheld</b> | Map Treaty settlement redress and obligations, relationship instruments, and obligations or agreements under iwi participation legislation before drafting the agreement; treat them as establishment design inputs that must be upheld, not later engagement details.                                   |
| <b>How the spatial plan committee will consult iwi authorities</b>                                                                                                                                     | Specify timing, materials, advice pathways, resourcing assumptions and how feedback is documented before public notification. This would need to comply with the Planning Bill requirements for pre-notification consultation with iwi authorities.                                                      |
| <b>How councils will work with infrastructure providers, development and sector groups, others with a strong interest and communities</b>                                                              | Define the engagement architecture for providers and sectors whose investment and land-use decisions will be affected by the RSP. In relation to designating authorities, processes will need to comply with the Planning Act requirements for pre-notification engagement with designating authorities. |
| <b>Agreement must be set out in a document and made publicly available</b>                                                                                                                             | Prepare the agreement as a public-facing governance document, with enough clarity to support accountability and later review.                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Current-boundary RSP continuity and Head Start change-control</b>                                                                                                                                   | Record that the first establishment baseline is the current Bill-introduction region unless legislation later provides otherwise. Include triggers for review of the process agreement, reconstitution, evidence transfer and residual-region or cross-boundary arrangements.                            |

|                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Collective central-government representation</b>                                       | Go beyond “working with central government” as a generic phrase. Address intentions for a Ministerial appointee, arrangements for forming a collective central-government position on matters before the Committee, CG secretariat input, portfolio agency roles, and escalation to Ministers.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>NZTA/Waka Kotahi, Regional Public Service Commissioner and other agency interfaces</b> | Treat NZTA as a transport, investment, RLTP, state-highway and possible designating-authority participant, not automatically the whole CG. Treat RPSCs as possible convenors or advisers only where they have a clear mandate. There may also be other agencies that may need to play roles in regions' spatial plan than simply as part of the single central government voice. It might vary by region but could include Te Waihanga (Infracom), MoE, Health NZ, Kāinga Ora, etc. MCERT is the central coordination point for the CG interface |
| <b>Voting, quorum, funding, and participation assumptions</b>                             | Identify whether any proposed committee or partnership model depends on non-elected voting rights or quorum status, and record cost-sharing, voting, and funding assumptions early rather than allowing them to surface during notification or adoption decisions.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

## 2.2 Formation should be treated as a staged establishment process

| Step                                                  | Managerial task                                                                                                                                                                                   | Likely output                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Secure mandate to prepare the agreement</b>     | Use the CE Forum, Mayoral Forum, regional council/territorial authority chief executives or existing regional forum to mandate agreement-development work.                                        | Mandate note and work programme.         |
| <b>2. Identify parties and interfaces</b>             | Confirm all local authorities in the region, cross-boundary councils, iwi/Māori interfaces, CG agencies, infrastructure providers, and sector/community interfaces.                               | Stakeholder and participation map.       |
| <b>3. Agree drafting lead and working group</b>       | Nominate a lead agency or shared drafting team, with legal, planning, governance, iwi partnering/participation, infrastructure, and programme-management input.                                   | Drafting group terms of reference.       |
| <b>4. Prepare issue and assumptions register</b>      | Record legislative dependencies, national direction dependencies, data gaps, funding assumptions, Head Start/local-government change risks, and review triggers.                                  | Assumptions and change-control register. |
| <b>5. Draft statutory clauses compliance schedule</b> | Address each Planning Bill section 69 matter explicitly, including adjacent-region agreement and iwi participation obligations.                                                                   | Draft statutory-compliance schedule.     |
| <b>6. Add operating clauses</b>                       | Add decision pathways, committee relationship, secretariat model, programme controls, evidence/data standards, funding, communications, risk, and dispute resolution <sup>1</sup> . escalation.   | Draft full process agreement.            |
| <b>7. Test with partners and councils</b>             | Run the draft through planning managers, legal/governance staff, iwi/Māori relationship teams, (incl. external <i>iwi/Māori</i> contacts), infrastructure leads, CEs and elected-member channels. | Tracked issues log and revised draft.    |

<sup>1</sup> A dispute resolution process is to be included in regulations and can be used, but councils may want to agree to use less formal processes before initiating the regulated process.

