

LITMUS

# FINAL REPORT

## Formative evaluation of Local Advisory Committees (LACs)

Prepared for:  
Fire and Emergency New Zealand  
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# Executive summary

This report presents findings of the formative evaluation of Local Advisory Committees (LACs) for Fire and Emergency New Zealand (Fire and Emergency). LACs were stood up in June 2020 to provide independent local and community-focused advice on community needs, issues, and risks related to fire and emergency services in each local area.

Section 14 of the Fire and Emergency Act 2017 mandates that the Fire and Emergency Board establish LACs. Fire and Emergency have established the first seven LACs, with the intention to stand up the remaining nine in the near future.

We evaluated the LACs from March to July 2021. The evaluation responded to three key questions:

1. How well designed are LACs to meet their legislative function?
2. How are LACs operating in the first year of implementation?
3. What are the learnings that can support the establishment of remaining LACs?

We reviewed relevant policies, processes, and documentation. We interviewed 24 LAC stakeholders, including Fire and Emergency Board members, the Executive Leadership Team, the National LAC Team, LAC Chairs, and Regional staff. We thematically analysed the data and developed a proposed Outcomes Framework for LACs.

## Perspectives on the role and purpose of LACs

Overall, stakeholders support LACs as a means to enable communities to provide direct input into the strategic direction and priorities of Fire and Emergency. However, some question whether LACs are the appropriate mechanism to engage with communities, given that local Fire and Emergency personnel and existing networks can provide similar insights.

There appears to be a lack of understanding about the rationale for the LAC model, the outcomes sought, and a view that these outcomes were not clearly or promptly articulated.

## What is working well?

Stakeholders identified critical aspects of the LAC roll-out that have worked effectively and are contributing to its success. They include:

- Effective use of information generated by the LAC trial<sup>1</sup> to shape the roll-out

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<sup>1</sup> A trial of the LAC approach and framework took place in Hawke's Bay between February and May in 2018

- A robust appointment process, leading to high calibre Committees, with a breadth of expertise and reach.
- High functioning Committees, based on effective inter-personal relationships within LACs and communities
- Effective working relationships between LACs and regional Fire and Emergency personnel
- Highly responsive and professional support from the National LAC Team
- LACs growing their confidence, skills and capacity to self-manage
- LACs becoming increasingly embedded and leveraging networks.

## What is not working well?

Stakeholders identified factors that were barriers to the success of LACs. These include:

- Delays transitioning to the new Fire and Emergency structure, which affected LAC establishment and operation
- Challenges navigating structure, process and feedback loops, and reporting lines
- A desire from LACs to work more independently from national headquarters
- Difficulties formulating and implementing stakeholder engagement strategies
- The capacity of some LAC members being stretched or time commitments exceeding their expectations.

## Evaluation judgements

**Overall, the LAC design enables LACs and Fire and Emergency to meet their legislative function.** However, refining the purpose and role of LACs and communicating this clearly to stakeholders will improve LAC's ability to function effectively. Changes underway to improve the feedback process between the Board, LACs, and national and regional stakeholders will also improve LAC's efficiency and effectiveness.

**In year one, LACs are moving into an established operational phase, and are working as intended and at an expected level.** Constructive relationships between LACs and local Fire and Emergency personnel have been established. LACs, local Fire and Emergency personnel and the National LAC Team have achieved these outcomes despite challenges, including organisational change and uncertainty around key roles in the Fire and Emergency structure.

**The evaluation identified key learnings that can support the establishment of the remaining LACs.** The conditions identified in the proposed Outcomes Framework need to be in place for LACs to operate effectively. Fire and Emergency needs to ensure these conditions are met before deciding when and how to stand up the remaining LACs.

Finally, Fire and Emergency needs to undertake an outcomes evaluation to ensure LACs are achieving their intended outcomes.

# Introduction and evaluation approach

This report presents the findings of the formative evaluation of LACs for Fire and Emergency. The Fire and Emergency Board requested an evaluation of LACs' first year of operation, following their establishment in 2020.

## The evaluation assessed the operation of LACs during the first year

The evaluation responded to the following key questions

1. How well designed are LACs to meet their legislative function?
2. How are LACs operating in the first year of implementation?
3. What are the learnings that can support the establishment of remaining LACs?

The evaluation did not assess the effectiveness of the LAC function in providing advice to the Fire and Emergency Board, as LACs are in the formative stage.

## We used qualitative research methods

### We reviewed policies, processes, and other documentation to answer evaluation question one

These documents included:

- LAC set up: relevant legislation, Cabinet papers, trial findings, LAC terms of reference and advisory papers, Members' Guide, and Board Expectations.
- Support for LACs: Role profiles, LAC community interest summaries
- LAC Operations: operating principles, tools and templates, Board reports, communications strategy, stakeholder engagement toolkit and stakeholder engagement reports.

