

Even better public sector for Queensland

Strategy 2024–2028



Acknowledgement of Country

We pay our respects to the Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this land, their ancestors, and their legacy. The foundations laid by these ancestors—the First Australians—give strength, inspiration, and courage to current and future generations towards creating a better Queensland.

We recognise it is our collective efforts and responsibility as individuals, communities, and governments to ensure equality, recognition, and advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders across all aspects of society and everyday life.

We are committed to working with, representing, advocating for and promoting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders with unwavering determination, passion and persistence.

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A note from the Public Sector Commissioner

I am delighted to share the *Even better public sector for Queensland strategy 2024–2028* (strategy).

Even better is a phrase which has been chosen with intent.

It recognises that every day, our workforce comes to work, ready and willing to serve their community across a wide range of roles.

The events of recent years, including COVID-19 and natural disasters, have showcased the genuine spirit of service that runs through Queensland’s public sector.

From providing services to Queenslanders to supporting the frontline, through to those who develop policy and programs—the work of Queensland’s public sector impacts the lives of Queenslanders daily.

As a sector, we are accountable to government and to our community. This high degree of accountability requires us to constantly be asking—what is required to support the delivery of better services, better advice and better outcomes for Queensland?

This strategy builds on our strengths and recognises the value of an even better public sector.

The exact nature of future challenges is unclear. However, we know that there will be increasingly interconnected and complex problems to solve and new technologies that will change the way we work and deliver services.

The skills and expertise needed to do our work are changing rapidly, and we know that reskilling and upskilling the sector will be integral to how we operate.

We know that building and maintaining trust with individuals and the communities we serve, as well as the trust of executive government, is foundational to the work of the public sector.

The strategy contains six key goals for us to focus on over the next five years.

These goals relate to three key areas—our work, workforce and workplace—which require strengthening as to how we:

- come together to work across public sector organisations to respond to complex challenges
- connect with our community and continue to provide excellent customer service
- identify the skills we need now and in the future and grow these skills across the sector
- foster future generations of diverse, purpose-driven leaders
- provide exciting and rewarding opportunities in respectful, safe and inclusive workplaces
- equip all our people to make ethical decisions which serve the public interest.

Strategies, such as this one, are important as they help to articulate the next step in our evolution as a high-performing sector.

More important is the process of implementation.

Over the course of the next five years we will learn more about the gaps we have identified in the sector, what is working well and what new things we can try that will help push us forward and make us even better.

One of the functions of the Public Sector Commission (PSC) under the *Public Sector Act 2022* (Act) is to provide system leadership and stewardship.

In simple terms, the PSC guides, supports and enables the sector as it delivers the best possible advice and services.

I am committed to working with our sector’s executive leaders to continuously develop the work program which supports making progress against this strategy’s five-year goals.

Thank you for the work you do every day in whatever role you play in the sector, and for joining me in a commitment to pursue being even better.

David Mackie
Public Sector Commissioner

Strategy on a page



Our work

Outcome 1

Our ways of working **inspire trust in government.**

Goal 1

We are **better** equipped to respond to complex challenges.

Goal 2

We are **better** connected to the community.



Our workforce

Outcome 2

Our people are ready to **meet any challenge.**

Goal 3

We **better** enable people to build their sector experiences.

Goal 4

We **better** identify future leaders and grow diverse potential.



Our workplace

Outcome 3

Our workplaces **support our people to serve their community.**

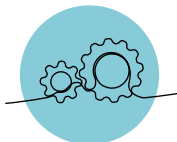
Goal 5

We provide **better** opportunities for current and future public servants to perform at their best.

Goal 6

We **better** support our people to make decisions that serve the interests of Queenslanders.

Our actions will be directed towards systems and processes, leaders and people across the sector



Systems and processes that support:

- shared priorities and resources
- the way we work now and in the future
- processes which ensure fairness, responsiveness and high performance.



Leaders who:

- are committed to sector stewardship
- are systems thinkers
- drive culturally and psychologically safe workplaces
- tell the sector's stories with pride.



People who:

- have the skills the sector needs, for now and the future
- have opportunities for career development and learning
- understand the craft of public service.

Who is the sector?

Queensland's public sector workforce serves their community in many ways, across many locations.