|                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>8. Resolve adjacent-region matters</b>                                                                                  | Agree cross-boundary matters with affected adjacent local authorities, especially transport corridors, growth pressures, hazards, catchments, and coastal issues.                      | Adjacent-region annex or protocol.                           |
| <b>9. Approve and publish</b>                                                                                              | Take agreement to participating councils or agreed regional forum for approval, then make it publicly available.                                                                       | Approved public process agreement.                           |
| <b>10. Maintain and review</b>                                                                                             | Build in triggers for review if the Bill changes, regulations are made, national direction is issued, Head Start proposals progress, or partner arrangements change.                   | Review and amendment process.                                |
| <b>11. Confirm current-boundary continuity and Head Start triggers</b>                                                     | State the current-region establishment assumption and identify review triggers for outline proposal, Cabinet decision in principle, detailed design, legislation, or rejection.        | Current-boundary continuity and Head Start trigger schedule. |
| <b>12. Map CG, NZTA and RPSC interfaces</b>                                                                                | Map central agencies, CG entities, relevant Government policy statements, national plans/strategies, NZTA interests, designating authorities and any RPSC coordination role.           | CG agency and investment interface map.                      |
| <b>13. Prepare partnering/participation, voting and funding assumptions for spatial plan committee, (and secretariat).</b> | Test proposed governance and iwi/Māori partnering and participation arrangements against LGA voting-rights proposals, quorum requirements, funding shares, and cost-approval pathways. | Participation/voting/funding assumptions note.               |

## 2.3 The agreement should go beyond compliance

The Bill specifies mandatory matters, but the attached readiness and risk papers show that the management challenge is wider. Regions will need the agreement to stabilise the operating model before the statutory process becomes time-critical. The agreement should therefore include operational provisions that are not merely descriptive. Further direction on some of these matters (e.g., evidence and data, options, and scenarios), is intended to be provided in national standards or regulations.

| <b>Operating issue</b>                                    | <b>Recommended process-agreement treatment</b>                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Sponsorship and escalation</b>                         | Identify executive sponsors, reporting cycle, escalation route and how unresolved issues move from staff to CEs, Mayoral Forum, and councils.                                                         |
| <b>Relationship with RSP Committee Terms of Reference</b> | Clarify what is decided by the agreement, what is delegated to the committee, and what remains for local authority approval.                                                                          |
| <b>Secretariat</b>                                        | Record host model, funding, staffing, document ownership, reporting, procurement support, and service levels expected by the committee.                                                               |
| <b>Evidence and data</b>                                  | Specify minimum viable data standards, evidence quality, metadata, common GIS/document platforms, and evidence gap process. This may include protocols for handling <i>iwi/Māori</i> data inputs.     |
| <b>Options and scenarios</b>                              | Describe the process for how scenarios/options will be prepared, tested, and documented for the options assessment report, noting direction for their substance may come in national instruments      |
| <b>Funding and cost sharing</b>                           | Set cost-sharing principles, approval pathways, budget-cycle alignment, procurement responsibilities, and contingency handling. This includes funding for <i>iwi/Māori partnering/participation</i> . |

|                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Public communications</b>                 | Agree common narrative, public information responsibility, councillor briefing protocol and consistent use of project materials.                                                                           |
| <b>Dispute and deadlock management</b>       | Set internal dispute steps before formal statutory dispute routes are needed; define what counts as unresolved and who can escalate.                                                                       |
| <b>Records and transparency</b>              | Clarify records ownership, official information handling, publication points, conflicts, decision logs, and document-control rules.                                                                        |
| <b>Change control</b>                        | Record review triggers and process for amendments so the agreement can adapt when legislation, regulations, or national direction change.                                                                  |
| <b>Current-boundary continuity</b>           | State the working geography, make clear that Head Start does not pause current-boundary RSP formation, and specify when the agreement will be reviewed or reconstituted.                                   |
| <b>Collective CG model</b>                   | Specify how CG advice will be collected, authorised, communicated, conflicted and escalated; include any central-government secretariat role and agency workstreams. <sup>2</sup>                          |
| <b>NZTA and RPSC role clarity</b>            | Separate NZTA transport/investment/designating roles from any possible whole-of-government role, and identify whether an RPSC is member, observer, officials-group chair, convenor, or escalation conduit. |
| <b>Voting and quorum assumptions</b>         | Record any reliance on appointed non-elected voting members, non-voting advisers, partner forums, or statutory/Treaty exceptions, and ensure the linked ToR can be legally tested.                         |
| <b>Regional Function Continuity Schedule</b> | For any non-full-region Head Start scenario, require a schedule covering RSP, NEP, RLTP, RPTP, CDEM/EM, catchment/flood, water, biosecurity, science/monitoring, and compliance/enforcement interfaces.    |