### We interviewed 24 LAC stakeholders to answer evaluation questions two and three

We interviewed stakeholders face-to-face, by phone or online and followed a discussion guide. Interviews were recorded and transcribed with consent and lasted between 40 minutes and one hour.

We conducted interviews between April and June 2021. Appendix A provides the evaluation tools. The interview sample is in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Interview sample**

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>No. interviews</b>
Fire and Emergency Board members	2
Executive Leadership Team (ELT)	2
National LAC Team	3
LAC Chairs	7
Region Managers/Area Managers/Principal Rural Fire Officers/other region team members involved with LACs	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>

We did not interview community stakeholders, iwi, interest groups and the public as the evaluation is not assessing outcomes or impact for these groups. However, these perspectives will be essential to include in the outcomes evaluation.

**We thematically analysed the data**

The evaluation team held several analysis workshops to determine patterns and themes and develop conclusions and judgements.

We held a sense-making workshop with the National LAC Team, during which we presented key themes and discussed the data and insights. The report was then drafted and reviewed internally before being finalised.

In this report, we refer to internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders are Fire and Emergency National and Regional participants. External stakeholders are LAC Chairs. Quotes from ELT, Board members and the National LAC Team are cited as ‘National’. ‘Chair’ refers to quotes from LAC Chairs, and regional stakeholders are quoted as ‘Regional’. We have referred to the people LACs engage with as ‘communities’.

**We developed a proposed Outcomes Framework**

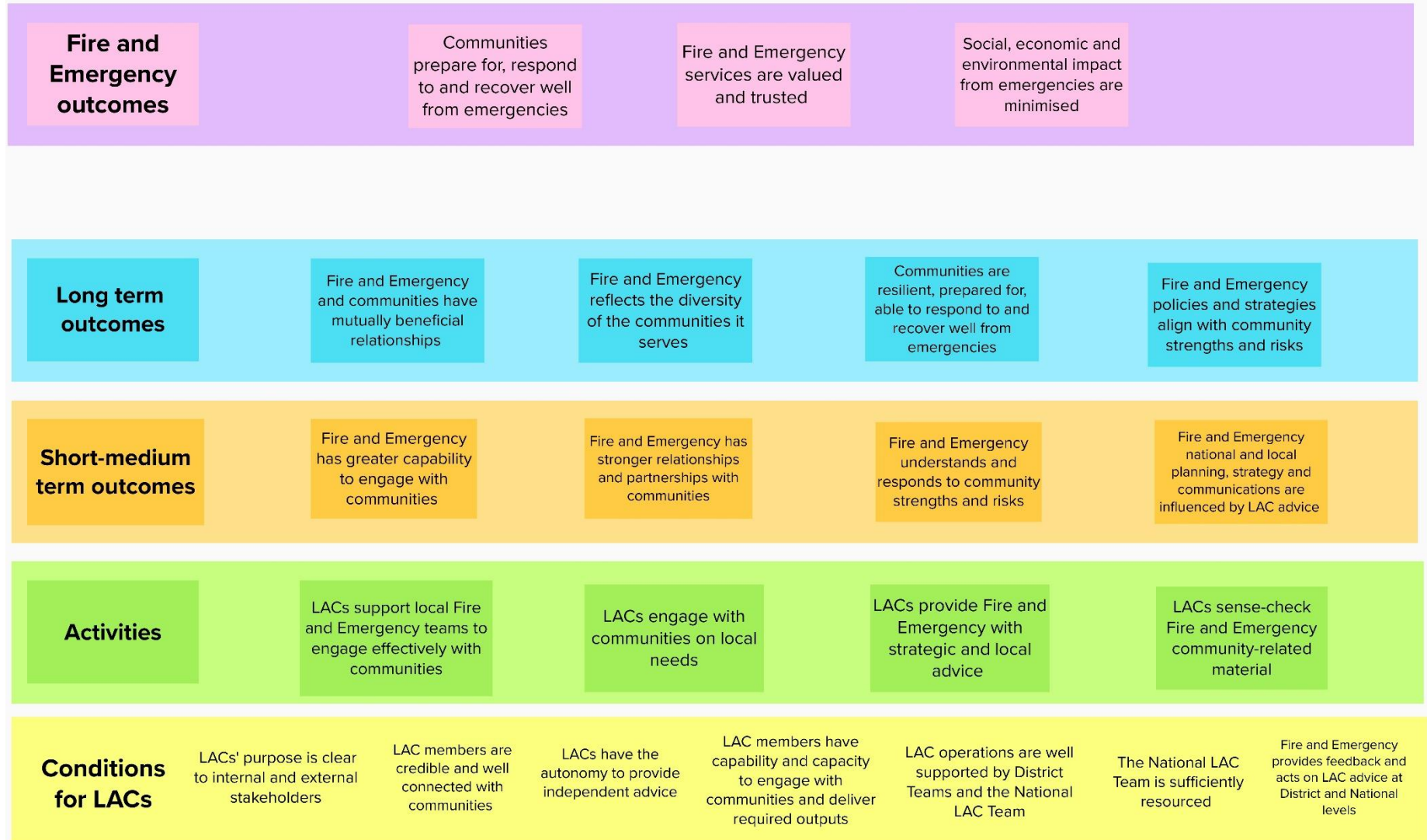
The framework describes the intended outcomes of LACs and will support LAC accountability and learning. The framework is in Figure 1 below.

