

REG EXCELLENCE PROGRAMME CASE STUDY

Improving delivery through rich conversations

REG Excellence assessment: West Waikato Network Outcomes Contract (NOC) team

Sometimes the most important conversations are the ones we just don't make time for. Taking time as a team to reflect on what's working well and what needs changing can be pushed aside as we prioritise delivery. However, to improve the quality of delivery, a team needs to look at all the factors that influence their work, which often requires taking a step back and investing in good conversations.

Rich conversation, in these instances, is about both depth and breadth, and a willingness to challenge and be challenged on preconceptions. This level of collaboration and self-reflection helps build trust, enables new thinking, and generates a shared path forward. The REG Excellence assessment is designed to guide these types of conversations with transport and maintenance teams about their transport management practices.

In April 2024 the West Waikato NOC contract manager for Fulton Hogan signed the team up for the REG Excellence assessment and invited all key staff along from Fulton Hogan, WSP and NZTA. The West Waikato NOC team are responsible for the maintenance of 653 kms of state highway across the region.

'I thought our team could benefit from sitting in a room together and talking about the work, not just doing the work,' says Rob Hutchinson, the NOC contract manager for Fulton Hogan. 'We have a talented group of people that come together from their respective organisations to maintain the state highway network in West Waikato. We wanted to see our work from a different perspective and learn, together, where we could focus our improvement planning.'

Most teams that participate in the assessment bring along 2-4 people from their team – usually the asset management, operations and transport planning team members. The West Waikato NOC team involved 10 team members in both the self-assessment and the two-day external moderation workshop, including junior members of their wider team.

The Excellence assessment gave us the opportunity to stretch and deepen our thinking about how we work together, our practices and activities, and pinpoint the areas that will help us achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in our maintenance of the state highway network across the West Waikato region.'

Rob Hutchinson, Contract Manager for Fulton Hogan for the West Waikato NOC

Self-assessment

The self-assessment is comprised of a series of questions that guide a comprehensive evaluation of transport activity management practices and activities. For each question, the team gives themselves a score for their current practices and sets a target score for where they'd like to get to.

'The framework allows the self-assessment to be undertaken individually or as a team,' reflects Simon Hunt, the strategic asset engineer in the NOC team. 'We decided to do it as a team, as the team members bring different knowledge, interpretations of the questions and viewpoints. Therefore, it made sense to address each question with this collective approach rather than do it individually, and potentially head down different paths, making it more time-consuming to come back together and arrive at a common viewpoint and score.'

External moderation workshop

Following the self-assessment, the team meet with an external assessor. Over the course of two days, each assessment question and the team's supporting evidence is reviewed. The moderator guides

conversation, with the goal of understanding and evaluating the self-assessment scores, providing a new set of external moderation scores and agreeing on target scores.

What impressed me most was the depth, breadth, scale and scope of the people sat around the table, the expertise they brought to the NOC, says Shaun Hodson, one of the programme moderators.

‘The conversations were key to maximising the value derived from the assessment and emphasised the importance of having the wider team present and contributing,’ says Simon Hunt. ‘This level of participation also enabled buy-in for the improvement plan, as the team members were able to contribute to and understand the context of each question, the scoring criteria, current and target scores and improvement actions.’

Assessment report

Following the workshop, the team receives their assessment report, including a two-page overview document for sharing with senior management and governance.

‘The report we got at the end summarised the experience we had in the assessment,’ says Rob. ‘It accurately documented the conversations we had and the scores we landed on, with clear next steps to improve value for money in our maintenance delivery.’

‘The assessor noted that we were not afraid to challenge each other on any statements made. Also, these challenges were taken with a good attitude (and not feeling upset that someone had disagreed). A sign of a high-performing team. We all came away from it glowing with pride, as we learned that we are leading the industry in our management of the West Waikato state highway network.’

Joanna Towler, Maintenance Contract Manager (West Waikato), NZTA

About the Road Efficiency Group Te Ringa Maimoa (REG)

REG is a partnership between New Zealand’s road controlling authorities, Local Government New Zealand and NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi. We partner with the sector to build tools and guidance that enable trust, confidence and value in transport investment.

The success of our programme is due to the incredible work of our 50+ subject expert volunteers, who are passionate about supporting the people that operate and maintain our national transport network. As established and aspiring leaders and experts from across the transport sector, these subject matter experts collectively drive the development of our sector resources, including the Excellence assessment. Learn more at nzta.govt.nz/reg