We know from workforce surveys that many people working in the sector believe their work has a positive impact on the lives of Queenslanders.

Queensland's public sector is made up of over 100 different organisations—varying in size from around 20 employees to large departments with over 100,000 staff. We work throughout the state with more than half of the sector working outside of our largest city.

Most public sector work involves delivering services directly to Queenslanders—including as teachers and teacher aides, nurses and midwives, allied health professionals, ambulance officers, scientists, social workers, registry officers, or park rangers.

A much smaller proportion of our public sector is working behind the scenes to support the delivery of these frontline services. These roles relate to administration, communications, human resources, information and technology (IT), and policy development and implementation.

It's not just our roles that are diverse.

We are also committed to building a workforce that reflects the diverse community we serve. This allows us to understand and connect with our communities even better.

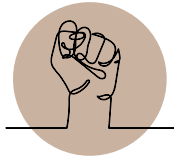
We are already a multigenerational workforce, and we are committed to ensuring equitable workforce representation for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people with disability, women in leadership, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. We also remain committed to enhancing policy, procedures and practice to improve employment outcomes for our LGBTIQ+ workforce.



The Public Sector Act 2022

The Act provides an ambitious and exciting vision for Queensland’s public sector and sets the foundation for this strategy.

It requires the sector to be responsive, culturally capable, fair, and high-performing and apolitical.



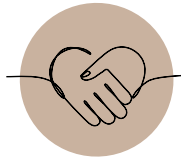
Responsive

A public sector that is driven by a spirit of service, invests in future-focused leadership, promotes effectiveness and efficiency, and shares responsibility for sector stewardship.



Culturally capable

A public sector that recognises the rights of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples to self-determination and promotes the perspectives of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Fair

A public sector that promotes equity, diversity, respect and inclusion, maximises employment security and invests in working environments that support people to perform at their best.



High-performing and apolitical

A public sector that responds to the needs of the community and government, works with integrity and in the public interest, and delivers its varied work professionally, impartially and innovatively.

Underlying these important commitments is a need for the public sector to always be improving.

The role of the Public Sector Commission

The Act provides an important role for the PSC—formerly known as the Public Service Commission.

The commencement of the Act in early 2023 expanded the scope of the PSC’s functions to support a broader range of public sector organisations.

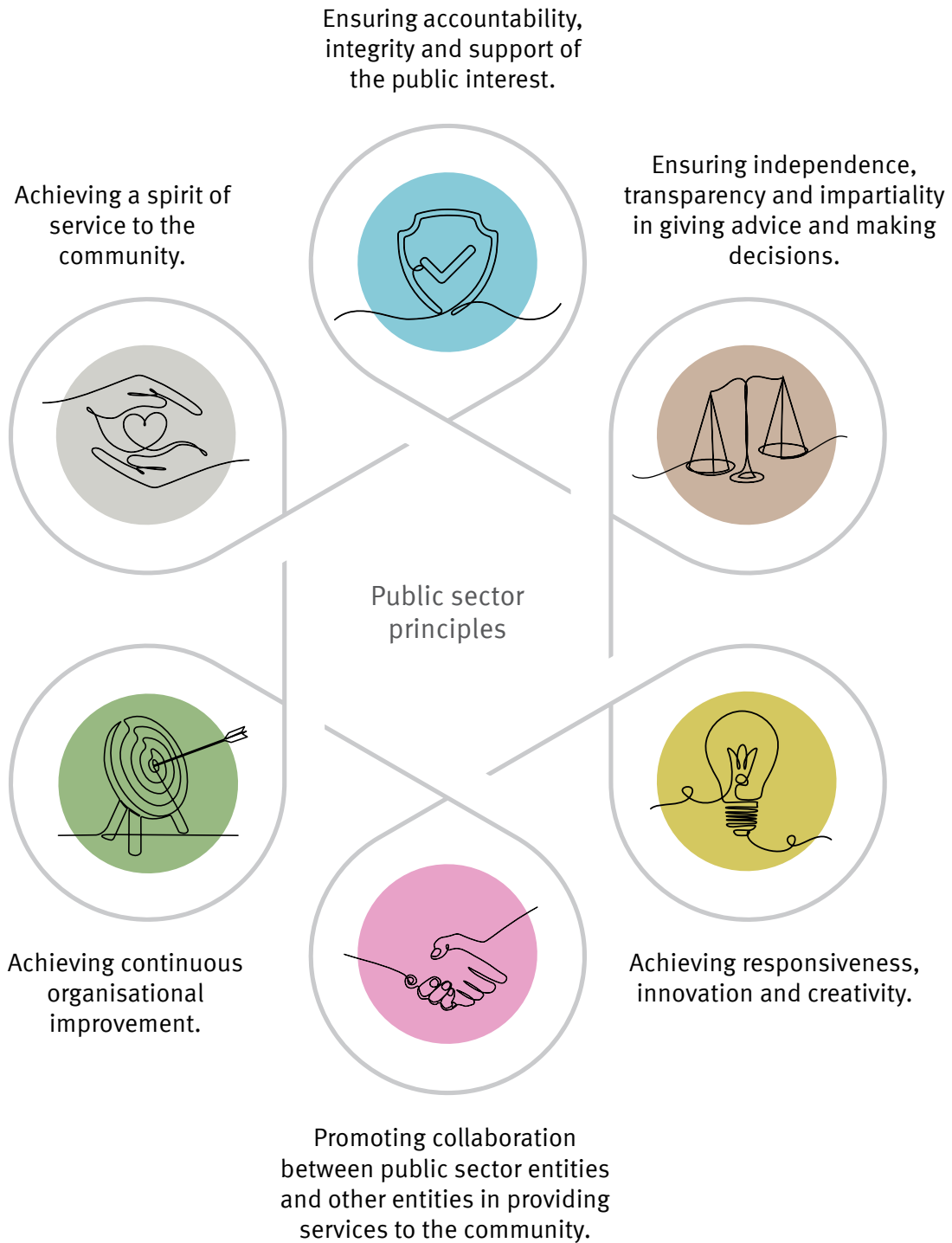
It outlines the PSC’s integral role in bringing the commitments of the Act to life.