The framework should be read from bottom to top. The first row describes conditions for LACs to succeed. The second row identifies the activities that LACs undertake. The following two rows are the short, medium, and long-term outcomes we expect LACs to achieve. These outcomes contribute to Fire and Emergency’s long-term goals listed on the top row.

Appendix B provides some potential indicators for this Outcomes Framework.

Figure 1: LAC outcomes

# Proposed LAC Outcomes Framework



# LAC background and context

This section describes LACs and the design context.

## **LACs are legislated for in the Fire and Emergency New Zealand Act 2017 (the Act)**

The Act requires the establishment of LACs to provide independent local and community-focused advice on community needs, issues, and risks related to Fire and Emergency services in each local area. The role of LACs in the Act is to:

- undertake efficient and effective local engagement for the Board
- provide local advice to Fire and Emergency on the national strategy, local issues, and local planning
- consider and promote the interests of the local area's Fire and Emergency volunteers
- consider the interests of the industry brigades operating in the local area
- consider the provisions of any current operational service agreement and memorandum of understanding that Fire and Emergency has and that is relevant to a local area in which the LAC has responsibilities
- provide regular advice on Fire and Emergency's progress concerning its local planning.

## **Fire and Emergency established seven LACs in 2020**

Following a trial in Hawke's Bay in 2018, Fire and Emergency established seven LACs in 2020. LAC boundaries align with Civil Defence boundaries. There are nine remaining LACs to establish.

LACs are accountable to the Board. The Board appoints members, provides direction for LACs and receives LAC reports. LACs currently meet quarterly, and report to the Board following each meeting. The Board requires LACs to develop an annual workplan and stakeholder engagement plan, engage with local stakeholders and Fire and Emergency volunteers, contribute to local planning processes, and participate in reporting processes to the Board.

## **The National LAC Team supports LACs**

The National LAC Team provided induction and training for all committee members on the purpose and role requirements of LACs. They provide ongoing support and tools to help LACs operate. This support involves meeting logistics, attending meetings, supporting the agenda, writing minutes and reports, and connecting LACs to other parts of Fire and Emergency. The National LAC Team has also developed an engagement toolkit for LACs and provide direction and advice to the LACs as needed.



# Perspectives on the role and purpose of LACs

This section describes internal Fire and Emergency perspectives about the role and function of LACs. It also discusses internal and external stakeholders' understanding of the purpose and desired outcomes for LACs. This section contributes to key evaluation question one: How well designed are LACs to meet their legislative function?

Overall, stakeholders support LACs as a means to enable communities to provide direct input into the strategic direction and priorities of Fire and Emergency. However, there are concerns and confusion about the aims and outcomes sought from LACs' implementation.

## Stakeholders support a mechanism that enables community input into Fire and Emergency strategy

Stakeholders strongly support mechanisms and models that enable community voices to be heard by strategic decision makers within Fire and Emergency. LACs are seen as one such mechanism, which ultimately will strengthen communities across the '4Rs' (reduction, readiness and response, and recovery).

Key benefits of LACs identified by stakeholders include:

- The ability for Fire and Emergency to keep abreast of unique community issues and how these are evolving
- The opportunity for Fire and Emergency to increase its engagement capacity and capability
- Increased information flows to the Board, filling a gap which may exist if local Fire and Emergency personnel cannot reach and respond to all voices. Also, a way to include non-Wellington and rural voices
- Support for communities to express their views freely and independently of Fire and Emergency personnel.
- The opportunity for two-way communication between Fire and Emergency and communities. In addition to communities feeding up to the Board, LACs are a way to share Fire and Emergency messages in a targeted way.

'The value of the LAC is that we can go through networks in communities... where the Area Manager does not have those same networks.' (Chair)

'People meeting outside of Fire and Emergency tend to be more at ease... not having a uniform in front of them ... information feels really honest and useful.' (Chair)

'The higher outcome is for communities to be more resilient. It is helping Fire and Emergency shape its support.' (National)

## **However, some question whether LACs are the *optimum* means of hearing from communities**

Stakeholders note that some of those involved in or impacted by LACs are uncertain whether they are necessary.