### 3. Relationship to RSP Committee, secretariat, and later statutory steps

The process agreement should be completed far enough ahead of substantive plan drafting to shape the RSP Committee terms of reference and secretariat establishment. The RSP Committee will then prepare the draft RSP, prepare an options assessment report, consult, recommend approval of the draft spatial plan for public notification, advise on IHP recommendations, review/amend the RSP, prepare, maintain, and publish coordination documents and monitor and report on progress in implementing the spatial plan. The process agreement is therefore the upstream governance settlement that makes those later steps workable.

| <b>Interface</b>                              | <b>What must be aligned</b>                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>RSP Committee terms of reference</b>       | Membership assumptions, chair/secretariat arrangements, decision rights, reporting to councils, conflict handling, and relationship to local authority approval steps.  |
| <b>Secretariat</b>                            | Administrative and programme functions required to carry out the agreement: evidence, meeting support, consultation, public notification, records, risk, and reporting. |
| <b>iwi/Māori partnering and participation</b> | How obligations, agreements, joint management arrangements, Mana Whakahono ā Rohe, and iwi authority consultation protocols are upheld.                                 |
| <b>Infrastructure and investment planning</b> | How infrastructure providers, LTP/infrastructure strategy/RLTP processes and CG infrastructure/funding priorities are connected to RSP development.                     |
| <b>Independent Hearings Panel</b>             | How the region will support public notification, submissions, evidence, IHP logistics, recommendations, advice, and local authority decisions.                          |

<sup>2</sup> A similar challenge may arise for Iwi/Māori inputs where there are multiple parties and potentially conflicting positions. Mechanisms for resolving this among relevant parties might include sub committees or other collaborative operating models for Iwi/Māori to determine.

|                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Coordination document</b>                       | How implementation actions, leads and reporting obligations will be carried through after the RSP is adopted.                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Head Start and regional-function continuity</b> | Current-boundary RSP establishment, four-scenario testing, Regional Function Continuity Schedule, evidence transfer, records continuity and reconstitution triggers.                                                            |
| <b>Central government, NZTA and RPSC</b>           | How CG positions are to be fed into the spatial planning process. how central government participates in the secretariat, how NZTA investment/designating interests are managed, and how any RPSC convening role is authorised. |

#### 4. Main risks and mitigations

| <b>Risk</b>                                                                                        | <b>Why it matters</b>                                                                                                | <b>Mitigation</b>                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Agreement treated as a legal formality</b>                                                      | The real operating model remains unresolved, and delays shift into committee meetings.                               | Use the agreement as the establishment constitution; include decision rights, programme, secretariat, funding, and escalation clauses.                                    |
| <b>Insufficient elected-member and CE ownership</b>                                                | Councils may later resist notification, funding, or IHP recommendation decisions.                                    | Secure early CE/Mayoral Forum mandate and consistent council briefing before approval.                                                                                    |
| <b>Adjacent-region issues left late</b>                                                            | Transport corridors, catchments, growth pressures, hazards, and coastal matters can trigger later rework.            | Agree adjacent-region protocols while drafting the agreement, not after options are settled.                                                                              |
| <b>Iwi/Māori partnering and participation obligations are not identified, resourced and upheld</b> | Participation becomes compressed, under-resourced or contested.                                                      | Prepare partnering/participation register before finalising committee/secretariat arrangements.                                                                           |
| <b>Sub-regional platforms dominate the region-wide process</b>                                     | Existing growth partnerships may unintentionally narrow the RSP to metropolitan issues.                              | Use sub-regional workstreams as inputs to a single region-wide statutory plan.                                                                                            |
| <b>Funding not aligned with council budget cycles</b>                                              | Work cannot be resourced even if legally required.                                                                   | Include cost-sharing principles, annual plan/LTP timing, procurement assumptions, and contingency.                                                                        |
| <b>Digital/evidence fragmentation</b>                                                              | Different councils commission incompatible evidence or use different data standards.                                 | Agree minimum viable evidence and data rules in the agreement in accordance with any relevant and available national standards, including protocols for Māori data inputs |
| <b>No change-control mechanism</b>                                                                 | Final legislation, regulations, or national direction may require rework without an agreed process.                  | Include assumptions register and formal review triggers.                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Current-boundary work paused unnecessarily</b>                                                  | Councils wait for Head Start decisions even though the latest guidance points to current-region RSP work continuing. | State the current-boundary baseline in the agreement and add explicit review triggers rather than pausing establishment work.                                             |
| <b>Premature rebasing to proposed Head Start geography</b>                                         | A proposal geography is treated as the statutory RSP region before legislation provides for it.                      | Record proposed geographies as scenarios unless and until legislation changes the region for RSP purposes.                                                                |