Under the Act, the PSC’s functions as our central human resources agency are wide-ranging and include:

- providing system leadership and stewardship
- building the capability and capacity of the public sector
- promoting equity, diversity, respect and inclusion
- promoting a culture of integrity, and ethical behaviour and decision-making
- promoting a culture of continuous improvement
- building leadership capability and developing a highly skilled cohort of senior leaders
- supporting the development of the capabilities the public sector needs to serve the people of Queensland and the government efficiently and effectively
- promoting the Act’s public sector principles.

Public sector principles

The Act sets out several principles which underpin how Queensland's public sector should be managed.



What unites our sector?

Working in the public sector is more than just a job.

For many, it generates both pride and purpose through serving the community and the government of the day.

The public sector has the potential to make a real difference and impact to people's lives now and into the future.

Public sector employees are held to high standards—both by the government we advise and serve, and the broader community who rely on us for the services they need.

It is critical that we earn the trust of government and the community through the way we work, no matter what role we are in or which public sector organisation we work for.

We may use different skills, professional knowledge and experience to do our work, but there are common, fundamental expectations which apply to everyone who works in the public sector.

We all build and maintain trust by working with integrity. This means consistently making sound and ethical decisions, demonstrating respect for everyone we interact with, resolving and managing personal interests which may conflict with our professional obligations, providing objective and impartial advice, and engaging in good faith with the community.

Each one of us works for the benefit of our diverse community by effectively managing public resources, and striving to deliver excellent services which respond to the priorities of government and the needs of the community.

We all have a responsibility to uphold our democratic system of government by doing the right thing as individuals, and by implementing government's decisions faithfully and independently.

Maintaining trust requires us all to work diligently and transparently. This means we must do our work carefully and consistently while also making sure we deliver what is needed, when it is needed.

Government and the community trust the public sector with a lot, not just delivering essential services, but also thinking about the future by supporting government to tackle complex, long-term challenges.

Embodying these common, fundamental expectations—day in and day out—allows us to demonstrate that we are worthy of this trust.

This truly sets us apart from other sectors.



What is objective and impartial advice?

Every person who works in the public sector is required to provide advice as part of their job—whether that advice is directed to a minister or a manager, is about a policy proposal or an operational decision, whether they are working on the frontline or supporting the frontline.

This advice must be honest, balanced, apolitical, serve the public interest and be based on the evidence available.