Some believe that LACs are superfluous and may become redundant over time, reflecting views that:

- On-the-ground Fire and Emergency staff can, and should, provide strategic insights about communities, particularly once the new organisational structure is fully implemented and District Managers are in place
- Current and prior community networks ensure that the idiosyncrasies and needs of local communities are well understood. Consequently, some consider that it might be more effective for Fire and Emergency to draw on or dovetail with these networks (e.g., police, ambulance, Civil Defence, regional councils, etc.).

'What do LACs offer that can't be done for the organisation in normal roles?' (National)

'LACs are not the sole conduit [between communities and Board].' (National)

## **Many stakeholders believe that the aim for LACs, and desired outputs, lack clarity**

There appears to be a lack of understanding about the rationale for the LAC model and a view that Fire and Emergency has not articulated the outcomes desired in a clear or timely fashion.

Some note that while legislation and Terms of Reference documentation provided some guidance, an Operating or Outcomes Framework for LACs was not developed before LACs were put in place.

Local stakeholders express some confusion around the exact purpose of LACs and the outcomes and outputs they should be achieving. Some attribute these issues to the speed and pace with which LACs were rolled out.

'What's the intent? What are we trying to achieve? How do we utilise this? How does it fit into the structure? What bits of the business do they need to interact with?' (National)

'It was not a critical part of the grand plan ... RACs turn into LACs ... But it was in the legislation, so we had to rock on.' (National)

'LAC hasn't mapped out how the relationship sits ... the stand-up of LACs has been exceptionally rushed.' (Regional)

## Conclusions

Internal and external stakeholders agree that Fire and Emergency needs a mechanism to engage with communities to strengthen community resilience and improve services provided by Fire and Emergency.

LACs have unique engagement capability, skills, and networks of which Fire and Emergency is yet to see the full benefit. LACs' capability provides an opportunity to strengthen Fire and Emergency engagement, particularly as the new regional structures are embedded.

The LAC mechanism needs to be strengthened to deliver the intended outcomes for communities and Fire and Emergency. In addition, Fire and Emergency needs to clarify the role and purpose of LACs and ensure internal and external stakeholders understand the expected outcomes.

# What is working well?

This section outlines aspects of the LAC roll-out that have worked effectively and are contributing to its success. This section responds to evaluation question two: How are LACs operating in the first year of implementation? It contributes to answering question three: What learnings can support the establishment of remaining LACs?

Factors that contribute to LAC success include:

- Effective use of information generated by the LAC trial
- A robust appointment process, leading to high calibre committees
- High functioning committees, based on effective inter-personal relationships
- Positive relationships between LACs and regional Fire and Emergency personnel
- The growing capacity of LACs to self-manage
- Highly responsive support from the national office
- LACs becoming embedded and leveraging networks.

## The LAC trial was effective

Stakeholders generally consider that the trial LAC in Hawke's Bay generated helpful information to shape the initial roll-out of seven LACs in July 2020.

The trial highlighted the need to fund a national support team for LACs and demonstrated that administrative support and expert advice would help to ensure LACs were established and operating relatively consistently (in terms of tools, reporting templates, etc.).

Stakeholders also consider that the trial underpinned the decision to stagger the roll-out of LACs.

'The findings showed that LACs are quite complicated ... to be successful, they need to be well supported.' (National)

## The appointment process is viewed as robust, leading to high calibre committees

Stakeholders consider the appointment process for LAC Chairs and committee members to be robust and efficient. Many stakeholders view the assembled committees to be highly skilled with a breadth of expertise and reach among members.

Some stakeholders note their positive response to the selection of locations for LAC roll-out. They consider there was a balanced mix of locations, with a range of unique attributes and challenges.

'The recruitment process was not only robust, but it was also amazing ... very professional and well run... my referees said they had never been through such a rigorous referees process before.' (Chair)

'Whoever made the selections did a good job of making sure we had as many of the right people around the table as we could.' (Chair)

'The majority have the skills to go out and engage.' (National)

'It's a really good committee, it's diverse, and it's skilled.' (Chair)

## **Perceptions of buy-in and good working relationships within LACs and beyond**

Committees are generally considered to be working effectively, and inter-personal relationships are very positive. Stakeholders note that there is a high degree of energy and enthusiasm brought to Committees.

'There's a good culture amongst the group, an open and transparent exchange of information.' (Chair)

'They challenge one another; everyone's respectful ... they gelled with each other very quickly.' (Chair)

'There is enthusiasm and drive to want to get stuff done...their keenness and interest and the time and effort they put into it.' (Regional)

'I came away from our last meeting really pleased – I always get 2 or 3 good items to go away and work on. Our LAC is operating very well.' (Regional)

## **Positive relationships between LACs and regional Fire and Emergency personnel**

Stakeholders note the inherent challenges of establishing relationships between LACs and local Fire and Emergency personnel during a time of significant organisational change. LACs report a degree of uncertainty around establishing relationships with local Fire and Emergency personnel when their future roles are unclear.