|                                                      |                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Fragmented CG voice</b>                           | Different agencies provide inconsistent positions on transport, housing, infrastructure, conservation, fiscal or national-direction matters. | Create a central-government officials group, CG secretariat support, and Ministerial escalation route behind any formal appointee. Seek provision of a CG priorities/outcomes statement for each region. |
| <b>NZTA or RPSC role confusion</b>                   | NZTA or an RPSC is treated as the whole CG without mandate, despite separate portfolio, Board, funding, or coordination roles.               | Separate technical/portfolio roles from collective-government representation and require a mandate, clearance process, and conflict protocols.                                                           |
| <b>Voting and funding assumptions contested late</b> | Committee membership, quorum, partner participation, or cost shares become disputed after work has begun.                                    | Include a participation/voting/funding assumptions schedule and test it legally with the committee ToR.                                                                                                  |

## 5. Immediate work programme for managers

- Establish a drafting group with planning, legal, governance, iwi/Māori, infrastructure, finance, data/GIS, and programme-management capability.
- Prepare a statutory compliance matrix against Planning Bill section 69 and related Schedule 2 requirements.
- Create a regional collaboration and participation map, including adjacent regions, CG agencies, iwi authorities, customary marine title groups, Post-Settlement Governance Entities, infrastructure providers, and sector/community interests.
- Draft a plain-English operating model diagram showing councils, RSP Committee, secretariat, technical groups, iwi/Māori participation channels, IHP and implementation pathways.
- Prepare a cost-sharing and resourcing schedule covering secretariat, evidence, engagement, hearings, legal advice, and communications.
- Set up an assumptions and change-control register to track legislative, national direction, digital, funding, and Head Start uncertainties.
- Prepare a public-facing explanation of why the process agreement matters and how it supports transparency and participation.
- Prepare a current-boundary RSP continuity statement and incorporate it into the agreement as a standing assumption, with clear triggers for review if Head Start proposals proceed.
- Work with MCERT to prepare a CG agency and investment interface map, including NZTA/Waka Kotahi, designating authorities, relevant Government policy statements, national strategies, CG-funded assets, and any Regional Public Service Commissioner role.
- Prepare a participation, voting and funding assumptions note so that committee membership, iwi/Māori influence pathways, quorum, and cost-sharing questions are not deferred until contested decisions arise.
- For any non-full-region Head Start scenario, prepare or require a Regional Function Continuity Schedule as a companion to the process agreement.

## 6. Matters that remain uncertain

| Uncertain matter                                                           | Why it matters for process-agreement formation                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Final form of the Planning Bill and regulations</b>                     | May alter committee, chair, secretariat, public-notification, IHP or process details.                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>National standards and national policy direction</b>                    | Will shape evidence requirements, RSP form, methodology and consistency tests.                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Central government role in practice</b>                                 | Section 69 requires the agreement to cover central government working arrangements, but agency participation models may remain unsettled. Work is underway with MCERT agencies to develop a <i>central-government coordination</i> and support model. |
| <b>Secretariat regulations</b>                                             | Section 71 requires chairperson and secretariat appointment in accordance with regulations, affecting agreement drafting.                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Head Start/local government structural change</b>                       | Could change regional boundaries, council roles, committee pathways, and participation arrangements.                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Funding and rates constraints</b>                                       | The agreement may need to operate before all councils have aligned annual plan or LTP budgets.                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Digital planning scope</b>                                              | The region may not yet know national e-plan or data system specifications.                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Extent to which existing FDS/spatial plan material can be relied on</b> | Existing material is valuable but often sub-regional and may not meet full Schedule 2 requirements.                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Current-boundary RSP continuity and Head Start detailed design</b>      | The immediate baseline is clearer, but future succession, reconstitution, residual-region, cross-boundary, and regional-function arrangements still require detailed design.                                                                          |
| <b>Proposed LGA voting-rights change</b>                                   | May affect whether appointed non-elected members on an LGA-based RSP Committee can vote or count for quorum, and therefore affects process-agreement assumptions.                                                                                     |
| <b>Collective central-government representation</b>                        | National guidance may be needed on the relationship between Ministerial appointees, officials groups, CG secretariat participation, and agency workstreams <sup>3</sup> .                                                                             |
| <b>NZTA and Regional Public Service Commissioner roles</b>                 | NZTA has transport, investment, and possible designating-authority interests; RPSCs may convene regional public service input but are not automatically statutory CG representatives.                                                                 |