Providing the best advice at the right time is key to the craft of public service. It ensures decision makers have the information they need to make the best decision possible.

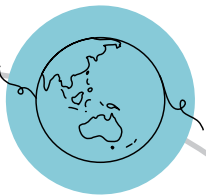
Challenges

Our public sector will likely face complex challenges in the future.

The key challenges facing Queensland's public sector have been identified through a process of research, engagement and workforce data analysis.

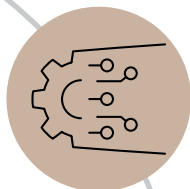
Increasingly complex local and global needs

To find the best solutions to the increasingly interrelated and complex issues society is facing, the public sector will need to be innovative and collaborative.



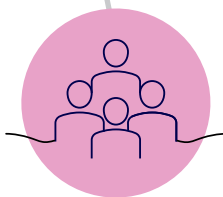
Skilling up for ongoing digital advancements

Technological advances are set to continue, and digital literacy is required for jobs of all kinds. The public sector will need to be agile as new technologies, including artificial intelligence, create new jobs and require new skillsets.



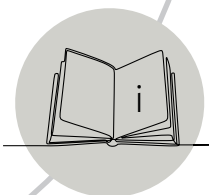
Changing workforce demographics

As our population ages, the proportion of the population who are 'working age' is predicted to shrink, even as people live and work for longer. The public sector will need to embrace multigenerational and diverse workplaces as an exciting new normal.



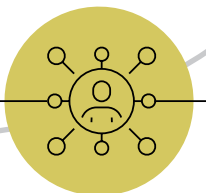
Earning trust in uncertain times

Trust in public institutions, including public sector organisations, is hard earned and easily corroded. We need to support government to tackle complex problems and engage with the community in evidence-based, meaningful ways.

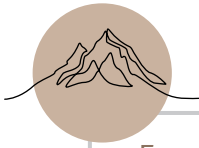


Moving towards productive flexibility

People value flexibility in where, when and how they work more than ever. The public sector will need to find ways to support flexibility while maintaining productivity, equity and connectedness.



Why an even better public sector?



Even better is an ongoing ambition

Even better acknowledges that while Queensland’s public sector does great work and is continually innovating, there is always room for improvement.

Even better recognises that we are always undergoing transformation as a sector—pivoting to respond to new information, changing priorities and emerging needs.

Even better puts the pursuit of better services and better outcomes for Queenslanders at the forefront of any investment in our ways of working, our workforce, and our workplaces.

Even better means seeing disruption and change as opportunities.

Public sectors around the world are grappling with how to best support their governments and their communities in a time of rapid social and technological change and increasingly linked, long-term challenges.

Building trust in public services is a global focus. Queensland is no different.

As a sector, we are called on by government to provide evidence-based and balanced advice that supports good decision-making.

Our community expects excellent service, genuine engagement and to have their needs considered when we make decisions or give advice on matters that affect them.

Our work can be hard at times. We need to consistently invest in ensuring that our people have the skills, resources and systems they need to give their best, continue to do great work, and make important contributions to the lives of Queenslanders.

This strategy has six goals across three areas—our work, our workforce and our workplace.

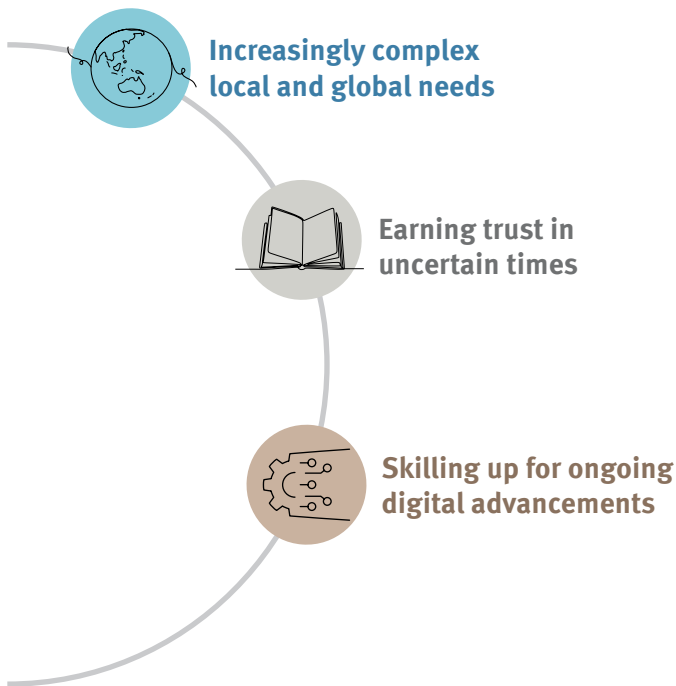
The six goals will help to drive impact by focusing on the key things we know are critical to delivering better services and outcomes for Queenslanders:

1. real collaboration and coordination across public sector organisations
2. fit-for-purpose community engagement and communication
3. skilled people working where they are needed most
4. purpose-driven sector leadership
5. inclusive workplaces that support flexible, productive and purposeful work
6. tools and frameworks for making ethical decisions.

Focus area 1 – Work

Our ways of working inspire trust in government

Responds to challenges



Our public sector is required to work quickly, consistently and diligently to deliver essential services and support Queensland’s system of government. Responsiveness is part of how we build and maintain trust.

We know that the future will bring many challenges and many opportunities. The fast-paced nature of technological advances and environmental changes will make designing and delivering effective and responsive public services even more important.

We know that many of these challenges and opportunities won’t fit neatly into the subject areas of individual public sector organisations.

In a time of disruption, change and uncertainty, the way we work will be key to building and maintaining trust with our community and government. Supporting the government to respond to the big, interconnected issues facing Queensland and engaging with the community about what matters most is a core part of our role.

We are better equipped to respond to complex challenges

We have a strong track record of coming together as a sector to respond to natural disasters, and more recently, a global pandemic.

Leveraging these strengths and harnessing learnings will allow us to build responsive ways of working to address present and future challenges.

Solving complex problems will require us to bring together data, diverse expertise and insights from different public sector organisations, stakeholders and partners. It requires us to have systems that help us to share responsibility and have clear accountability for addressing public sector-wide priorities and outcomes. This also relies on building skills in purpose-driven, sector collaboration and partnering.

We are better connected to the community

A big part of what we do—in both frontline and frontline supporting roles—involves working with, listening to and understanding the needs of our increasingly diverse community.

We do this to:

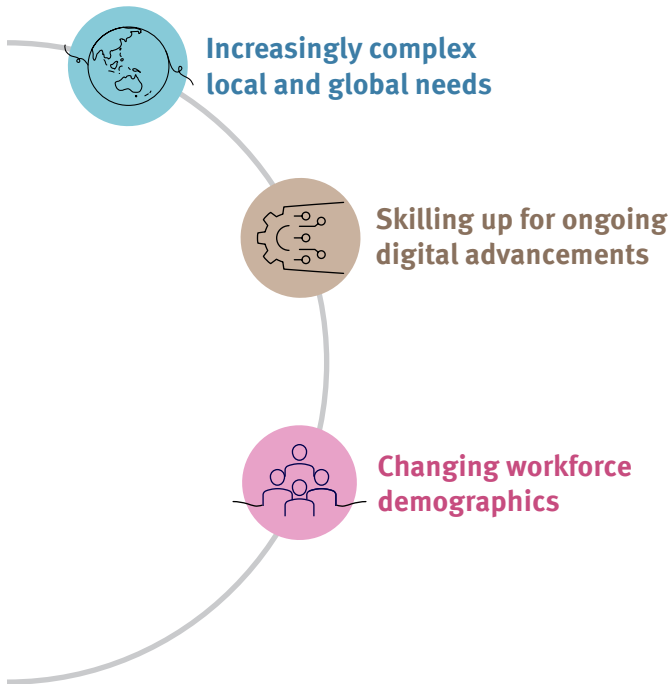
- inform the advice we provide to government alongside other evidence and data
- communicate essential information to the community about matters which affect them
- make sure our services are evolving in line with community expectations.

Technology continues to change how people expect to share and receive information. Engaging and communicating meaningfully with customers and stakeholders requires us to develop contemporary skills and competencies. It also requires us to invest in the systems and processes which support transparent, coordinated, and contemporary approaches to engaging with the community.