Despite this challenging context, relationships between LACs and local Fire and Emergency personnel are viewed positively and seen as fundamental to the success of the roll-out. Overall, there is goodwill on both sides, with a desire to share information and skills.

LACs appreciate the support of local Fire and Emergency personnel in establishing committees, attending meetings, facilitating community linkages, and being responsive to operational issues that emerge.

There is also a sense, on both sides, that the initial learning curve that has occurred has laid a solid foundation for future relationships between LACs and local Fire and Emergency personnel.

‘The relationships between local leaders and LACs are positive and good.’  
(National)

‘Local Fire and Emergency are getting more confidence in the LAC and feel like they can trust us.’ (Chair)

## **The National LAC Team is viewed as highly responsive and professional**

Overall, stakeholders consider the National LAC Team to provide excellent and timely advice and support to LACs. Specifically:

- The induction process is comprehensive, helping LAC members make a smooth transition into new roles
- The tools developed by the National LAC Team are easy-to-use and beneficial
- ‘Hands-on’ support to LACs provides clear guidance and direction (e.g., managing meetings, preparing reports)
- The National LAC Team’s efforts to encourage collaboration between LACs are beneficial and considered a valuable part of the overall induction process.

‘Administration around support for meetings ... coming to meetings ... responsive and quality... reporting functions ... really good and really helpful.’ (Chair)

‘Meeting structures are really good. All the nuts-and-bolts stuff is good.’ (Chair)

‘Any issue or challenge, they’re very quick to respond.’ (Chair)

## **LACs growing their capacity to self-manage**

Stakeholders note that LACs have grown in confidence and skills over the 12 months since they were established. LACs have developed a clearer sense of what is required to organise themselves and communicate with the national office. As a result, they are becoming more self-reliant and gaining confidence to set their direction.

Many consider the initial, intensive support from the National LAC Team provided the foundations for LACs to mature over the past 12 months.

‘In the last quarterly meeting, we let the Chairs lead.’ (National)

‘Fire Plans are something new that they are now delivering.’ (National)

‘We’ve been working on the strategic side of things and come to the conclusion we want to take a couple of key focus areas.’ (Chair)

## Evidence of impact at the community level

Stakeholders report that although LACs have been in place for a relatively short time, there is some evidence that LAC activities have a positive impact. Examples include:

- Developing a deeper understanding of community issues
- Developing relationships with communities and networks that previously didn't exist
- Providing input into community responses after incidents.

'We're starting to see a kernel of how local people pick up and share ideas such as in Napier after the flood, in Northland with the influx of people resulting from COVID.... We're developing a greater understanding of how to get in, and work with the community in a more nuanced way.' (National)

'It's establishing the networks that Fire and Emergency doesn't have ... like with local Runanga.' (National)

'We've been able to provide some input into things that allow us to communicate or engage with the community better ... a couple of incidents... we've got quite broad tentacles into the community.' (Chair)

'LAC has provided a whole bunch of other avenues and other connections with the community ... we're getting a deeper understanding of some of the challenges and removing some of the myths.' (Regional)

## Conclusions

LACs are achieving at an expected level for year one of implementation. The systems and relationships are in place for embedding the committees and seeing the expected outcomes emerge.

LACs' capability and knowledge of their role is increasing, primarily because of the ongoing support provided by the National LAC Team. This support has proven invaluable and will be essential for establishing LACs in the future.

Internal and external stakeholders see value in LACs' contribution and engagement, especially at the regional level. This value differs slightly from that envisioned in the design of LACs, which was to provide independent advice directly to the Board. Independent advice remains an essential component of LAC work. However, Fire and Emergency may see the value of LACs' contribution at the regional level increase as relationships strengthen, regional planning is put in place, and LACs gain more confidence in the role.

# What is not working well?

This section describes factors and issues that stakeholders identify as barriers to the success of LACs. This section responds to evaluation questions two and three: How are LACs operating in the first year of implementation, and what learnings can support the establishment of remaining LACs?

Barriers to the success of LACs include:

- Delays transitioning to the new Fire and Emergency structure
- Challenges navigating remits and reporting lines
- A desire from LACs to work more independently from the national office
- Difficulties formulating and implementing stakeholder engagement strategies and a sense that the process is being unnecessarily hurried by the national office
- The capacity of some LAC members being stretched or time commitments exceeding their expectations.

## **Delays transitioning to Fire and Emergency have affected LAC establishment and operation**

The amalgamation of more than 14,000 people from 40 separate organisations into Fire and Emergency New Zealand has, necessarily, taken time and resources. Most of the project team who designed the LAC structure are no longer involved with the LAC programme. This change has meant some loss of organisational knowledge and understanding of the intent and design of LACs.

Furthermore, the time it has taken to establish local planning and District Manager roles has had a flow-on effect for LACs. There is some uncertainty about who they will engage with in the future from Fire and Emergency at the local level and it has been challenging to know the priorities for Fire and Emergency, at a local level, without this crucial role in place.