## 7. Key points for council managers to note

Suggested framing: "The process agreement is the operating spine for the first Regional Spatial Plan."

| No.      | Briefing point                                  | Talk-to note                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Start with section 69.</b>                   | The Bill requires local authorities to agree the focus, roles, central-government interface, adjacent-region interface, iwi participation arrangements, and obligations; and engagement with iwi authorities, infrastructure, sectors, and communities. |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Formation is an establishment project.</b>   | Do not treat the agreement as a template. It should be developed through a mandated regional work programme.                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Use it to lock in decision rights early.</b> | The agreement should clarify who decides, who recommends, who funds, who provides evidence and who escalates disputes.                                                                                                                                  |

<sup>3</sup> This work is underway with MCERT agencies which will use this as a basis to inform the CG representative's role, secretariat support, and other input into the RSP process (incl. priority setting, regional support, and coordination functions).

|    |                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4  | <b>Iwi/Māori arrangements are central.</b>                           | Existing obligations and agreements, <i>Mana Whakahono ā Rohe</i> , joint management agreements and iwi authority consultation need to be mapped before the agreement is finalised. Use iwi/Māori partnering and consultation language and ensure Treaty-settlement, and existing relationship arrangements are not collapsed into generic engagement. |
| 5  | <b>Adjacent-region matters require separate attention.</b>           | The Bill requires adjacent-region working arrangements to be agreed with the relevant adjacent authorities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 6  | <b>The agreement should shape committee and secretariat design.</b>  | The RSP Committee ToR and secretariat model should flow from the operating choices made in the agreement.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 7  | <b>Add operational clauses beyond the statutory minimum.</b>         | Include funding, programme controls, evidence/data, communications, records, risk, dispute, and change-control provisions.<br>Funding and associated voting-rights assumptions are likely to be among the most contested elements and should be exposed early.                                                                                         |
| 8  | <b>Make uncertainty manageable.</b>                                  | Use assumptions, review triggers, and change-control clauses rather than waiting for every detail to be certain.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 9  | <b>Publish with purpose.</b>                                         | Because the agreement must be public, make it clear enough to explain how the region will work and how participants will be involved.                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 10 | <b>Bottom line for managers.</b>                                     | A good process agreement reduces rework, dispute, and legitimacy risk before the RSP Committee is under statutory delivery pressure.                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 11 | <b>Head Start does not pause the process agreement.</b>              | Use the May guidance to state current-boundary RSP continuity, but include review and reconstitution triggers for later Head Start decisions.                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 12 | <b>Central government needs a collective operating model.</b>        | The agreement should describe how CG advice is collected, authorised, and escalated, and how central government participates in the secretariat.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 13 | <b>NZTA is central but not the whole CG.</b>                         | Build NZTA into transport, RLTP, state highway, investment, business-case, and designation workstreams, while avoiding role confusion.                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 14 | <b>RPSCs may help convene, not automatically decide.</b>             | Use any Regional Public Service Commissioner role as convening or coordination support only where clearly mandated by the relevant Ministers/agencies.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 15 | <b>The agreement should connect to regional-function continuity.</b> | For non-full-region Head Start scenarios, require a Regional Function Continuity Schedule so RSP, transport, catchment, emergency management, science, and compliance systems are not fragmented.                                                                                                                                                      |

## 8. Bottom line for managers

Councils should treat the process agreement as the first substantive establishment product for regional spatial planning. It is the place to make regional collaboration explicit, turn statutory duties into a workable programme, preserve participation obligations, connect with infrastructure and adjacent regions, and give the RSP Committee and secretariat a stable basis on which to work.

The agreement should now also be treated as the main continuity instrument for accommodating Head Start, the main organising document for collective central-government participation, and the place where voting, funding, iwi/Māori partnering/participation, and NZTA/RPSC interface assumptions are exposed early.