Focus area 2 – Workforce

Our people are ready to meet any challenge

Responds to challenges



The challenges and opportunities that lie ahead require us to do more than hone our ways of working.

To rise to these challenges and turn opportunities into better services and outcomes for Queenslanders, we will need to unlock the full potential of our greatest resource—our people.

Central to our ability to face the future is our ability to adopt sector-wide, system-level perspectives and approaches. This means having a better understanding of the professional and technical skills we need to cultivate now, so we are ready to respond in the future.

It also means ensuring public sector leaders are equipped to work collectively and collaboratively to support government to implement sector-wide priorities and policies.

We better enable people to build their public sector experiences

Our public sector is made up of diverse people working in many different professions, locations, and organisations.

This breadth of expertise and experience is a strength. There are unique opportunities to pursue public sector professions, functions and expertise unmatched outside the sector.

Knowing the skills needed across the sector and identifying ways to acquire and grow those skills is key to enabling our people to build meaningful careers.

We need to get better at giving talented public sector professionals opportunities to move and develop within the sector—especially in those priority skills areas that cut across multiple public sector organisations such as policy development and implementation, human resources and IT.

This is a specific kind of purpose-driven workforce mobility.

It will require systems and processes to empower individuals to grow their knowledge and skills in priority areas for the benefit of the public sector and community while building rich and fulfilling careers.

We better identify future leaders and grow diverse potential

Our fast-paced public sector relies on thoughtful, decisive, and authentic leadership.

Our senior leaders are pivotal to delivering better services and outcomes – through both leading in their organisations and working together to steer the public sector as a system.

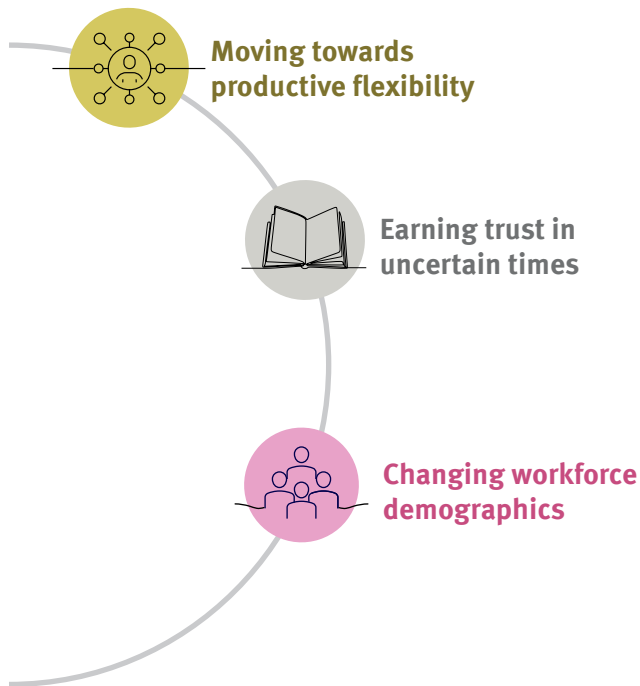
Leadership happens at many levels in our organisations. These roles require extraordinary people who are willing to invest in themselves and others, and who see the public sector as an interconnected system of services.

We need to better equip future generations of leaders with the breadth of knowledge, experience, and people skills necessary to deal with complexity and bring out the best in others. Leadership that reflects the community we serve will help ensure our advice and approach remains relevant and on point.

Focus area 3 – Workplace

Our workplaces support our people to serve their community

Responds to challenges



Workplaces are not just the buildings we work in—our workplaces are made up of the processes, attitudes, opportunities and environments which help us thrive at work.

For many people, our public sector is a great place to work where we are engaged in our job, proud of what we do and understand what is expected of us. We believe what we do has a positive impact on the lives of Queenslanders.

While people’s expectations about workplaces are changing, we have something special to offer. A connection to purpose and service is one reason why Queensland’s public sector is a place where people want to forge dynamic and rewarding careers.

Being able to show people how their individual skills, experience and interests can contribute to better outcomes for Queenslanders is key to attracting people to the public sector—and to keeping them engaged throughout their careers.

While dynamic and rewarding, our daily work is rarely straightforward. We are required to balance being responsive to government and the community, with the highest standards of professional conduct and performance.

We cannot lose sight of the fundamental obligations we all have as public sector employees.