In addition, LACs were established throughout 2020 and were affected by the Covid-19 lockdown. The induction training sessions were online, and relationships have taken time to form without face-to-face meetings.

‘There were a number of iterations of project teams during the LAC establishment phase. It was disconnected.’ (National)

‘When Tranche two happens, more than half the people will change. They may come with different views.’ (National)

‘We’re in a state of flux...so structures of the districts that need to support and work alongside LACs, they’re not actually there... Until we’ve got that bedded down, we won’t be able to get the full benefit of LACs.’ (National)



'I think it was too early because of the nature of where the restructuring was at the time.' (Chair)

'We've made a good relationship with the Area Commander, and now we've got a new team coming in, so they're going to start from scratch ... It seems a bit like putting the cart before the horse.' (Chair)

## Challenges with structure, process and feedback loops

Stakeholders identified several issues relating to navigating remits and reporting lines:

- There are tensions between LACs fulfilling their strategic role and a desire to respond to local operational matters that communities inevitably bring to their attention. There is concern that stakeholders may become disengaged and disillusioned if the LAC cannot influence operational issues.
- Feedback to LACs from the Board has, at times, been considered inadequate (e.g. lacking, too generic, too slow). As such, LAC Chairs identified it as a barrier to LACs being responsive to communities.
- Some national stakeholders note that LAC reports focus too extensively on operational matters and suggest that their advice needs to be filtered and distilled to best use the Board's attention.

In June, the Board endorsed a high-level framework to integrate LAC advice into Fire and Emergency's planning processes. This includes work to improve feedback processes.

'If you don't allow the LAC to get a little bit more involved in operations... you might struggle to maintain their interest and membership.' (Regional)

'Quarterly reporting is reactionary. It's about quick runs on the board. It may be relevant at a local level, but it's not the right level for the Board.'" (National)

'Lack of meaningful communication from the Board to LACs is not respectful of LAC's experience, knowledge and time.' (National)

'It's mechanisms to take the information that is given and act upon that information. So, it's not just a case of going and talking to the Board and then nothing. Never getting anything back. Or nothing changes, nothing happening.'" (Chair)

## A desire from LACs to work more independently from the national office

Some stakeholders expressed a desire for LACs to operate more independently from the national office. In part, this reflects their growing capacity to manage themselves, based on what they have learned from one year in operation. It also reflects a view that logistics for LACs may be managed more efficiently by a local person (e.g., with knowledge of venues, transport options, etc.)

Some stakeholders would like the appointment process to become more localised rather than going solely via the Board. They believe that this would allow them to target ideal candidates, expedite the process, and make it easier to recruit people put off by formal recruitment processes.

However, there are difficulties in this as there are regulatory requirements that the Board must follow in appointing a member to a LAC.

'We don't have a say about who comes on the committee... It would be great if we could co-opt people, tap them on the shoulder. The cost of going through advertising and interviewing means it's a very long-winded selection process. Some of the right people may not apply as they don't like a very formalised process.' (Chair)

'We're still very much operating with training wheels on... [But] we're at a point where we almost don't need that. We're happy to have someone here keep our notes and do the tasks required. We need to be unleashed to go and make our own mistakes from time to time.' (Chair)

'Support could be led locally. The national team [arranging logistics] is probably overkill and inefficient ... duplicating stuff we do every day.'" (Regional)

## **Difficulties implementing stakeholder engagement processes**

Stakeholders report that establishing stakeholder engagement processes has been challenging. Many attribute this to a lack of clarity around what Fire and Emergency expects from LACs. However, they accept that engagement is nebulous, evolving and locally distinct – it cannot be one-size-fits-all.

Some consider that Fire and Emergency currently emphasises quantity over quality in stakeholder engagement and has unrealistic expectations about what LACs can achieve in a short timeframe. They note that effective relationships need to be approached sensitively and with caution.

Some have encountered resistance from communities that do not wish to engage with LACs. This resistance may reflect that communities have existing relationships with Fire and Emergency or do not see a clear rationale for engaging.

'The process of getting to the stakeholder engagement plans has not gone well ... it reflects the lack of focus and purpose about engaging. It's currently too broad.' (National)

'There was a push from the national team to get everything up and running as quickly as possible, but there's also value in things forming organically. We should take this slowly. Getting the foundation right ... we want to be sustainable. If we come out all guns blazing, the community is going to get pissed off with us quickly.' (Chair)

'There's fatigue [with people saying], 'We're sick and tired of being consulted ... to them, it's just another committee, and they can't be bothered meeting with another committee.' (Chair)

## **The capacity of LAC members may be stretched**

Stakeholders note that many LAC members fulfil multiple commitments within their communities, in addition to their own working and family lives. As such, there have been occasions when suitable candidates, or appointees, have not had the capacity for LACs.