## Appendix: Practical checklist for managers

| Checklist area                                   | Question for managers                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Mandate</b>                                   | Has a regional forum or all councils authorised development of the process agreement?                                                                                           |
| <b>Parties</b>                                   | Have all local authorities, adjacent-region interfaces, iwi/Māori entities, CG agencies, infrastructure providers, and sector/community interests been mapped?                  |
| <b>Statutory coverage</b>                        | Does the draft explicitly address every section 69 matter?                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Iwi/Māori obligations</b>                     | Have existing iwi partnering/participation legislation obligations and agreements, joint management agreements, and <i>Mana Whakahono ā Rohe</i> been identified and reflected? |
| <b>Committee alignment</b>                       | Does the agreement state how the RSP Committee will be supported and how it reports/recommends to councils?                                                                     |
| <b>Secretariat</b>                               | Does the agreement describe host, funding, authority, service expectations, and document-control arrangements?                                                                  |
| <b>Evidence/data</b>                             | Are minimum evidence, GIS, metadata, and confidence requirements recorded?                                                                                                      |
| <b>Funding</b>                                   | Are cost-sharing, procurement, and budget-cycle assumptions clear?                                                                                                              |
| <b>Dispute/change control</b>                    | Is there a clear path for escalation and amendment when assumptions change?                                                                                                     |
| <b>Public availability</b>                       | Is the agreement written so that it can be published and understood by participants and the public?                                                                             |
| <b>Current-boundary continuity</b>               | Does the agreement state that current regional boundaries are the RSP establishment baseline unless legislation provides otherwise?                                             |
| <b>Head Start change-control</b>                 | Does the agreement contain triggers for outline proposal, decision in principle, detailed design, legislation, rejection, or material change?                                   |
| <b>Collective government model</b>               | Does the agreement explain how the CG position will be collected, authorised, communicated, and escalated?                                                                      |
| <b>NZTA interface</b>                            | Does the agreement separate NZTA transport/investment/designating-authority roles from any whole-of-government role?                                                            |
| <b>Regional Public Service Commissioner role</b> | Does the agreement clarify whether any RPSC role is as member, observer, officials-group chair, convenor, secretariat adviser, or escalation conduit?                           |
| <b>Voting and funding assumptions</b>            | Have non-elected voting, quorum, partner participation, cost-sharing, and budget-cycle assumptions been identified for legal/governance testing?                                |
| <b>Regional Function Continuity Schedule</b>     | For any non-full-region Head Start proposal, is there a companion schedule for RSP, NEP, RLTP, RPTP, CDEM/EM, catchment, water, biosecurity, science, and compliance functions? |

## Source documents and official references

### Primary source documents (prepared by SMConsulting)

1. Info Paper - RMA Replacement Spatial Planning Implementation - Detailed Notes, 18 March 2026.
2. Discuss Paper - Enabling organisational readiness for regional spatial planning, 20 March 2026
3. Info Paper - PL & NE Bills - Implementation Risk Synthesis incl. Spatial Planning., 23 March 2026
4. Info paper - RMA Instruments and Governance Transition to Spatial Planning, 27 March 2026.
5. Relevant preceding RSP Committees briefing-note source set - updated Notes 1, 2 and 5.

## Official references

6. Planning Bill 235-1, New Zealand Legislation - <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2025/235/en/latest/>
7. Natural Environment Bill 234-1, New Zealand Legislation - <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2025/234/en/latest/>
8. Ministry for the Environment, Better planning for a better New Zealand - <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/better-planning-for-a-better-new-zealand/>
9. Ministry for the Environment, Transitioning into the new planning system - <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/transitioning-into-the-new-planning-system/>
10. Te Uru Kahika, Spatial Planning under the Planning Act position piece - <https://www.teurukahika.govt.nz/media/5tuds14x/te-uru-kahika-spatial-planning-sector-position-piece-final-270825.pdf>
11. DIA Guidance for Head Start outline proposals released 29 May 2026 [https://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Local-Government-2026/\\$file/Guidance-for-Head-Start-outline-proposals.pdf](https://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Local-Government-2026/$file/Guidance-for-Head-Start-outline-proposals.pdf)
12. Supplementary Analysis Report statement that central government may be represented on spatial plan committees and must be part of spatial plan secretariats [https://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/Supplementary-Analysis-Report\\_-Replacing-the-Resource-Management-Act-1991-Further-Policy-Decisions\\_Redacted.pdf](https://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/Supplementary-Analysis-Report_-Replacing-the-Resource-Management-Act-1991-Further-Policy-Decisions_Redacted.pdf)