

Clause 10 Assessment Framework for the Southland Reorganisation Investigation

Purpose of the framework

This framework supports the Commission to assess reorganisation options, including the status quo, against the statutory objectives in schedule 3, clause 10 of the Local Government Act 2002.

The statutory objectives are set by legislation and cannot be changed. The framework does not add to, modify, or re-weight those objectives. Its purpose is to provide a structured way to consider how each option performs against each objective, using the same lens across options.

The framework supports a **comparative assessment** of options, recognising that different options may perform better or worse against different objectives.

The nine statutory objectives have been grouped into four domains to help organise evidence

Each statutory objective represents a distinct matter the Commission must consider when assessing reorganisation options.

The objectives are assessed separately. No single objective is determinative. The framework does not assign weights or relative priority to the statutory objectives in advance. Grouping the objectives into domains is for clarity – the domains do not imply hierarchy.

The framework provides interpretive guidance for assessing each statutory objective ...

The assessment criteria are prompts to support judgement, not thresholds, tests, or requirements that reorganisation option must meet. The criteria help ensure that assessments focus on the matters that are most relevant to each objective and that the same considerations are applied consistently across options.

Using common criteria supports transparent, reasoned, and comparable assessments, while leaving room for evaluative judgement based on evidence and context. Evidence informs the assessment but does not replace the need for judgement in applying the statutory objectives.

Evidence will vary in quality, availability, and certainty across objectives and options. The absence of evidence does not imply poor performance. Commissioners are expected to apply evaluative judgement, drawing on both qualitative and quantitative material.

... and context about issues of importance in Southland

The key issues for Southland summarise matters raised through engagement and analysis to date.

They provide context for the assessment reorganisation options. They do not introduce additional objectives or criteria, and they do not predetermine outcomes. Their role is to help Commissioners consider how each option responds to the particular circumstances, opportunities, and challenges of the Southland region.

Forming an overall judgement about reorganisation options

The framework supports separate assessments against each statutory objective.

An overall assessment of desirability will be formed by Commissioners after these assessments are considered together. This overall assessment involves the exercise of evaluative judgement, recognising trade-offs, rather than aggregating scores or applying a mechanical formula. An option may improve performance against some objectives while reducing performance against others. Clause 10 requires these trade-offs to be weighed through judgement, not resolved mechanically.

The framework is designed to support consistent, transparent comparison of options against statutory objectives

It does not:

- › set minimum standards, scores, or pass or fail thresholds
- › predetermine outcomes or priorities, or
- › replace the Commissioners' evaluative judgement.

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Developed for The Local Government Commission as part of a staged investigation into options for local government reorganisation in Southland.



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IMAGE CREDIT: 456808: EGLINTON VALLEY FIORDLAND, SOUTHLAND, NEW ZEALAND, CREDIT-GREAT-SOUTH-1.

CONTEXT: Key issues for Southland

PLACE, GEOGRAPHY, AND PARTICIPATION

- Effects of distance, isolation, and scale on participation and access
- Ability of iwi and Māori to participate meaningfully in governance and decision making, supported by council capability and cultural responsiveness
- Strong place-based differences in needs and priorities
- Risks to rural, township, and remote voices in governance arrangements

EQUITY, DISTRIBUTION, AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING

- Uneven social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing across communities
- Concerns about how benefits, costs, and impacts are distributed
- Long-term implications for community resilience and cohesion

GOVERNANCE CLARITY AND LOCAL FIT

- Clarity of representation, delegation, and accountability at local and sub-local levels
- Communities of interest that cross council boundaries
- Risks of one-size-fits-all governance or service models.

CAPABILITY, SERVICES, AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Uneven service performance and access across the region
- Workforce availability and specialist capability constraints
- Ageing, constrained, or unevenly distributed infrastructure, and the implications for service delivery and future investment
- Long-term sustainability of services, assets, and organisational capacity

ECONOMIC ALIGNMENT AND FUTURE TRAJECTORIES

- Alignment with functional economic areas
- Coordination of planning, infrastructure, and investment
- Differing future trajectories, including growth, stability, or decline

STATUTORY PARTNERSHIPS AND TRUST

- Continuity and trust in existing statutory partnership arrangements
- Clarity of roles, responsibilities, and decision making authority
- Practical workability of partnership arrangements through change

STATUTORY OBJECTIVES – Schedule 3, Clause 10, Local Government Act, 2002	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA – interpretive guidance for assessing the statutory objective (prompts to support judgement, not thresholds)	
<p>a) better fulfilment of the purpose of local government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic access, engagement, and influence • Representation quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsiveness to community priorities • Public legitimacy
<p>a) better fulfilment of the purpose of local government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to address wellbeing outcomes • Distribution of wellbeing impacts • Social wellbeing and inclusion • Environmental wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural wellbeing • Economic wellbeing and opportunity • Intergenerational sustainability
<p>b) productivity improvements within the affected local authorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation and coordination of work • Use of workforce capability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process simplicity and consistency • Transition impact on productivity
<p>c) efficiencies and cost savings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net cost impacts • Credibility of efficiencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of costs and savings • Long-term cost sustainability
<p>d) assurance that any local authority established or changed has the resources necessary to enable it to effectively perform or exercise its responsibilities, duties, and powers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational capability and capacity • Financial resources and resilience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition and continuity risk
<p>f) enhanced effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of local government services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service performance and reliability • Fit with Southland conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational efficiency of services • Service sustainability over time
<p>e) effective responses to the opportunities, needs, and circumstances of the affected areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place-based fit • Responsiveness to local circumstances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities of interest and functional catchments • Functional roles and responsibilities
<p>g) better support for the ability of local and regional economies to develop and prosper</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment with functional economic areas • Coordination of planning and investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for economic diversity
<p>h) enhanced ability of local government to meet the changing needs of communities for governance and services into the future</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptability over time • Long-term stewardship and risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different future trajectories • Durability of arrangements
<p>i) effective provision for any co-governance and co-management arrangements that are established by legislation (including Treaty of Waitangi claim settlement legislation) and that are between local authorities and iwi or Māori organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity of statutory arrangements • Clarity of roles and responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workability of partnership arrangements • Protection of statutory rights and interests

DOMAIN >

1

Fulfilment of the purpose of local governments

DOMAIN >

2

Efficiency, effectiveness, capability, and sustainability

DOMAIN >

3

Place, identity, and current and future community needs

DOMAIN >

4

Statutory partnership and management obligations with iwi and Māori