Some stakeholders note that some LAC members feel pressured by the time and 'head-space' involved, despite being very committed to the LAC. They mention the volume and nature of information from the national office, the amount of administration/logistics to manage, and the time required to attend meetings.

Another more minor issue raised is the capacity of LAC members to use technology such as Teams.

'The workload expected ... you can see it taking a toll on some committee members.' (Chair)

'The volume of information they produce. There is a lot of repetition in there. It is more onerous than it needs to be.' (Chair)

'Using Teams has been a nightmare, a huge problem... it's embarrassing for LAC members to admit.' (Chair)

## **Conclusions**

After one year, it's clear an interdependent relationship between Fire and Emergency and LACs is key to their success. LACs need to provide useful and relevant advice and information to Fire and Emergency regionally and nationally. Likewise, Fire and Emergency need to direct LACs to areas of interest and respond to the advice and information that LACs provide. LACs need to be confident that Fire and Emergency will listen to what communities say and respond when they engage their communities.

Many of the challenges experienced in the first year are because Fire and Emergency did not have systems in place to advise, or respond to the advice of, LACs. Fire and Emergency is resolving these issues as LACs are embedded and District Managers and local planning are established.

# Evaluation judgements and conclusions

This section presents our evaluative judgements to the three key evaluation questions:

1. How well designed are LACs to meet their legislative function?
2. How are LACs operating in the first year of implementation?
3. What are the learnings that can support the establishment of remaining LACs?

## **LACs are well designed to meet their legislative function, but the current design can improve**

The current design ensures LACs and Fire and Emergency meet their legislative function. LACs provide the Board with information that can inform Fire and Emergency strategy. The design also facilitates stronger relationships between Fire and Emergency and communities at the local level.

Refining the purpose and role of LACs and communicating this clearly to stakeholders will improve LACs' ability to meet their legislative function effectively. The proposed Outcomes Framework and an associated monitoring plan and communication strategy will facilitate this outcome.

Changes to improve the feedback process between Fire and Emergency, LACs, and communities will also improve LACs' efficiency and effectiveness.

## **In year one, LACs are moving into an established operational phase and, on the whole, working as intended**

At the end of the first year, the seven LACs are moving from a formation phase to regular operations. Committee members are considered credible, with diverse community networks. LACs are beginning to engage meaningfully with their communities, and quarterly meetings and reporting are ongoing. Constructive relationships between LACs and local Fire and Emergency personnel have been established.

Committee members have a better understanding of what's expected of them and their role in contributing to Fire and Emergency. LACs, local Fire and Emergency personnel and the National LAC Team have achieved these outcomes despite challenges, including organisational change and uncertainty around key roles.

## **Key learnings can support the establishment of the remaining LACs**

Meaningful community or local engagement requires a robust system and patience. It will also take time and extensive support to ensure new LACs are well established and contribute as intended in the Act.

- This evaluation has identified several conditions for LACs to operate effectively. These include:
  - a clearly articulated purpose,
  - credible and connected members,
  - autonomy to provide independent advice,
  - capacity to engage,
  - support from Fire and Emergency at the district and national level, and
  - sufficient resourcing.

Critically, Fire and Emergency need to have mechanisms in place to act on LAC advice.

Fire and Emergency needs to meet these conditions before determining how and when to stand up the remaining LACs.

Finally, Fire and Emergency needs to assess whether LACs are achieving the outcomes as intended by the legislation. Fire and Emergency should conduct an outcomes evaluation to inform this decision.

# Appendix A: Evaluation tools

## Information sheet



FENZ LAC Evaluation  
Information Sheet\_28

## Consent form



FENZ LAC interview  
consent form\_250321

## Question guide



FENZ LAC  
Evaluation\_question g

# Appendix B: Indicators to measure success

## We have identified the following indicators to monitor LAC performance

Monitoring and measuring outcomes are critical to ensuring success. The following indicators contribute to monitoring outcomes identified in the proposed Outcomes Framework. The indicators are a mix of output and outcome measures and include quantitative and qualitative measures. Data to monitor these indicators will come from existing and new surveys and monitoring information.

The National LAC Team should review and update the indicators annually.

### To ensure LAC members have capacity to participate, monitor:

- Whether LACs are meeting quorum
- Frequency and type of community engagement events
- Retention and turnover of LAC members
- LAC satisfaction survey, question 21: engagement is well supported by Fire and Emergency local leaders

### To ensure Fire and Emergency are using the advice and drawing on LAC engagement, monitor:

- LAC satisfaction survey, question 17: The LAC has effective relationships with Fire and Emergency local leaders.
- The number of times Fire and Emergency use LACs to sense-check community-related material and the outcome of that sense-check (from existing LAC reporting or interviews with District Managers).
- Ways LAC advice is included in Fire and Emergency policy or actions regionally and nationally (from interviews with District Managers)

We recommend surveying District Managers to assess the value they place on LAC advice and engagement and the extent to which the advice has been integrated into their planning and service delivery. This survey should include a similar question to the satisfaction survey question for LACs.