We provide better opportunities for current and future public servants to perform at their best

An ageing population means the proportion of working aged people will likely shrink in the future and competition for skills will increase. We will need to attract new people into the public sector by providing improved pathways for entry.

Careers will also be longer than in the past. We will need to ensure people have access to meaningful reskilling opportunities over the course of their career, and that we understand how to support people to thrive in contemporary workplaces.

Agility in how, when and where work is done is more important than ever. We need to grapple with how to support flexibility across our diverse and dispersed workforce while delivering the services the government and public expect. These approaches will help the Queensland public sector be a place that purpose-driven people want to work.

We better support our people to make decisions that serve the interests of Queenslanders

While the systems and processes that support our work may change as we respond to emerging challenges and digital disruption, we will always remain accountable to government and the public.

We need to facilitate the practical transfer of knowledge and expertise about what it means to be professional in the public sector—and how that differs to other sectors.

We need to empower people through practical guidance, processes and training to make decisions which serve the public interest. We need to ensure people who are joining the public sector for the first time, understand the unique requirements and standards of working in this sector.

How will we make progress on the six goals?

The six goals direct a five-year program of work.

Change will happen through clear and specific activities and projects contained in a series of action plans. Each action plan will build on the previous and look at what is working and what can be improved. This will help us to adjust our course and design future action plans.

Queensland's PSC will develop, implement and report on the success of the action plans. It will also lead some actions. This aligns to its responsibilities to guide and support the public sector or, as the Act describes it, to provide system leadership and stewardship.

The first action plan will focus on building on the public sector's strengths. The PSC will partner with a few departments to take critical first steps in the direction of the six goals.

The first action plan will cover implementation of the strategy over the initial two years. It will not contain everything we need to do over the course of the five years, but it will push us forward in the right direction.

To develop subsequent action plans, the PSC will expand its partnership with public sector organisations to lead actions which will have collective benefits.

Ongoing data analysis, research and engagement with the public sector, stakeholders and executive government will be necessary to make sure the actions committed to will deliver worthwhile results.

Accountability for progress

The Public Sector Governance Council (council) and Leadership Board (board) will oversee implementation of the action plans.

The council is responsible for many aspects of public sector management, including monitoring our workforce's performance, recognising excellence and innovation, fostering cultures of integrity and supporting sector collaboration. The council's input and oversight throughout the life of the strategy will be vital.

The council is chaired by the Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

The board is comprised of all departmental chief executives and is the primary mechanism for the collaborative, whole of sector work envisioned in the Act.

The PSC will be responsible for managing the strategy's program of work. This includes monitoring progress on actions, supporting the delivery of projects scoped as part of the action plan(s), and providing updates to the council and the board.

The work delivered under this strategy will complement the PSC's other critical, ongoing work aimed at promoting the Act's requirements for a public sector which is responsive, fair, culturally capable, and high-performing and apolitical.



How was this strategy developed?

We built upon the generous sharing of expertise from people both internal and external to the public sector.

We also created a solid research base that informed further discussions and engagement workshops.

The vast array of information we gathered helped us create a strategy that is connected to the public sector's current needs and focused on the future of the sector.

The process included:

- interviews with several departmental chief executives
- interviews with thought leaders
- desktop research covering over 100 international and national reports and articles, including:
 - » Peter Bridgman's *A fair and responsive public service for all – independent review of Queensland's public sector employment laws*
 - » Professor Peter Coaldrake AO's *Let the sunshine in: Review of culture and accountability in the Queensland public sector*
 - » Queensland Audit Office's *Managing workforce agility in the Queensland public sector*

- interjurisdictional analysis of other public sector reform efforts and initiatives
- analysis of public sector demographic data and annual survey responses
- sector engagement through a series of workshops including diverse and regional representation
- further consultation with departmental chief executives and senior human resource (HR) and corporate officers.

All of this led to the six goals identified to build an even better public sector for Queensland.

The work that is happening across the sector, including work already being delivered by the PSC, was considered as part of developing this strategy's focus areas and goals. The development process looked at where the gaps were—or those areas that would benefit from sector-wide attention—and focused on how we can address these gaps.



*Internal and external to the sector

This document was developed by
the Public Sector Commission in
collaboration with the sector.

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