### To assess the extent communities are benefitting from LACs, consider:

- LAC conducting community resilience baseline and repeating this assessment or using an existing measure to assess community resilience.

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**LITMUS**



# Participant Information Sheet

## Evaluation of Local Advisory Committees

Dear participant

We invite you to participate in the evaluation of Fire and Emergency's Local Advisory Committees (LACs). This information sheet explains the evaluation purpose, what participants will be required to do and how to get involved.

### **Why is the evaluation being conducted?**

The Fire and Emergency Board needs an evaluation of LACs during their first year of operation. LACs were stood up in 2020 to provide independent local and community-focused advice on community needs, issues, and risks related to fire and emergency services in each local area.

The evaluation will assess how well LACs are working and how well Fire and Emergency's National LAC Team supports LACs to meet the legislative function. The evaluation will identify the enablers and barriers to implementation and identify improvements for setting up and supporting remaining LACs. The evaluation will not assess the LACs' effectiveness in providing advice to the Fire and Emergency Board, as LACs are in the formative stage.

### **Who is undertaking the evaluation?**

Fire and Emergency has commissioned Litmus ([www.litmus.co.nz](http://www.litmus.co.nz)), an independent evaluation agency, to conduct the evaluation.

### **Why have I been invited to take part in the evaluation?**

We are interviewing a range of stakeholders who will have an informed opinion on LACs. We are including LAC chairs and Fire and Emergency board members, managers, and staff.

### **What will taking part involve?**

The interview will take about 60 minutes at a time that suits you. The interview will happen in April and May 2021 and be conducted virtually. We will ask your opinions of how well LACs are operating in the first year and how well Fire and Emergency's National LAC Team supports LACs. We will also ask you about any improvements you think are necessary for the operation of LACs.

**Do I have to take part?**

You do not have to participate in the evaluation or say why you do not want to participate. Your choice will not affect your relationship with Fire and Emergency. You only need to answer the questions you want to and can stop the interview at any time. You can also withdraw from the interview without giving a reason.

**What are the potential benefits and possible risks of taking part?**

Information from your interview will help Fire and Emergency and LACs make any improvements to LACs. Information will also inform the implementation of new LACs. We do not consider there are any significant risks for taking part in an interview.

**Will taking part be confidential?**

The evaluation report will provide a summary of all interviews, combined with other data. We will remove all identifiable information. Fire and Emergency will not know who said what in the report. However, the evaluators may need to tell someone if they are concerned about your wellbeing or public safety.

**How will information be recorded, stored, and protected?**

We will record your interview with your permission. We will securely store recordings, transcripts, and interview notes and destroy them after two years. We will not use your information for any other purpose.

**Who to contact if I want to take part or have a question?**

- Sharon Powick, Sharon.Powick@fireandemergency.nz.
- Finlay Smith, Litmus, finlay@litmus.co.nz, 022 030 6826

Thank you

# Consent form

## Evaluation of Local Advisory Committees

I understand that:

- My participation is voluntary. I can withdraw at any time.
- I can choose not to answer any questions I do not wish to answer (without saying why).
- The evaluation team will keep my information confidential. My name will not appear in the report.
- My participation in the evaluation will not affect my relationship with Fire and Emergency New Zealand.
- The interview will be audio-recorded with my permission.
- I can ask the interviewer to stop the recording at any time.
- I can request a copy of the recording or transcript of the discussion.
- The evaluation team will securely store recordings, transcripts and all other material from this discussion.

I have read the consent form and have had my questions answered. I give my consent to participate in this project.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

	Yes (tick)
I would like a copy of my interview notes/transcript	
I would like a copy of the evaluation report	

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

# Evaluation of Local Advisory Committees (LACs)

## Question Guide: Fire and emergency stakeholders

Questions are adapted to different stakeholder groups.

1. What is the ELTs/RLTs vision for LACs?
2. Where would you like to see LACs in five years?
3. What is working well with the LACs? What is not working so well?
4. What learnings do you have for the setup, operation and support of remaining LACs?
5. How well is LAC serving its intended function?
6. What risks do LACs pose for Fire and Emergency?
7. Do you have any other comments about LACs that you would like to add?

## **LAC Chairs question guide**

1. What are the goals for the LAC in your region?
2. How does your LAC operate and provide value to communities and Fire and Emergency?
3. What is working well in your LAC? What is helping your LAC to be effective?
4. What is not working as well in your LAC? What is getting in the way of your LAC being effective?
5. Based on your experiences as Chair, what learnings do you have for the setup, operation and support of remaining LACs?
6. Do you have any other comments on the design and early operation of LACs?